



—Bert Winford Photo

Raul Ruelas, a workman, examines one of hundreds of adobe blocks drying in yard near

Escondido. The firm is one of only two firms producing adobe blocks in Southern California.

FIRM RARE PRODUCER

Sun Stirs Crop Of Adobe Blocks

By JAMIE BRYSON

ESCONDIDO — The dust is beginning to rise again on a treeless field alongside U.S. 395 south of here as workmen prepare for the 1964 crop of an ancient and charming product — adobe blocks.

The coming of warm weather is what stirs men to scoop a particular kind of reddish earth into a mound near a strange-looking machine which will mold the blocks.

For the adobe are sun-loving and won't cure in cool or damp weather.

"It cracks them," said R. Y. Hollingsworth, secretary of the Adobe Block Co. which has operated the plant two miles south of Escondido since 1947. "We just produce when the sun shines."

ALONE IN COUNTY

His firm is the only producer of adobe blocks in the county and one of only two producers in Southern California, Hollingsworth said.

"And would you like to know," he said, "they're really not made of adobe at all — that's just a name handed down with them. Blocks made of adobe crack."

What actually goes into

the half-million a year blocks made in the firm's 200 acre field is about 40 per cent fine clay found near the surface and 60 per cent sand and topsoil. This is mixed with water and a liquid asphalt emulsion substance which bonds and waterproofs the blocks.

NEW INGREDIENT

"This is what they didn't have when they built the old adobe houses and the missions," Hollingsworth said. "They used straw and manure to bond their bricks and when water got to them they melted."

A tractor is busy now scooping up the unique soil and stockpiling it for the block-making season from April to October. The gasoline-powered moulding machine will leave acres of the new dark brown blocks in neat rows, drying alongside the highway.

The machine and four men can produce as high as 4,000 blocks a day, Hollingsworth said. The same crew using the old-fashioned wooden mold method would be lucky to make 600.

New bricks are hard in three days and impervious to weather but a thorough curing takes a month.

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