

## OLD TRAPPERS LODGE MOTELS, APTS., ROOMS, HOUSES

10340 Keswick Street  
Sun Valley, CA. 91352  
Phone 818-767-1011



Enclosed is some information about a Southern California artist named John Ehn, whose works have been honored by the California State Office of Historical Preservation as State Landmark #939.

Mr. Ehn died in 1981 and the family is being forced to divest themselves of a tract of land, in Sun Valley, which includes the Landmark. The family would like the collection of works to be held together and available to the public. They would like to donate the sculpture, artifacts, and boothill to an established and stable institution to insure their fathers efforts are seen by a large amount of people in a safe and sympathetic enviroment.

John was a professional trapper and the theme of his works is the Old West-A theme which we felt would be of interest to the public visiting your facilities. The family believes a relationship between them and you would be of mutual benefit. Simply put, they hope you will have an interest in displaying Mr. Ehn's work as an attraction and therefore save a Historic Landmark, Keeping it in California and making their fathers vision available to the public. In the short range you would receive immediate national publicity for saving a major work of art and a State Landmark from destruction. In the long range you would have a popular attraction that would need only minimal upkeep and you would receive continued notice as the home of this enviroment. The Landmark plaque and status is transferrable.

The sculpture itself is acknowledged as a masterwork of its genre and the site is highlighted in the current issue of The Clarion, the magazine of the Museum of American Folk Art in New York.

## JOHN EHN'S OLD TRAPPERS LODGE

### CALIFORNIA STATE LANDMARK # 939

#### History-Description

In 1941, John Ehn moved his family to California, where he acquired some land at the edge of the Burbank Airport and built a motel. In 1951 he started the construction of "Boot Hill Cemetery" a fantasy of life in the old West, in front of the motel. The project expanded with additions of Western artifacts and assemblage in different areas of the property. In 1981 the site was declared by the California State Office of Historic Preservation, as California State Landmark #939 under an omnibus nomination, "20th Century Folk Art Environments in California."

The site consists of 3 distinct areas...

1. Boot Hill - an approximate 38' x 45' area which consists of 20 reinforced concrete sculptures of various size the tallest of which is approximately 14' tall and 45 wooden or stone "tombstones."
2. Western artifacts, tools, animals, a 20'3" long by 2'4" high concrete wall w/ bas relief portraits, plus tableaux, and more cover the face of the two story office building and an adjacent area.
3. Office Interior - a series of 24 "memory boards" the biggest of which is 3' x 4', an animal pelt, 12 small portrait sculptures, paintings, and framed photographs.

Most of the outdoor pieces on the site were recently restored. Some of the tombstones were refurbished the early part of this year. Minimal maintenance is needed on other outdoor artifacts. All indoor assemblage and artifacts are in good condition.

The Landmark sits on 2 lots within the 2.6 acre site.

Mr. Ehns' work has appeared in museum exhibits and was shown at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Oakland Museum, the Triton Museum and has appeared in books and numerous magazine and newspaper articles and on television.

Because of inheritance taxes and the expansion of the Burbank airport, the family of John Ehn is forced to divest themselves of 2.6 acres of land which includes the California State Landmark #939, "Old Trappers Lodge." The Family wishes that the dreams and vision of their father be kept in the public eye. Shy of finding a buyer who will allow the family to maintain the art work in-situ the family wishes...

To find a new home for the outdoor sections of the environment in toto, as close as possible in location to the original site.

