

## Weir Brothers, Weir Bros. and Larry Weir Adobe

Courtesy of ModernSanDiego.com

Jack Weir, one of the founders of Weir Bros. Construction passed away on February 27th, 2009 at the age of 85. For decades, Weir Bros. specialized in custom adobe structures – some designed in-house (by brother Larry) while others would enhance the talents of local architects like Sim Bruce Richards who adored adobe when not building in redwood, cedar and mahogany.

John Edward "Jack" Weir was born June 5, 1923, in Chicago. He was 12 when his mother passed away while giving birth to her sixth child. Growing up motherless during the Great Depression shaped his independent nature that would serve him well in life, according to his family. As a teen he worked for a traveling summer carnival. At age 18, he joined the Navy and was assigned to a select group of skilled pilots that trained to land on aircraft carriers.

It was while on military duty in San Diego that he met his future wife, Carnella Hall, at a dance at the Hotel Del Coronado. She moved from Arkansas to work for a munitions factory during the war. They were married on January 19, 1946, and had six children together.

After the war, Weir and his wife Connie settled in Encinitas, where he ran a gas station and auto body shop with his brother Larry. He lived in the apartment above the shop in a small wood building that still exists across the street from Swami's sandwich shop.

His daughters, "...particularly enjoyed hearing his stories about growing up during the Depression, when he would jump onto slow-moving trains and kick off enough coal to his waiting

brothers to keep the family warm during those frigid Chicago winters. Later in life, Weir would make ends meet during the post-World War II economic slump by trading his auto body work for produce and other necessities. It was a combination of barter deals, in fact, that led to him establishing one of North County's most successful home-building companies.”

In 1947, after a large debt was paid with an acre of land on Idaho Street, Weir decided to build a home for his family on it. With a \$3,000 loan and some old adobe bricks he acquired in another trade, he erected his first "mud" house. Weir quickly sold the home for several thousand dollars, which he and his brother used to build six more homes on Windsor Avenue. Each was built with bricks made of sand and clay, mixed with water, and dried under the sun. By 1948 Weir Bros. Construction was up and running with Jack serving as contractor, Larry as the designer. In 1951, Weir moved to Escondido. There, he had access to a large supply of adobe at what is now Kit Carson Park. His company grew to 80 employees.

The brothers worked long hours building adobe homes. They started with small, inexpensive two-bedroom units and then expanded into Rancho Santa Fe by building high-end masterpieces. Either way, it was an acquired taste. "People either love adobe or they wouldn't even stable their horses in it," Weir said in a 1989 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*.

In 1988, Weir retired and turned the business over to his only son, Robert. The company now goes by the name of Weir Bros. Custom Homes Inc. and is located in Rancho Santa Fe.

Lawrence “Larry” Weir, a designer of numerous adobe houses in San Diego County and helped restore the Mission San Antonio de Pala in 1958, died on July 11, 2012 of heart failure. He was 87.

Son of Patrick Weir and Stella Bourgeois, Larry was born in Chicago on November 5, 1924. He served in the Navy from 1939 to 1946, where, during World War II he delivered supplies and briefly served as an aircraft gunner in the South Pacific. Following military service he moved to San Diego and with his three older brothers started Weir Brothers Construction, quickly establishing themselves as pioneers in adobe construction. In 1964 he started his own company Larry Weir Adobe.

Larry and Maria Ravettino were married on June 23, 1951. They had nine children: Larry Weir, Maria Werth, Estelle Harrison, Thomas Weir, Christine Herms, Catherine Le Bell, Theresa Moller, Michael Damian, and Joani Weir.

In 1964, Weir left the business to begin his own company, Larry Weir Adobe. That firm operated for about four decades and built homes across the county, including Rancho Santa Fe, Escondido, Encinitas and Poway. Weir's designs were rarely conventional. Weir drew inspiration from his time in the Navy by using rope to frame windows. He also built houses around the site, incorporating boulders and tree limbs into the structure's design. On occasion he would visit a train yard and buy old parts for use in the construction of the homes.

While certainly adobe walls were their signature early on, passersby may also look for a signature placement of an old wagon wheel often embedded in a wall or a fence as well as round and large arched windows. Weir Brothers homes were often built of recycled lumber – decades before it was fashionable they would buy old piers and train trestles for the large beams used in their home designs. It has been said that Jack's designs were square, while Larry's depended on circles, turrets, and more rounded, creative patterns.

In an effort to document the whereabouts of the early adobe structures (Weir eventually had to change the focus of his

company toward wood and stucco construction when building codes and earthquake standards dealt a blow to adobe dwellings in California) I am soliciting any and all help from the public in locating and identifying structures. Drop me a line at [keith@modernsandiego.com](mailto:keith@modernsandiego.com) if you know where a Weir Bros. adobe is.

Also of note is Mike Goodbody's influence on the adobe home industry in Escondido and across Southern California. Beyond his work as project manager for many Weir Bros projects, he was a talented and innovative designer and builder of many adobe homes in the region. Mr. Goodbody reportedly owned Southwest Adobe which manufactured adobe blocks from their location near Kit Carson Park in Escondido.