REFERENCE · HUDSON VALLEY HISTORY

How a Hudson Valley brick was made

From riverbank clay to New York walls, in the 1800s and early 1900s.

Clay, a river and a growing city

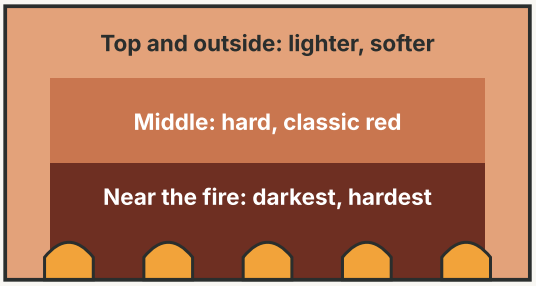
Glaciers left thick clay beds along the Hudson. The river carried the bricks down to a city that needed all of them.

The **color range** you see in reclaimed brick comes from the kiln: where a brick sat decided how it fired.

40+
brickyards in Haverstraw by the 1880s

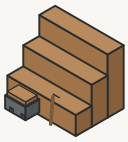
100s of millions
bricks a year down the river

~2 weeks
to fire a kiln and let it cool



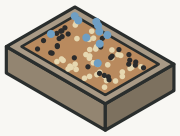
Coal fire in arches along the bottom

1 Dig the clay



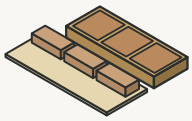
By hand from tall riverbank clay walls, in stepped benches.

2 Temper it



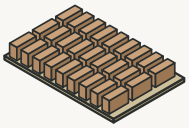
Clay, sand, coal dust and water, mixed to each yard's own recipe.

3 Mold



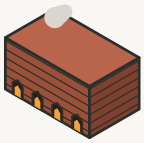
Sanded wooden molds by hand; steam machines by the late 1800s.

4 Air-dry



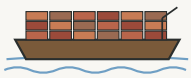
Laid flat for hours, then on edge with gaps for several days.

5 Fire



Stacked into a kiln with its own flues. Coal-fired about a week.

6 Ship



Cooled a week, sorted, and loaded onto barges for New York.

Rise and fall of the Hudson Valley brickyards

1835
Great Fire in Manhattan
New codes favor fireproof brick

1880s
40+ yards in Haverstraw
Hundreds of millions a year

1906
Haverstraw landslide
Over-dug clay banks give way

1930s
Great Depression
Many brickyards close

1970s
Most yards closed
Concrete and steel took over

Today
Reclaimed
The same bricks, back in use

History you can see

- **Color from the kiln**
  Light salmon to deep red and near black, from the same clay. Warped bump bricks came from beside the fire.
- **Marks of a past life**
  Old lime mortar, kiln marks, softened edges.

Why it still works

- **Proven by time**
  A century of Northeast freeze and thaw already behind it. Reuse skips the clay pit and the kiln.
- **Lay it in lime**
  Older brick is softer: use breathable NHL 3.5 mortar.

Three ways to buy

All made in the Hudson Valley · wall coverage with ½" joints

A sample

Order one brick or a few. The sample box price updates in your cart.

By the brick

Any number, from just one. Hold some history in your hand.

By the pallet

	Red, orange, dark	Antique, 1800s	Bump
Bricks	504	504	450
Covers	82 ft²	82 ft²	86 ft²

Count your bricks
Scan for the brick calculator

Chief Bricks · 15 Fisher Ave, Nanuet, NY 10954 · (718) 379-1232 · chiefbricks.com