

Drive-by trees

Cypress Row

Oysterville

Partway down Territory Road in the historic village of Oysterville, a stand of immense Monterey cypress lines the east side of the street. Planted by a local resident near the turn of the 20th century, the grandiose trees are now more than 110 years old and have become stately icons in this bayside hamlet.

Indigenous to the central California coast, where high winds and the constant spray of salt take a heavy toll, most examples of this species are flat-topped and rather scraggly, their twisted limbs pushing back at the elements like broad, angled brooms. Here though, on the lee side of the Long Beach Peninsula, where the trees have been magnificently tended and pampered, they've shot up like sentinels — their arms outstretched and sheltering — the protective guardians of Oysterville.

The Captain's Sequoia

Oysterville

A sea captain, Columbia River bar pilot and successful businessman, George Flavel was undeniably one of Astoria's most influential citizens. His family's Queen



Cypress Row.

Anne-style mansion, now a historical museum, is a showcase of furnishings and decor that reflect world travel and sophisticated tastes; it's no surprise that the same can be said for the garden.

Nine trees on the Flavel estate — all believed to have been planted between 1886 and 1895 — are now Oregon Heritage Trees, the most impressive of which is a Giant Sequoia. Entirely dwarfing the northwest

corner of the property, this 125-year-old colossus, a native to the California Sierra Nevadas, looms near the top of Duane Street. A youngster among sequoias, which can live to be 3,000 years old and grow to 300 feet tall, this fine beauty, with its curving limbs and enormous trunk, currently stands about 100 feet tall — and shows no signs of stopping.

Monkey Puzzle Trees

Native to the Andes mountains of South America, this evergreen tree, also known as the Chilean pine, belongs to one of the oldest species on Earth: Considered a living fossil, the tree species has survived for at least 60 million years. Though individual specimens can live for a millennia, none of our local examples are more than 112 years old.

How can we be sure? In 1905 the city of Portland hosted the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition, a celebration that included 21 participating nations, Chile among them. As gifts, the Chilean ambassadors offered seedlings of this curious tree, and it's believed the ones we see today sprang from that generosity.

Dotting the coastline, in parks, home gardens, and even the side yards of businesses, these souvenir trees (and now, their descendants) are easy to spot: Their leaves, which look like scales, are thick and triangular, with very sharp edges and tips; their long, cylindrical limbs swing down, carrying branches that remind us of this tree's other common name — the Monkey Tail.



The Captain's Sequoia.