



Robert Rankin Chapter #62 America 250

*Glenwood Cemetery
Saturday, May 16, 2026*



Robert Rankin dedicated a bench and a Liberty Tree at historic Glenwood Cemetery in Houston, Texas on May 16, 2026, in celebration of the founding of America and the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. This project was over two years in the making and was led by Fred Jackson, Bernice Mistrot and Alex Thorne. Also on the committee were Tom Jackson, Jerry Martin, and Ralph Reed.

Financial Contributors included Fred Jackson, Tom Jackson, Bernice Mistrot, Billy Sorrels, Carmen Alliston, Tawnya Sanders, Glenwood Cemetery, Texas Gravestone Care, and Bounds Wholesale Nursery.



Emcee Alex Thorne, in the background, tells the audience, "As this tree matures, I pray that it will be a living reminder of those who fought and sacrificed to establish our nation and also to preserve our God given rights and freedoms," as Project Team Leads Bernice Mistrot and Fred Jackson unveil the plaque and bench flanking the newly planted Liberty Tree.



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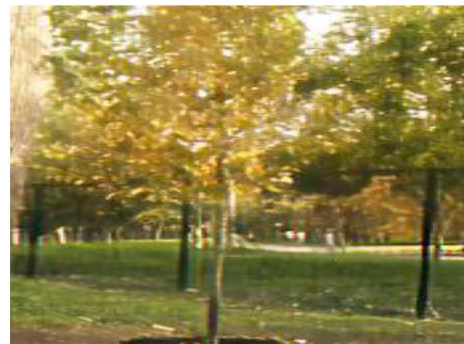
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Liberty Tree: Poem by Thomas Paine

In a chariot of light from the regions of day,
The Goddess of Liberty came;
Ten thousand celestials directed the way
And hither conducted the dame.
A fair budding branch from the gardens above,
Where millions with millions agree,
She brought in her hand as a pledge of her love,
And the plant she named Liberty Tree.
The celestial exotic struck deep in the ground,
Like a native it flourished and bore;
The fame of its fruit drew the nations around,
To seek out this peaceable shore.
Unmindful of names or distinction they came,
For freemen like brothers agree;
With one spirit endued, they one friendship pursued,
And their temple was Liberty Tree.
Beneath this fair tree, like the patriarchs of old,
Their bread in contentment they ate,
Unvexed with the troubles of silver and gold,
The cares of the grand and the great.
With timber and tar they Old England supplied,
And supported her power on the sea;
Her battles they fought, without getting a groat,
For the honor of Liberty Tree.
But hear, O ye swains, 'tis a tale most profane,
How all the tyrannical powers,
Kings, Commons, and Lords, are uniting amain
To cut down this guardian of ours;
From the east to the west blow the trumpet to arms
Through the land let the sound of it flee,
Let the far and the near, all unite with a cheer,
In defence of our Liberty Tree.

Liberty Tree Dedication



**Glenwood Cemetery
2525 Washington Ave.
Houston, TX 77007**

**Saturday, May 16, 2026
10:00 AM**



*Robert Rankin Chapter #62
Sons of the American Revolution*

Event program created by Robert Rankin Chapter President Jerry Martin.

Liberty Tree

A stately elm tree in Boston, site of the first acts of defiance by American patriots against the British Rulers in 1765, was known as the Liberty Tree. It served as a rallying point for the growing patriot resistance, leading to our nation's Declaration of Independence in 1776.

This Liberty Tree, a red maple planted in 2026, commemorates the 250th Anniversary of the founding of our country. Provided By The Sons of the American Revolution and Glenwood Cemetery, this tree is a symbolic salute to all Americans who have worked toward a free and independent nation from inception.

~ Wording on the Plaque ~





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Robert Rankin Chaplin Don Andress gave the invocation after the meeting was called to order by former Rankin President Alex Thorne.

Presenting colors, Color Guard Commander Ralph Reed (pictured left) lead a group that was comprised of Rankin members in both continental and militia attire, as well as a color guard unit from Cypress Ridge High School under the direction of Senior Master Sergeant James Core.

Various groups were represented including the Glenwood Cemetery Foundation, the Washington Cemetery Association, Ladies of the DAR, members of the C.A.R. and different SAR chapters.





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If visiting Glenwood Cemetery, the map below shows you where you can find the Robert Rankin Chapter bench, plaque, and Liberty Tree:





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Top Left:

Front Row (L-R): Compatriot Tom Jackson, employees of the cemetery, Texas SAR State President Dustin Whittenburg stands to the left of Glenwood Cemetery Executive Director Carmen Alliston (holding Patriotism Certificate), Robert Rankin President Jerry Martin and Robert Rankin Color Guard Commander Ralph Reed.

