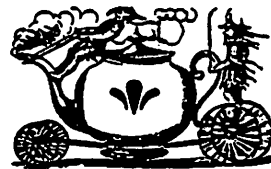


Mary & Adrian Prætzellis



Historical Archaeology
Local History Research



7-20-90

Dear Mr. Rosen,

Enclosed is the material on John Medica's
Garden that we spoke about this week.

Thank you for your help with this project!

Sincerely,

Adrian Prætzellis

State of California - The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION

1. Historic Name John Medica's Garden

2. Common or Current Name Same

3. Number & Street 5000 Medica Road

City Santa Rosa

Vicinity Only

Cross-Corridor

ZIP 95404

County (3-Letter Designator) SON

4. UTM Zone 10 A n4255750

B e529490

C n42557 80

D e529590

5. Quad Map No.

Parcel No.

Other

Ser. No.

National Register Status

Local Designation

DESCRIPTION

6. Property Category

If District, Number of Documented Resources

7. Briefly describe the present physical appearance of the property, including condition, boundaries, surroundings, and (if appropriate) architectural style.

The site contains numerous features built by John Medica: the Medica House, Medica Cottage, a greenhouse/potting shed, stone tool house, swimming pool, and a stone outhouse. In addition, there are downsized stone structures, castles, bridges, and grottos, many introduced plants, and extensive paved paths and steps. These elements are described in turn.

The MEDICA HOUSE consists of a single-story Spanish Eclectic style dwelling, approximately 35 by 55 feet in size. The building is stuccoed except for stone-facing, 2-3 feet in height, which extends around the perimeter of the house. It appears that this apparently decorative surface treatment covers a perimeter stone footing. The flat roof has a low parapet; the roof is drained by round ceramic pipes and downspouts. Aluminum frame windows are used throughout, both sliders and picture windows. A stone chimney is set into the west wall; this is reflected inside the house by a stone fireplace, the only example of Medica's domestic stonework. The building has entrances on the north and east sides. The north entrance is protected by a flat roof porch, supported on stone columns which, in turn, are connected to a stone walkway and wall that encloses the house on the north and east sides. The porch

see Continuation sheet

8. Alterations & Date

House is said to have been remodled, and interal space reorganized

9. Related Features on Property see 7. above

PHOTOS ENCLOSED

10. Planning Agency

Santa Rosa Planning Dept.

11. Owner & Address

12. Type of Ownership private

13. Present Use Residence

14. Zoning

15. Threats Development

o, CA 94296-0001

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

16. Construction Date(s) 1943-1967 (fact) Original Location yes Date Moved _____
17. Architect John Medica Builder John Medica
18. Historic Attributes (with Number from List) 02--Single family dwelling; 04--cottage/garage/sheds; 27--folk art environment; 29--landscape features, exotic plantings; 36--ethnic minority property (Slovenian).

SIGNIFICANCE AND EVALUATION

19. Context for Evaluation: Theme Folk Art Area California
Period 1943-1967 Property Type Folk art environment Context Formally Developed? no

20. Briefly discuss the property's importance within the context. Use historical and architectural analysis as appropriate. Compare with similar properties.

The Medica Gardens, houses and outbuildings were designed and hand-built by John Medica between the years 1943 and 1967. Medica was born in 1900 in Rijeka, Slovenia and immigrated to America circa 1922 [John Fitzpatrick, personal interview]. Slovenia, currently the northwest coast province of Yugoslavia, was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Mr. Medica settled in Eureka, California and worked as a logger. At the same time, he attended night school and apparently studied engineering and even law [Joan Fitzpatrick and Jean Torres, personal interviews].