A. Boot Hill.

B. Outdoor artifacts.

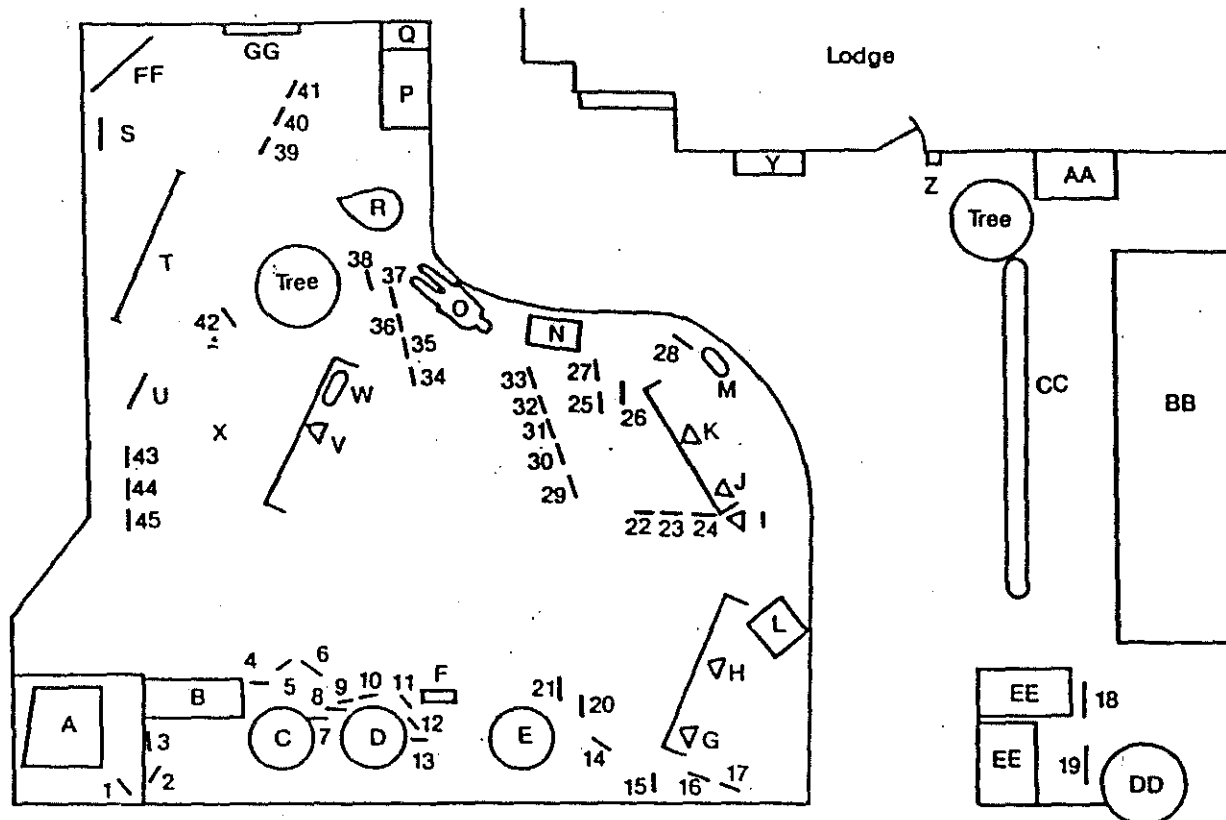
The family is willing to donate the works of art to an institution if they will guarantee proper and annual maintenance of the art works. The indoor pieces will be retained by the family and will form the nucleus of an exhibition directed toward art museums. The family will pay for the move.

Enclosed is a site plan along with articles on the landmark from the Los Angeles Times,

Contact person at Old Trappers Lodge is one of John Ehn's daughters...

Rosemarie Farish  
Old Trappers Lodge  
10340 Keswick  
Sun Valley, CA 91352  
(818)767-1011

# John Ehn's Boothill



## SCULPTURES

- A Old Trapper John Ehn, Pioneer Hunter
- B Mister Boney
- C The Fight
- D Kidnap
- E Memorial to Mrs. John Ehn Sr. And Mrs. John Ehn Jr., Pioneer Mothers Sculpted by Old Trapper
- F Iron Foot Eva
- G Sweet Lorraine
- H Lovely Louise
- I Daughter Clementine
- J Miner 49'er
- K 2 Gun Rosie
- L Historical Landmark Plaque
- M John Ehn — Self-Portrait #1
- N Turtle — "Texas Bed Bug"
- O Big Foot Brown
- P Baby Rattlers
- Q Pontiac Spring
- R Turtle #2
- S "Gundy Shoots" Gunsmith
- T Saddle Rail
- U Totem Pole
- V Lonesome George
- W John Ehn — #2
- X Tools
- Y Display Case

