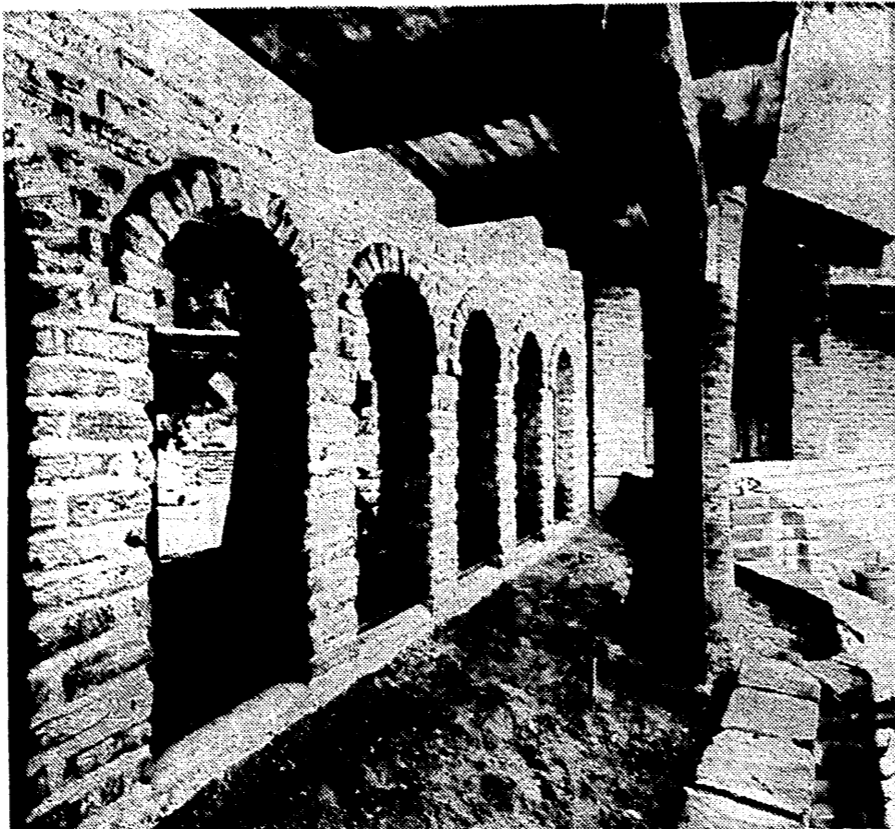
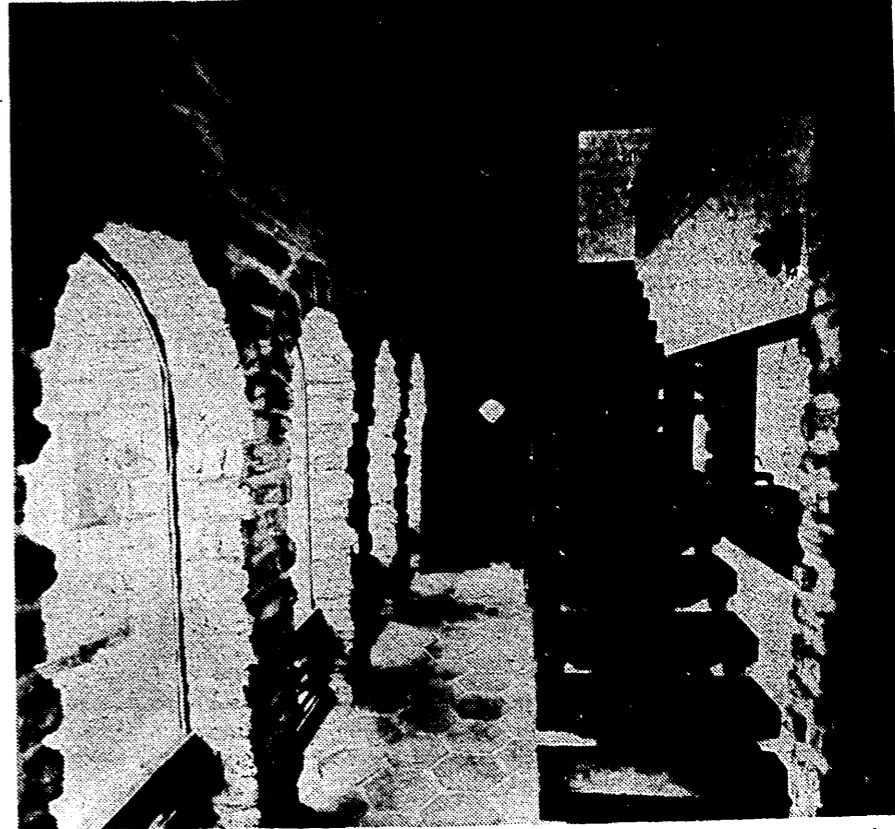




**ADOBE BLOCK** is made much the same as it was in days of old, although there have been refinements, mainly the addition of an oil emulsion to make adobe waterproof and resistant to deterioration. The formula is mixing the soil with water and emulsion, (above) then pouring it into forms to mold the block, (below) and then letting it cure in the sun, turning the block on edge after it hardens (bottom). This is the handcraft method. Most modern adobe plants now produce the block in uniform size and shape by machines.



**SERIES OF ARCHES** for windows lend design interest to the Freelands' adobe home under construction in Rancho Santa Fe. Note the thickness of walls. Glass is cushioned in rope imbedded in frame. The hemp will remain exposed.



**INTERIOR HALL**, floored with hexagonal tile, is lit by arched windows in Freeland residence. Stairs, with heavy suspended plank steps, lead to the master bedroom suite on second floor. Railing was hand carved in Mexico.