See continuation sheet

21. Sources

Telephone interview with Joan Fitzpatrick, 13 July 1990. Telephone interview with Seymour Rosen (SPACES, Los Angeles) 17 July 1990. Telephone interview with Jean Torres, 16 July 1990. California State
See continuation Sheet

22. Applicable National Register Criteria C

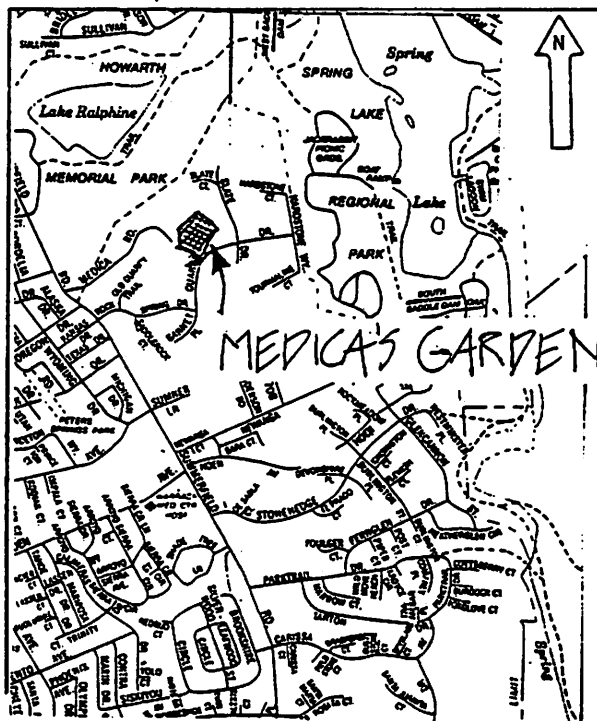
23. Other Recognition State Landmark #939
State Landmark No. (if applicable) _____

24. Evaluator K. Hattersley-Drayton, A. Praetzelis
Date of Evaluation 19 July 1990

25. Survey Type Project related

26. Survey Name Medica Gardens

27. Year Form Prepared 19 July 1990
By (Name) A. Praetzelis, K. Hattersley-Drayton
Organization Local History/North Bay Folklife
Address 5503 Corbett Circle
City & ZIP Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Phone (707) 545-2219



7.

roof has a parapet which is topped with half-round tiles; drainage is supplied by similar ceramic pipes. The east entrance faces the Garden. It is sheltered by a stuccoed, shed roof entry porch which is roofed with half-round tiles. A stone bench projects from the knee wall on the west side of the house. The House appears to be in excellent condition.

The MEDICA COTTAGE consists of a single story, Spanish Eclectic style dwelling with attached garage, approximately 22 by 40 feet in size. It has a bi-level, flat roof and is stuccoed. Like the Medica House, the Cottage has a knee high, decorative, stone facing. This facing covers a perimeter footing of either stone or concrete. The garage unit makes up the southern section of the structure. Its flat roof has an indented parapet on the south side over the up-and-over garage door. The garage is pierced with one wood sash and two aluminum windows. The dwelling unit is pierced by aluminum slider windows. Its stuccoed shed roof entry porch is covered with half round tiles. The front parapet of the principal roof is decorated with a row of half-round tiles. Roof drainage is treated by round ceramic pipes that lead to downspouts. The Cottage has a concrete-lined, partial basement; at the time of examination, the basement contained a few inches of standing water. The Cottage appears to be in good condition.

The GREENHOUSE consists of two wooden structures used by John Medica as a potting shed and plant propagation area. The greenhouse consists of a wood-frame structure covered with sheets of a translucent, corrugated material. Inside are tables to hold the plants. The second element is an open lathhouse in which is a long bench or table on which plants were repotted. Both structures are quite flimsy.

On the east side of the property are the remains of two structures erected by Medica as part of an early attempt at commercial turkey raising. The more northerly structure has collapsed, leaving only the concrete slab floor. The remaining unit is a shed roof, wood frame structure, built at least in part from salvaged materials. The structure is in poor condition.

