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MANITOWOC COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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1977 Series

BRICKMAKING, a Manitowoc Industry From the 1850's to About 1948.

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Some Manitowoc Brickmakers

Brickmaking in the Manitowoc area dates back to at least the 1850's. My great grandfather, Andrew Bertler, is listed as a brickmaker in 1868. Also listed in this same city directory is Groffman & Co. Brickyards listed in 1875 include Bertler & White at N. Fifth and Huron Streets, W. Fricke at the corner of South Seventeenth and Clark Streets, Gerpheide at South Twenty-first Street near the river, and Fred F. Veith at South Twentieth and Franklin Streets. In 1884 Andrew and Stephen Bertler are listed as Bertler & Co. and the Fricke Brickyard is located at the mouth of the Little Manitowoc River. Still later are shown Henry Boettcher at Twentieth & Milwaukee L.S. & W.R.R., Charles Fricke at the mouth of Little Manitowoc, George Fricke at south end of Thirteenth & City Limits, Fred Veith and Herman Wehausen at the west side of Thirteenth, South Limits. In 1897 Ed Fricke is shown at Cleveland Avenue, Peter Kaufman at 817 South 20th, and Frank Woerfel at the foot of South 26th. In 1899 Kaufman & Winter are shown at 817 South 20th. In 1911 Manitowoc Clay Products is shown at the foot of South 24th Street. This list may or may not include all the brickmaking companies in Manitowoc since I do not have access to in-depth research at this time.

Wages

Original records show that wages from 1886 through 1892 were not overly munificent, although they must have been the prevailing rate since the employees worked the entire season and returned year after year. The highest paid employee was W. Schmidt who received $2.10 per day. Next was A. Sista who was paid $1.75; A. Winter $1.40; several employees at $1.25 per day and the rate went to as low as 37.4 cents per day. This last rate must have been for young boys in their early or pre-teens (probably some whom we would today call "Gophers"). Usually the employee did not receive all of the wages due them, but left them on the books until the season was over, at which time they were paid in full. Can you imagine a family man working 124 ten hour days for $169.87? Very likely this was their only cash income for the year. But then, my grandfather, Stephen, only drew out $300.00 for his income in the year 1892 and he was the owner and had the investment.

Total wages paid in 1886 were $2,684.49. In 1887 they were $2,581.82; in 1888, $2,128.79; in 1889, $1,879.99; in 1890, $318.84; in 1891, $2,754.56; and in 1892, $2,755.14. An entry for December 12, 1890 shows what may be the reason for the small salaries paid that year. Apparently that year, several brickmakers made bricks as partners. The entry indicates that Boettcher was overdrawn 45,000 bricks and Veid (sic) was overdrawn 25,000. Bertler & Son were due 33,000 as their share, E. Fricke 29,000 and G. Fricke 12,000 bricks as their shares. These are all names that are shown in the directories as being brickmakers.

Sales

In 1890, 449,110 bricks were sold, in 1891, 400,375, and in 1892, 465,250. The only entry I find relating to the price of bricks, is that of one employee who purchased 600 bricks and had $3.64 deducted from his wages. However, there are many entries of other employees taking brick as payment of some wages. From the quantity, it would indicate that they built themselves a home and brick veneered it. This may be what some of them did when they were not working at the brickyards. With a sales price somewhere about $6.00 per thousand, it is apparent that total gross income would normally be less than $3,000.00 per year.

Locations

The first Bertler Brickyard was on North Lake Street, to the north of what is now the new Madison School. This lakefront location was ideal as there was a good supply of clay as well as sand which was used more extensively in those days. But the chief asset was the proximity to shipping since throughout the years, countless thousands of bricks were shipped to Milwaukee and Chicago. Some years ago some narrow gauge tracks were found near this location and speculation was that they were left behind when the brickyard location was moved to North Sixth and Pine Streets. The description matches that of the tracks over which we pushed endless loads of bricks. Also in talking to my Uncle John, he indicated that the reason the yards were moved was that the Lake Michigan water level had risen and operations had to be abandoned at that location.

My Uncle John drove the team and I remember many a time when I was a child, that it was possible to hear his colorful language at our home at 1001 North 8th Street which was over two blocks away. Of course there were only a few homes in the area at that time so sound carried quite well.