Z John Ehn — Bronze

- AA Crazy Snake
- BB Trailer & Displays
- CC Fence of Faces
- DD Hanging Tree
- EE Display Case

## SIGNS

- FF Trapper's Sign Post
- GG Bink the Barber

## TOMBSTONES

- 1 Butch
- 2 Willie the Weasel
- 3 Rock Art
- 4 Wolf Wagner
- 5 Bill Boozer
- 6 Rot-gut Riller/Deadbeat Dan
- 7 Tiger O'Toole/No Job Jensen
- 8 Diamond Dick
- 9 Red Finn
- 10 Sad Sadie/No Air Nelly
- 11 Able Crook
- 12 Grouch McGraw
- 13 Stella Steele/Hard Luck Hank
- 14 Eagle Eye Eagan
- 15 Bill Butcher
- 16 Uriah Stiff

- 17 The Cryin Giant
- 18 Peg-Leg Lily Larson
- 19 Judge Hiram Blood
- 20 Sweet Cella
- 21 Painless Pelky/Dude Dillion
- 22 Dead-Eye Dillion
- 23 Killer Carson
- 24 Slu-Foot Sue
- 25 Pearl of Pawnee
- 26 Trapper Joe
- 27 Cold Deck Cogan
- 28 Cut Rate Kate
- 29 Little Nell/Airless Alex
- 30 Flash Fergusen/Big Nose Nell
- 31 Harry Hoffman/Last Word Willie
- 32 Frank Jordan
- 33 "Old Trapper's" Route
- 34 Unknown Halfwit
- 35 Gabby McGee
- 36 Dancing Volcano
- 37 Badwater Bill
- 38 Big Foot Brown
- 39 Cattle King Kelly
- 40 Foxey Fenner
- 41 Moon Flower
- 42 Goon Galaney
- 43 Loverboy Roy
- 44 Lester Moore
- 45 Buckshot Bailey

OLD TRAPPERS LODGE  
IS LOCATED AT 10340 KESWICK ST  
AT THE CORNER OF KESWICK ST  
AND 7705 SAN FERNANDO ROAD

1/2 MILE FROM THE CORNER  
OF SAN FERNANDO ROAD AND  
HOLLYWOOD WAY, NEAR  
THE GOLDEN STATE I-5  
FREEWAY-HOLLYWOOD  
WAY OFF RAMP  
PLEASE COME  
SEE US



## *A Brief History Of John and Mary Ehr*

These packets of keepsakes will go to many people. Friends of Mary and John, John's brother and sister-in-laws, Mary's sisters and brother. But most of all they are going to their 20 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. There will also be some extra packets to give to great-grandchildren not born as of this date, June 3rd of 1982. What follows is a brief history of the two unique and wonderful people that you all knew and loved that have now left us.

Mary Leota Esther Gonyon was born July 27, 1904 in Gould City, Michigan. Her mother was Maryanne Polly Gonyon. The Polly's had come to Upper Michigan from Ohio in a covered wagon to claim the free homestead land offered by the U. S. Government. Maryanne was one of nine of ten children, most of whom died as children. She was the only one of this large family to have children of her own.

Her father was Isaac Gonyon, a French-Canadian widower who came from Canada with his team of huge trained oxen to look for work. Maryanne Polly and Isaac Gonyon married and homesteaded land next to the Polly farm. Isaac farmed during the summer and worked as a logger and lumberjack in the winter. They had six children; Mary, Joseph, Stephen, Edith, Ellen, and Amy. They were very poor. Mary, the oldest, was only able to attend school until about the fifth grade. Then she had to stay home to work on the farm.

John Ehr was born Johan Ehr in Violet, a small logging camp near Gould City. on September 15, 1897. His mother was Marie Ella Berg Ehr. She was an orphan who was born in Helsinki, Finland. She was a servant who saved her money from the time she was a child to buy her passage on an emigrant ship to the United States.

