



# 157th Anniversary of the Fall of the Charter Oak



The Charter Oak is one of Connecticut's most recognizable symbols – but why is it so important? The legend originates in the days when Connecticut was still a British colony. In 1662, King Charles II issued the colony its Royal Charter. This charter gave the colony the right to govern itself, and it stayed like that for twenty-five years. However, in 1687, the new King James II ordered that the Charter be taken back, so that Connecticut (and other New England colonies) could be under his rule.

The people of the Connecticut Colony refused to hand over their charter. The King sent Sir Edmund Andros, whom he had appointed governor of all New England, to recover the Charter from Connecticut. Andros met with the holders of Connecticut's Charter at Butler's Tavern in Hartford on the evening of October 26. The story goes that during the meeting a fight broke out, the candles were doused, and the Charter vanished from the room. Outside the tavern was Captain Joseph Wadsworth, who had obtained the Charter amid the confusion. He took the Royal Charter to a stately oak tree on a Hartford property and hid it inside, where it was never seen again by British eyes.



Photograph courtesy of [connecticuthistory.org](http://connecticuthistory.org)

The old Charter Oak tree stood tall in Hartford until August of 1856, when a violent storm knocked it to the ground on the 21st. The wood of the tree was fashioned into many different artifacts in order to preserve the tree and its legend.