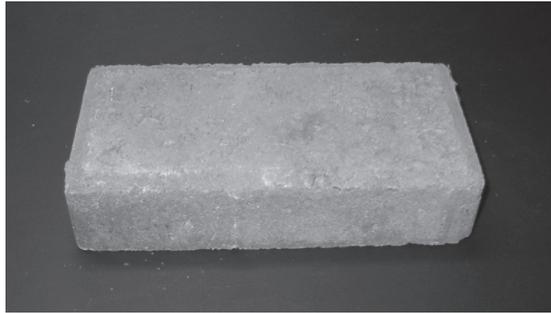


The Story of Bricks



Bricks are the oldest manufactured building material. The first types of bricks were sundried bricks. Sundried bricks, similar to adobe brick, were used in ancient Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt as early as 4,000 B.C. The chief occupation of the Israelites during their captivity in Egypt was making sun-dried bricks from clay taken from the Nile River. Later, it was discovered that if the dried bricks were put into an oven it gave them greater strength and endured the harshness of the weather. Colonial sundried bricks were first made in Virginia as early as 1612. For the next 300 years, bricks were used to pave streets and sidewalks, and to build chimneys.

Sundried bricks were usually made from clay. After the clay was dug out, it was crushed into a fine granular substance. Enough water was mixed with the clay to make a soft paste to be able to shape the mud. Straw was added to the mud and mixed in to give the brick strength. After the straw was added and the soft paste mud was wet throughout, the mud was ready to be put into a mold. Molds were dipped in water and then sprinkled with sand. The sand acted as a lubricant so the brick-shaped mud could be easily pushed out of the mold. The mud was packed into the mold. It was then pushed out of the mold as the shape of a brick. The mud brick was put in the sun and allowed to be dried in the sun. The hotter the sun, the stronger the brick would be.

Oven-baked bricks were made by the same process. When the bricks were dried throughout, they were stacked in ovens called kilns, which were heated by fire. The temperature in the kiln was increased slowly until it reached 1600 degrees to 2000 degrees or higher, depending on the kind of clay used. The clay particles became partly melted and fused together, making the brick hard and strong.