

## **Conservation, Preservation and Rehabilitation of Earthen Architecture as a Youth Development Program**



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### **ABSTRACT**

In 2007 the Town of Bernalillo, New Mexico in the US established a Youth Conservation Corps Program to teach the skills of conservation, preservation, and rehabilitation of earthen architecture to local youth with employment barriers such as adjudication, disenrollment from traditional educational institutions, and other social issues. The program teaches marketable traditional earthen architecture construction techniques and preservation skills, Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) certification as well as Graduate Equivalency Diploma GED attainment and career development. As a result, skills that have disappeared in today's construction arena are reviving a disappearing adobe architecture landscape in Bernalillo. Funded by the Town of Bernalillo and the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps, the program has employed over 210 men and women between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of three historic adobe structures in Bernalillo. These sites include the Sena Terron (Sod) Barn and the Adobe Molino built by the well-known master builder Abenicio Salazar, for whom Bernalillo's Historic District is named. The third site is the Graber Terrón/Adobe House which is programmed to become the Firemen's Housing Quarters for the Fire Department. The skills taught range from the production, construction and repair of adobe buildings, preservation skills, traditional lime and mud plasters as well as carpentry and traditional roofing, and flooring. The training includes in class instruction on adobe code and historic preservation principles which are carefully followed in all projects. As GED attainment is a strong component of this program, all youth without a high school diploma are required to complete the provided GED classes and are encouraged, and assisted, in continuing their education. The presentation will include program concept and development, case studies of each of three project sites its cultural and historic methods of earthen construction and the connection to local indigenous, colonial and modern earth building methods. All the buildings currently worked on have unique and distinct building methods of construction, the Molino (Flour Mill) was historically a three story adobe building and the others are unique for the lost building art of Terrón (Sod) construction, no longer seen in New Mexico. The case studies of individual participants, and community development impacts of the program will be showcased as an alternative to cultural preservation and knowledge as well as an educational continuum to the participants. The presenters are individuals who have extensive background in community development, preservation, and youth training.

**Keywords:** Adobe, Terron, sod, preservation, youth training, cultural resources, community empowerment, traditional technologies and urban revitalization.