She arrived nearly destitute in a strange country, unable to speak a word of English. She worked as a servant until she married. She spoke Finnish, Swedish, and English. She was only 4 ft. 10 inches tall but was a woman of great willpower and strength.

John's Father was Johan Ehr Sr. He was born in Stockholm, Sweden. He was the only son in a family with five daughters and one son. He was apprenticed as a Hydraulic Machine Engineer at the age of fourteen. (In the days before electricity lumber mill machinery was run by the power of falling water. He was trained to set up these systems.) When he was eighteen years old he signed a contract to come to the United States to set up a lumbermill in Upper Michigan where he met Marie Berg. They married and homesteaded a farm near Gould City. They had six sons and one daughter, Wilhelm, Friedrich, Oscar, John, <sup>Joel</sup> Victor, and Anna. In addition to farming the Ehr Family owned a commercial fishery with their own boats and dock. They also ran a lumbering operation for many years. But Johan Sr. was suffering from a kidney deformity and the resulting infections that eventually

killed him. He was nearly six and a half feet tall and known for his strength but as his health failed John Ehn Jr. was forced to drop out of school to help his ailing father. He had only about ~~the~~ seventh grade education because of this. The Gonyon and Ehn farms were near Gould City which is in Mackinaw County on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It was a small, isolated community where every family knew the other families very well.

Mary Leota Esther Ehn and John Ehn Jr. were married on April 2, 1921 when she was sixteen and he was ~~twenty~~-three. They went to work at a lumbercamp almost at once. The early years of their marriage was spent in lumbering and fishing but John had trapped fur bearing animals as a sideline since he was a small boy and more and more of his time was spent on this occupation.

They made a trip to Florida where his brother Joel had moved. There he became partners with a man named Snake Johnson, an exconvict who bragged of killing several men. They trapped and shot alligators and snakes in the Florida Everglades for their hides. Mary helped skin and stretch the hides and the venture was very profitable. However they soon became afraid that Snake Johnson might kill them too, and so they got out of the alligator and snake business and returned to Michigan. When the State of Michigan started a force of salaried trappers to catch animals feeding on livestock John was hired. He worked for the State of Michigan for about 10 years and then went to work for the Federal Bureau of Biological Survey which also hired trappers to trap animals such as wolves, coyotes, bobcats, and bears which kill livestock. During the years in Michigan he began teaching other trappers as a sideline along with trapping beaver, mink, etc for their fur. His new job with the Federal government led to many transfers as John became a troubleshooter for the Department, being transferred wherever a big problem needed solving. He worked in several states. Mary and John had a house trailer, several tents, and a panel truck. Most of the time they lived in their rigs instead of a house because they were moving around so much. By this time they had four children; Clifford Bell, born in 1924, Louise, Joy, born in 1926, Lorraine Ann, born in 1930, and Rosemarie, born in 1937.

John continued to develop his trapping courses for fur trappers. He wrote columns for several trapping magazines. He wrote and published 6 books on trapping which he sold thru the mail along with scents, trap-covers, and other trapping supplies.

In 1940 John contracted a spinal inflammation which caused him great pain. It was impossible for him to do the walking and heavy pack carrying needed in trapping. The Doctors told him he would probably never recover and to live in a warm dry climate. John and Mary looked in several states but finally decided on Southern California. They moved to Sun Valley, (then called Roscoe) in March of 1941.

- page -

They bought a vacant lot and began building a house. Before the house was finished people were stopping to ask if it were for rent and they realized there was a great need of housing in the area due to the burgeoning aircraft industry. They decided to build rental units instead of the store they had originally planned on having. As they needed money for the construction both Mary and John went to work in the aircraft factories. They built many of their rentals with the help of their children, doing the actual construction themselves. They also moved in houses from the area cleared for extending the airfield. In all they acquired nearly 100 apartments, houses, furnished rooms, etc. John quit his job at Lockheed after a year or so but the strain of working eight hours a day and then building many more hours a day started a heart condition. Mary and John ran their business, The Old Trappers Lodge, for 40 years with their childrens help. They lived to see 20 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. John Ehr was a man of fierce determination and great pride in his family. He was also a great storyteller and loved being a character. He started dressing in western style as publicity for his trapping and rental businesses but continued it because he loved the attention and being considered unique, which he was! He built huge cement statues as a memorial to his wife and children, using their faces and names for his creations. He assembled a huge, unique museum collection of western oddities. He was written about in many magazines. A program on public television was about him. He is mentioned in books on folk art as a genuine American Folk Artist. His Motel-Museum has been used as a setting for several movies and television programs.

