1-1-1960

The monument to unrequited love

Hampton Dunn

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud_pub

Part of the American Studies Commons, and the Community-based Research Commons

Scholar Commons Citation

http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/flstud_pub/2654

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Digital Collection - Florida Studies Center at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Collection - Florida Studies Center Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.
THE MONUMENT TO UNREQUITED LOVE

By HAMPTON DUNN

HOMESTEAD --- Some say Edward Leedskalnin built the bizarre coral castle alongside busy U.S. 1 here to furnish a home for the girl of his dreams---a girl he never met. Others say he fled to America in the first place because he'd been jilted on his wedding day back in his native Latvia and he erected the massive fortress-like home hoping that one day his "ex," whom he called "Sweet Sixteen," would come.

At any rate, he was unlike the poet who wanted to live in his house by the side of the road "and be a friend of man." Leedskalnin was a recluse who first constructed a gigantic eight-foot stone wall around his castle site to keep prying eyes away.

The coral curtain cloaked the work of the diminutive 97-pound immigrant with a veil that not even death itself has been able to brush aside. Before his death in 1951, Leedskalnin never told how he was able to move the huge coral rocks weighing up to 35 tons which he excavated single-handed. He boasted he knew the secrets used in building the Pyramids of Egypt. It is known he used primitive tools; his brace and bit was the crank of a Model T Ford.

Notable features of the castle include a nine-ton swinging door so perfectly pivoted a child can turn it. There's also a great obelisk weighing 282 tons. A bowl-shaped sundial accurately marks the time and adjusts itself to the seasons, all the more remarkable because its builder had no more than a fourth grade education.