1935

Tile and Brick Stand Up With Age and Weather

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Recommended Citation
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol15/iss2/12
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With Age and Weather

... by Virginia Berry

O VER 6,000 years ago, the Babylonians and Assyrians, in whose country no stones were to be found, discovered that burned bricks were their most satisfactory building material.

In our modern age people are again turning to bricks and tile as building materials. Our present day bricks are of the same general proportions as those of Babylonian times except that they are much smaller.

Brick and tile are being used more and more for our houses because they are fireproof, and through modern developments have been made waterproof.

The consumer is at a loss to judge when it comes to the quality of brick, so he must depend upon the reliability of the producer. One indication of the quality of brick is the amount of absorption, or the quantity of water it will absorb. The amount should be relatively low to make the bricks frost proof.

One of the greatest advantages of using brick and tile for our houses is ease with which they lend themselves to the working out of designs and plans that fit into the background where they are to be placed, whether it is in the midst of a city or on a wooded plot. When a roof is to be enhanced with vegetable growth to give the appearance of age, very soft tile must be used. Porous tile works perfectly for a thatched roof. The danger here is that the tile may have been burned too hard and will "sweat" on the under side, giving the same effect as a leaky roof.

A good tile roof is permanent. About 1912 when the city of New Orleans had to be ratproofed because of rats coming off the ships and infesting the city, the oldest house in the city was torn down. The roof was of Spanish S-tile, made of batture mud from the outward slope of the levee, and was placed on cedar rafters. After more than a century this roof was in good condition, having been repaired only where hail had broken the tiles.

Many of the old European churches and buildings that are famously beautiful were built of brick. Particularly in Germany, extensive study has been carried on in the working out of designs in laying bricks. No other building material can give such richness in color effects.

These same general ideas can be worked out in our homes by the use of unmatched brick. The design plan can be worked out on squared paper so that it is easy for the bricklayer to follow, and the finished pattern will have the beauty of the subdued colors of an old Persian rug.

In these depression days when one must count his pennies, brick may seem too expensive to use for residences. But if the later cost of repainting and the higher insurance rates on a frame house are taken into consideration, these costs will soon pile up to more than equal the added 5 percent for the original cost of a brick house. The tendency to use celled bricks helps to reduce the cost of the freight on bricks. The cells do not injure the strength of the bricks, but make bricklaying lighter work and the mortar, which in unsatisfactory work is more often at fault than the bricks, sticks better.

It is possible to secure either rough or smooth bricks to suit our needs and taste. Sand struck or smooth cut bricks present a rough surface, while water struck or end cut bricks are smooth.

In building a house, one need not stop with brick and tile for the exterior or with the use of the reds, or the buffs and light colors which are less common in Iowa. Glazed bricks and tiles of many different colors can be used in kitchen, bath room or basement, and may even find their way into the living room. They come in colors from the coolest greys to almost a cherry red. The use of metallic zinc in firing has made possible the greens and delicate yellows. Other processes give blues, but always the colors retain their characteristic softness.

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