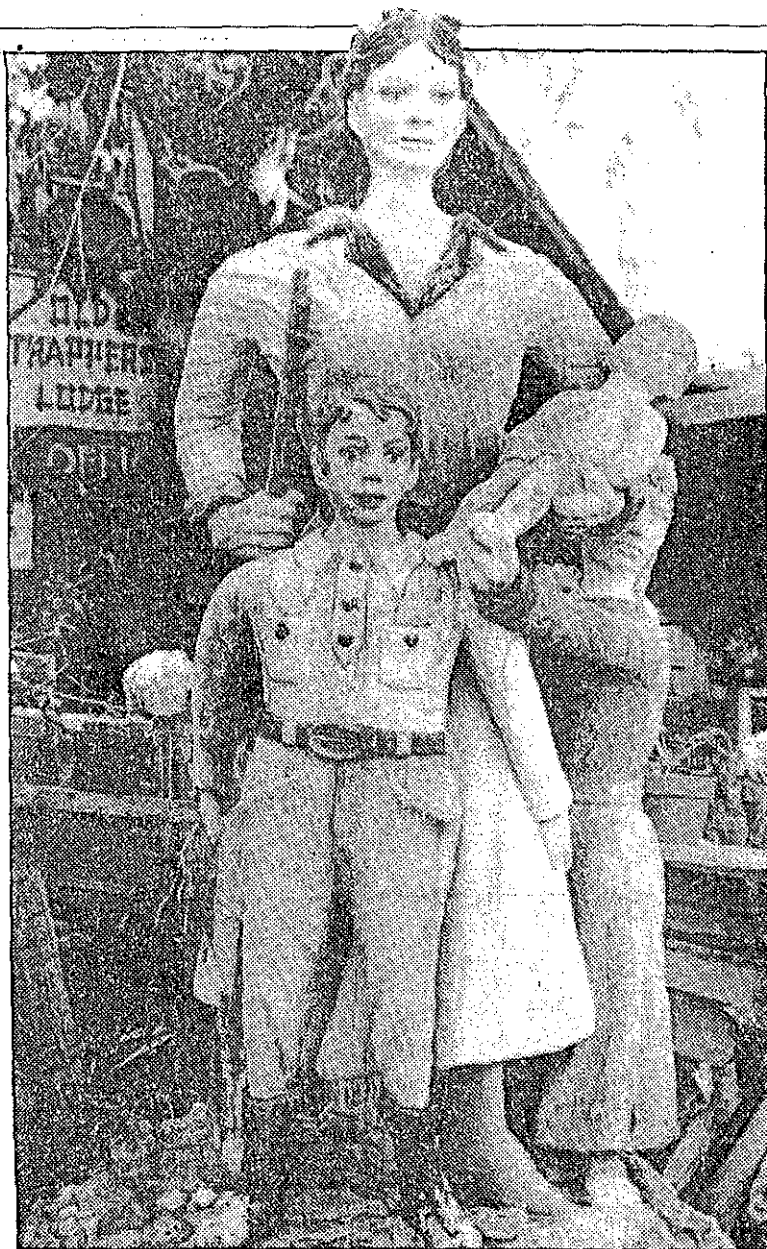
Mary Gonyon Ehr was a much more private and reserved person. In her own way she was just as special as John. She raised her family under very trying conditions and always carried a large workload. She always tried to do her best. Her viewpoint on life was always kind and she had many friends. She loved to do things for people, give them little gifts, help them in many ways. When she was younger she loved to cook huge meals every day for her family, friends, employees. She loved people and people loved her. She loved color, her yard was full of flowers and her house was full of bright curtains, furniture, knickknacks. Her home was a bright and cheerful place for friends and family to come to. She was a loving and courageous human being. We shall always miss her.

