

Brea Mud House clings to colorful past

By Barbara Glasone
DSP Managing Editor

While many of Brea's early clapboard houses disintegrated with time, the matchless Mud House has weathered the elements. Once a bastion for medical miracles, the two-story building at 307 N. Brea Blvd. is dulled only by the modernization of a neighboring restaurant.

Yet for all its community importance, Dr. William E. Jackson's architectural wonder has failed to arouse historical interest.

"We feel badly that we have to sell Papa's building," laments the late doctor's daughter, Miriam Bergman. "We would like to contact the national historic register to see if there's any interest."

Jackson, a pioneer physician in Brea, built the office in 1939, 16 years after joining Doctors French and Early at the Brea Emergency Hospital. Using environmental creativity, he ordered a government pamphlet that outlined cost-efficient advantages of adobe construction.

The moustached physician labored for days blending devilgrass, a solid binder, with bitudobe, an oil additive perfected by Standard Oil to be impervious to water.

The adobe-like consistency, Jackson discovered, created natural air conditioning in the summer and warmth in the winter for his Monterey-style building. Surgery rooms were

built with glass blocks to invite natural sunlight while oak floors were pegged to warm the treatment cubicles.

"Papa's greatest delight was to use his ingenuity," recalls Bergman while rummaging through a box of antiquated instruments in her Brea home.

Patently, she opens a cardboard box that unveils a striking, artistic necklace. "Papa fashioned this from horseshair which he coiled into beads, and he added this black arrowhead," she says, dangling the fragile strand.

The jewelry, Bergman explains, was made when her father was hired as on-site doctor for the Jesse Lasky Motion Picture Company in the early 20s. When action was uneventful on the "Covered Wagon" set in Utah, Jackson would turn his talents toward crafts and spend hours molding nature's gifts.

Raised near Chicago, Jackson attended Hahnemann Medical College in Kansas City. Hahnemann, founder of homeopathic medicine, had a profound influence on the young student's career.

"Papa always followed the theory that similar cures similar," says Bergman, gripping one of Jackson's photographs. "For example, a smallpox vaccination usually includes smallpox virus." In 1917, Jackson married

Rosalynne and fathered four children. Four years later, the family was on its way to La Habra, California where a cousin, William Marston, worked for Union Oil Company.

Brea Emergency Hospital building and moved it to a larger parcel on north Pomona Avenue (now Brea Boulevard). Twelve years later, the Mud House was perched near the original hospi-



INGENIOUS GIFTS — Dr. William E. Jackson, a pioneer Brea physician, shared his creativity with community and family during his many years in Orange County. He is pictured at left as a university graduate and at right in later years.

Jackson was impressed with the open territory and mild climate, and he decided to make a permanent move. Telling his family he felt welcome in the oil rich Brea community, he joined the Brea Christian Church, Marsons and Eastern Star. In time, he served on the board of trustees of Oilfield National Bank.

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It was also a time for house calls, and in critical emergencies, assisting with animals in labor.

"Papa always wore his medical clothing under coveralls when he worked outdoors," says Bergman. "If there was an emergency, he could tend to it in short order and look professional."

One such emergency arose in the 30s when a Brea man and his passenger struck a streetcar. "The driver went through the plate glass windshield and cut his throat," remembers Bergman. "Papa took one look, knew he didn't have time to be sterile, grabbed a needle and started sewing. If he would have waited, the man would have bled to death."

Following Jackson's death in 1979, his surgical tables and ether machine were given to the Brea Historical Society. Additional equipment was shipped to South America.

One family medical "treasure," however, remains in the Bergman home. The proud daughter holds up a bottle of Zoagria, a female fruit tonic which great-grandfather William Gale concocted before the turn-of-the-century.