## Ancient Blocks Build To New Popularity



(Continued from F-1) concrete block industry strives to simulate the appearance of the earthy product — and is doing a good job of it, at that — with a block called slumpstone.

People who live in adobe homes are enthusiastic about them.

With any choice, they wouldn't live in any other kind of dwelling. They like the appearance of the brown block. They enjoy the feeling and the atmosphere that it creates. They can cite many advantages of convenience in adobe construction — the insulating values of the thick walls, the soundproofing qualities and the ease of maintenance.

Code requirements in most of the building jurisdictions now require that load-bearing adobe walls be 16 inches thick. Foot-thick walls were once accepted. The walls must have horizontal reinforcing steel, and are tied together with a concrete bond beam at the top of the wall.

In spite of the appeal of adobe and in spite of the fact that building walls from the earth was one of the earliest construction practices in the Southwest, relatively few new homes built in San Diego County today are adobe.

But the number grows each year.

More of them are found in the rural areas than within the city. That's undoubtedly due to the fact the earthy brown texture of the adobe block blends well with the countryside. Adobe fits with pastoral surroundings.

However, adobe also lends itself to contemporary architectural imagination and is fitting in homes patterned

after early California and Spanish styles. Colorful, ornamental Spanish tiling is often used to accent the adobe structure.

In San Diego County, adobe residential construction is much more prevalent in certain areas than others.

In the rural surroundings of Pauma Valley and Warner Springs, more new adobe homes are going up than any other type of construction.

Adobe is highly popular in the verdant citrus and avocado groves on the slopes around Fallbrook, Vista and Escondido.

Several new, large, luxurious and fancy adobe residences dot the wooded hills of Rancho Santa Fe.

In the average residential subdivision, cost may be the principal factor limiting more general use of adobe in construction.

Larry Weir of Escondido, who has been specializing in adobe building for about 20 years, estimates that the cost of an adobe house will run from 10 to 20 per cent higher than conventional frame and stucco construction, depending on the design and the size of the house.

It is not that the adobe block itself is expensive. It compares favorably with the price of other masonry. But the labor, the code restrictions on adobe use, plus other materials that complement

the adobe house, tend to increase the price.

Some adobe builders contend that adobe construction is no more expensive than other "good" construction. They emphasize the word "good," meaning the permanence, the appeal and the insulative qualities of adobe construction.

Most families want the red tiled roof, tiled flooring, often they want unusual arches, hewn-beam ceilings, massive fireplaces and perhaps some natural wood paneling. All of these features are important and go well with the exposed adobe, but they also hike up the cost.

An adobe block for the outside wall of a house is made in dimensions of 4 by 12 by 16 inches and weighs 45 or more pounds. This is the most common size.

But a 45-pound block involves a hefty lifting assignment for the masonry worker. The block probably seems much heavier along in late afternoon and the work pace probably slows. Hence, there is an extra labor cost factor.

Building codes require heavy steel reinforcing, a matter with which early-day builders did not have to contend. These requirements add again to adobe construction cost.

The code demands for adobe are about the same as for concrete block, but it usu-

ally is a more difficult job to reinforce the solid adobe than it is the hollow concrete block.

Adobe can be either painted or plastered over, but most people prefer to leave the natural adobe exposed on both interior and exterior walls.

The color and textural appearance of the raw block is the appeal and part of the reason for building with adobe.

Floors in the adobe home are usually covered with either clay or quarry tile, another feature that makes maintenance easy. Roofs are often tiled with red clay.

Many families have built their own adobe homes, even to making their own adobe block. There is a thrill, they say, in taking the earth from the site and building it into a home.

However, most of the adobe building today is left to the professionals, and more specifically, the adobe specialists, of which there are relatively few in San Diego County. General contractors, particularly masonry contractors, will occasionally erect an adobe structure, but they encounter problems different from building with conventional concrete block or clay brick.

Adobe manufacture has also become more refined, perhaps too much so, according to

some of those who appreciate the rustic texture of the primitive adobe. Machine production of the block, they say, is too precise.

Largest manufacturer of the earthen product in San Diego County is Craig's Adobe Block Co. in Escondido, a plant started about 20 years ago by L. R. Green.

Green recently sold the plant to Eugene F. Craig, who anticipates a production of 750,000 adobe blocks of varied dimensions this year.

Craig said production at the plant has gained steadily almost each year since Green started the operation, and has doubled in the last four years, which reflects the revived demand for adobe.

Adobe block is no longer made by hand at the modern plant. A machine now mixes all the materials in proper

proportion and turns out the block in whatever dimensions are needed. A metal framing machine molds the block to size. The only hand labor is in turning blocks which have been laid out to cure in the sun.

Some people object. They prefer the handcrafted block, the only difference being that the adobe mud is poured into wooden slip forms to mold the block. But in so doing, the block is shaped in the rougher texture of the wooden form, and lacks the uniformity of the machine cast adobe.

"That's the charm of adobe," says Wally Siwek, a veteran adobe builder with the Weir organization. "A block that is too precise and mortared in patterns that are uniform — well it looks al-

(Continued on F-9, Col. 3)





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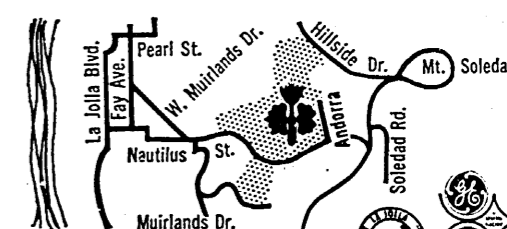
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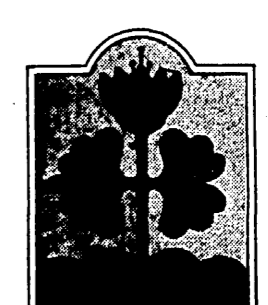
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