

Masonry history

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Masonry Brick and cement have been important construction materials for centuries, and an experienced mason is an essential part of almost any construction crew. Masonry is a growing career that requires knowledge of history, materials, and techniques. Masonry consists of a lot of different things such as laying brick, block, or rock. It also consists of pouring concrete slabs such as foundations, driveways, or even pouring concrete walls. These skills require specialized training and practice to perfect. Masonry is the process of constructing a building from individual bricks laid in a specific pattern and bound together” (What is Brick Masonry?). This specific pattern that is bound together is called a course. “ Masonry is considered a durable construction method and brick is one of the most common types of masonry used in industrialized nations” (What is Brick Masonry?). Concrete masons and concrete finishers work outside together and complete the long process of pouring concrete such as foundations, slabs, or steps (Porterfield).

Concrete is everywhere: on highways, bridges, sidewalks, or driveways, just about all ways of traveling (What is Brick Masonry?). A variety of skills is required to be an experienced mason. “ Keys to success are hand eye coordination, manual dexterity, good balance, physical fitness, solid math skills, and team playing ability” (What is Brick Masonry?). Masonry has existed for centuries. “ The Egyptian pyramids, coliseum in Rome, India’s Taj Mahal, the Great Wall of China and some of the world’s most significant architectural achievements have been built with masonry” (Mason Contractors).

Artistic, strong, and durable masonry structures have withstood the normal wear and tear for centuries (Mason Contractors). “ Ancient records and

excavations show that brick construction dates back more than 5000 years” (Master Masonry). For centuries, before technology came out, the mason would have to hand form his brick that he was to lay in the wall later (Master Masonry). “ Many of the brick used in construction in the early American settlements were brought from England” (Master Masonry).

Records show that the first brick ever made in the United States were made in Virginia in 1611 and in Massachusetts in 1629 (Master Masonry). “ In 1666 a great fire changed London from a city of wooden buildings to a city of brick construction” (Master Masonry). Because the English had first built everything in London out of wood, it acted such as a chain reaction and burnt the whole city down (Master Masonry). The British realized that brick was a better material for their needs, and so did many other civilizations. Through civilization, architects and buildings have chosen masonry for its beauty, versatility, and durability” (Mason Contractors). Masonry is used to stop disasters such as the London fire because it is resistant to fire, earthquakes, and sounds (Mason Contractors). Since masonry is so popular, American masons can get expect to be paid well. On average a brick mason gets paid \$30. 50 an hour (Bricklayers). “ Bricklayers who work full time may receive benefits such as health insurance, paid vacation, sick leave, and retirement plan” (Bricklayers).

However bad weather or downturns in construction activity can reduce hours (Bricklayers). Fifty percent of brick masons make \$22. 56 with an annual wage of \$46, 000 a year (Brick masons and Block masons). Earth’s expanding population does provide masons some job security. “ As the population grows more schools, homes, factories, and other structures will

be needed” (Bricklayers). This growth will contribute to the demand for bricklayers and stonemasons. “ Employment of bricklayers and stone masons is sensitive to the economy; if the economy slows down, then so does construction” (Bricklayers).







Demand may also come from those who are renovating existing masonry buildings to maybe open a new business or make a new home to live in (Bricklayers). “ With a crumbling infrastructure throughout the country the demand for cement masons who can repair and build highways, bridges, and other structures will be high in the coming years” (Porterfield). New concerns over the cost of heating and cooling buildings workers mean that workers will need to build energy efficient buildings in the coming years also (Bricklayers). The demand for terrazzo workers brick layers and stone masons is also expected to exceed the supply of skilled workers” (Porterfield). One is not required to go to college to be a mason, yet it is good to take courses such as construction trades or business classes. “ There are also helpful high school classes that [one] can take such as carpentry, algebra, or physics” (Bricklayers). These classes can help in other careers too, not just masonry. “ Since there are no college requirements some companies may require [one] to be at an experienced level before they will hire [one] on” (Porterfield).

They may require one to two years experience to come on as a layer, or they may not require any experience to come on as a laborer who only mixes mud or takes brick to the layers. “ Apprenticeship programs do four years of on-the-job; training, [one is] paid for the time [one spends] on the job and [one receives] at least 144 hours of classroom training” (Bricklayers).

Bricklayers start out on the job by examining the blueprint or structure to see what work needs to be done, and then they start to unload the supplies for the job (Bricklayers). Bricklayers then lay the foundation, then they spread the mortar, then they tap the brick into place” (Bricklayers). Masons measure the distance from the reference points using levels or plumb lines (Bricklayers). “ Bricklayers mark guides to follow as they lay the material” (Bricklayers). Bricklayers start at corners because they are most difficult. The more experienced masons do the corners and the less experienced fill the corners in to form the wall (Bricklayers). There are a variety of ways to lay brick, and there are many designs and formats masons use.

With all that is going to be said, people interested in masonry will need to know that a course is a row of brick, a header is when the short side of the brick faces out, and a stretcher is when the long side of the brick faces out (Bradshaw). The first and most basic type of brick pattern is a running bond; this is where the bond alternates instead of being stacked upon one another (Bradshaw). A common bond occurs when a header is laid so that the small end only appears on the face of the wall. A stretcher is a brick laid such that the long, narrow side only appears on the face of the wall.

Brick laid in common bond with sixth course headers will have five rows of stretchers, one row of headers, then five more rows of stretchers, and one more row of headers(Bradshaw). Then there is the stack bond, which is where the brick is stacked right on top of each other (Bradshaw). There is also an English bond, which has one full course of stretchers and another full course of headers that alternate as such (Bradshaw). A Flemish bond is where every course is made of alternating headers and stretchers.

Then there is the herringbone bond, in which every course is laid at an angle with the angle depending on the direction of the course. The Flemish and herringbone bonds are the most difficult ones to lay because the style is so detailed. A mason must measure and level the work exactly because imperfections show easily in both these styles (Bradshaw). The chart below contains pictures of the six most common types of masonry bonds. These bonds are used in most commercial masonry jobs. Different types of bonds are used depending on issues like customer preferences and the types of structure being constructed. Six Types of Masonry Bonds Running Bond | Common Bond |   | Stack Bond | English Bond |   | Flemish Bond | Herringbone Bond |   | Source: Brickwork Guide

Masonry is a very important part of construction throughout the world. It has been around for hundreds of years and has grown and changed a lot since it was originated, which makes it a good construction method. The pay for a more experienced mason is outstanding, and the pay for an inexperienced one is still way above average. The demand for masons has gone down a whole lot in the past years, but I think that it will start to rise in the coming years. One better thing about the career is there is no schooling required; one just needs experience. These great reasons are why anyone able should get into masonry to start a great career for the rest of his or her life.