Back Row (L-R):

Compatriot John Thompson, President Stars and Stripes C.A.R. Riley Canon, employees of the cemetery.

Bottom Left:

Robert Rankin Chapter President Jerry Martin (far right) presented the Patriotism Certificate to Executive Director Carmen Alliston, who accepted on behalf of the cemetery.



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The Speakers



Top Left:

(L-R) President Stars and Stripes C.A.R. Riley Canon, Glenwood Cemetery Executive Director Carmen Alliston, Texas Society SAR President Dustin Whittenburg, Robert Rankin Chapter Chaplin Don Andress.

Top Right:

President Stars and Stripes C.A.R. Riley Canon reads the inscription on the Liberty Tree plaque.

Bottom Left:

Former Texas SAR President (2018-19) and Tom Jackson provides the dedication address, which is presented on the following pages. Standing behind Tom is Former three term Rankin President Alex Thorne, the emcee for the event.



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Dedication Speech, Tom Jackson, TX SAR Pres. (2018-2019)

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, fellow Texans, members of the community, and honored guests.

We gather today at historic Glenwood Cemetery for a meaningful occasion -- to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, to dedicate this bench in remembrance and reflection, and to designate this tree as a Liberty Tree, joining a proud tradition that reaches back to the birth of our nation.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, ordinary men and women made extraordinary choices. In April of 1775, on the roads to Lexington and Concord, citizens stood not for wealth or power, but for liberty, self-government, and the belief that freedom was worth sacrifice. Those first Patriots could not have imagined the nation that would emerge from their courage -- a nation stretching from the Atlantic to the Gulf Coast, from the thirteen colonies to the great State of Texas.

The original Liberty Tree stood in Boston and was chopped down by redcoats in August 1775. Liberty trees and poles soon appeared across America as symbols of a stand against tyranny.

Today, we honor that tradition here in Houston.

This Liberty Tree reminds us that freedom is not inherited automatically. Every generation must understand it, value it, and preserve it. Trees are



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living witnesses to history. They grow through storms, through seasons of challenge and triumph. Their roots deepen over time, just as the roots of liberty deepen when nourished by civic virtue, patriotism, and service.

And beside this tree, we dedicate this bench.

A bench is such a simple thing, yet it carries profound meaning. It invites us to pause. To reflect. To remember those who came before us. Perhaps someone will sit here years from now -- a child learning history, a veteran remembering sacrifice, a family member tracing ancestry, or simply a visitor seeking peace among these sacred grounds. May this bench serve as a place where the story of American liberty continues to be told.

And beside this tree, there is a plaque with a story to tell.

It is most appropriate that we gather in Glenwood Cemetery, a place where founders of Houston and Texas rest and their stories live on. Permit me to tell you of just three of them.

Resting here is Anson Jones, the last President of the Republic of Texas and he was most instrumental in Texas joining the United States. Fittingly, he was the son of a Patriot Soldier of the American Revolution. His life both literally and symbolically linked the ideals of the American Revolution with the spirit of Texas independence.



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Charlotte Baldwin Allen, known as the "mother of Houston" came here to rest as well. A cattiewoman whose life was inextricably interwoven with Market Square, the Rice Hotel and City Hall. She was also the granddaughter of Captain Samuel Baldwin, a patriot of the American Revolution. To paraphrase the Houston Chronicle, she is literally a connecting link between the American Revolution, the founding of Houston and its present history.

Finally, I turn to Mary Jane Harris Briscoe, Belle of the Bayou, Houston civic leader and a founder of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and the Texas State Historical Association. Her husband signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, her grandfather a Colonel in the American Revolution and her father in law whose descendants would include Governor Dolph Briscoe. History swirled around her and she took important steps to preserve our rich history, which is a trademark of Glenwood Cemetery.

Cemeteries are not only places of mourning; they are places of memory. They remind us that history is personal.

As we continue the celebration of America's Semiquincentennial of our nation's journey -- let us remember that patriotism is not merely pride in the past. It is responsibility for the future. We honor our founders best not simply by remembering their words, but by living out the principles they entrusted to us: liberty, unity, civic duty, and respect for one another as Americans.



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May this Liberty Tree stand for generations as a symbol of enduring freedom.

May this bench offer rest, reflection, and remembrance.

May this plaque tell the story to those who first learn and those who remember.

May all who visit be reminded that the blessings of liberty were earned through sacrifice, sustained through courage, and preserved only through the continued devotion of the American people.

Thank you, and

May God bless all those who walk or rest in Glenwood, the great State of Texas, and God bless the United States of America.