

Staff photo by Michael Loren

### **Housing history**

In the next six weeks the city will move the Casner House, 207 S. Madrona, to a lot on Redwood Street in Brea to join with other historic buildings for preservation. The William D. Casner family built the Airplane-Craftsman style home in 1915. Casner planted the row of palm trees in 1911 along S. Orange that still stand today. He was an oil pioneer and drilled the first well on the Emaigamated Lease east of Brea. Later he played an active role in stimulating business in building some of the Main Street establishments of today.

## HOMES MOVED TO REDWOOD AVE., ETC.

### 1. CASNER HOUSE

The house was built in 1915. It is considered the best example of a craftsman bungalow built here between 1910 and 1915. Its particular style is called an airplane craftsman because of the second story being much smaller than the first story.

It was built by William Casner, one of the very early settlers who came to Brea in 1910. He was responsible for drilling the first oil well on the Amalgamated Oil Lease just west of town.

When he and his family moved to town in 1910, Mrs. Casner recalled that Brea, which was then called Randolph, was a half dozen buildings separated by a dirt road. Mr. Casner had to drive to Stern and Goodman's mercantile store at the present corner of Commonwealth and Harbor Blvd. to buy groceries, horses and wagons. These horses and wagons were the start of a transfer business he established in 1915.

In later years Mr. Casner became a self-taught woodcarver and poet. He lined the walls of his home with his carvings, and he enjoyed reciting his poems to friends.

He died in Los Alamitos in 1962 at the age of 91.

### 2. THE MATHEWS HOUSE

It was built in 1929 by Lawrence and Florence Mathews and originally sat at Flower St. right across from Laurel School. In 1989 it became the first house moved to Redwood St.

*→ He was a cook in a cafe on Brea Blvd (Pomona Ave.)*

It is one of the most beautiful examples of a provincial revival home in Brea. One way you can tell a provincial revival home is from its high pitched roof. This style was very popular in the 1920's and was influenced by the houses in Europe that were seen by our soldiers serving there during World War I.

What also makes this house special is that it is a Van Tuyle (pronounced "tile") home, meaning that it was built by the Van Tuyle Construction Co. This company built some of the better homes in Brea, and having a Van Tuyle home was considered special.

Florence Mathews was well known in Brea in the 20's and 30's because she served during President Herbert Hoover's Administration as Brea's Postmaster. At that time the name "postmistress" wasn't yet used. When Franklin Roosevelt became President in 1933 she was replaced.

### 3. THE BOX HOUSE

It was built about 1911 and originally sat on the corner of Ash and Walnut before it was moved to Redwood St. It's one of the oldest homes still left in Brea and is an excellent example of an early oilworker's home. It's a home of a "common man" of that period

Besides being nicknamed "The Box House" because of its rectangular shape, it's also called the "Jameson House" because of very early residents, Elmer and Martha Jameson, who moved into the house in 1919. Mrs. Jameson was born in England and Mr. J. in Colorado. They came to Brea in 1914 where Mr. J. was employed by the Standard Oil Co. where he remained until he retired in 1942. Mr. J. helped lay out the first gas lines in the city and also helped build the Sewell Building in 1914. When Brea was incorporated as a city in 1917, the Sewell Bldg. became the location of our first city hall.

### 4. The Blue Bungalow

Actually this isn't a very good name for it because it's only been painted blue for about 10 years or less. A better name would be its historic name, the Dr. Davis home.

Built in 1921 on the southeast corner of Brea Blvd. and Birch St., this colonial revival home replaces a former house built by Dr. and Mrs. Davis on that site. A year after it was built two rooms were added onto the front which served as Dr. Davis' office and waiting room. The family lived in the rear portion of the structure. (When you look at the front of the house, the office would be on the right and the waiting room on the left)

Dr. Davis was one of the first doctors in the county to volunteer his services overseas during World War I. He left Brea in 1918 and was supposed to be sent to Siberia for duty, but luckily his orders were changed and he eventually ended up in France where he helped open a base hospital. After the war, he remained in France for a short time working at a military convalescent and reconstruction hospital working with soldiers who had lost limbs or needed plastic surgery. He returned home to Brea in July 1919.

In the late 20's, Dr. Davis closed his practice in Brea, and the building became a restaurant for about 10 years. Then it was changed into a tearoom, and when it closed, the building became a home again for many years.