The MEDICA GARDEN consists of a landscape of stone structures and introduced plants that covers much of the four acre site. The Garden's focus is knoll of rock outcropping at the middle of the parcel. This natural feature has been transformed into a fanciful landscape of miniature structures, bridges, and exotic vegetation. The site contains 28 stone structures; these include castles, towers, skyscrapers, grottos, planters, and an abalone-decorated mushroom. Most of these structures are no more than five feet tall. In addition, there are three arches, which stand 7-8 feet high; 6 bridges, including a replica of the Golden Gate Bridge, all of which have stone handrails and can be walked

across; a full-size swimming pool; a miniature railroad and "gold mine;" several waterfall/pool complexes; and thousands of feet of paved walkways, walls, and steps. The southwestern property boundary is marked by an extraordinary stone fence, over 300 feet long, whose intermittent post are in the shape of small, conical-roofed towers. The entire property is extensively planted with exotic species. The central knoll is particularly well stocked with mature cacti and other succulents.

The stonework is in generally excellent condition. A demolished arch in the northern section of the Garden provided a view of Medica's construction techniques. The arch was of basalt lumps up to 1 foot in diameter. The rock was built up around a frame of 1 inch diameter steel pipe and cemented with copious amounts of concrete. Medica left very few air pockets in the interstices that would have weakened the arch. Some of the smaller features were made of rock chips implanted in a skin of concrete over a wire frame. Although the entire site is quite rigid, surprisingly few cracks are evident in the concrete. Even the most damage-prone features--the bridges and their associated swag-like handrails-- show very few cracks and no immediately obvious indicators of significant structural problem.

20. In 1943 he purchased circa 103 acres in Santa Rosa, of which four acres survive to date as the Medica Gardens. His purchase prompted criticism from family and friends because the land was so rocky you "couldn't even plant a potato" [Fitzpatrick]. In retrospect, it appears that he was drawn to the property because it resembled the landscape of his former homeland. Indeed, the rockwork fences and later bridges; castles and sundry fantasy sculptures also reflected vernacular building traditions of Croatia and Slovenia.

According to family heirs, Medica first built the caretaker's cottage and then the main house, which has since been modified. In earlier years the house plan was described as "maze-like." The rock archway over the driveway was also constructed at the time of the main house, circa 1945. Medica also built three rental houses on his acreage. The swimming pool, pond and immediate garden areas were constructed next.

Medica married late in life. Francis Matucevich Waite, a Croatian-American, provided a social context which was a profound influence on his work. Mrs. Waite's family maintained strong ethnic ties through the Slovenian Hall in San Francisco. She gardened side-by-side with her husband. Also her family (in particular two young nieces) regularly visited the property and

influenced its continuing development. It was after his marriage, in fact, that Medica began to build the fantasy sculptures. The series of castles were started in 1963 as a request from a niece. She even built a cardboard model for the first castle which became the core of its construction [Jean Torres, personal interview].

The Medicas planted the site with indigenous and exotic species. The fig trees and grape arbors are a direct link to Yugoslavia whereas the variety of cacti, both common and rare, reflect the landscape of the American West. Cacti were chosen initially to serve as low-maintenance plants, as the four acres of annuals and perennials became increasingly laborious to maintain. Over time, Medica became intrigued with cacti and collected and propagated them.

