

At Lawrenceville Brick & Tile - It's Out With The Old And In With The New

State-of-the-Art Plant and New Offices Replace Facilities Built in 1946

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LAWRENCEVILLE BRICK & Tile was founded in 1946 to supply the booming housing industry that emerged after World War II. The company has ties with a long list of prominent local citizens and can even boast of having both a former governor of Virginia and the founder of a major department store chain as long-term members of the Board of Directors.

The original idea for the company was to build a periodic kiln plant in the town of Lawrenceville, VA near the "creek" clay to be used in the process. John B. Rawlings, one of the original founders, talked to John Isenhour, Sr., about the plans, and he recommended that they build a "new style" tunnel kiln instead. Thus, the plant, utilizing the first tunnel kiln in Virginia, was built in 1946. The kiln was 4-brick wide and was supplied by Dressler. After production was started, the plant had great difficulty in using the very plastic "creek" clay. Mr. Rawlings again turned to Mr. Isenhour for advice. Mr. Isenhour recommended that John Whittaker, a consultant from South Carolina, be brought in to help find a better source of raw materials. After "disappearing" for several days with no contact, Mr. Whittaker returned to announce that a piece of property outside of town should be purchased. A deal was made without even testing the shale, and the company moved forward with the new materials to become a major factor in the local market area.

That first 4-wide tunnel kiln operated until 1966 and produced about 10 to 12 million brick per year.



Plant 4 Office and Production Facilities

Plant 1 (approximately 21 million/year) and Plant 2 (approximately 20.5 million/year) were later added by Harrop at the same location. Total production at the original "in-town" site peaked at approximately 50 million/year in the late 1980's.

Plant 3 was built by Harrop in 1991 at a new site on Highway 58, east of Lawrenceville. This plant was designed for 50 million, but actually produces 60 million at the present time. The newest facility, Plant 4, was added at the same location in 2002 with site preparation and construction starting in August of that year. The plant was built by Ceric as the primary contractor, and it is rated at 61 million modular cored units per year. The first cars came out of the new kiln in September of 2003, and the plant reached rated production in April of 2004.

Plant 4 has 1.5 acres under roof in the raw material preparation area and 2.5 acres under roof in the production area. Flow through the plant has been designed so as to minimize car movement and to reduce labor requirements. PLC's are used throughout the plant with fiber optic networking. Data for all phases of the operation is collected at a single point in the kiln control room.

Brick & Tile has shut down all the production at the old location in Lawrenceville and has also moved the

offices to the Highway 58 site. These offices are in temporary facilities now, but they will be replaced in the near future by permanent buildings located between Plants 3 and 4.

Mining and Material Preparation

Both raw materials used by Brick & Tile are trucked in from 12-month stockpiles located within 10 miles of the plant. One material is a soft shale and the other is a schist. The soft shale, supplies most of the plastics and averages 20-22% moisture content while the schist averages 8-10% moisture content. The materials are fed separately by a 5' x 22' feeder at the truck dump hopper to a McLanahan twin roll crusher. A 21-day supply of the ground schist and a 70-day supply of the ground shale are kept under roof.

A front end loader moves the individual materials to two feeders where they are blended at a 50/50 ratio. The ratio can vary from 60/40 to 40/60 without any major production problems. The mix is then fed to a J. C. Steele hammermill powered by two 100 HP motors. The ground mix is first conveyed to a 5' x 7' Midwestern 5-deck scalping screen and then to four 5' x 7' Midwestern 3-deck finishing screens. Belt scales monitor the tonnage feeding the grinding system, the tonnage feeding the hammermill,