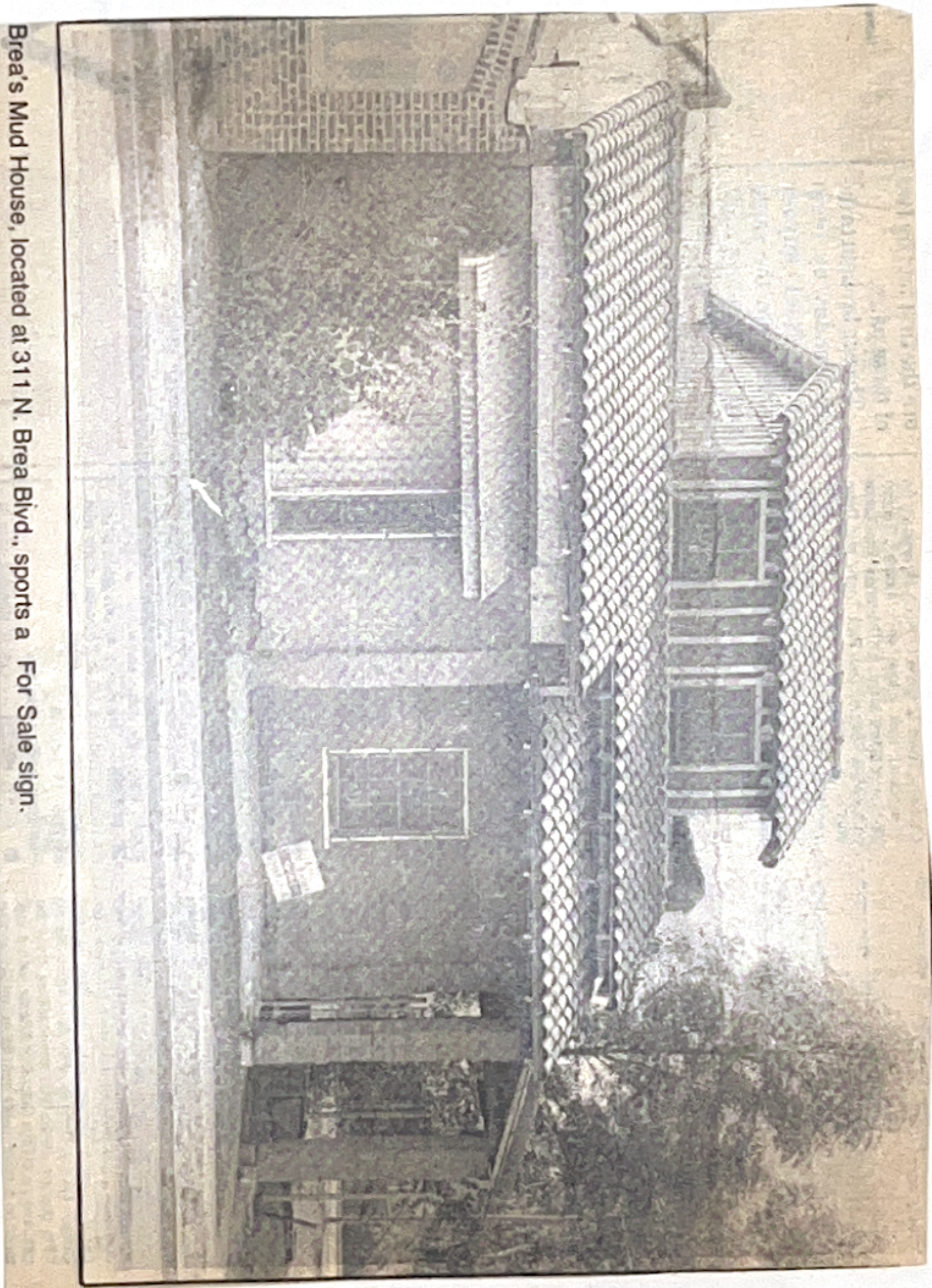
"I don't know what's in it," winks Bergman, "but I know Papa came from good stock."

TOOLS OF THE TRADE — An antique collection of Dr. William Jackson's medical building on north Brea Boulevard is treasured by his daughter Miriam Bergman. She recently gave a short tour of the Mud House for the Brea Historical Society.