From the size of the circuit, it would appear that the picture was taken a few years after the brickyard was moved to this location from the old lakefront site. Therefore it would be in the period from 1895 to 1905. In 1936 my Uncle John told me that the North 6th Street location was in use about 40 years. By the 1920's, the circuit extended all the way to Pine Street and from Sixth to Fifth Street. Later this large excavation was used as a free public dump and gradually filled in. Just think of all the antiques that must be buried there!

The long sheds in the right background cover the kilns. More about these later. The smaller shed at the left covers a haymow. There is also a bicycle in the picture. To see all these details, it is necessary to use a magnifying glass. (See photo on page 5)

New Location

When the supply of clay to the south was exhausted, the brickmaking operation was moved to just south of Waldo Blvd. This encompassed no great problem since the S. Bertler Sons Co. owned all the land between North Sixth and Pine to Fifth and Pine and north to Lincoln Park. Waldo Blvd. and Oak Street were not through streets at this time. New, improved machinery was installed. Instead

of horses and scraper, a large self-propelled electric shovel was utilized. By today's standards it was very crude. It was about 10 feet wide and 15 feet long. The bucket probably held about one-quarter yard of clay. The boom was operated by wire cables on a drum.

My father, George Bertler, operated the shovel. He would load up a car or hopper, similar to those used in coal mines. When loaded, he would yank on a cord connected to a bell by the mixer. Either Uncle Willy (William Bertler) or Uncle John (Bertler) would then start the donkey, which was an electric winch that pulled the loaded car by cable along a set of tracks and up a ramp to the pit box. After he had dumed the hopper, my dad then had to push it back to the shovel for another load. As the clay bank was depleted, the tracks for the hopper were extended and / or shifted closer to the clay. This worked very nicely until Waldo Blvd. was put through. The state condemned land for right-of-way purposes but the three brothers felt that the appraised value was too low since the highway would very seriously disrupt the business. After all, the raw material would be on the north side of the highway and the manufacturing on the south side. Therefore they appealed the award and were successful in having the amount increased from under $10,000 to over $14,000. They were able to prove that in 1929 they had each earned about $5,000.00 as their share of the partnership. The complete trial is recorded in Manitowoc Circuit Court.

As well as having to pay an increased monetary award, the state was required to install a concrete tunnel below Waldo Blvd. so that the clay could be moved through the tunnel to the brick making machine. It is one of the ironies of life that this tunnel, built at great W.P.A. expense, was never used. The great depression was on and no bricks were made for several years. When the brickyards reopened in 1936, a new International three yard dump truck was used to move the clay from the pit to the machine. The tunnel is still there, although both ends are covered up. It runs north and south and is located at about 513 Waldo Blvd.

Making Bricks – 1936-1937

When the raw clay was too dry to be worked properly, it was necessary to pour water on the clay bank. We would fill up pails at the tributary previously mentioned and tote them to the top of the clay bank, where they were dumped into a trench so that the water could soak downwards and permeate the clay. Fortunately this did not happen too often. Some water was normally added in the mixer, also.

When the clay was dumped, it dropped into a pit-box. This was an oblong steel box that held a couple of yards of clay and was equipped with slow moving spiral gears that coarse ground the clay and dropped it onto a conveyor belt which carried it up to a pulverizer. The pulverizer was basically two high speed steel wheels that rotated towards each other. As the name implies, this pulverized the clay for proper mixing in the machine. Ever so often there would be a chattering and banging for several seconds as a stone would try and work its way through the pulverizer. If it were too big, the machinery was stopped and the stone removed. Usually though, the stone broke into pieces before the machines could be stopped. While we welcomed the diversion, we dreaded the results. Invariably this meant that one or more of the wire cutters would break when the shards finally emerged from the brickmaker. Everything considered, the clay bank was remarkably free of stones. This of course was one of the criteria in selecting this area for making bricks.

From the pulverizer, the clay went directly into the brick machine. Basically this was an oblong cast iron vessel with a series of spiral worm gears that thoroughly mixed the clay and moved it forward and downward and then under tremendous pressure, through a series of gradually decreasing tapered dies until it emerged as a continuous slab of clay with all the finished dimensions of a brick except for the width.

Cutting Bricks

This slab then moved on to the wire brick cutter which was directly in line with the brick machine or mixer. The cutter was a large circular device with room for about 40 to 50 individually removable "U" shaped cutters, each of which had a wire stretched taut across the "U". As these cutters rotated they would each drop between an endless moving guide on each side and cut the clay slab into the precise width. The pressure of the slab coming out of the brick machine was enough to operate the cutter. Having been forewarned by the noise of a stone passing through the pulverizer, we would be prepared for the breaking of one or more wire cutters when the stone chips reached this point. We would hastily pull out the pin holding the damaged cutter to the wheel and replace the cutter with another one.

