

## Clay Brick Production

Clay is an industrial raw material that was prominent in the early development of Edmonton.

Since the first brick-making plant in Alberta opened in the Edmonton region in 1881, plants have operated at 15 localities within the current City boundaries. One plant is operating today.

In 1881, the Humberstone Brick and Coal Co. used the coal it mined east of the current Edmonton Convention Centre site as fuel to fire bricks made from river terrace clay quarried nearby.

Humberstone sold the bricks for \$20 per thousand; the equivalent current cost would be approximately \$560 per thousand.

Two Iowa farm boys aborted their trip to the Klondike during their stop in Edmonton, after hearing of the local high-quality clays. Frank and John Pollard started making bricks by hand in 1898 on 4.25 hectares that are below and west of the south end of the High Level Bridge. Brick production ceased in 1914. Many of the older brick buildings at the University of Alberta are built from bricks fired at Pollard Brothers. Brick rubble can be seen in the lowest river terrace bank just west of the first High Level Bridge pier.

Other brickyard operators in the first two decades of this century include P. Anderson and Co. who operated on the river flats between the current location of the Muttart Conservatory and the south end of the Low Level Bridge, and the Sandison Brickyard, which became Edmonton Brick Co. Ltd., who had their plant on the river flats at the current location of Victoria Golf Course: the major dip in the seventh fairway is a remnant of the clay pit.

The largest brickyard in northern Alberta, the Acme Brick Co. Ltd., started in 1907 at the location of what is today 137th Avenue and 170th Street. Glacial Lake Edmonton Clays were used to make textured, wire-cut brick by the stiff-mud process. Sewer tile, flue tile, and hollow building tile also were in the product line. Clays from glacial lake sediments at Athabasca are used to vary the product colour selection. This is the only brick plant now operating in Alberta outside of the Medicine Hat-Redcliff district.

### Source

Edmonton Beneath Our Feet: A guide to the geology of the Edmonton region (Edmonton Geological Society; 1993)