

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

**MEDICA DESCRIPTION**

John Medica's Garden is a four acre site in an undulating landscape which in its natural state contains many outcroppings of grey stone. On this site he has built walkways, miniature castles, arches, grottos, planters, and a miniature "gold mine" with a railroad, all made of discarded chiprock from a nearby quarry. The quarry stone appears to be the same grey stone of the outcroppings in the landscape. The quarry, now closed, opened in 1880 and supplied rock and cobblestone to San Francisco. Although most of the original 103 acres that John Medica purchased in 1943 have since been sold off in parcels, the garden and rockwork world John created between 1955 and 1967 is complete on the current four acre site. A self-taught mason and rockworker, Medica's stone structures and walkways are beautiful examples of stone craft and show no signs of deterioration. According to Medica, all the stone work done for his site is still extant. The site consists of 28 stone buildings, castles, towers, grottos and planters, most of which stand approximately 3 1/2 feet tall; 3 stone arches, approximately 8 feet tall; six stone bridges; 1 swimming pool; a miniature railroad which penetrates a miniature "gold mine;" and interconnecting, winding, stonework paths. Medica has planted his garden with native plants: trees, shrubs, flowers and many succulents, mostly cacti. The plants are beside the paths and the stone buildings and nestled inside and atop some of the structures. Medica refers to the site as his "garden" and the effect is of a garden with both stone and plant elements. Also on the site are 3 buildings built by Medica: his stucco house, another smaller stucco house where a caretaker lives, and a stone building which is used as a tool house. Ancillary structures include a lathhouse, where he starts his plant cuttings, and an arbor with a stone table and stone benches. John is now 85 (born 1900), and needs help maintaining the plants in his garden, which, in some sections, have become overgrown. Abutting the garden site on three sides is a new housing development which can be seen from the edges of the 4 acre garden.

This application is prepared for the purpose of adding John Medica's Garden to the existing California Registered Historical Landmark # 939, "20th Century Folk Art Environments in California. (Thematic)." Nine other sites of similar inspiration have been acknowledged by the State of California: Litto, Pope Valley; Capidro, Menlo Park; Nit Wit Ridge, Cambria Pines; Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village, Simi Valley; Old Trapper's Lodge, Sun Valley; Possum Trot, Yermo; Hula Yille, Hesperia; Desert View Tower, Jacumba; Charley's World of Lost Art, Andrade.

John Medica's Garden is significant as an example of twentieth century environmental folk art. Medica began building his rock and succulent garden in 1955 and completed what can be seen today in 1967. Like most of the creators of folk art environments, John Medica began building his site when he was middle aged, and used discarded materials, in his case discarded chiprock from a nearby quarry. He designed and built it himself, with little education but what he taught himself. The quality of the craftsmanship is quite high: the stonework is beautiful and sturdily in place with no deterioration. The landscape design and placement of the stone structures has resulted in a wholly imagined world. The site has been a local landmark ever since John Medica began building it, and has been toured by individual visitors and groups. John Medica is now 85 and is concerned that his garden remain open to the public after his death. The site is an extraordinary example of one individual's vision, and has the potential to be a useful and magical public resource: an arts center, horticultural center, or public park, without changing or endangering its essential character. Landmark status will assist preservation and trust efforts now being explored with John, his attorney and interested community members, including SPACES, a national organization dedicated to the documentation and preservation of large scale sculptural environments, such as John Medica's Garden.