After being cut, the bricks moved about two inches apart onto a belt conveyor. On both sides of the conveyor, there were permanent bucks with room for four pallets or two loads of bricks. The bricks were made at a rate of about 2500 per hour. Uncle John was usually first to take bricks off the belt, always taking every fifth and sixth bricks. The next person below him, would take the third and fourth bricks, and the third person would take the first two. It is truly amazing, considering the speed that the bricks were made, that oftentimes a whole day would pass without a single brick being spoiled by going over the end of the belt. Not that it would have been a great loss, since the damaged bricks could be easily reprocessed at no cost. Nor was the cost of the raw material a significant factor.

Stacking Bricks on Pallets

After removing the alloted two bricks from the belt, you would swing your upper torso 90 degrees to place them on the pallets, then back 180 degrees to pick up two more bricks. The pallets were made of three pieces of two by four spaced about 24 inches apart and joined together by one inch wide by three-eighths thick slats, with about a half inch space between each slat. A finished pallet was about four feet by four feet. Two pallets were placed on the stationary bucks so that they abutted. A row of about forty bricks would be placed on the far side of the pallets. Each brick would be spaced about half an inch from the next one. The second row would be started with the first three bricks at each end being placed crosswise to act as a bond for the ends. The other bricks in the row bridged the gap in the first row. Each tier was alternated in this fashion, repeating the design. Normally the two outside rows were six bricks high and the middle row was seven bricks high. Thus, each double pallet or load would contain about 760 bricks.

When the last row was nearing completion, the first man would work his way ahead to the next pallet to get it started, the second man would soon follow, and the third man finished up the load and was in position to work on the next load. All of this was accomplished without a break in the action or a loss of brick

Bricks Put Into Drying Sheds

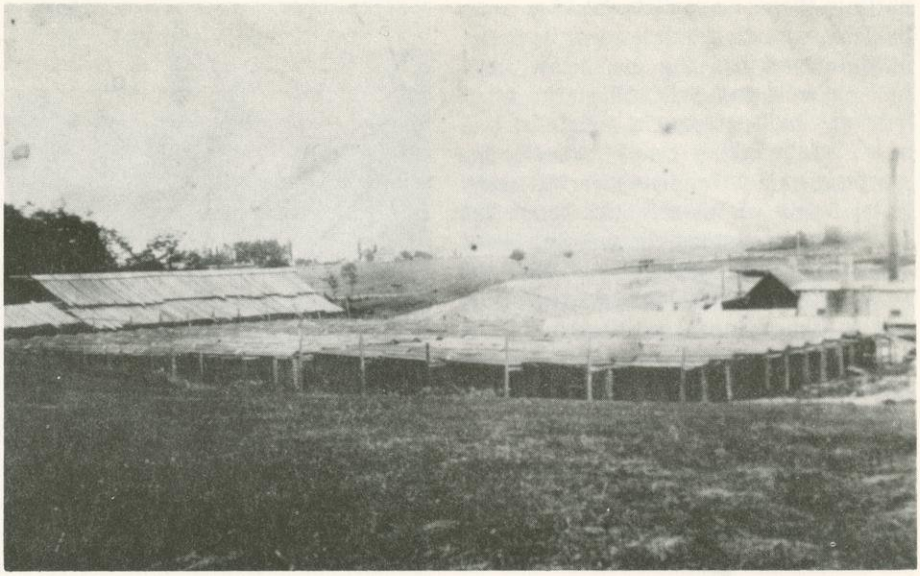
Under the fixed bucks was a set of narrow gauge tracks. The fourth man pushed a four-wheeled hand truck under the load and cranked it up. He then moved the load onto another four-wheeled carrier which traveled north and south on a set of tracks in front of the drying sheds. The closest simile I can use is to imagine a truck trailer riding piggyback sideways on a train. Before moving, he would block up the wheels on the load.

For a very practical reason this track was as level as possible. The only power to operate these trucks was one man-power and a full load would exceed 4,000 pounds. Needless to say, you did develop good leg muscles. This carrier was then pushed to whatever drying shed was to be filled that day. If this was the first load of the day or the first load in that shed, the trucker would inscribe with a nail, the date on one brick and lay it flat. Occasionally we would also inscribe our initials and the date into a brick with the hope that some day posterity would find the brick and speculate on who made the brick. Some of these "special" bricks were delivered to the Valders High School and to Mirro Plant 1 at an addition that was built near the river in 1936 or 1937.

