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earth-building does take place in the Southwest, where a combination of Native American and Hispanic influences have fortified these ancient, yet contemporary building arts. However, there is an earth wall precedent in the eastern U.S., dating back to pre-Revolutionary times. Rammed Earth has been practiced in wetter climates like England, France, and Germany since the Roman occupation. European immigrants to the American colonies built with earth, using the skills of their homelands, especially before the advent of sawmills. Such historic structures still serve in New York, Pennsylvania and South Carolina.

In the Américas, we often see adobe in wet tropical climates, such as México, or Honduras, which can receive over 100 inches of rain a year. Today, stabilization techniques keep moisture from affecting the earth walls. Those who build in wetter climates often choose either rammed earth or pressed block, which require little curing time.

Adobe construction, in combination with good passive solar design, makes for an effective energy-saving solution in cold winter areas. The use of high-mass walls, insulation and a large south solar aperture, can cut energy use in January by 60% or more. High-mass earth walls also cut cooling costs in hot desert locales. Earth walls allow you to buy smaller heating and cooling units and run them for shorter periods of time- a big defense against today's escalating energy costs. The old adobe saying "cooler in summer and warmer in winter" has some basis in truth.

THE LEARNING CURVE The knowledge and skills don't happen overnight. You'll need to view, read, visit, practice, talk and draw. The more construction experience you have, the sooner you'll be ready. At Southwest Solaradobe School, we advise newcomers to start learning at least two



Adobe Home Interior, Tucson, Arizona

Photo by Terrence Moore

years before they intend to break ground. What do you need to know? Here's a few topic areas to think about...

- site logistics
- identifying and preparing the soil, stabilization
- foundations and underfloor needs
- choice of wall system
- door & window bucks, attachments
- electrical systems - bond beams & roofing systems



Below: Adobe Home under construction near Alpine, Texas
-construction by Rainbow Adobe



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