

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, and a copy of a book based on an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (see page 42).

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

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