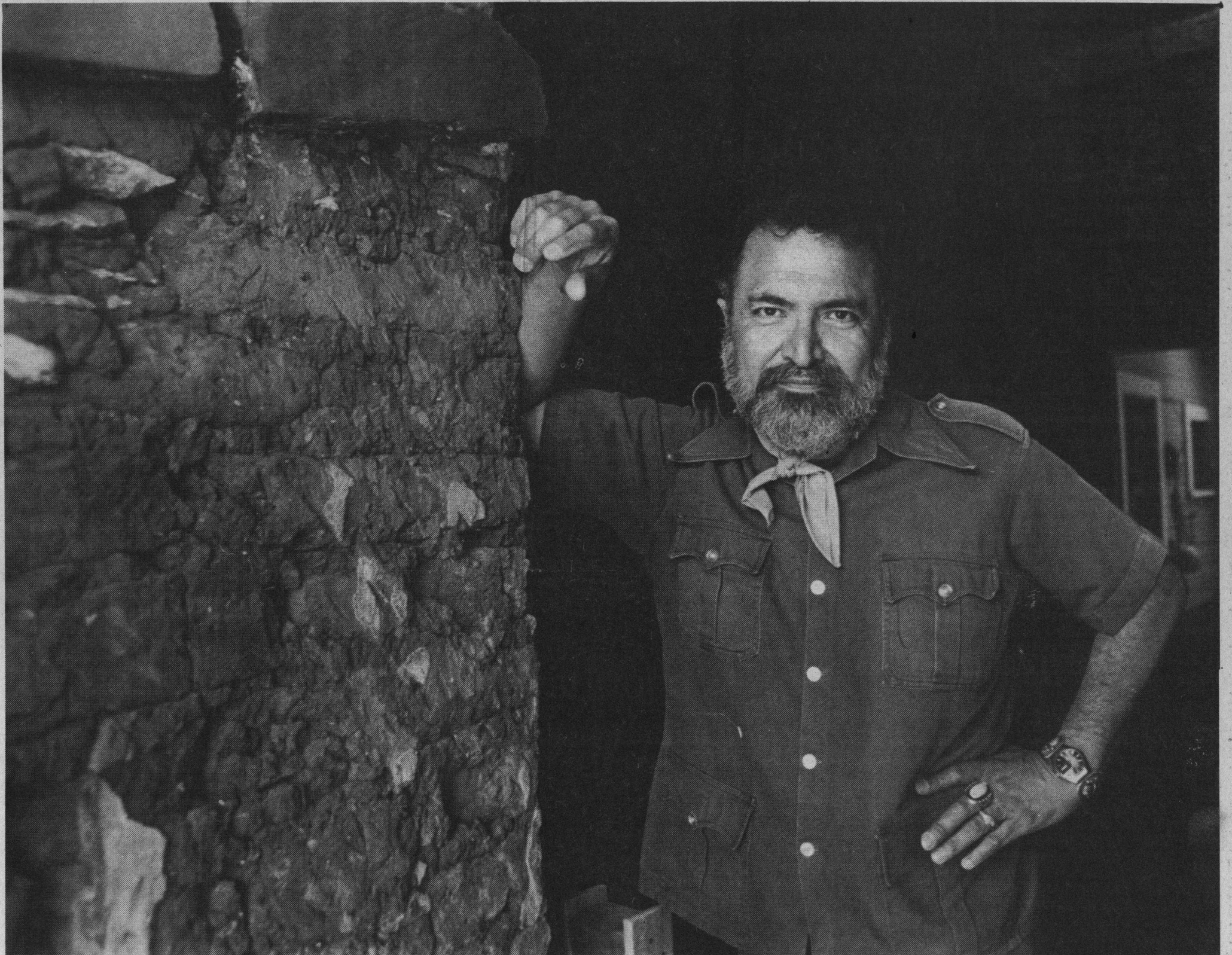


Adobe expert arrives

In honor of Historic Preservation Week, Cabrillo College's archaeology program and the Adobe Coalition will host an 'Open Hole' for the public from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Santa Cruz Mission Adobe, 134 School St. Cabrillo students will give a brief summary and tour of the archaeological dig in progress at the Mission Adobe State Historic Park.