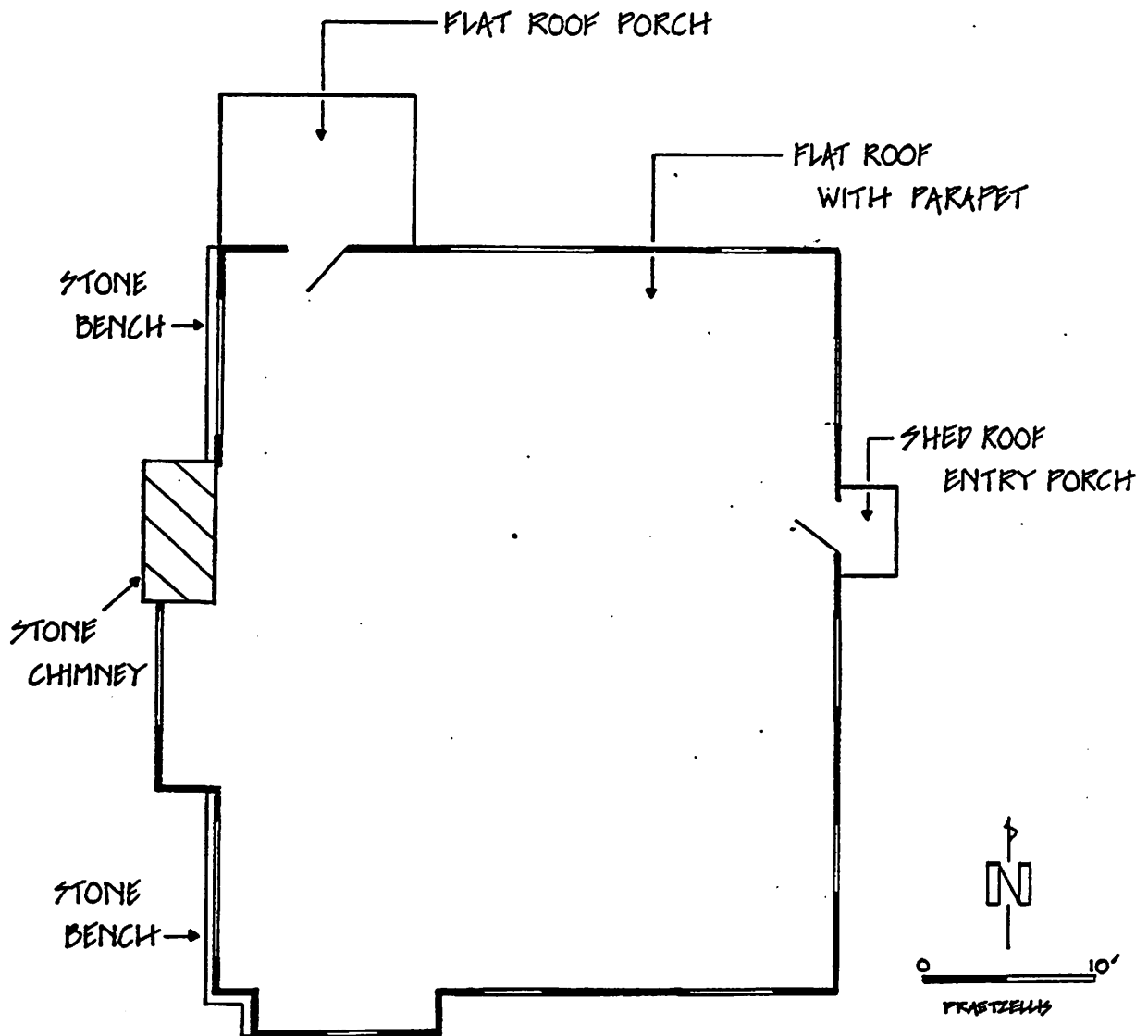
The garden's maze-like twist of walkways, bridges, sculptures and pools have been a delight to school groups who have visited the site on a regular basis. Medica Gardens have been written up in the local press and featured on the popular TV show: "Bay Area Back Roads." In June, 1987, the site was dedicated as State Landmark #939 as one of nine exemplary California "folk art environments."

Although the garden is now overgrown, the rockwork fences and sculptures are in excellent condition and integrity is high. The site is a unique and charming example of one man's idiosyncratic artistic vision. The Medica Gardens are, however, also a cultural landscape with deep ties to vernacular building and aesthetics of Northwest Yugoslavia.

The importance of the Medica House and Cottage stems from: 1/ their association with John Medica, the creator of the Gardens; 2/ as examples of Medica's earliest efforts at stonework; 3/ their potential to contain information that could contribute to the understanding of the Gardens as interpretations of Slovenian folk traditions in building, aesthetics, and design; and 4/ for their pivotal place in the overall landscape design of the Gardens.

