

International Hands-on Workshops for Architectural and Site Conservation



News

For Immediate Release

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Connecting People to Preserve the Past

March 11, 2002 -- Heritage Conservation Network will be conducting five hands-on building conservation workshops this year, giving a significant boost to ongoing preservation projects throughout the country. Each workshop matches volunteer participants, a technical expert and a historic structure in need of some tender loving care.

The goal of the program, according to Judith Broeker, HCN's Program Director, is multi-faceted. "We want each person attending a workshop to feel they have had a valuable hands-on learning experience while making a real contribution to a preservation project. We hope that they will take with them an increased excitement about the historic built environment as well as specialized skills that can be applied to other projects." Ms. Broeker added, "Ultimately, I would like to see the workshops create an understanding and enjoyment of various cultures in order to make the saving of cultural heritage a truly international experience."

The workshops focus on a variety of building conservation techniques and will be held at the following locations:

- an 1800's vernacular house in Mesilla, NM in May (adobe conservation)
- the Wickfield "Round Barn", a.k.a Wickfield Farm Sales Pavilion, in Cantril, IA in July (horsehair plaster conservation)
- the Obadiah La Tourette Grist & Saw Mill in Long Valley, NJ in July (stone and wood frame conservation)
- the Hudson Allen House in Oxford, AL in August (roof truss repair and decorative woodwork repair and reproduction) and
- the Asbury Grist Mill in Asbury, NJ, in October (stone, water wheel and site conservation).

Pre-registration is required. Participants do not need any particularly training or skill level, just an interest in helping preserve the past. Though some participants will likely be professionals looking to expand their skill base, others will be people simply wanting to spend a week working on an interesting project. HCN strives to offer a variety of locations and building types in order to appeal to a broad number of participants. To qualify as a workshop site, a structure must be historically significant and in need of conservation work. A strong sense of community and commitment to the structure's preservation are also taken into account.

The Wickfield "Round Barn" has been the subject of a restoration by the Van Buren County Historical Commission, themselves in partnership with the present owners of the former Wickfield Farm. The round structure was built in 1918 to house auction and lodging facilities and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. Restoration is expected to cost over \$200,000, and HCN's workshop participants will help repair interior plastering as part of the multi-phase project.

The Washington Township Land Trust acquired the Obadiah La Tourette Grist and Saw Mill in 1992 and has been restoring it largely with the assistance of volunteers. The mill's existing machinery illustrates more than 200 years of grain and flour milling history, including the great change in the

milling process from the time-honored millstones to the roller milling system. It, too, is on the National Register, as part of the German Valley Historic District.

Participants at the Asbury Mill workshop will be working on the riverfront site, as well as the actual building and water wheel. The goal is to locate and reopen the original water channel that fed water from the river to the water wheel, allowing the wheel to turn again. The current mill was built in 1863 on the site of a pre-Revolutionary mill and was used as a grain mill until the 1890s when it became the Asbury Graphite Mill. This workshop offers participants an opportunity to work on an important aspect of American industrial heritage.

The Hudson Allen House was built in the late 1830s and features sophisticated interior Federal Period woodwork that may have been produced by Lev and Griffin Borders, known slave artisans. The house suffered a disastrous fire in 2000 and has been unoccupied since. "Admittedly it will be a bit hot and humid working there in August, but the concern was that the structure wouldn't survive the winter without us" said Ms. Broeker. Participants will be working to repair roof trusses as well as the interior woodwork, replicating originals when necessary and repairing other components of one of the most significant early houses in the Choccolocco Valley area of Alabama.

In Mesilla, NM, using a late 1800's adobe house as their laboratory, workshop participants will learn how to make adobe bricks by hand, which are needed for building repairs. Participants will also learn the traditional art of preparing and applying lime plaster to protect the exterior of the structure. Mesilla has a long and colorful history and is a popular with visitors because of its concentration of historic adobe structures. As a supply center for troops garrisoned at Fort Filmore in the 1850s, Mesilla became a bustling commercial center and, until bypassed by the railroad in 1881 in favor of Las Cruces, was the social center of the region. The adobe conservation workshop will also include some work at Socorro Mission, just outside El Paso, Texas, about an hour from the main workshop site. The Mission was originally built in 1691, destroyed by two floods, and rebuilt at its present location in 1843.

Each workshop session lasts one or two weeks, and participant fees cover lodging, most meals, and project materials expenses. Transportation to the workshop site is not included in the participant fee. More information about Heritage Conservation Network and these workshops, including how to register, can be found on the HCN web site at www.heritageconservation.net or by contacting HCN's main office at (303) 444 0128.