When the trucker had the load lined up with the tracks in the shed being used that day, he would block the wheels of the carrier and unblock those of the handtruck, after which he pushed the load into the shed. These tracks did slope slightly downwards so that gravity did help. However, sometimes gravity helped too much so caution had to be exercised so that the truck did not run away and slam into the preceding load. To help prevent this, the truck had a restraining strap on either end which was utilized by the operator. When the load was positioned, he would then crank it down so that it rested on permanent two by eight supports so that he could remove the trolley and return for another load. Each drying shed would hold from 30 to 31 loads. About 30 to 35 loads were made each day.

It was the duty of this man to put four more pallets into position whenever one side was empty. This way, the men taking bricks off the belt were not interrupted. The duty of trucking was rotated after every five loads. Although it was strenuous work, it was "good duty" since it gave you a chance to drink a dipper of water from the bucket, attend to any calls of nature and to get a few minutes rest.

So far as the division of work between my dad and uncles was concerned, my dad ran the shovel and truck, Uncle John took off bricks, and Uncle Willy ran the machinery. At 6:59 each morning he had his watch in hand and at exactly 7:00 he pulled the switch on the rheostat to start the motor, gradually increasing the power and speed of the belts that turned the pulleys. He kept constant watch on the belts to be sure that they were kept taut, putting belt dressing on them as required, checking and oiling the equipment and adjusting the water flow into the mixer or adding sand if required. If the clay was too wet, the bricks would not mold properly and if too dry, the clay wouldn't hold together.



Stephen Bertler & Sons Brickyard

Circa 1905-1910, based on the amount of clay removed in the background. An excellent panoramic view, taken at about Sixth and Waldo and looking southeast. The Fricke brickyard shows up in the far left background, to the right of the kilns and to the left of the white house. The land in the right background was part of a farm, as evidenced by the fences, barn buildings and animals.

Hours of Work and Pay

After the machinery had been started, Uncle Willy would hang up his watch so that we all could check the time if we so desired. It wasn't really necessary since we kept pretty good track of the time by the number of loads of bricks. At exactly 12:00 Noon he pulled the switch for a one hour lunch break. At 1:00 sharp the switch went back on and didn't go off until 6:00 P.M. unless something intervened. We worked ten hours a day for five days and on Saturday, we only worked nine hours. Saturday was also payday. I earned 30 cents per hour in 1936 and 1937, or $17.50 per week. Of this I was allowed to keep $3.00 and the rest went to help out the family.

I remember one time in 1937 that I mentioned to my dad that I thought I should earn 40 cents per hour the same as my brother Ralph. He said that I should keep still and be happy that I had a job. He was right for in 1938, my third year out of high school no bricks were made and I hired out to a farmer for the summer months for $20.00 per month and room and board. That winter I walked five miles each way to Geimer's bowling alleys in Two Rivers and spotted pins for three cents a line for open bowling and four cents a line for league bowling.

Drying Bricks

The time required for the bricks to dry would be from three to four weeks, depending on the weather. If rainy and damp, it would take longer and if it was hot, it would take less time. 1936 had some days that hovered near the 100 degrees mark and it often exceeded 110 degrees at the brickyards because it was in a hollow. Anytime that it looked like rain we would go up and down between the drying sheds and drop the rain flaps. These would extend about one foot down from the sheds and they furnished protection from driving rains that could cause the drying bricks to revert back to mud. When the threat of rain had passed, the flaps were flipped back on the top of the sheds.

Making Kilns (Kil's)

After the bricks were dried, they were trucked out, load by load, in the reverse manner in which they were stored. There were permanent tracks on the east end of the drying sheds as well as the west end.

The kilns were built under the long sheds previously noted. Each kiln was started from scratch and built on top of what had been the site of a previous kiln. The kilns were about 40 feet wide, 20 feet high and from as few as 12 arches to 24 or 26 arches long. Each arch contained about 26,000 bricks so that the number of bricks in a kiln varied from 300,000 to almost 700,000. Since the bricks were now "dry" as opposed to wet at the time of manufacture it was possible to stack them this high. When wet, they could not be stacked more than seven high or they would flatten out or bulge and therefore be useless.