Over the years it has served as a paint store, a craft shop, site of the Brea Redevelopment Agency, and its last use was by the Brea Police Dept.

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#### 5. THE MITCHELL HOUSE #1

Built in 1914, it originally stood on the 100 block of Madrona St. between Ash and Birch. It was owned by Roy Mitchell who lived in the larger home that was next door (That's the next house on my list) It's a craftsman bungalow home. Notice the interesting cut outs above the porch.

Mr. Mitchell came to Brea in 1911 working for the Standard Oil Co. In 1916 he worked for the incorporation of Brea as a city, and when it did become one on Feb. 23, 1917, he was elected as a member of Brea's first Board of Trustees (City Council). He served that term and was elected to a second term but died in 1921 before he could complete it.

#### 6. THE MITCHELL HOUSE #2

Unlike the other homes so far that were moved to Redwood Ave. because of redevelopment, this house was taken to another part of town altogether, Maple Ave. just north of Elm St. As I said before, it was the home that Councilman Mitchell lived in on Madrona St.

It also is a craftsman bungalow and is quite large.

#### 7. THE PRACTICE HOUSE

*For generations of Brea-Olinda High School girls, it was the gateway to adulthood: a neatly kept cottage near the edge of campus where housekeeping skills were honed.*

*One-half of a larger facility built at Brea Grammar School (today's junior high) and briefly used to accommodate the Brea-Olinda district's first high-school classes, the Mediterranean-style "Practice House" was moved in 1927 to BOHS's Birch Street campus, where it soon began its long career as a live-in laboratory for future homemakers.*

*Here Brea coeds came for week-long, intensive training sessions in cooking, cleaning and entertaining. Many approached their scheduled sojourns with trepidation, but the days of sewing and scrubbing, baking and basting gave way to new-found skills and special memories. Years later, graduates would fondly recall the events they hosted here, from faculty luncheons to senior teas...dinner for dotting mothers to parties for nervous boyfriends.*

*In its day, the Practice House was unique—the only known full-scale, self-contained home economics lab in Orange County. Changing lifestyles and altered expectations led to new uses for the old building by the 1960's, and it served successively as a teachers' lounge, preschool care center, counseling office, classroom and continuation school.*

*Identified in a 1981 study as "historically significant," the Practice House was spared redevelopment's wrecking ball when the high school fell in 1989.*

NEIGHBORHOOD

# Brea block houses pieces of city's past

**HISTORY:** Some homes originally were on Redwood Avenue; others were saved from redevelopment.

By PAULA KRINER  
The Orange County Register

BREA — Bill and Trudy Mynes' neighborhood on Redwood Avenue is a monument to the city's past.

One block of homes built in the early 1900s has been preserved to remind residents of what the area was once like.

"We were on the edge of town when we moved in 27 years ago," Bill Mynes said. "There was a big farm on the corner. No mall. No houses on the hill. We rode horses on the freeway."

