

Ynformes de Sn. Jn. Bautista

Dedicated to the Preservation of Our Mission's Historical Resources



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New Mud for Old Walls

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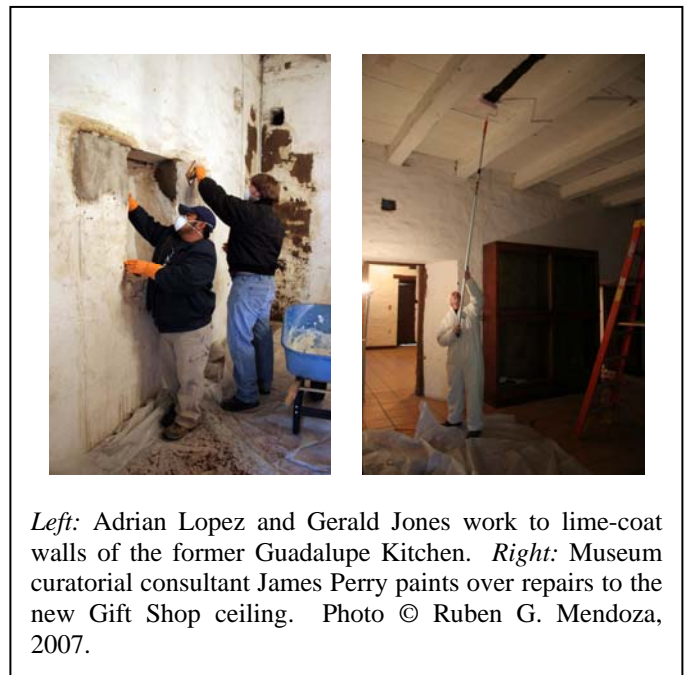
Old Mission San Juan Bautista was constructed in its entirety of adobe bricks and clay, redwood timber from the Santa Cruz Mountains, mudstone and siltstone cobbles and boulders from the Rocks Road area, and lime stucco and mortar mined from the canyon quarries just south of town. As such, the only suitable material for adobe conservation and an authentic restoration remains adobe clays and lime plaster mined from area quarries. In an effort to move forward on the rehabilitation of the interior areas of the Old Mission *Convento* and Museum, my students and I recently undertook the repair, re-mudding, and lime plastering of damaged areas within the new Gift Shop area to be housed in the former Padre's (Guadalupe Society) Kitchen. With the technical assistance of SJB volunteer Luis Candelaria, a former *adobero* or adobe maker from New Mexico, we collected some choice *zoquete* or adobe clay from the fields located just below the Old Mission.



CSU Monterey Bay student and project crew member Gerald Jones recently worked to mud and lime coat interior walls in the Old Convento. Photo © Ruben G. Mendoza, 2007.

We then proceeded to prepare walls with a wash of lime solution prepared from one part lime (Type S) and five parts water. The lime wash in question serves to enhance the bond between existing walls and those adobe clays used in the re-mudding process. After

some initial trials, and the identification of the appropriate adobe mud mix, CSU Monterey Bay students Adrian Lopez and Gerald Jones mixed adobe clays with sand, grasses, and lime water into a formidable adobe stucco that we then used to patch damaged areas within the Mission *Convento* and Museum. The re-mudding proved a valuable, albeit, messy, exercise in architectural conservation.



Left: Adrian Lopez and Gerald Jones work to lime-coat walls of the former Guadalupe Kitchen. Right: Museum curatorial consultant James Perry paints over repairs to the new Gift Shop ceiling. Photo © Ruben G. Mendoza, 2007.

Lime or Calcium Carbonate Coatings

In recent discussions with architectural conservator Anthony “Tony” Crosby, with whom I undertook a recent collaboration geared to the interpretation of the architectural history of the Royal Presidio Chapel in Monterey, I learned that a ratio of one part lime (Type N or S) to three parts sand was akin to that used to plaster the exterior facings of the colonial era adobes of California and the Southwest. With that information, my students and I undertook the rehabilitation of the lime stucco in areas throughout the new Gift Shop and Museum. We in addition used the aforementioned lime/water solution to wash newly mudded areas in

preparation for the lime stucco coatings in question. Overall, we believe that we are now poised to better address the rehabilitation of interior spaces where concrete or cement patching has not yet altered the original adobe and lime plaster surfaces of the colonial era buildings. It should be noted that because lime stucco provides a permeable or “breathable” membrane for adobe walls, it is the preferred method for insuring that humidity is not trapped in the walls of adobe structures. By contrast, concrete or cement stucco applied to adobe walls only serves to trap humidity therein, thereby promoting the deterioration of the very buildings that such coatings were intended to protect.

Crafting the River of Life

Recently, Morgan Halla of San Juan Bautista stepped up to the plate and took on a series of carpentry projects at the Old Mission that have as a result proved his value to the project. One such effort was that of fabricating an authentic colonial era style redwood “River of Life” door like that in the Guadalupe Chapel. After some initial research, including both measurements and photographs, Morgan Halla undertook the fabrication of a new redwood door for the new Gift Shop Manager’s Office. Not satisfied with merely approximating the master craftsmanship of the Guadalupe Chapel door, Morgan undertook to replicate the door down to the last minute detail, including hand-forged iron nails and hardware.

traversing the Heavenly Kingdom. The *New Advent Encyclopedia* in turn indicates that “the river of life sets forth that the grace of spiritual doctrine flowed through the minds of the faithful.” According to John 7: 38-39, from the Holy Spirit “flow rivers of living water,” and so it was that the Franciscan friars of Old San Juan sought to immortalize this sacred precept by integrating it into the doors and icons of this early California mission.



The finer details in that “River of Life” door crafted by Morgan Halla may be appreciated in this image. We as such look forward to future creations by Morgan. Photo © Ruben G. Mendoza, 2007.



Left: The new River of Life door crafted by Morgan Halla from select Redwood lumber was fashioned after the blue door in the Guadalupe Chapel. *Right:* Morgan took into account every detail, including hand-forged iron nails and mortise and tenon work. Photo © Ruben G. Mendoza, 2007.

How Many Adobes?

If you’ve ever wondered about just how many adobe bricks or blocks were used in the construction of the Old Mission Church, or for that matter, the surviving *Convento* museum building, perhaps projections for Mission Dolores – aka: San Francisco de Asís – in San Francisco, California, may provide some clues. According to one calculation, 36,000 adobes were used in the construction of the Mission Dolores Church alone. Whereas the walls of the Mission Church at San Francisco were constructed to a depth of 4.0 feet, or 1.2 meters, and a height of 35.5 feet and a width of 30.0 feet, the walls of the adobe Church at San Juan Bautista measure some five feet in thickness, and rise to a height of 41.2 feet. Moreover, whereas the Church at San Francisco measures 150.6 feet in length, the Church at San Juan Bautista measures 211.0 feet in length and 72.1 feet in width. Given its status as the only remaining three aisled Mission Church in California, and thereby, the largest such structure in the California missions, it is likely that some 100,000 or more bricks were used in the construction of the old adobe Church at San Juan.

The “River of Life” is of course that font or river of life described in the Book of Revelations as