The same orderly system of stacking bricks prevailed in building kilns as in

putting them on pallets. Arches were built by extending each layer or tier out a little further than the one below, until half an arch was built. Then the other half was built, starting a couple of feet away and working back, reversing the overhang until a complete arch was made. Total height of the arch was about five feet with the arching commencing about three feet above the ground. Once the arch was joined, bricks were stacked on top in the manner described until the finished height was reached. These arches extended the entire width of the kiln and were for the purpose of feeding fuel to "burn" the bricks.

A movable track was used for transporting the dried bricks to the growing kiln. As the kiln grew, the track was moved. Several loads of bricks could be set down at one time on portable bucks, so that the entire crew could stack bricks. After the kiln was as high as the men could reach, about seven feet, an elevator was used to convey the bricks from the pallets to the men working on the upper part of the kiln. Normally one man putting bricks on the elevator could keep two men busy stacking bricks. This was because the feeder could take two bricks in each hand and evenly space them on the belt. The men on the kiln had to take one brick in each hand and set it separately. It was also necessary for them from time to time to roll some wet clay into long shims to be used to prevent unevenness in the rows of bricks. At this time I mention that in 1907, my grandfather, Stephen Bertler, was killed as a result of a kiln of bricks tumbling on him. I do not know if this was before the bricks were burned or after. My sister, Frances, showed me a newspaper clipping which described the circumstances of his death.

Employees at the Brickyards

Circa 1905-1910 based on the age of George Bertler who would have been in his early 20's at this time. The names of the members of this crew were not recorded, so they are nameless. However, the identification of the three Bertler brothers is possible because of the strong familial characteristics. John is seated to the right in the foreground, George (holding a brick shaker) is standing in back of George. Notice the young lad, probably about 13 years of age, seated next to William. He is most likely what today is known as a "gopher", that is he, "goes for this and goes for that." He earned the princely sum of about 35 cents per day. The size of the crew, 13, is characteristic and agrees with the entries in the payroll ledgers for the early 1890's as to the number of employees. Notice the modularity of the bricks in the drying rack. An interesting observation is that there are no fat brickmakers in this group, indicating that this was indeed arduous work.

Preparations for Burning

Once the kiln was completed it was veneered with a double layer of old baked bricks, and one layer covered the top. The veneer wall was built around the fire hole of each arch, and each arch had a peep hole built in. Depending on the seasons and the demand for bricks, the kiln could then be readied for burning or it could remain that way for years without burning. The reason for not burning the kiln at once was financial. As long as the bricks were raw or "green" they were just so much clay. However, once they were burned, they were truly bricks and therefore assessed as stock in trade. Thus kilns were never burned before there was a demand for bricks.

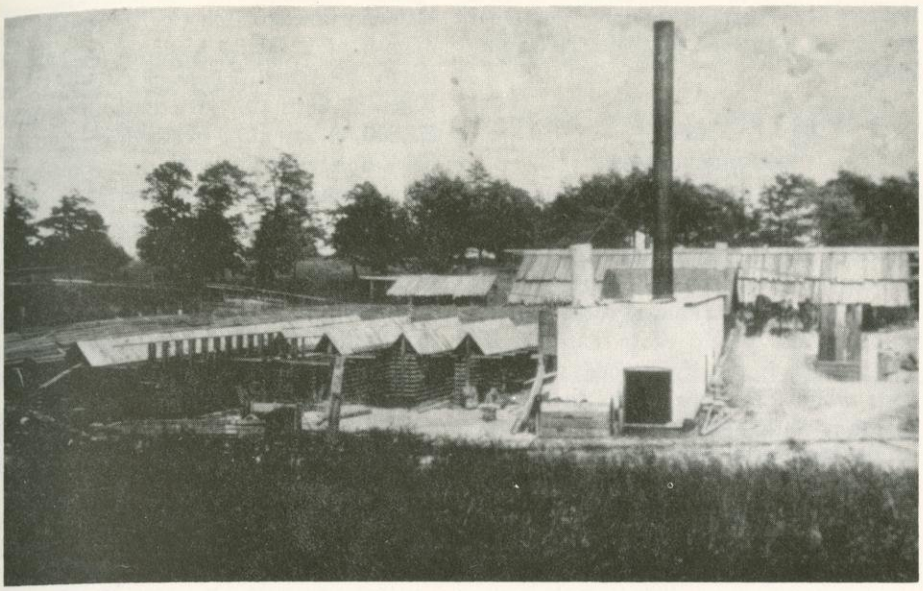
Whenever a kiln was to be burned, a layer of mud would be smeared over the entire outside veneer walls. In preparation for burning, hard cordwood would be ordered from northern suppliers and coal bunkers constructed. When the loaded boxcar(s) of cordwood was spotted on a railroad siding near the old Chicago & Northwestern station on South 13th Street, all hands would turn to hauling the wood. An old 1923 flatbed International truck was used as well as the 1936 model. The cordwood was four feet in length and varied in thickness, with thicker logs having been split in half or even quarters. Many of the larger pieces exceeded 100 pounds in weight. Since the wood was purchased by the cord (four feet by four feet by eight feet) none of it was unloaded until measurements were made to determine how much settling had occurred. Although a box car would have been loaded to the roof, by the time it reached Manitowoc it would usually have settled a foot or more. So you only paid for what you got.

