

Solomon's Castle was built by sculptor Howard Solomon. The castle is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There are many sights to see, including 80 stained glass windows, the Boat in the Moat Restaurant, a nature trail along Horse Creek, and art galleries. HERALD-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTOS

## No. 92: Solomon's Castle, 1972-1990, Ona

4533 Solomon Road. Howard Solomon, designer

Howard Solomon, who died in 2016 at 81, was a one-of-a-kind artist who created his own residence from a collection of used aluminum newspaper printing plates and other discarded items.

He liked to call himself "The DaVinci of Debris." That gives you an idea of his sense of humor, which lives on during the tours given by his family members.

North of State Road 70 in Hardee County, off County Road 665 (turn left at Pine Level) about an hour's drive east from Sarasota, Solomon's Castle is a medieval-style "fortress" of 12,000 square feet in three stories. Solomon built it himself, and his family still lives there, looking out on the 90 acres bordering Horse Creek through 90 stained-glass windows, also fashioned by Solomon.

The property contains a workshop, galleries, exhibit rooms, a bed-and-breakfast inn and a restaurant

called the "Boat in the Moat."

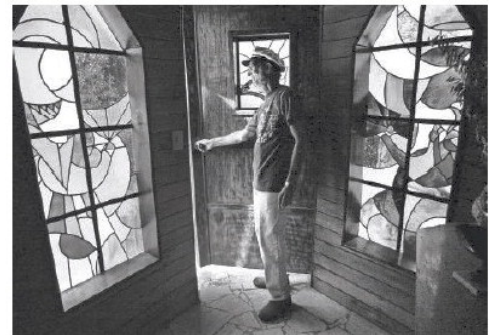
Howard Solomon bought 40 acres for \$350 an acre in 1972, and the family lived in a double-wide trailer for seven years while the house was under construction. But he kept adding to it.

The artist did much more than build the castle. There are countless sculptures made with what he called "found objects" – hardware, beverage cans, shells, oil drums, sheet metal and wood – using his talents as a welder, painter, carpenter, lathe operator and a whimsical humorist.

A room called The Menagerie contains artwork made from 50,000 wire coat hangers.

Solomon's Castle is closed during August and September, but reopens in October. You can walk the grounds for free; house tours are \$18 for adults, cash only.

*"Florida Buildings I Love" is Harold Bubil's homage to the Sunshine State's built environment. This article originally ran on Sept. 15, 2018.*



Sculptor Howard Solomon peeks out the door of his castle. He hand crafted Solomon's Castle and its 80 stained glass windows.