



Tile Heritage Foundation

for research and preservation of ceramic surfaces

Founded in July 1987 Tile Heritage celebrates its 28th anniversary this year. Supporters like YOU... members, major contributors, industry sponsors, generous grantors... everyone... have made possible the continued fulfillment of the Foundation's mission to Document and Preserve tile history in the U.S., both past and present. THANK YOU!



Kraftile at "Casa Irisada," 1931. Photo by Sheila Menzies.

E-News for Fall 2015

Here's What's Below

Casa Irisada: A Site to Behold

Albert Clay Myers: Inventor

"Can You Help Identify This?"

WACO Art Tile

Heath's *Tile Makes the Room*

Casa Irisada: A Site to Behold

by Joseph A. Taylor

Despite the shadow of the recent stock market crash in October of 1929, **Albert Clay Myers** and his soon-to-be new wife Adelaide* were moving ahead with their plans to build a handsome home for themselves using his company's ceramic products. "Clay," as he was called, then 40 years old with an adopted child,* had served as president and plant superintendent of **Kraftile** in Niles, California for four productive years and saw an opportunity to promote his company with what amounted to a "demonstration" home in the foothills not far from where he worked. The company featured the prospective palatial estate, "Casa Irisada," in a full-page color advertisement.



"Casa Irisada," Home of the Rainbow, was completed by 1931 when Clay and Adelaide Myers, recently married, settled into their new abode. The house was constructed of Kraftile products and designed to serve as a showcase for the company.

All photos courtesy of Steve Pierce unless otherwise noted.



Clay Myers outside what will be the dining room, overseeing construction of "Casa Irisada."

Born to a brick maker in Los Angeles in 1889, Clay Myers first appears on the ceramic landscape when he registered for the draft in 1917. At 28, with only three years of high school education to his credit,* he superintended the fire brick plant at the **Richmond Brick Company** in Greenridge, Staten Island, New York. Returning to California by 1920 he secured a job as superintendent at the **California Brick Company** at Washington Corners in Alameda County located on the boundary of Niles and Decoto.* In 1922 he partnered with **James Hislop** and his sons in forming the **Clay Glow Tile Company** in Richmond (California), soon to be renamed **California Art Tile**. His talents were recognized by the Kraft brothers from Chicago, who were initially making roof tiles in Niles, hiring him away from Cal Art in 1925. A year later he assumed his prominent position at **Kraftile** where he was able to maximize his talents.

Distinguishing itself from other tile companies in the state, Kraftile produced a structural tile with a glazed finish, dubbed "**Kraft-Enamel**," which was suitable for interior partitions and exterior curtain and load-bearing walls, basically combining hollow tile construction with a faience tile finish.

Exceptional quality was required and achieved with the company's exclusive one-fire "monolithic" method where the tile's body and enamel face were burned in one continuous fire at an extremely high temperature thus fusing the clay body with its glazed enamel finish. Tiles were also true to size and shape, entirely free from warps, cracks and checks. Masons found savings in labor and time installing this material, which would lay perfectly with a one-eighth inch joint.



“Casa Irisada” on Morrison Canyon Road overlooking Fremont, California in 2015.



Floor to ceiling pyramidal fireplace and flue adjoin the structural glazed block walls, which serve to both heat the house in winter and keep it cool in the summer.

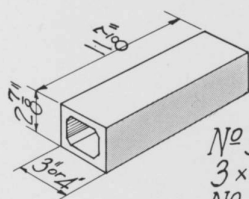
“Casa Irisada” serves as an exemplary Kraft-Enamel dwelling with both its exterior and interior walls featuring hollow tile construction. The floors throughout the house are tiled with Kraftile’s famous “high fired faience” finish.



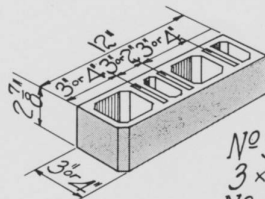
Living room, glaze tiled floor and walls. Note the fireplace on the left.

But times were changing. The stressful economic conditions brought on by the Great Depression took their toll. Clay Myers was relieved of his job as the company’s president in 1931, and he and Adelaide (now with two or three children*) chose to leave their new home not long thereafter.

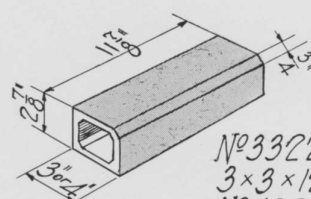
- 3 & 4 IN. PARTITION TILE -



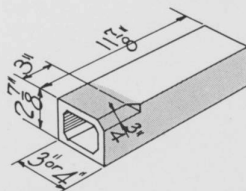
No 3320
3x3x12
No 4320
4x3x12
Stretcher



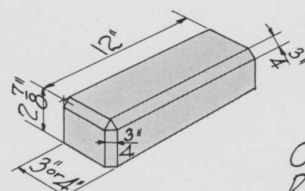
No 3321
3x3x12
No 4321
4x3x12
Return.



