

Owner-built adobe houses - Roy and Margie Whetstone Adobe Montview Drive, Escondido

The Great Depression, which began in 1929, caused hardships to those who lost jobs, businesses, and their homes. In the decade of belt-tightening that followed, many small homes across the United States were owner-built or constructed by small carpenter-contractors. Very little capital was needed for a small wooden or stucco framed home. In an era of austerity, the construction of an adobe home had even more cost saving appeal.

The design this small adobe was inspired by the architectural style of the adobe *casas* built on California ranchos throughout the North County. The wide and long front porch, lengthy eaves for shading windows, a low-pitched tile, or shake covered roof, a large outside patio, and rectangle shape typified the vernacular architecture associated with a Mexican-California. The earthen structure was not only economic, but enjoyed a construction revival in early 20th century California. One such adobe home is located in Escondido on Montview Drive off Center City Parkway.



Jay Whetstone gardens in front of the adobe house he helped his father build.

In 1935, second generation Escondido resident, Roy Whetstone and his son, John Charles built their own adobe block in an effort to once again be homeowners.

Roy made a living by managing local groves and driving trucks for Boyle and Son Trucking. He hauled produce from the region to Los Angeles. But when the Depression hit, Roy's job was drastically reduced and he was unable to make much money. The family lost their car and home and were forced to move into a rental property in town. It took him several years to save enough money to buy the Montview Drive property. He originally bought about four acres of land.... In 1949, the property size was greatly diminished when Highway 395 was constructed. Roy and Margie lived in their adobe house for 30 years until Roy's death in 1963. ("The Adobe House of Roy and Margie Whetstone," Jennifer Fermin)



Another Whetstone granddaughter wrote that her mother, Louise remembered her father and brother building the adobe home: she,

recalled watching the mule that mixed the mud and straw to the proper consistency to form the bricks that were then allowed to dry in the sun. When the bricks were dry, they were used to construct the simple, two-bedroom house. I was so impressed, even as a child, that a house could be built of homemade adobe bricks. One of the other things that impressed me about the house was the massive, dark wood front door that was probably built by my grandfather. I always thought it was the

most beautiful door I had ever seen, and several years ago when I visited the house, I was delighted to see that the door remains there today.
(Anne Johnson in an email to Jennifer Fermin)



This adobe house, built in a decade of austerity and the desire for self-reliance hosted several generation of Whetstone family members. Her heart-warming experiences of family gatherings in and about the grove garden and inside the home are described:

I remember the kitchen where my grandfather made boysenberry cobbler from berries he had grown and where all the wonderful vegetables were cooked that came from his garden. I remember making wreaths with my cousins from the many flowers that grew in the yard and playing in the grove of citrus trees that my grandfather lovingly tended. I remember the happy times we spent on the beautiful front

porch that stretched the full length of the house. (Interview with Anne Johnson)



The home also inspired the writings of Roy's wife, Margie Whetstone, who was known to Escondido residents for her poetry and promotion of Escondido history. Today, the adobe house has been remodeled and gone are the many original features such as the "beautiful fireplace." The acreage is zoned for commercial use. The little adobe stands as a reminder of a decade when Americans struggled to regain their place as homeowners after overwhelming economic setbacks.

Information and photographs courtesy of Jennifer Fermin, granddaughter of Roy and Margie Whetstone. Notes also from Ms. Fermin given to her by various family members including her cousins Harold Duane Boyle and Anne Johnson.

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