

(03) MEXICO: COLONIAL HOUSING

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In Latin America, people live in many different types of houses. The kind of house a person has is largely determined by the building materials available in a particular region, the climate of the area, the degree of development, and the outside influences that have acted upon that particular culture.

- 3A *Federal District.* The making of bricks is one of the important industries of Mexico. This kiln is being packed for firing. After the kiln is completely packed, it is sealed and firing begins.
- 3B Frequently, one finds the unfired adobe brick used for the walls of a house, and the very popular fired curved tiles used for the roof. This type of roof dates back to the colonial period and is common today in many parts of Latin America.
- 3C *Guanajuato.* In cities where space is limited, whether in Latin America or in any country in the world, buildings are found very close together. This picture taken in Guanajuato shows the congestion found in cities. The material of the wall in the foreground as well as the foundations of most of these buildings, is adobe brick. Occasionally this brick is treated with a facing of stucco and painted. Often only the fronts of houses are treated in this manner. Because these houses are built on a hill, one has the impression of houses of several stories, but most of them are one-story dwellings. This is one of the very narrow streets of Guanajuato. It is called the "Street of the Kiss" because it is supposed to be so narrow that people approaching one another from opposite directions cannot pass without kissing.
- 3D *Cuernavaca.* Stone, especially limestone, is quite common in Mexico and is used not only in the buildings but also in combination with fired tile for the very elaborate walls that enclose private residences and estates. The design in red is an ingenious use of the curved tiles for decoration. These are the same tiles that are used for roofs. It is amazing how many different designs are created through the use of the simple curved tile.
- 3E On the road to Puebla, where stone is plentiful, it is not uncommon to find huts like this one made of this material.
- 3F *Toluca.* The stone arch used so frequently in the architecture of the colonial period is still used today. Note the method of construction. Although comparatively primitive, it is certainly the same as that used during the colonial period.
- 3G *Mexico City.* Stone construction was used in this apartment house of the colonial period. Note the use of the arch between the walls, the

narrowness of the courtyard, and the generally heavy quality of the architecture. These apartments, comparable to our tenements, are only one story high, have very thick walls, and are usually dark and cold. Note in this particular instance that running water is in the court and not in each home. Today these dwellings are being torn down and replaced with modern housing projects.

- 3H New buildings follow the same general pattern but provide more space and light. Note that the buildings shown here are three stories high and have many windows.
- 3I [®] *Mérida*. All of Yucatán rests on a bed of limestone. It is therefore natural to find much stone used in the local buildings. Yucatán has little surface water. All water is obtained from wells or subterranean limestone caverns in which water has collected. Windmills are widely used to pump waters from the wells.
- 3J *Mérida*. Contrasting bands of red and white stone create this striped effect that is Moorish in feeling.

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- 4A *Yucatán.* The elaborate architecture and combined use of stone and other materials are shown in this typical house of the late 19th century in Mérida.
- 4B *Puebla.* Puebla is one of the tile-making centers of the Americas. Here the old technique of *majolica*, introduced to Spain by the Moors and brought from Spain to the Americas, was taught to Indian craftsmen. The industry still flourishes. The technique is used not only in vases, plates and objects of art, but also in tiles. The famous *Casa del Alfeñique* (the Almond Paste House) shown in this slide illustrates the use of the glazed tiles in building.
- 4C *Puebla.* In the interior of this building one finds glazed tiles used as decorative frames for doorways.
- 4D *Puebla.* The tile is also used on the walls of the kitchen. Note the many earthen pottery utensils, some of which are merely fired while others are glazed.
- 4E *Puebla.* The walls of this building show the inset glazed tiles that form an overall pattern. Notice also the elaborately carved stone used around the windows and porches.
- 4F *Mexico City.* In the colonial period, it was not uncommon to find the combination of stone, brick, carved stone sculpture, and glazed tile, as well as pressed design in stucco. Here one sees a great many materials combined to create an extraordinarily beautiful building.
- 4G *Mexico City.* In present-day architecture one finds materials used much as they are in this slide. Note the combination of stucco, wrought iron, glazed tile, curved tile, and carved stone. This is one of the more pretentious and elaborate types of private homes.
- 4H *Mexico City.* The private homes along this street are good examples of the fusion of modern design and materials with traditional forms and materials. Note the combination of wood balconies and tile roofs.
- 4I *Guanajuato.* The modern city of Guanajuato still shows the imprint of colonial traditions and styles. Note the extensive use of stone construction in the large government buildings.

- 4J *Mexico City.* Here one sees the monument to the revolution and some of the modern apartment buildings of Mexico City. Note, however, an amazing contrast in the immediate foreground. Although the style of the architecture is modern – even ultramodern—the rooftops have a life of their own. In many cases servants who come from some distance find it impossible to return home at night. The apartments as a rule do not include servants' quarters. Therefore, the servants often building and live in shacks such as these on the roofs of very modern buildings.