

# HOUSE *of* BRICKS

Architectural photographer Christopher Payne provides a glimpse into one of the last manufacturers of molded bricks in America.

TEXT BY CASSANDRA GERARDO







Unlike the manufacturers of modern extruded bricks, which contain wirecut holes that extract excess clay, making them lighter and cheaper to produce, the Stiles and Hart Brick Company, located in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and operational since 1886, produces over 70,000 traditional solid molded bricks per day. “It’s like pottery. The e are different colors and slight variations that make a façade more pleasing to the eye,” notes photographer Christopher Payne, who is fascinated with the product. “Once you notice them, you see them everywhere.” Stiles and Hart bricks constitute the structures of Ivy League institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Brown; pave the prominent municipalities of Massachusetts; and comprise Boston landmarks like Fenway Park and Faneuil Hall.





Previous page: A 100-year-old brick mold still in use.

Above: Brickmaking begins daily at 5am. Workers extract clay from nearby pits, place it into a conveyer, mix it with water, and then press it into branded molds.









Workers remove the bricks from their molds and cure them for 36 hours in wheeled drying racks, which are set on tracks. The machinery may be over a century old, but the technology is highly automated, directing leftover heat from used kilns into this preliminary drying areas.



The clay is then wheeled into a beehive kiln, where outside gas burners blow hot air into the oven, cooking the bricks over the course of four days. The position of the bricks within the kiln and on the drying racks will determine their final color. Shown here is one of Stiles and Hart's six kilns half full. Baked bricks are packed onto pallets, shrink wrapped, and shipped out across the country. The process from clay pit to pallet takes two weeks.

Christopher Payne is showing an expanded version of this series in the exhibition "Brick by Brick: The Erie Canal & the Building Boom" open from October 2, 2018–January 19, 2019 at the ArtsWestchester Gallery in White Plains, NY. For more details, visit [artswestchester.org/brick-by-brick-exhibition](http://artswestchester.org/brick-by-brick-exhibition).









# Oculus

Fall 2018

A Publication of  
AIA New York  
Volume 80, Issue 3  
\$10

*AGILE*  
**SPACES**