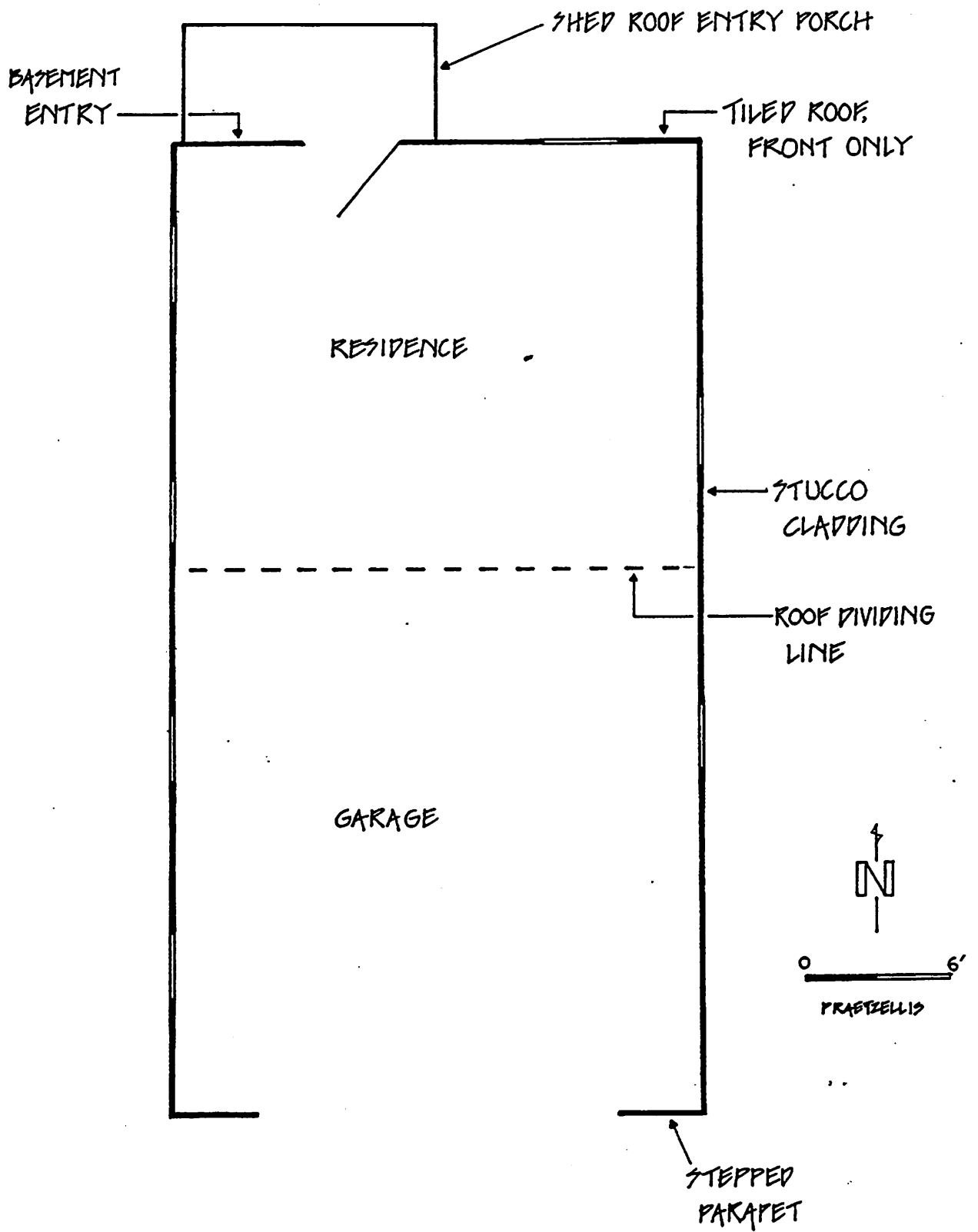
21. Sources, continued

Landmark nomination for John Medica's Garden, prepared by Jocelyn Gibbs for SPACES.



