

SHORE ACRES
A
STATE PARK
With an
Extraordinary Garden

Shore Acres State Park is situated some thirteen miles south and west of North Bend, or ten miles from Coos Bay (City); on the seaward side of the Seven Devils peninsula which lies between South Slough and the ocean; described as being in Sections 8, 17 and 18, in Township 26 South, Range 14 West, Willamette meridian, Coos County, Oregon; containing 637 acres, a gift to the State of Oregon, from Lola G. and Louis J. Simpson; the deed date December 10, 1942.

Shore Acres is the name given to the property by its former owners, members of the well known Asa M. Simpson family, who were prominent, early day lumbermen and ship builders in the Coos Bay area. These former owners were esthetic minded, with a penchant for the beautiful things of nature. In the gardened acres of the park area, they had planted thirty-five hundred different varieties of trees, shrubs and flowering plants. Among them are many native to the state and nation, with a great diversity of exotics, brought to Coos Bay in the famed, Simpson owned sailing vessels, returning from odd, far away places under the command of Captain Ralph F. Peasley, whose prototype was Peter B. Kyne's fictional "Captain Matt Peasley", who attained storied renown in Kyne's "Cappy Ricks" sea tales.

The tract borders the ocean on an exceptional shore line, where the underlying sand stone formation dips quite steeply inward, in conformity with the Coaledo dip, sternly repulsing the stormy seas that crash with shuddering fury upon this unusual inverted rock face, less than a hundred feet from the main building. East of the house the land is level for a

distance, rising gradually to the base of an elevated, fire scarred and snag ridden ridge that swings westward, merging into the bold Cape Arago promontory with its challenging coastal views.

The house grounds and the extensive garden area, both bordering the ocean, occupy a portion of this fairly level land which gradually narrows in its southerly trend toward the end of the garden where it is pinched out by the turn of the ridge to the seashore. The Cape Arago road skirts the base of the ridge to the garden end before beginning the ascent of the promontory. Here the former private entrance road opened into the grounds beside the caretakers lodge thence down the flowered and tree bordered garden lane to the manor house.

This large, unpainted, three story structure is over one hundred feet long, has fifteen guest rooms a large living room with a huge fireplace that radiated cheer, a dining room and appurtenant housekeeping quarters all kept in order by a retinue of servants. In the basement is a large, concrete swimming pool, with a connected heating plant for tempering the water, and also provide hot water for shower baths and domestic use. A house of comfort and convenience for the many visiting friends and often notable guests, who assembled there in the heyday of its social activities, to enjoy the hospitality of their genial hosts, wander in the gardens or beside the ocean, and if the weather was inclement, watch the waves of the turbulent sea crash upon this unusual shore front from the shelter and comfort of the house, just beyond the reach of their fury.

Soon after the property was acquired by the State in 1942 it was taken over by the coast defense forces as a local headquarters, and occupied thru 1943-1944 and into the early part of 1945. During this period lookouts were continuously stationed on the high Cape Arago park promontory and an

around the clock sentry post was maintained on the park road challenging all who approached and keeping curious minded individuals away from their military activities on this wide-sweeping, highly important observation point, that covered the southerly approach to the entrance of Coos Bay from which almost steady lumber shipments for the Asiatic war theatre were being made. Near the foreland lookout post, an elevated Shore Acres Park field, commanding a wide expanse of the ocean, was used as a site for practice firing of mobile coast defense guns, at medium and long range, moving sea targets, and the area was, of course, kept closed to the public.

After Shore Acres became a state park in 1942, Anton Jensen a qualified florist and gardener, then in charge of Cape Arago park, also took over the care of Shore Acres, and assumed the special task of reconditioning the long neglected gardens. He continued this work during the military occupancy, and their present appearance is abundant evidence of his skillful, hard working stewardship in bringing them back to their former state of beauty, and park visitors are now much impressed by their pleasing and exquisite flowered showings.

At this time the Shore Acres gardens, together with the unusual rock formation of its sea front, and the large house, are the principal attractions. As a park, it includes a portion of the Cape Arago headland view points and the picnic areas of the Cape Arago park are equally available to both of them.

Without other present park development, Shore Acres is a gardened corollary of the spectacular, and sternly picturesque Cape Arago park area. For a greater appreciation of both of them, Cape Arago would better be visited first, then return to the quiet loveliness of Shore Acres and its peaceful, restful gardens that will linger long in the memory of those who enjoy the

rich, harmonizing beauty of an abundance of trees, shrubs and plants that flower so profusely and scent the air with their sweetness. It is a park of pleasing interest to all present visitors, with an abundance of possibilities for a much greater future development

W A Langille

W. A. LANGILLE

December 4, 1947

SHORE ACRES


Recommendations

The outstanding feature of this park is its incomparable shore line, and in this feature should the park concentrate its development. The large open fields and hillside should be reforested.

Two controvertible problems exist in the large house and garden. The house is of such size that it has no value to the park. It is in need of repairs estimated to cost \$25,000.00. Several parties have made offers to use it as a roadhouse. It should never be used for such a purpose. The building should be torn down and in its place, an observation building constructed.

The garden should be retained and kept in its present condition. New development should not be done. Investigation of the small beach should be made as to its safety for bathers. A new water system for the park is now under way. Fires have twice swept this park and every precaution should be taken to prevent future fires. With picnic facilities at Sunset Bay and Cape Arago State Parks, picnic facilities at Shore Acres can be held to a minimum. Develop observation points along the shore line where there is an ever changing panorama challenging the imagination of the viewer.

May 7, 1948


S. H. Boardman
State Parks Superintendent