No 3322
3x3x12
No 4322
4x3x12
Flat Return



No 3323
3x3x12
No 4323
4x3x12
Right Up or Left
Down Corner-Shown.



No 3324
3x3x12
No 4324
4x3x12
Out Return-Lt.
Right also made.

From "Preview on Construction Details and Shapes of Kraft-Enamel, The Structural Hollow Tile with a Wall Tile Finish." Kraftile Company, c. 1931.

Tile Heritage Foundation Archives.



The dining room is graced with a dramatic glazed tile floor that remains in excellent condition after 85 years!

Despite its 85 years, the house today remains in remarkable condition. However, to live in this tiled environment, virtually surrounded by ceramic surfaces in every room, would require not only an affinity with the medium but a high degree of tile “nuttiness” as well! jt



The master bathroom sports all original accessories, not only the sink, tub and toilet tank but the soap dishes, cup holder and towel racks, not to mention the two matching light fixtures!

July 25, 1933.

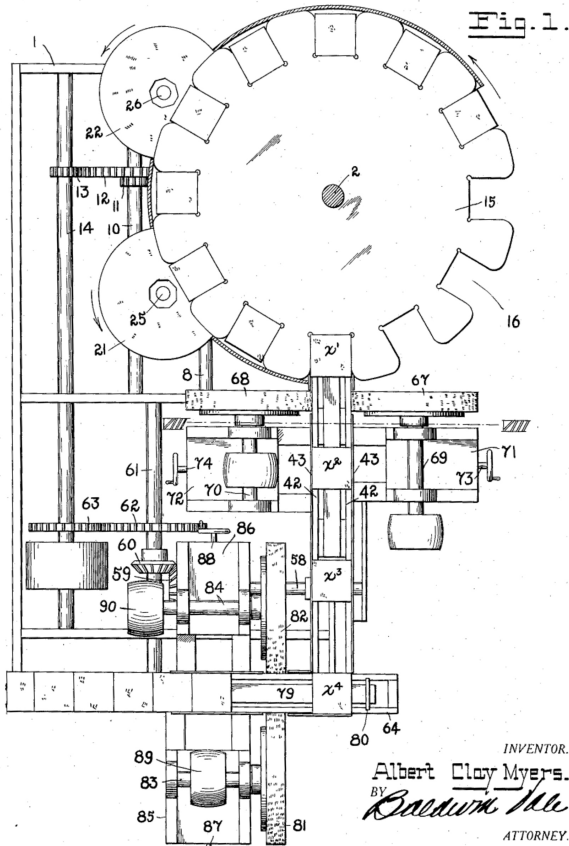
A. C. MYERS
TILE MACHINERY

1,919,639

Filed June 30, 1930

6 Sheets-Sheet 1

Fig. 1.



INVENTOR.
Albert Clay Myers.
BY *Barth M. Me*
ATTORNEY.

Albert Clay Myers: Inventor

While still serving as president of Kraftile Company, Clay Myers submitted a number of mechanical designs to the United States Patent Office in Washington, D.C., which Tile Heritage recently discovered online. The first, "Tile Machinery," was filed on June 30, 1930 and approved three years later.

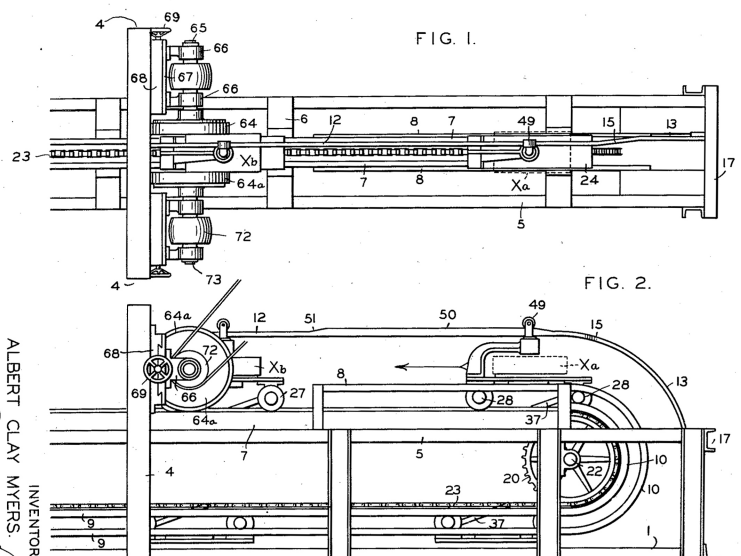
The objects of this invention were to simplify the method of producing tile and to lower the cost of production; to reduce the loss from breakage prior to the firing period; to produce a tile mechanically standardized as to thickness, lateral dimensions and edge bevel before glazing and firing; and to provide gaging, edging, and beveling machinery that would perform its functions on the unfired tile with accuracy and a minimum of breakage.

