

✓ This Indian vanished ...

'Warrior chief' tree reigned at Twin Lakes area for many years

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FOR MORE more than 50 years, a lonely old Cypress tree stood guard at the foot of Seventh Avenue on the edge of the road above the beach sands. It was no ordinary Cypress. It was the "Indian Tree" to natives and longtime summer visitors alike, and it grew on the camel's back of land which juts out between Twin Lakes beach and today's Small Craft Harbor area.

Anyone making the curve from Seventh Avenue toward the Harbor couldn't miss the striking profile of a warrior chief in full "feathered" regalia.

For years the tree was there, still retaining its Indian profile although losing a bit of its "chin" or "nose" down through the seasons.

It was a relic of the previous century when grain crops flourished in the open fields behind it, and cows and horses grazed pasturelands now covered with houses. Few roads then led out to the cliffs and beaches from Highway One — then called the Road from Santa Cruz to Watsonville.

The tree probably was there when Jacob Schwann — one of Twin Lakes' first settlers — arrived. Schwann Lagoon is named for him. The Small Craft Harbor was a similar lagoon, named for another early family, the Woods. Both lagoons were quiet, wooded water worlds where wild birds nested in thickets of willow and tules, deer browsed under the great oaks and little animals of the forest found refuge.

Later, in the horse and buggy age of tourism, a corral and barn were built at the foot of Schwann's Lagoon as a convenience to many of the Baptists, who had established a summer conference grounds there in the 1880s. Horses furnished the go-power in those days.

A glance at history

The train ran past regularly between Watsonville and Santa Cruz, bringing tourists — or "summer people" as they were called then. Beach picnics and bonfires were a way of life as were leisurely horse and buggy rides around the cliffs or back through the surrounding fields and hills.

The old landmark tree witnessed all that and more before it lost its "feathered headdress." Who cut it off? No one knows. By 1971, the tree was a mere stubby stump, and several years later it was gone entirely.



Twin Lakes 'Indian Tree' as it appeared in early years, above, and stripped of its 'feathers' in 1970, below.