Burning Bricks

The process of burning bricks would take from 12 to 14 days. Fires would be started on each end of each arch. For the first two days only coke would be burned. This was to drive off any moisture in the bricks. After that, the fire was built bigger and bigger with each firing, using coal near the doors of the arches and cordwood in the center. A long steel rod or "slider" with a short heavy canvas sleeve was used to push the wood to the center. The fires would be fed about every three hours. After firing up, cordwood would be stacked at each arch in preparation for the next firing. Once this was done, we would go back to making bricks or stacking them in a new kiln.

Fires were tended around the clock and the hired help would all want to work nights since they did no other work except to fire up. The first few days of burning bricks, we would work the regular 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. shift, then work overnight and then another full day shift, or a total of 35 hours on the job.

After about eight or nine days the fire would be built up to a point so that it could best be described as a "controlled fire storm." The roof boards over the kiln would be removed at this time. One side of the kiln was "charged" with as much cordwood as possible and then sealed off. The other side was regularly fed and cordwood was pushed in as far as possible with the aid of a slider. After about two days flames would leap out the top of the charged side. This indicated that the bricks on that side were baked. The other side would then be stoked up and sealed off. The first side would be opened up and used as access to feed the other side.



The approximate position of the photographer was at what today is 1012 N. 6th Street and looking east. The brick building in the foreground is set back about 100 feet from Sixth Street. The bridge in the left background is located at about 5th and Waldo Boulevard, between the Alpert and Sutter homes. There was a small tributary stream flowing from here and back of the kilns (kil's) southerly and easterly to the Little Manitowoc River.

When this picture was taken, power for operating the brick machinery was furnished by steam. Notice the large chimney for the boiler, the water tank next to the building, and the coal bunker in the left forground.

This is an excellent frontal view of most of the circuit the team of horses and the driver made to bring clay to the grinder. The earth scraper has been tripped against an anchored plank, which caused the scraper to tilt forward and over the pit and the clay then dropped into the machinery positioned below.

From here, the teamster would drive forward and to the right (driver's left) to the clay bank, pick up another load and continue the circuit back up the ramp.

The drying sheds in the immediate background indicates that the bricks made at this time were "hand-made" bricks, that is basically formed by hand in molds and left in the molds until dry enough to shake out. There was not as much clay used in a day's time as when more modern machinery was used. This is borne out by the size of the team which is only average. Later when more bricks per day were made, a larger, two-wheeled scraper was used. This scraper required two men to operate as well as a matched team of Percherons to pull it. These horses would weigh in excess of 2000 pounds and cost from $1000.00 to $1200.00 per team. A matched team meant that both horses pulled together as equals. This was important since clay from a solid bank is especially hard to work. The work week was 59 hours.

Then in a few days flames would leap out the top of this side. At that point, firing was discontinued and the kiln allowed to cool off. Even in the coldest weather the bricks would be too hot to handle for at least two weeks.

Nostalgia

Burning bricks is remembered with a pleasant nostalgia by hundreds of area adults. If they were children then, it was a time for coating raw potatoes and onions with wet clay and throwing them into the fire to bake. Or just baking them without a clay cover. Delicious! A real thick charcoal crust that you peeled (and burned your fingers in so doing). Salt was then added to the steaming mealy goodness, and the potatoes and onions were ready to be eaten. You would start out with a large size potato and if you were not careful, ended up with little more than a marble. Corn in the husk would also be roasted, as well as marshmallows and weiners on sticks cut from the nearby willow thicket.