TREASURES FROM THE PAST — Dr. Jackson's daughter, Miriam Bergman of Brea, thumbs through some of her father's medical books gleaned from 50 years of practice.



Brea's Mud House, located at 311 N. Brea Blvd., sports a For Sale sign.

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In 1927, Jackson purchased the tal building. "There are so many memories of the Mud House," says Bergman. "I remember the smallpox scare during the early 30s when long lines of people would circle the porch, waiting to be vaccinated. One person fainted and struck the steps, and he had to have his head sewn up before he could get a shot."

It was also a time for house calls, and in critical emergencies, assisting with animals in labor. "Papa always wore his medical clothing under coveralls when he worked outdoors," says Bergman. "If there was an emergency, he could tend to it in short order and look professional."

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By Kathy Pape
DSP Correspondent

Even with a new covering, Brea's "Mud House" still stands. Abutting La Esquina Mexican restaurant on Brea Boulevard, the adobe home has been in the Jackson family until recently, when architect Iraj Eftekhari bought it.

The new owner immediately realized the value of his purchase since many adobe buildings adorn his native country, Iran. He was reminded by adding to the building, he would realize an increase in energy savings.

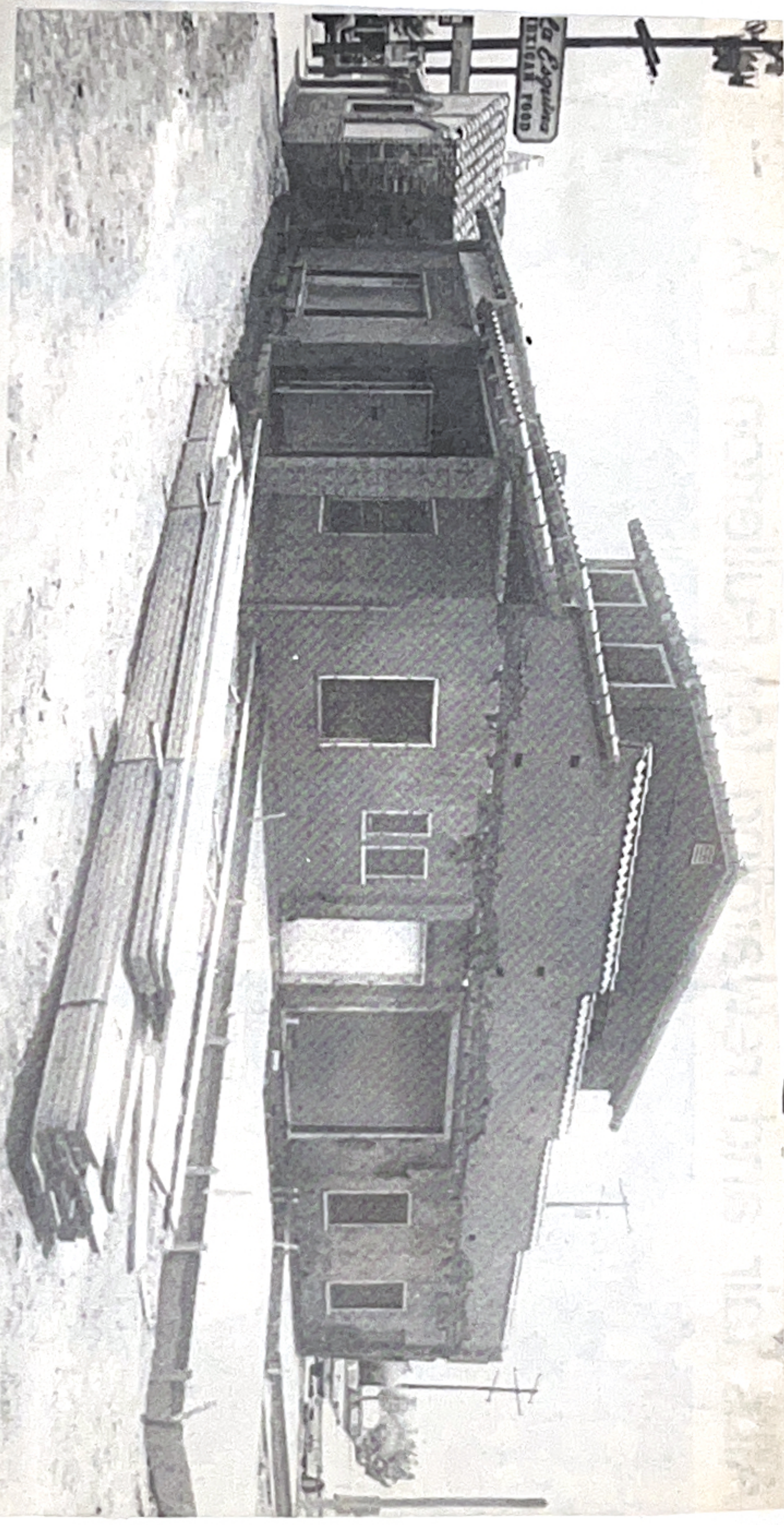
In the past, according to Eftekhari, the Iranian people used adobe for all their buildings, which they build similarly to the Spanish designs in Mexico, with a central garden and living quarters surrounding it. Most adobe is made with just water and clay, Eftekhari stated, though there are several other techniques his countrymen have used in the past.

