

# Lone Willow Tree Still Thrives

By Barbara Burleigh

With the county's quasiquicentennial year coming to a close, we have all been given a taste of the past in our own communities.

The words, Lone Willow Tree, have been fundamental to the history of Gordon. But where is this product of nature situated? Where did it spring forth from the ground to give settlers and travelers an indication that they had finally arrived near their destination?

Our own Lone Willow Tree lies east of the present day Sheridan County Fair grounds, near where the abandoned railroad tracks use to lay.

Homesteaders set up tents in this area. This tree was the only one of any size and had put down its roots on the banks of the Antelope Creek.

Rev. John Scamahorn of Sullivan, Indiana, led 104 adventurous settlers to journey as far as Valentine on rail and then by ox drawn wagons. On May 1, 1884, Rev Scamahorn and his followers arrived in the Antelope Valley and set up tents in the area of the Lone Willow Tree.

Rev Scamahorn was minister of the Methodist Church. When asked to have the new village named after him, Rev Scamahorn felt it should be named after John Gordon, who led a pilgrimage westward in 1875, resulting in the burning of his wagon train and all possessions. Thus Gordon was born and named.

Thank you to Dale Downing who knows where the tree is located and also had taken a picture of this lovely miracle, full of beautiful leaves.

Now the tree shows remnants of days gone by, however, it still lives. Jail House



Photo by Barbara Burleigh

The willow tree as it looks today.

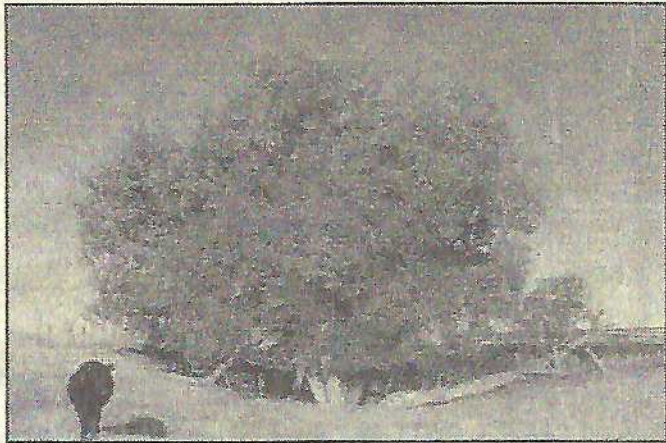


Photo by Dale Downing

The willow tree as it looked several years ago.

Chimney Rock; and the Scottsbluff Monument, located in the Platte Valley, sent joy through the hearts of the Oregon Trail pioneers, and so did the Lone Willow Tree, serving its God given purpose for the pioneers of the 1800's.

Also, thank you to Lois Swanson for allowing entry to her land where this old champion could be viewed.

Lois envisions cleaning the dead wood from the tree, removing the fallen branches and broken trunks. Also, Lois would like to have the tree surrounded by a nice fence and perhaps a bench and a

function of the landmark.

With the help of volunteers and perhaps an undertaking of the FFA and 4-H Clubs, this could become a reality.

How interesting is the fact that Lois and her son are going to try to start new trees from the branches of this Willow Tree. Won't that be wonderful if they can coax growth for the future?

*The leaves have fallen  
The branches are bare  
They look broken and  
unaware*

*Of the past they have held  
The shade provided  
The history it whispers*