

California - John Medica - John Medica's Castles & Garden

BIOGRAPHY

- 1900 John was born April 6, (in Austria -- now Yugoslavia) near Fuma (20 miles from Trieste). From a poor farming family, he had a grammar school education only.
- 1922 John left the old country (Yugoslavia). Migrating to the U.S, he went to Oregon and Eureka, northern California, and worked in the logging camps. He worked in several states for the lumber industry as a logger.
- ? During the Depression John had a store. He lost everything. Afterwards he went into the Turkey business. He raised chickens & Turkeys until 1955.
- 1932? He came to Santa Rosa.
- 1943 Purchasing 103 acres, he began building houses in the 1940's. Three were built in the 1940's and 50's. In John's words, "I got 5,000 chickens without a nickel. I got all the feed without a nickel. Everyone liked me".
- 1945 John began building fences.
- 1955 He married Frances. (Frances Maticevich was born March 15, 1912, on the Yugoslavian Dalmatian Coast).
- 1955 He began a rock and succulent garden, building walkways, bridges, and wells. Prior to 1955 there was nothing there. The Prickly Pear cactus was built first. He was self taught in masonry and rockwork. As he said in 1982 (interview by S. Rosen) he invented everything himself: it was all in his imagination. His materials were discarded chiprock obtained from a nearby quarry which supplied San Francisco. (The quarry opened in 1880). He also made rockwork for many people, as well as restoring part of a winery.
- 1950's The road to the property was named after the Medicas.
- c.1960-62 John started the bridges and castles.
- 1960-1970s The property was foreclosed on the Medicas several times. Several parcels of land had to be sold. They lost many acres.
- 1967 John completed construction of the major portion of his work.
- 1975/76 John and his work were included in the exhibition, In Celebration of Ourselves at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (in 1979 he was also included in the book of the same name).
- 1976/77 He stopped building on his property. The castle was moved to Redwood City. As a result of the foreclosures, some of the rockwork became part of other people's property.
- 1982 John was interviewed by Seymour Rosen (audiotape).
- 1983/84 The property was reduced to 4 acres. (The rock world is complete on the current 4 acre site).

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- 1984 Frances Medica died.
- 1985 John Medica's Garden was nominated as a California registered Historical Landmark #939 (20th century Folk Art Environments in California --Thematic). SEE GIBBS 1985. Investigations into setting up Trust for site were commenced.
- 1986 John Medica's Garden was awarded California Landmark status (#939). An historic plaque was applied for and awarded.
- 1987 The landmark and plaque were dedicated. The Board of Supervisors in Sonoma County passed a resolution recognizing John Medica's Castle and Gardens as a Sonoma County folk art landmark.

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