

Adobe Brick Making Introduction

Adobe brick making was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries in Old California. The many buildings in the missions, presidios, pueblos, *ranchos*, and *haciendas* were made from adobe bricks. Adobe bricks are made from a mixture of dirt (sand and clay), water, straw, and manure. Each brick was usually dried in the sun for 2 months and each one weighed about 60 pounds. Because rain was very bad for the bricks, usually buildings had to have good, wide roofs and sloping verandas.

Adobe buildings are very unique in that they are almost always cool inside. It is natural air conditioning in the summer. But, in the winter it is just as cold. Servants would have to utilize more wool blankets. Those of higher status would usually have some time of coal or ash burning stove or pot in the rooms to warm them up. However, adobe bricks were easy to obtain since they were made from the materials on site.

The adobe brick making station at the Petaluma Adobe is an optional station. It is very messy but a fun way to learn just how hard it was to build adobe bricks. The station also requires a change of clothes and shoes.

References: Making the Adobe Brick by Eugene Boudreau
How California Adobes Were Built in the 1830's by James P Delgado and Christopher Wade

Adobe Brick Making Station

Materials Needed: (*Provided by Park)

- *Adobe Brick Molds
- *Shovel
- *Rake
- *Pick Axe
- *Straw
- Change of clothes and shoes

The bricks were usually made using manure, however due to health and safety concerns your class will not be using manure in the bricks.

Any bricks that are made at the Petaluma Adobe will stay at the Adobe. Each group should only make one brick.

It is best if the adobe pit has water put in it the night before an ELP group uses it. Please let staff know if you are planning on doing this station so that they can soak it for the group.

Station Set-up:

1. The adobe molds, shovel, rake, and pickaxe are all located in the ELP Supply Room.
2. You will probably want to pick out any sharp objects, rocks, etc from the pit.
3. You will need to stretch the hose to the adobe pit and put water in it (about 1 foot of water)
4. The straw should be broken into pieces about 3 inches long.
5. You will need about 2-3 hand fulls per brick.

Station:

1. After the water has soaked into the mud it should be like thick soup.
2. Add the straw
3. Jump in and mix the mud, water, and straw with feet
4. Once the ingredients are all mixed, it is time to start making the brick.
5. Wet the Adobe brick mold
6. Put the ingredients into the form and pat it so the water rises to the top
7. After that, make it nice and flat in the mold. After about 15 minutes you should be able to shake the brick out of the form. (You may need to use a ruler to run along the edges to loosen it-like a cake)
8. Rinse off the form and tools. This should be done after each brick is made.
9. Set the brick in the sun to dry

Station Clean-up

1. All of the tools and molds should be rinsed off.
2. Once they have dried, they need to be returned to the ELP Supply Room
3. The kids should rinse off at the hose NOT IN THE BATHROOM.