

Adobe

Adobe was the first construction material used by humans, and to this day 50% of the world's people still live in some form of adobe housing.

Once agriculture and animal husbandry began gaining ground at the end of the Neolithic Era, about 10,000 B.C.E., we start to see the beginning of adobe use in human homemaking; and 12,000 years later we are still using adobe as a building material, especially here in New Mexico!

The earliest written record of the word "adobe" was an Egyptian hieroglyph which translates to "brick." This was then later adopted into Arabic as "at-tubu," which then found its way into 10th century Spanish as "adobe." English then borrowed the Spanish word in the 18th century, so the origins of the word are much like the origins of adobe itself, a worldwide phenomenon.

Here in the Southwest we have a special relationship with adobe. Indigenous people of the America's, especially America's dry regions, have been using adobe to build their homes since they began to settle down into agricultural communities around 900 C.E.

Unlike modern adobe, or Spanish adobe, Ancestral Puebloan adobe buildings were made by what is called "puddling." Instead of using molded bricks, the mud was molded by hand and then added to the soon-to-be building. Some of the most famous structures in the Southwest were made using this technique: the buildings at Bandelier, and the pre-contact buildings of Pecos Pueblo, are wonderful examples.

When the Spanish arrived they brought their brick making methods with them. One great place to see both the puddle-making Pueblo technique and the Spanish brick technique side by side is [Pecos National Historical Park](#).

The beautiful earthy brown, against the corn flower blue sky is one of the things that makes New Mexico "The Land of Enchantment." Did you know that New Mexico boasts 1/3 of the nations adobe?! And all most all of the historic building here at El Rancho de las Golondrinas, even some of our most



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modern structures such as Pino House which is turn of the century, employee adobe in one from or another.

Every year our maintenance crew spends many long hours re-plastering our adobe buildings, a task that in both Pueblo culture and Spanish colonial culture was almost exclusively the realm of women. Many historic photographs show women at this task well into the 20th century.