JOHN MEDICA HOUSE

9000 MEDICA ROAD, SANTA ROSA, CA.



JOHN MEDICA COTTAGE

5000 MEDICA ROAD, SANTA ROSA, CA.

HISTORIC RESOURCE REVIEW, JOHN MEDICA GARDENS

Recommendations

- 1) John Medica Gardens is a site of great significance to the history and cultural heritage of Santa Rosa. Its' integrity and charm as a "folk art environment" has been recognized at the state level with its dedication as a State Landmark (#939) in June of 1987. As a first priority, it is recommended that the garden be preserved intact as a county or state park, preserve or conservancy with adequate maintenance, security, interpretation and public access.
- 2) Realistically it is understood that the preservation of the entire site may be difficult. The owner-builder John Medica also recognized that limited development along the peripheries of the parcel was probably inevitable. The development concept proposed by Doilney and Sass seems reasonable and sympathetic. I would recommend, however, that the following guidelines be considered:
 - a) Name: the name of the development should remain the John Medica Gardens.
 - b) All existing stone fences, arches and monuments should either be incorporated into the overall plan design or should be safely removed to the proposed common ground.
 - c) A reasonable plan for preserving, maintaining and securing the proposed common grounds needs to be adequately delineated. One possible scenario is to maintain the central garden area through public/private collaboration. Thus each of the six

John Medica Gardens, page 2

proposed households could be assessed for the upkeep and maintenance of the garden, with access to a restored pool and patio area. Public or private funding should also be sought to ensure that limited public access is available (e.g. guided school groups, historic house/garden tours, etc.). Conceivably, the City or County might be interested in maintaining the pool and gardens as a private concession: as a rental for small private parties and company picnics.

In closing, the John Medica Garden has been celebrated as one man's personal artistic vision and play. It is important to recognize that the Gardens are also a cultural landscape with direct ties to the aesthetics and vernacular building traditions of Medica's homeland of Slovenia, Yugoslavia. As such the site is a critical resource for both local and statewide ethnic history.

Karana Hattersley-Drayton
North Bay Folklife Services
231 Plamer Street
Petaluma, CA 94952
(707) 763-5447

July 18, 1990

Mary & Adrian Prætzellis



Historical Archaeology
Local History Research



19 July 1990

**RECOMMENDATIONS:
John Medica Gardens**

The following text is intended to complement the recommendations dated 18 July 1990, submitted by K. Hattersley-Drayton, of North Bay Folklife Services.

The writer agrees that the preferred treatment of the Medica Gardens would be intact preservation under the care of a responsible public or private agency; the owner is encouraged to pursue this course. However, if the property is to be developed, it is important that precautions be taken to ensure that the Gardens and their visual environment are protected.

1/ The intensity of development should be appropriate to the scale of the Gardens. In this connection, the proposal by Doilney and Sass seems appropriate as it limits house lots to the periphery of the parcel.

2/ Before the final subdivision map is approved, the plan of the Medica Gardens features--presently being prepared by Sonoma Civil Consultants--should be checked for completeness by a qualified material culture professional.

3/ Before a development plan is approved, it is essential that a preservation plan be devised for the Gardens. Such a plan would include provisions for the maintenance of the Gardens and the monitoring of their condition. Organizations such as the California Preservation Foundation, the Trust for Public Land, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation are experienced in the creation of easements and trusts for preservation. The developer is encouraged to contact these organizations for their advice.

4/ While preservation would be preferable, if it is essential to demolish either of the existing residences it is recommended that its internal details be recorded, both graphically and photographically, by an appropriate material culture professional. This information should be presented in a descriptive report, to be filed at appropriate public facilities, that would assess the influence of Slovenian architectural and aesthetic traditions on Medica's creations. This work would include interviews with past visitors to the house who could help reconstruct internal features that existed before the main house was remodeled.

5/ If it is necessary to demolish or relocate any of the Garden monuments or to disturb the exotic plantings, the affected features or plants should be recorded, prior to their disturbance, by an appropriate material culture professional. This work would include interviews with past visitors to the Gardens who could help reconstruct the appearance of the Garden during Medica's lifetime. This information should be filed at appropriate public facilities.

6/ New home construction should be appropriate to the materials and scale of the Gardens. The use of local basalt--the material from which Medica made his creations--should be encouraged by the Design Review Board. The Board should also be sensitive to the scale of the Gardens to ensure that the monuments are not visually overpowered by the new homes.

7/ The development's access road should be carefully sited--in consultation with an appropriate material culture professional--so as to minimize the impact on retaining walls and stone steps that surround the central portion of the Gardens.



Adrian Praetzelis
SOPA Certified Historical Archaeologist