John Ehr died December 26, 1981, after breaking his hip, of heart failure. He was 84.

Mary Ehr died April 2, 1982, of a series of heart attacks, on their 61st anniversary. She was 77½.

This packet includes one of the primitive indian necklaces John made and some pieces of Mary's huge costume jewelry collection. Also a picture taken on their 60th Wedding Anniversary and a card from their business and perhaps a knickknack from their home. We hope these few things help keep their memory alive in your heart. In this way they still live as a part of us all, their friends and descendants, everyone that knew and loved them.





Statue called "Pioneer Woman" by John Henry Ehn presides outside the Old Trapper's Lodge at San Fernando Road and Keswick Street.

## Happy trails lead to Old Trapper's Lodge

### UNKNOWN L.A.

David Colker

Imagine a drive through the low-tech industrial and warehouse area north of Burbank Airport. You make your way along San Fernando Road, hardly noticing the nondescript buildings along the route. And then, casually, you look to one side of the road to suddenly see, nestled into a small grove of trees, huge statues depicting blood-stained Indian fighters, rugged pioneers gazing towards the horizon and dance-hall girls!

No, Rod Serling isn't in the passenger seat. You have happened upon Old Trapper's Lodge, one of the finest and most eccentric folk art monuments in the area. The incredible statues out front of the two-story wood and stucco office — which was built to resemble a hunting lodge — are the work of the late John Henry Ehn, known to everybody (but his wife, who insisted on calling him John) as the Old Trapper, or simply O.T.

Born in 1897 in upper Michigan, O.T. spent several years as an animal trapper. He moved his family West in the 1940's and built small rental

houses and the "lodge" office at the corner of San Fernando Road and Keswick Street.

Although the business grew successful, O.T. longed for the wilderness and in 1951 he hired a sculptor to create a life-size likeness of him, in his trapper's outfit, to place out in front of the office.

O.T. liked the statue, but after watching the sculptor he figured he could do just as well. Using his family members for models he built statues in the yard to commemorate the spirit of the Old West.

His wife, Mary, was the inspiration behind "Pioneer Woman"; his daughter, Rosemarie (who now runs the business) became "Two Gun Rosie." He depicted a bloody fight to the death between "Pegleg Smith" and "Big Bear" in a large statue entitled "Mighty Americans."

But he didn't stop with statues. He hauled out thousands of artifacts from his trapper days — antlers, pots and pans, lanterns, hats, tools, snowshoes, guns, horseshoes and countless knickknacks — to make giant collages and displays.

He proudly lorded over it all until his death in 1981.

O.T. did live long enough to have his work recognized by the State Historical Resources Commission as a California Historical Landmark.

**"CALIFORNIA STATE HISTORIC LANDMARK #939"**

**"OLD TRAPPERS LODGE" IS ONE OF TEN, 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY FOLK ART ENVIRONMENTS IN CALIFORNIA TO BE HONORED WITH STATE HISTORIC LANDMARK STATUS, LARGELY THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF "SPACES."**



John Ehn beside frontier-day statue of an Indian and a white man in hand-to-hand fight.  
Times photo by Bruce Cox

## OLD TRAPPER KEEPS TRAPPINGS

# Woodsman Blazes City Life

BY CHARLES HILLINGER

Times Staff Writer

John (Old Trapper) Ehn gave up the woods and moved to the city.

But you would never know it.

Ehn, 78, owns and operates the Old Trapper's Lodge in Sun Valley—a collection of 150 low-income rental units on 64 lots.

The rentals are hidden behind towering pepper and eucalyptus trees, behind bigger-than-life statues, huge totem poles and dozens of headstones on a weed-choked half acre.

Pelts, horns, traps, snowshoes, old boots, guns, knives, trap lines, antlers, rusted tools and hundreds of other miscellaneous items from his days in the woods of northern Michigan adorn the trees and rustic three-story cabinlike entrance to the lodge.