Older persons who were adults in those days recall the Lucullan feasts they enjoyed when bricks were burned. A party would be organized, baked beans, ham and other meats prepared, and they would gather for a night of hospitality, which included a quarter-barrel or more of beer, card playing including skat and sheepshead, songs and talk. Something about the fires promoted a feeling of conviviality that has never been forgotten. Even if there were no party, many people would drop in just to bask in the heat and talk.

Loading and Hauling Bricks

When the kiln had cooled enough, the veneer wall would be removed to be utilized in the next kiln. When loading bricks, one man would climb almost to the top of the kiln. Depending on whether it was Uncle John or Uncle Willy, he would grab either five or six bricks and throw them down to a second man or catcher about halfway up. This man would then throw them down to the person(s) on the truck. This sounds easy, but since each brick weighed several pounds you were catching fifteen pounds or better, that had already dropped five feet or more. Also, these bricks were piled on top of one another so you had to be sure that you had one hand underneath the bottom brick and quickly put the other hand on top to hold the bricks together to be sure that they did not drop on your feet or the ground. Naturally those on the truck got dirt in their eyes, hair, and clothes. Canvas gloves were worn when handling burned bricks because these bricks are exceedingly abrasive. When the gloves were worn through on one side, they were reversed and worn out on the other side. After all, they cost 15 cents a pair and you didn't waste them.

The 1936 International truck that we had was a pleasure to work with. It had a hydraulic lift as well as being easy to maneuver. But the 1923 truck was a huge lumbering monster that had to be hand-cranked, as it had no starter. First you had to open two petcocks on the top of the engine, squirt some gasoline into the engine from an oilcan, close the petcocks and crank, being very careful not to break your wrist if the engine backfired. If it didn't start, you repeated the process. Once the weather turned cold, the water was drained after each use, as anti-freeze was not used. It had true power steering. You had to put both arms around the 20 inch hardwood wheel and exert all the power you could to make it turn. Steering it was a fulltime two-handed job, and you could get the speed up to 30 miles per hour on the straightaway.

Brick Grades and Uses

Because they didn't receive as much heat as the other bricks, those from the top of the kiln were softer, therefore they were used as chimney bricks. The bricks in the center were "selects". They were strong, modular, and decorative. The hardest bricks came from around the arches, since they received the most heat. Because of supporting the weight of the entire kiln, they were not always as modular as the other bricks. The tremendous heat surrounding the arches often melted the ends of the arch bricks. These bricks were normally used for interior walls where they were not seen.

Select bricks sold for $15.00 per thousand, delivered. A contractor bought them for 20% less or $12.00 per

thousand. In those days, cleaned, used bricks sold for $5.00 per thousand. When you purchased 1000 bricks, you received 1000. No more and no less. If some bricks were broken, both ends were put in the load. This is because the bricklayer had to break some bricks to size. In those days the bricklayers did not have the machinery that is available today for the accurate cutting of bricks. To the best of my knowledge face bricks, per se, were not made in this area. Apparently the proper kind of clay is not available. The bricks that were made were called "common".

Before cement blocks or poured basement walls became an acceptable building material, all basements in this area were built with common bricks or fieldstones. Many homes in the county were built entirely of common bricks. The older homes are identified by their rich creamy color.

Brickmaking Season

Brickmaking usually started in mid-May and lasted until sometime into October, depending on the weather. The reason for this was that hopefully there would be no frosts during these months. A hard frost would cause water in the green bricks in the drying sheds to freeze. This would cause the bricks to crumble and they were then useless.

In 1936 and 1937 we made about 2,000,000 bricks each year. No bricks were made during World War II. In 1946 or 1947, my dad and uncles were hired to run the brickyards and to make bricks for Hamann Construction Co. This marks th demise of a family business that laste nearly 90 years. A year or so later, Fre Radandt Sons Co. at a cost of aroun $4,500.00 was hired to cut down the cla bank north of Waldo Blvd. and use it a fill for the hole where the sheds, ma chinery and kilns were formerly located

Having a large family was just as muc of an asset to a brickmaker in those day as it was to a farmer. I believe that all o us "Bertler" boys worked at one time o another at the brickyards. This include George, Jr. (deceased), Walter, Ralph Gerald (deceased), Eugene, Donald, an myself. Paul Bertler, who was the son o John, also worked at the brickyards William Bertler had four daughters but n sons. I know that the Fricke boys als worked in their parents' brickyard.

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