Lightning rods installed on Bicentennial white oak

A worker from Bartlett Tree Experts installs lightning rods on a Bicentennial white oak tree at the Park Hall home of Scott Lawrence last month. The tree had already been struck by lightning before.

Only three of five trees so designated still surviving

By JASON BABCOCK jbabcock@somdnews.com

Scott Lawrence's backyard in Park Hall has Odenton, agreed to do ning rods, which are realgrown and lived through at least 240 years of history. In more recent years, the towering tree has survived a lightning strike, a gypsy moth infestation and massive branches crashing down. Lately woodpeckers have been pockmarking the base of the old tree.

The gypsy moths were eradicated years ago, but Lawrence has been meaning to protect the tree from another lightning strike, which is more likely since it was already hit.

Last week, Lawrence and Bartlett Tree Experts installed lightning rods on the massive white oak, which was officially deemed by the state as a Bicentennial tree, meaning it was alive when the U.S. Declaration of Inde-

There are two other designated Bicentennial trees still living in St. Mary's County — a willow oak tree on the banks of the St. Mary's River and an American beech tree also in St. Mary's City.

rods installed on his historic tree, but it is an ex-

The white oak tree in Bartlett Tree Experts, house, he said. which has an office in of the tree.

property last month.

"We want to see this tree said.

"I feel like I have a moral obligation to it," Lawrence you go to will have lightsaid. "It needs to be taken ning protection" for their care of."

oak in St. Mary's, Charles non, the home of George and Calvert counties, according to the Maryland try's first president. Big Tree Commission.

Domotor said "quite often" the compapendence was signed in ny is requested to install tractor, 54-year-old Lawlightning rods in trees.

years ago. But when he arrived back home, there was mud sprayed up all over the rear of his house. When the tree was struck, Lawrence had been it left a massive scar down to be buried in his own meaning to get lightning its trunk and shattered backyard, he said, "I'm the mud.

And once a tree is because of the change in gram. the tree's chemical composition.

height as well. Not to and willow oak tree in St. Lawrence said.

"If this tree were to be Maryland. struck again, the best Three of those trees are case scenario is every- still living; the willow oak thing in the house gets in Bushwood and the holfried," Domotor said. In ly tree at the college are the worst-case scenario, gone. the tree explodes, the

pensive project, running house catches on fire and into thousands of dollars. the tree falls down on the

By installing the lightthe work at no charge be- ly just copper nubs lightcause of the importance ly driven into the bark, "we're not trying to attract "We're all about preser- lightning," Domotor said, vation," Brendan Domo- but rather allowing a path tor, arborist representa- of least resistance for the tive for Bartlett, said in an electricity to follow down interview at Lawrence's to a copper rod buried deep in the ground.

"This is diverting all this live as long as it can," he electrical potential away," he said.

"A lot of historic sites trees, he said, such as Lawrence's tree is the across the Potomac River oldest documented white in Virginia at Mount Ver-Washington, the coun-

Lawrence's grandpar-The white oak mea- ents, David and Mary sures 183 inches around Hammett, built the house its trunk and is 74 feet tall. in Park Hall in 1946 that that he lives in today.

A retired defense conrence plans to be buried Lawrence wasn't home in his backyard when the at the time when the tree time comes, and already was struck by lightning has all of the permits in place. A large field stone is already set in the fenced burial yard, which will be inscribed.

Asked why he wanted the curbing in the back- not religious. Why should yard, which sprayed up I be buried at a church? I always liked it here."

There are 32 Bicentenstruck by lighting, it is 50 nial trees remaining in percent more likely to be the state, according to the hit again, Domotor said, Maryland Big Tree Pro-

In 1976, there were five trees in St. Mary's Coun-Trees are often hit by ty listed as Bicentennials: lightning because of their the American beech tree mention, being around Mary's City, the Park Hall for hundreds of years, white oak, another willow "it's inevitable" that it oak tree in Bushwood and would be hit by lightning, an American holly tree at St. Mary's College of

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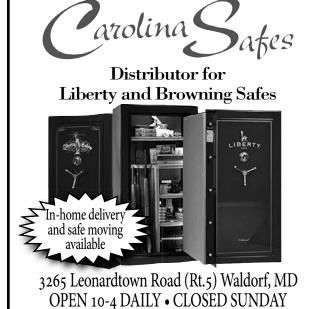
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Overpayment option available for taxes

Due to increasing requests from citizens, the St. Mary's County treasurer is accepting overpayments for 2017 real estate taxes to be applied to future tax liabilities. Overpayments are being accepted in the treasurer's office and by mail.

The requirements are that property owners must understand that the St. Mary's County Treasurer and staff are not providing tax advice by offering an option for overpayment of 2017 real estate tax liabilities. Each property owner should contact their tax adviser with any questions regarding federal and state tax laws. All owners making walk-in overpayments will receive a receipt with the date of overpayment and the amount of their overpayment.

Tax bills for 2017 are available at www.stmarysmd. com/treasurer/taxes. Once 2018 tax liabilities are made available, any shortfall is the responsibility of the taxpayer. Contact the St. Mary's County Treasurer's Office with any additional questions at 301-475-4200, ext. *3300.



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