

JOHN EHN: OLD TRAPPER'S LODGE

BIOGRAPHY

1897 September 15, Johan Henry (John) Ehn was born in Violet, Mackinaw County, Upper Michigan. Violet was a logging camp.

Johan Ehn Sr. (John's father) was born in Stockholm Sweden. He had 5 sisters. At age 24 he apprenticed as a Hydraulic machine Engineer. He was trained to set up systems for lumber mill machinery run by the power of falling water (before electricity was invented). He came to the U.S. when he was 18 to set up a lumber mill in Upper Michigan. Here he met Marie Ella Berg. They married and homesteaded a farm near Gould City.

Marie Ella Berg Ehn, John's mother was born in Helsinki Finland. She was an orphan who worked as a servant and saved her money from childhood to buy passage on an emigrant ship to the U.S. She was 4'10" tall and spoke Finnish, Swedish, and English.

John Ehn and Mary Berg had six sons and one daughter: Wilhelm, Fredrich, Oscar, John, Joel, Victor and Anna.

The Ehn family farmed and owned a commercial fishery and ran a lumbering operation. John Junior dropped out of school in the 7th grade because of his father's ailing health.

1921 April 2. John married Mary Leota Esther Gonyon. Born July 27 1904, in Gould City Michigan she had a fifth grade education. Her mother Maryanne Polly Gonyon came from Ohio. She was one of 9 or 10 children. Her father, Isaac Gonyon, was a French Canadian widower. He farmed during the summer and worked as logger and lumberjack in the winter. Mary was the eldest of six children, Joseph, Stephen, Edith, Ellen and Amy.

John and Mary had 4 children: Clifford Bell 1924; Louise Joy 1926; Lorraine Ann 1930; and Rosemarie 1937.

1933 John had his closest shave with death in Iron county Michigan (source: John's tape).

? 1931-2 Visited his brother Joel in Florida, where John became partners with Snake Johnson. Together they trapped and shot alligators and snakes in the Everglades for their hides. Mary helped skin and stretch them.

? 1934 Returned to Michigan. - WENT TO WORK FOR MR WILLIAMS FIELD & GAME MICHIGAN
The state of Michigan started a force of salaried trappers to catch animals feeding on livestock. John was hired. John worked for the State of Michigan for about 20 years. IN GOVERNMENT WORK - Mich. ARIZONA.

? 1936 The Federal Bureau of Biological Survey hired John to trap. He became their trouble shooter and worked in several states for the Department. (FLORIDA ON HIS OWN)

John became a bounty hunter for the Department of Agriculture Wildlife Service.

While in Michigan John began to teach other trappers. He wrote and published six books on trapping which he sold through the mail along with scents and other trapper supplies (Titles available?)

28/29 11/11/1931
Louise 5/12/1932
20 yrs prior to Mary to CAC
MEXICAN MAJORITY
& TEACHERS
CAC BUS DRIVERS
STARTING WRITING 1937

RAIL ROAD
CAR HOME
Gould City
Mich.

FISHERY
FISHING
1930-1935

1941 March. The Ehn family moved to Roscoe (Sun Valley), Southern California. John began building a house. He realised the need for housing in the area due to the burgeoning aircraft industry, and started to build rental units. Mary and John both worked in aircraft factories for about 15 years to raise money for construction. John worked for Lockheed. The children helped with the construction.

John began to dress in Western clothes to help his trapping and rental businesses.

1951 John began building the Boot Hill Cemetery outside his motel. He hired Claude Bel from Knottberry farm to build a monumental sculpture of himself. After watching for three days and consulting with Claude, he started his own creations. John's collection of Western artifacts were placed in the Old West Museum.

1965 April 10. John prepared a handwritten four page record for the guns at 7819 Arvilla Avenue, Sun Valley California. (xerox in Spaces archive).

1972 Sunday February 8, 5.00p.m., Old Trapper was on **It Takes All Kinds**, Chanel 2. He was interviewed and videotaped at Old Trapper's Lodge and at his residence.

1981 John finished working on Old Trapper's Lodge and Boot Hill Cemetery.
May. Old Trapper's Lodge was named as a California Registered Historical Landmark #939.

December 26 John died of a heart attack after breaking a hip.

1982 April 2 Mary Ehn died after a series of heart attacks.

June 3 Lorraine Phillips (John and Mary's daughter) prepared A Brief History of John and Mary Ehn after her parents demise. The whole family collaborated in the preparation of keepsake packets each containing a primitive Indian necklace made by John, two pieces of Mary's costume jewellery, a picture taken on Mary and John's 60th wedding anniversary, a business card, (possibly a nick-neck from their home) and a copy of the family history.

1984 Old Trapper's Lodge was repainted by Jerome Ward (see the recommendations from Don Howlett July 17, 1983 in SPACES archive)
February 3. The State Historical Resources Commission recommended allocation of a plaque for Old Trapper's Lodge. This was unveiled on March 25, 1985.

IANCO-STARRELS, Josine

1985 Art News. Los Angeles Times (Sunday April 7, Calendar Section).

KIRSCH, Jonathan

1978 Lost and Found Art: Four California Visionaries. New West, pp.29-34.

ROCHLIN, Mergu

? (short article and photo, no title in Boldface edited by Richard Gehr, L.A. Weekly).

ROSEN, Seymour

1979 In Celebration of Ourselves. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

ROSENBERG, Jane

1983 Old Trepper Fulfilled Dream: Lodge, Bogus Cemetery Eulogized Pioneering Spirit. Los Angeles Times (Valley Section, March 13) pp.1,3.

SOLMAN, Paul

1976 The captain of Nilwill Ridge. The Underground Orchard and the Marticien's House: The Odyssey of an Architect who believes People can Design their Own Homes. Mother Jones, (Sept/Oct) pp. 9-

WILSON, Jane.

1971 ? West Magazine

ZIMMERMAN, Martin

1979 The Old Trepper. The California Highway Patrolman. Vol.43. No.5. pp. 11, 40, 42.

EXHIBITIONS

1976 In Celebration of Ourselves, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

1983 April 23-June 4 Many Mansions: Four Folk Art Environments of Beyond Baroque, Venice California.

SOURCES

Rosemarie Ferish
10340 Keswick Street
Sun Valley CA 91352
(818) 767-1011 / 767-6029

Lorraine Phillips
2256 Harper St
Santa Cruz CA 950622
(408) 476-6572