Ehn, who bears a resemblance to Buffalo Bill with his flowing white hair and silver goatee, created the large frontier-days statues.

He scrawled inscriptions on his headstones and draped the trees and front of his place with memories of his years in the woods.

"It's what I carried in the back of my mind all my life," he explained. "What I had to do to express my feelings about things.

"I feel at home here. Feel like I never left the woods . . ."

Would-be trappers throughout the country to this day subscribe to Ehn's correspondence courses on the art of trapping and maintaining trap lines.

For a half century Ehn trapped from Mexico to the Canadian border with his headquarters on the Michigan Peninsula.

"The government kept importing me from my home grounds to do special jobs like trapping the big wolves that came into Arizona from old Mexico," said Ehn, who always wears a fur vest on warmer days and a fur coat on colder ones.

"I savvy wolves," he added.

Ehn is of Swedish-Finnish extraction. His father was a trapper before him.

One statue shows an Indian and a peg-leg white man locked in a fierce hand-to-hand struggle. Other statues have the faces of Ehn's wife, Mary, and other members of his family.

One statue shows a man with enormous feet lying in state on the ground. Six bullet holes riddle his chest. A headstone notes: "Here lies Big Foot Brown. Dirty Gerty shot him down."

There's a statue to "Lonesome George," a lifelong trapper friend, and headstones to characters like Rot Gut Riley, Big Nose Nell and Bad Water Bill.



#### ■ Folk Art or Not Art?

John Ehn's Old West sculptures are dismissed by some, hailed by others.

#### OLD TRAPPERS LODGE

California Historical Landmark No. 939  
See The Old West Museum Free  
10340 KESWICK STREET  
SUN VALLEY, CA 91352  
(818) 767-1011

## Old Trappers Lodge Captures the Hearts of Folk Art Lovers

By LYNN O'SHAUGHNESSY,  
Times Staff Writer

Tucked away along an industrial stretch of Sun Valley pockmarked with warehouses, railroad tracks and vast parking lots is a collection of Old West sculptures that is prized by a clique of art lovers from around the world.

The admirers include the State of California, which honored the lifetime artworks of John Ehn by registering his collection as Historical Landmark No. 939. Visionary art curators also appreciate the work, which was feted recently at the Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara. The exhibit, titled "Divine Disorder," ended just in time for some of Ehn's pieces to be shipped to the Oakland Museum for an upcoming display.

A nomination to the National Register of Historic Places might also be in the cards for Ehn's collective works. Ehn was 84 when he died in 1981.

The fuss over Ehn's work is noteworthy because some people might argue that it is not art. To the uninitiated, the artist's creations do not look as if they belong in a museum.

Ehn's work is not fine art, but folk art. Such works are often eccentric, rough-edged and misunderstood—the Edsel of the art world.

#### 'It's Wonderful'

But fiercely loyal supporters defend the work of Ehn and other folk artists. "Someplace in your stomach, you know it's wonderful," said Seymour Rosen, director of SPACES, a national folk art organization based in Los Angeles.

When not on tour, Ehn's artworks can be found at the Old Trappers Lodge. That's the name Ehn gave to his Sun Valley property, where he ran a motel and rented low-income apartments until his death. Ehn, who was a professional trapper in the Midwest and West before ill health brought him to Southern California, devoted the last 25 years of his life to building a whimsical tableau of the Old West in his front yard.

He started his avocation by making larger-than-life statues of pioneer figures, which he lifted from Mormon biblical history and folk tales and songs.

One concrete pioneer is kidnapping a scantily clad woman. Not far away, a peg-legged cowboy and a blood-splattered Indian are locked in battle, with weapons at their feet. Across the yard, a '49er miner shares a park bench with a lady gunslinger, whose orange petticoat is showing.

Ehn also created a Boot Hill. Under the shade of avocado trees he erected homemade tombstones

Please see TRAPPERS, Page 8



JOE VITTI / Los Angeles Times

Rosemarie Farish with "2-Gun Rosie," a likeness of her that was fashioned by her father, folk artist John Ehn, at Old Trappers Lodge in Sun Valley. Ehn died in 1981 at age 84.