Redwood beams and adobe bricks frame consultant architect Gil Sanchez.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel



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Architect Gil Sanchez coaxes crumbling layers to tell of their past.

Historic Houses - School Street + Mission

5.15.86

By ROBERTA FRIEDMAN
Sentinel Staff Writer

CRUMBLING plaster and row on row of gray mud bricks tell of the many cultures of the peoples who built, rebuilt and lived in the Mission Adobe on School Street.

Archaeologists have peeled back the layers of the old building's history. Now architect Gil Sanchez will help reconstruct and display the story of each era for future visitors.

Sanchez has built a unique practice around the repair of old adobe buildings. In past projects, he has returned former glory to the Plaza Hotel of San Juan Bautista, the Royal Presidio Chapel of Santa Barbara, and Mission San Jose near Fremont.

More modest ranches and shops throughout California, constructed centuries ago from sun-baked blocks of mud and sand, have been rescued by his skill.

Last month, he won the post of consulting architect to the state's restoration of the last remaining adobe from Mission Santa Cruz. He has moved his office from San Jose to an adobe on Glen Canyon Road.

He was selected from among 25 architects by the Department of Parks and Recreation, which will spend \$1.5 million on the project.

Sanchez, born to a family of migrant farm workers, grew up in San Jose and learned architecture as apprentice to 15 different firms. He attended night school to pass his license examination.

He was doing conventional projects in Silicon Valley when the Peralta Adobe in San Jose caught his eye.

The city wanted to reconstruct this remnant of Pueblo de San Jose. Sanchez, seeking a glimpse into his own Hispanic heritage, wanted to be the man to do it.

"I didn't know anything about adobes," he said, but he was

selected from the five architects interviewed.

On the job, Sanchez initiated himself into the ancient art of making mud that would support a roof for hundreds of years.

"I went all up and down the state, contacting anyone I could and reading everything I could find on adobe."

His reconstruction of the Peralta Adobe received an Excellence in Design Award in 1977 from the Fine Arts Commission in San Jose. Other awards since have honored Sanchez's work.

At the School Street adobe, as at other sites, he consults closely with historians and archaeologists who have unraveled the building's past.

Mission Santa Cruz was founded in 1791, and its remaining adobe dates from the early 1800s.

Historians suspect that Indian girls newly converted by the Catholic priests were the adobe's first inhabitants.

The adobe later was turned into a duplex when two families bought the building from the Mission's Indians. Purchase price paid by one of the families was two cows and two mules.

The succeeding inhabitants left a structural legacy that has encased the adobe's primitive core. But archaeology students from Cabrillo College have reversed the process.

One of the original inside walls that had divided the adobe into twenty-foot rooms has been opened to expose stacks of adobe bricks.

Filling interior walls with adobe is an ancient technique, Sanchez explains. The same method was used in San Juan Bautista's Plaza Hotel, as well as in a 15th century building that he saw in Spain.

Each mud brick and redwood support laid bare "holds a lot of history," Sanchez says.

Carefully chipped-away plaster

reveals finger marks from the Indian hands that first smoothed a coating of mud on the walls. Smoke stains from indoor hearths mark the narrow openings of windows that have since been enlarged.

Straw in the adobe bricks once grew in the surrounding meadows. Analysis of pollens trapped in the dried mud can reveal what plants grew here in the 1820s.

Sawmarks in the redwood beams added by American settlers who came with the Gold Rush can date the opening of local lumber mills.

Modern improvements will be retained along with the first structures of the adobe, Sanchez says. The seven remaining rooms (of an original 17) will display different periods in the adobe's evolution from an Indian barracks to private residence.

A rebuilt adobe means more to Sanchez than a technical job well

done. The structure should speak to all who come to listen.

"If it can't tell a story," he says, "then all the work is meaningless."

Adobes in particular record the rapid successions that transformed California.

"People were here six thousand years ago. Then came another people, the Spanish, who had little understanding of the first people's culture. They said (to the Indians), 'We'll give you a religion.'"

"Then came the Americans, who in turn didn't care about the Spanish culture."

"Now, with our power, we influence other countries. Are we repeating history? Are we doing the right thing?"

He hopes that the tale told by the different stages in Mission Adobe's evolution will leave visitors with "an understanding of who we were and where we are going."