The 11-page patent consists of eleven figures (illustrations clearly numbered) and five additional pages describing in detail the numbered parts and procedures. A pdf is available by clicking here (or by requesting a printed copy from Tile Heritage).

A second patent, "Tile Fabricating Machinery," was filed on March 16, 1931 and approved two years later. The objects of this invention were to produce a structural tile unit uniform in three dimensions and suitable as an integer in the construction of building walls; to reduce the cost of production by minimizing the loss from breakage; and to provide dressing and gaging machinery capable of reducing unfired tile to a standard of accuracy in three dimensions of thickness, height and width, with a minimum of breakage.

This 10-page patent consists of eleven figures (illustrations) and four additional pages describing the numbered parts and procedures. A pdf is available by clicking here (or by requesting a printed copy from Tile Heritage).

* Special thanks to Bonnie Montgomery and Dan Mosier for their research.



INVENTOR.
ALBERT CLAY MYERS.
BY *Barth M. Me*
ATTORNEY.

July 25, 1933.

A. C. MYERS
TILE FABRICATING MACHINERY
Filed March 16, 1931
6 Sheets-Sheet 1
1,919,640



“Can You Help Identify This?”

It’s a familiar question here at Tile Heritage, people emailing, often without pictures, asking if we can identify a tile installation in their home or elsewhere in their community.

It’s always a challenge when we are emailed images and don’t immediately recognize what we’re looking at. Historic tile catalogs

(there are hundreds in the Tile Heritage collection) can be a big help, but when no part of the installation appears in print, we’re often at a loss and have to rely on others’ expertise.

In this case a general contractor from Seattle wrote wanting to know if this ‘30s fireplace surround was “worth saving.” We knew it was rare and had a hunch as to its maker; we urged extreme care were the tiles to be removed. We then called on **Ron Endlich of Tile Antiques** in Seattle to confirm the identity. Forty-eight hours passed. We were then informed that the tiles had been removed with only one “clean crack” (read “broken”), and a “small piece” that had flaked off another tile had been lost. “A 99% successful removal” claimed the contractor.

WACO ART TILE, produced by the Washington Brick Lime & Sewer Pipe Co., Clayton, Wash.





Tile Makes the Room

Good Design from Heath Ceramics

By Catherine Bailey and Robin Petravic

Ten Speed Press
Berkeley, 2015

Heath has been an integral part of California's popular culture for nearly 70 years, principally in the Bay Area where Edith Heath's studio, and later her factory, was located and where her ceramic products, her prized dinnerware and eventually her tiles, were in ever-increasing demand. The quality of her work, stylistically, appealed particularly to a select group of designers and architects, many representing prestigious firms throughout the United States and well beyond. The company did little if any advertising, yet its reputation grew handily by word-of-mouth.

Relieving the concerns of many that Heath Ceramics would close upon Edith's death, the torch was passed successfully to Catherine Bailey and Robin Petravic in 2003 resulting in a resurgence of a ceramic tradition, the "flat" part of which is beautifully represented in this new publication: *Tile Makes the Room*. (Hard, textured cover, 256 pages. List price: \$40.00)

The book is a journey, a guided tour of rooms, mostly residential, mostly in the U.S., but extending across both oceans to Europe and North Africa to the east, Japan to the west, Mexico and Brazil to the south, and Canada to the north. All of the 50+ rooms are tiled (about equally divided between Heath and other makers), yet the focus is shared with the numerous other features in each room. The tiles' size, shape, color and texture affect the ambiance of the space as do the tiles' location and the movement of light across the surface. Similarly, the paint and/or wallpaper, the cabinetry, fixtures and furniture, along with the selected art and assorted ornaments all play a role on each interior stage, blending into a coordinated and memorable design.

All professionally photographed, the rooms as a whole are spotlessly clean and unpeopled. The warmth comes largely from the darker tones and from the choice of a matte finish on the paper. An interesting exercise is to choose which of the rooms are most livable; another, which of the rooms, without peeking, are tiled with Heath (hint: think extended rectangle). With all the information provided in the Project Details, one is left wondering whose hands were involved in setting these marvelous ceramic surfaces.

Throughout the book the authors speak with one voice, write with one pen, so a reader does not get to hear either person individually. They do appear at their home and in their factory, but the book is not intended to be about them. Even so there is a natural urge to want to get to know the people who have chosen to make handmade tiles their life work.

Joseph A. Taylor