

10,000 bricks formed each hour at the Yankee Hill Brick Co.

By Lori Merryman

Three men manually piled clay, ready for firing, inside the cavity of the arched, deteriorating brick kiln.

Inside, the time-worn building, on a floor of crumbled clay bricks, the time-consuming task of piling up the bricks one by one resembled a scene from the late 1800s.

This scene at the Yankee Hill Brick Co., 3705 South Coddington St., brings back memories of a past era in the form of one of the company's kilns, built more than 75 years ago.

The company, originating more than 100 years ago, now makes about 20 million bricks a year, said Marlow Remmers, vice president of administration. The plant is one of the first six manufacturing plants in Nebraska, he said.

In an age of mass production and new machinery, an old style kiln still holds a functional role in the brick making process for the manufacturers at Yankee Hill Brick Co.

The process for making the bricks reminds one of a ceramics class, but on a larger scale. The clay for the bricks comes from four clay pits near the plant.

Water and an additive are mixed with the clay, which is then pushed into an extruder which shapes it into a continuous rectangle of wet clay. If anyone has ever seen a child create Play-dough figures with a shape maker, this is a similar process.

Rollers on the conveyor belt make the various textures seen in the different brick styles. The continuous moving clay is cut

into small bricks by piano-type wires on the machine. The bricks are then placed on racks and put in dryers at about 180 degrees for three to four days.

During this first part of the process, 10,000 bricks are formed out of clay per hour, Remmers said.

Once the bricks have been dried, they are ready to be fired, Remmers said. Most of the bricks are fired in the large tunnel kiln. The tunnel kiln is the length of a football field and can fire up to 2,100 bricks per hour.

The average temperature inside the tunnel kiln is 2,100 degrees, but a 20 degree difference will produce a different color, Remmers said.

The firing process is a 24-hour process, even on holidays, Remmers said.

Remmers said the cold winter weather poses a problem, especially in the older kiln.

"We use natural gas in the kilns, but when it gets too cold, we have to shut off the gas and switch to propane," he said.

The company already has an \$1,800 a day gas cost and this increases when they to switch to propane, Remmers added.

Yankee Hill Brick is one of two brick companies in Nebraska. Remmers said all of the bricks they sell are made at the plant except for white ones. This is because of the lack of a proper kind of clay to make the white bricks.

Despite this, Remmers said he feels there are far more color choices to be found in the clay here.

"The clay is one of the best there is in the Midwest, and that's why we're here," he added.

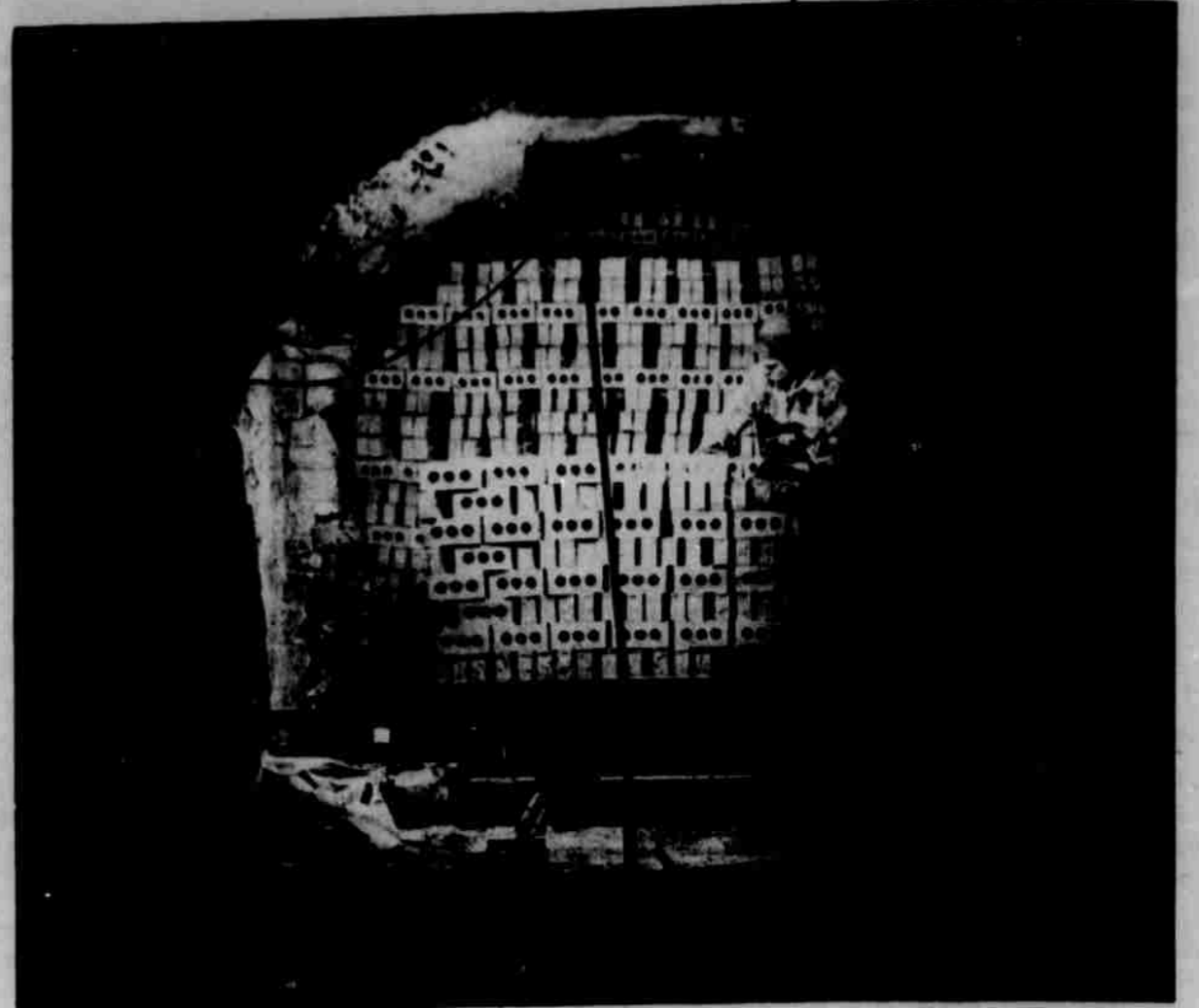


Photo by Tom Gessner

Clayton Heinrich piles bricks at the Yankee Hill Brick Co. in a scene reminiscent of Poe's *Cask of Amontillado*.

Protesters...

Continued from Page 1

Weldon said UNL political science professor Ivan Volgyes' recommendation to bomb two Iranian cities is unwise.

"I don't think it was a very well thought out statement," she said.

Volgyes said Monday that the U.S. should warn the Iranian government and then bomb cities to force the release of

hostages.

Weldon said, "I think Carter is doing a very good job in dealing with the crisis. Khomeini should make the next move."

She added the recent crisis shows how much other countries can push around the United States.

"The Iranian students are so mixed up that they really don't understand their motives," Weldon said.

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