In the rural areas, he said, the people build the structures from the wet adobe, then let it bake in the sun, instead of creating adobe bricks.

One advantage of adobe is the absence of insect infestation since the basic building material is dirt, Eftekhari pointed out. The primary weakness to the buildings is earthquakes. However, he said, since the "Mud House" has been standing for over 50 years, "I don't think I should worry about it."

The energy savings he will see by retaining the structure comes from adobe's heating properties. It takes more time to heat up than normal building materials, and when it does, it retains the heat for longer periods. Consequently, buildings remain cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Mud House reminds new owner of Iranian adobe buildings



REFLECTIONS OF THE OLD COUNTRY — Iraj Eftekhari, the new owner of Brea's historic Mud House, compares the building composition to the adobe facilities in his native Iran. Eftekhari plans to build an addition to the home located on Brea Boulevard.

(Star-Progress photo by Jack Hancock)

And in Iran, these insulating properties are needed. During winter, part of the country has heavy snows, while in the summer, temperatures can exceed 100 F., according to Eftekhari. In fact, "Denver is similar to Teheran" in climate and elevation, he said. Iran's capital city sits 6,000 feet above sea level.

Despite all these advantages, Eftekhari said, most urban areas in Iran today are abandoning adobe and adopting Western

building techniques. Only in the villages and rural areas will you still see adobe buildings, he said.

In the 1930s, when Dr. W.E. Jackson originally decided to build his own medical facility, he wanted a building that would block out the "heavy street traffic noise" then present on Brea Boulevard. He wanted to be sure that it was "his patient's heart he heard through the stethoscope, instead of a truck rumbling

with this chemical, the adobe became impervious to rain. With this discovery, Jackson paid \$3 for a building permit for his one-story office, "estimated value \$1500."

He laid the bricks himself, with the help of a carpenter. When it was finished, he and his family moved into the building. His outpatient clinic occupied the north half; his family, the south half.

Jackson continued practicing medicine until the 1970s when he retired. He passed away in 1979. None of his four heirs wanted to keep the building themselves, so they asked whether the city wanted to designate it as a historical building.

At one time, the officials considered letting Brea's Historical Society use it as a meeting place, but the Society did not have the funds to adequately renovate and bring the facility up to public building codes. The group reluctantly declined the offer, even though they are well aware of its historical value.

With this avenue blocked, the heirs were able to delay probate until this year, when Eftekhari purchased it. They wanted to find a buyer who would find value in the building and preserve it.

In fact, according to Eftekhari, Brea city officials wanted the "Mud House" removed from the property. However, he successfully refused. "With the extension," Eftekhari claims, "it will be a nice-looking building."