# TRAPPERS: Lodge Snares Place in Folk Art History

Continued from Page 6

and one authentic one, which he picked up at a swap meet after its owner discovered that an illness wasn't terminal after all. The tombstones hold lurid descriptions of how imaginary souls—such as Dead Beat Dan and Iron Foot Eva—met the same fate as Cold Deck Kogan.

The tombstone for Kogan tells of his quick demise:

*Cold Deck Kogan (1836-1886)  
held 5 aces*

*Cowboy Kid held a gun*

*Judge Slaughter held an inquest*

*At the rising of the sun ver-  
dict—suicide.*

Some of Ehn's artwork seems just plain silly. A sign above what appears to be a snake pit warns the curious of "baby rattles." But there aren't any snakes inside—just infants' rattles. Next to that display is a sign for the "Pontiac Spring." Inside the shallow well rests a spring taken from a Pontiac automobile.

## Old West Mooseum

The rental office—the family still runs the business—serves as the Old West Mooseum. The outside doubles as a coatrack of sorts, where Ehn hung mementos of his days as a government trapper—snowshoes, fishing gear, cast iron pots and pans, stretched hides and a totem pole.

Inside, the office is choked with stuff like yellowed historical photographs, antlers, a stuffed moose, and open diaries—boards upon which he affixed memorabilia, including the horseshoe off the horse he rode as a trapper in Minnesota and the nipple from a baby bottle that was used by one of his children.

"He had ideas that were far-fetched but, as anyone can tell you, most artists are considered eccentric. They don't live by other people's standards," said Rosemarie Farish, Ehn's youngest daughter, the apartment's manager.

Old Trappers Lodge is one of about 300 folk art environments known to exist across the country. There are 40 known folk art environments in California; Old Trappers Lodge is one of 10 honored by



JOE VITTI / Los Angeles Times

Rosemarie Farish, youngest daughter of folk artist John Ehn, packs a work called "Blonde Buxom Lady" for shipment to the Oakland Museum, where it will be part of a folk art exhibit.

the state with historic landmark designations.

The honor was bestowed in 1981 after SPACES convinced skeptical state officials that folk art is a legitimate art form that should be honored and preserved.

"It was difficult and kind of wonderful that the state Office of Historic Preservation had enough insight and liberalness . . . to consider something else besides things that are usually considered of historical importance," Rosen said.

The most famous folk art example in the Los Angeles area is Watts Towers, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, followed by Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village in Simi Valley. Old Trappers Lodge is third.

## Western Gear

Ehn, called "O.T." by most folks, was the sort of fellow who would turn heads in an elevator. His sartorial fondness for Western gear and his long white hair and goatee made him a Buffalo Bill look-alike. He pierced one ear, brightened his smile with a gold and ruby tooth and wore 20 to 30 turquoise rings on his fingers at one time. He told tall tales that would have made Paul Bunyan envious and found time to operate a correspondence school for trappers.

Although Ehn was a nonconformist, he fit the definition of a folk artist. Folk art environments are typically constructed by people who get a notion to create after they retire. It would never occur to most of them that they are artists. They usually have no formal art training and create with unconventional materials, using primitive techniques.

These visionaries are driven by a compulsion that they often have a hard time explaining to family and friends, who can only scratch their heads and wonder what got into grandma or grandpa.

Ehn's family never did figure out exactly why Ehn created Trappers Lodge.

"A lot of his thinking and reasoning why went to his reward with him," Farish said.

Ehn's artistic career began after a trip to Knott's Berry Farm in 1951. He hired a sculptor there to create a giant concrete statue of himself. After observing the sculptor at work for three days, he figured he had mastered the technique. That first statue depicting Ehn as a somber pioneer sits in the corner of his yard overlooking San Fernando Road.

His artwork was influenced by his lifetime motto: "Waste Not Want Not." Into his art he wove objects that others most likely would have stuffed in a desk drawer, tossed under a bed or thrown in a garbage disposal. He had been known to use jelly packages from restaurants, for instance.