

Pepper Tree celebrates 160th birthday

By Suzanne Steed

Houston County resident Fran Miles has always had a love for the well-known Pep-

per Tree that is located not far from her home.

Ms. Miles, the unofficial caretaker of the historic tree checks its health on a regular

basis and does it with love.

She said the Pepper Tree, located 26 miles east of Crockett on the El Camino Real or Hwy. 21, was planted in 1848

and will celebrate its 160th birthday this year.

The tree was located in 1929 when the highway workers found it during the paving of Hwy. 21.

It was later discovered that the Kennedy Family of Augusta and Grapeland area were early settlers of the Weches and Neches areas in the 1840s.

The Kennedy family was known for their planting of trees and shrubs in the area.

The family burial ground is located south of the tree toward Weches.

The Pepper Tree has four offspring located in Houston County and planted under the auspices of Eliza Bishop.

One is located on the northwest corner of the Houston County Courthouse in downtown Crockett adjacent to the historical marker.

Two more are located on West Goliad Avenue near the Crockett Depot.

And a fourth is located on the northeast corner of the Jordan School next to the administration building on East Houston Avenue.

The name, Pepper Tree, is misused to describe the species. The tree is actually a Lilac Chaste Tree or *Vitex Agnus Castus* L.



Photo by Bud Rhone

This historic Pepper Tree located on Hwy. 21 east near Weches will celebrate its 160th birthday this year.