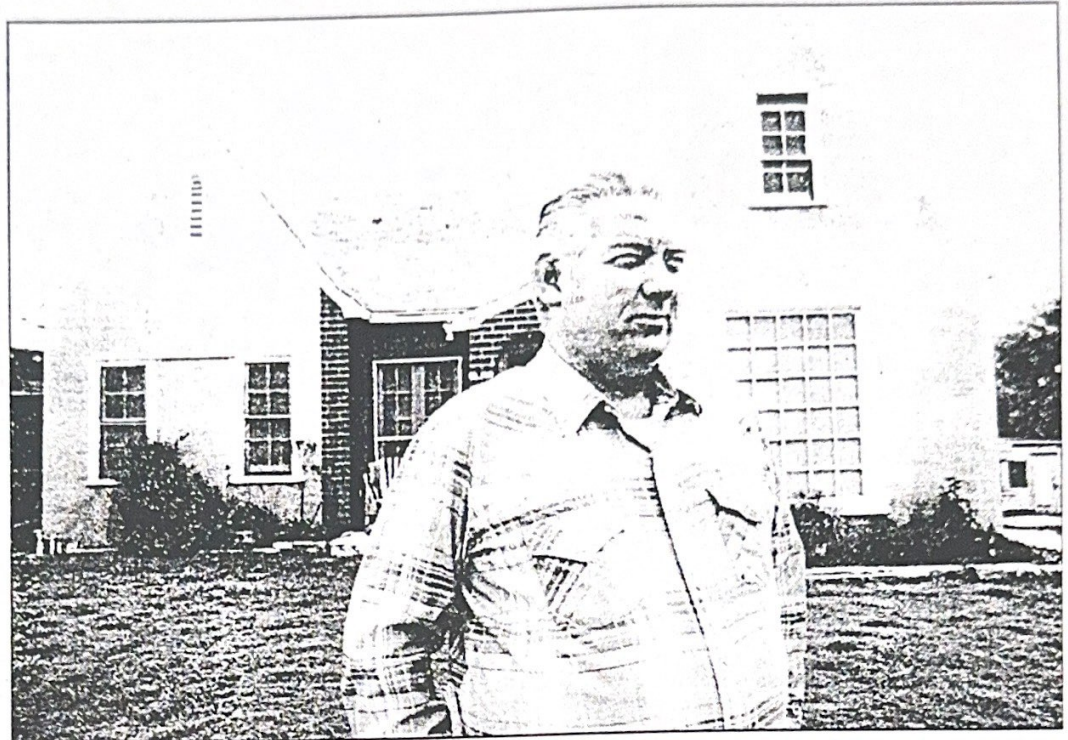
The Myneses watched stucco subdivisions and sprawling apartment complexes replace fields and older houses on surrounding streets, but their block remained mostly intact. The city has designated that stretch as its first historic block.

Other older houses were moved onto vacant lots on the block over the years. The most recent additions were relocated over the past two years from the city's downtown redevelopment area to save them from demolition.

"This will end up like a little oasis because in the next 15 years so many of those older homes that are left will be gone with redevelopment," said Brian Saul, chairman of the city's Historical Committee.

The five homes relocated to the 100 block of Redwood Avenue were selected based on architectural style or historic significance, Saul said.

The "Blue Bungalow," now located at the corner of Redwood Avenue and Ash Street, was built in 1919 at the prominent intersection of Brea Boulevard and Birch Street. It was the home and office of one of the community's first doctors and later a restaurant, gift shop, police substation and city re-



YONG KIM/For The Orange County Register

**BLOCK VETERAN:** Bill Mynes stands in front of his house on Redwood Avenue in Brea to see the house across the street getting refurbished. He moved there for 27 years, and remembers when it was on the edge of town.

development office. Now, it's a private residence again.

Next door stands a 1911 clapboard bungalow, typical of those built for workers in local oil fields.

Across the street, new owners are adding finishing touches to a white clapboard house trimmed with angel cutouts on the front wall. The house was built in 1914 on South Madrona Avenue and was owned by Roy Mitchell, a member of Brea's first city council.

Down the block, workers are renovating a two-story, five-bedroom house constructed in 1915 by William D. Casner, who drilled the area's first oil well on land east of the city.

The gray house next door was moved to the block in 1988 and is an example of the work of local architect Van Tyle. The house, built in

1929 on South Flower Avenue, still has most of its original features.

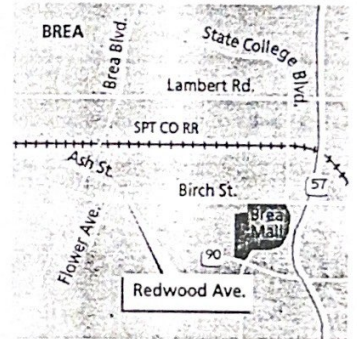
The Myneses, whose home was built in 1928 on the same spot it now sits, don't believe it's fair to call the neighborhood historic when so many houses have been relocated there.

But Karen Tangler and her family like the changes they've seen in their neighborhood since they moved in six years ago.

The historic houses, old-style street lamps and red cobbled sections in the road set the neighborhood apart, she said.

"I have never changed my mind since I first saw the house. It's so cute," she said. "I don't want to live in clone-ville. I can move anywhere and have every third house be the same."

Do you have a neighborhood worth



bragging about? We want to know about it. Write a brief description of your neighborhood and what makes it special. Include your name and a telephone number where you can be reached during the day and send it to Neighborhoods/Metro, P.O. Box 11626, Santa Ana, Calif. 92711.