Adobe Home Heritage

Escondido 1835-1985
Adobe homes have been built in our area for centuries

Adobe structures could be found scattered about our general area during the mid-19th century but whole neighborhoods would be filled with adobes here just 100 years later thanks to the proliferation of local builders who specialized in Adobe.

San Diego Historical Society photo
Adobe home buyers are attracted by the building material’s unique look and practicality.
Escondido city-owned property included multiple adobe buildings in the past, including the bandstand in Grape Day Park, built in 1946.

Adobe Bandstand at Grape Day Park  1936

Courtesy of Lucy Berk
The City of Escondido’s second City Hall, a WPA project, opened on the city’s 50th anniversary in 1938. It was located on Grand Avenue, along with…

Adobe City Hall 1938
… the adjoining Fire Station #1, a two-story Adobe WPA project completed in 1940. Both were demolished to accommodate improvements and additions to the Palomar Hospital downtown location.

Frances Ryan Collection, Pioneer Room

Adobe Fire Station 1940
In 1974, the general area you see here was planned to be a community of adobe homes. Ultimately, it would not be quite this large.
Adobe homes are made of bricks created by mixing sand, clay and straw together, pouring it into forms, and allowing it to bake in the sun; a building material that has been around for centuries. Adobe homes often feature rafters made of heavy lumber extending beyond the eaves, recessed metal casement windows with brick sill trim, and wooden shutters. Clay tile roofs are common.
Adobe homes were environmentally friendly well before green became a popular trend, as most of the homes were built with the bricks made on site or very close by and the thermal properties of Adobe mean that the homes use less energy for heating and cooling. Recycled wood and other building materials came from a variety of sites.

Escondido has a significant collection of adobe homes that will remain architecturally unique.
Adobe as a building material also allows great flexibility in building curved shapes. Many facades feature curved walls and this twisted light post with address has whimsical appeal.

Adobe allows curves and unique styling
After visiting this California Ranch style home of Charles H. Paxton in the late 1940’s, L.R. Green was inspired to form the Adobe Block company in 1949. The home would later become a prime example of adaptive reuse as the Hacienda de Vega restaurant.

Adobe home, built in the 1930s, inspired L.R. Green to manufacture adobe blocks
L.R. Green’s adobe block company would turn out millions of adobe blocks
In 1951, the Weir Brothers Construction Company moved to Escondido. They were the best known adobe home builders in the area. Brothers Jack, Robert and Larry designed and constructed homes in North County for 30 years. Their office building on South Escondido Blvd., with its rounded façade, stands proudly today.

Weir Brothers Office; still standing at 1538 S. Escondido Blvd.
Adobe Villas multi-residential project designed and built by the Weir Brothers behind their office on Escondido Blvd.
George Patterson, another adobe builder, entered the adobe construction world in Escondido in 1976 with construction of his own home on Hamilton Lane.

George Patterson built his first home on Hamilton
Charles Paxton would also build adobe homes in the area. His first office was built on South Escondido Blvd. in 1946.

George Paxton’s first office - 1946
In the early 80s, building codes shut down affordable adobes.
At the time, seismic concerns meant that the State of California made significant changes to building codes that made building more Adobes more difficult, and therefore, too expensive to build. Ironically, most adobe homeowners feel comfortable that their homes are rock solid structures that will remain standing for many years to come.
Escondido’s adobe homes will remain architecturally unique.
2015
Historic Preservation Commission
Awards

Honoring Significant
Adobe Structures & Innovators
Hacienda de Vega Restaurant
2608 S. Escondido Boulevard
Original structure – 1930s
Fine Example of Adaptive Reuse
Recipient: Ben Cueva
The “Castle”, an adobe home with its unique turret that leads to the front door. It was built in 1964 and is lovingly cared for by owners Tom and Joanne Shapard.

The “Castle” - 1964
Exceptional; Adobe Residence
Owners Tom & Joanne Shapard
The Weir Brothers; the most prolific and most instrumental in putting the Escondido area on the map for its rich adobe heritage. Photo of Jack and Larry Weir.

The Weir Brothers
Larry and Jack
Prolific and Innovative Builders
1947 - 1988