Bremen were being upgraded with bricks, and Lauw opened his first brickworks in 1855. He reinvested his profits to buy out the neighboring brickworks, as well as larger areas of land in Ammerland and the Frisian Woods. There, he had discovered, the lime-poor clay soil was perfect for the production of bricks. He was also able to extract peat, which was used for firing bricks at the time.

The port of Wilhelmshaven was founded, and an ambitious urban development program was launched, making the town into Prussia's major port onto the North Sea. Much of the town and its military facilities were built using brick, and the demand was enormous. August Lauw soon built his first Hoffmann kiln, a technological development that industrialized the production of bricks; he continued to expand his business and bought more land in order to extract the huge amounts of peat needed to fire his kilns. Before long Lauw had established a near-monopoly over the brick industry, and by 1870 his company was producing around twelve million bricks a year—making Lauw Bockhorn's most important entrepreneur in the early twentieth century. He was known as *the Clinker Baron*.

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Local historian Thomas Ponel informs us that August Lauw handed control of the brickworks to his son, Carl Friedrich, sometime around 1900. The company was subsequently passed on to his grandchildren, Carl August and Günther, in 1917. It was these two who would go on to sell the bricks used in the Mies villas, but, as Ponel continues, the bricks that were sent to Krefeld were not freshly baked. August Lauw's grandsons had been sitting on a surplus of bricks from Carl Friedrich's era, and the load shipped to Krefeld in 1929 was already thirty years old. The fact that Krefeld received this particular batch of old clinkers may well have been down to Mies's specifications: the expensive clinkers had to be first rate; the color should be somewhere in the narrow intersection of red, purple, and brown—meaning that blue or yellowish bricks were ruled out. They had to be classic-looking clinkers, in other words, neither under- nor overfired, and they had to be sorted. Bricks of this kind were in short supply during the late 1920s, however. Brick Expressionism was blossoming in northern Germany, and one could not exactly pick and choose in that way. So what load of bricks was Mies sent?

When August Lauw handed over the company to his son at the turn of the century, he had a strange problem on his hands: the extraction of large amounts of peat across Frisia had destroyed the breeding grounds of the local peat crows. Peat crows, a less widespread relative of the carrion crow, are now almost extinct in Europe. In Lauw's day, however, they were common in the northwest corner of Germany, in an area that stretched across the Bay of Dollart and over the border, as far as Groningen in the Netherlands. The peat crow is an intelligent bird that shares most of its traits with common crows. Thanks to a number of studies on wild crows in the United States, we now know, for example, that crows can bear a grudge and that they will maintain a dislike toward people they find threatening for several years. Crows have the ability to recognize human faces and will hound people who behave intrusively. They share information about unpopular faces with the rest of their flock, meaning that the hatred can pass from crow to crow, from generation to generation.

The forest workers hired to dig up the peat with their sharp spades and then stack it to dry began to report impossible working conditions because of the commotion caused by the flocks of angry crows that seemed to recognize anyone who had stolen their peat. Measures were taken with scarecrows and warning shots, but with no effect. The peat extraction was moved, but the problems continued. The crows' natural habitat had been

disturbed, and the spectacle grew. There were reports of deafening screeching, attacks, scratching, hair-pulling, and pecking. Thomas Ponel refers to the Zetel town chronicle, where, in 1898, it was noted that "the crows rained down on the peat cutters." After the son of one of the workers got his eyelid torn up, August Lauw took charge of the situation and hired several local hunting parties to deal with the problem once and for all. In addition to traditional hunting methods, they set up nets and snares. During spring, eggs were collected and crushed, and any nests were to be trampled. The crow was not regarded as particularly useful at the time, and their bodies therefore had to be discarded. Lauw erected a large, low-lying "crow depot" (a *Krähendepot*) in Neuenburger Urwald, midway between Bockhorn and Schweinebrück, where his two largest brickworks were based, and this was where the dead crows were dumped. Once the depot was full, and the sweet scent of death hung over the landscape, the building was sealed, and a new depot was built alongside the first.

Yet the problem did not go away. The bricks used to build the depots had been fired using the very same peat the crows missed, and you could say that the whole affair became one long self-fulfilling spiral. Crows are omnivorous, and in 1895, Lauw turned to rat poison. Strips of poison-laced fat and some primitive pellets were laid all over Lauw's land, as well as the adjoining areas, and before long, there was a noticeable drop in the number of peat crows, and the attacks gradually tapered off. Yet the poison also affected other creatures, like foxes, badgers, rats, magpies, wild boar, and mice. This was not popular among the local population. The cadavers were collected and dumped in a third "barrack" just beyond the first two crow depots.

There is no record of how many birds were killed, but it is widely assumed that Lauw's efforts were a major contributing factor to the fact that the peat crow is now considered a delocalized and endangered species. Stories of the Friesland peat-crow wars spread as silly-season news across Europe at the turn of the century. Around 1910 Carl Friedrich Lauw began to receive complaints about the three depots that had been abandoned in the woods. The local authorities ordered him to scrape out and dismantle the structures. There had been no shortage of money when the depots were built—this was the golden age, after all—and the depot clinkers were all of top quality: evenly fired, without much variation in color, including shades of golden, reddish-brown, with hints of purple. Carl Friedrich decided to clean and save the mossy, slippery crow-depot clinkers.

During the 1920s, as mentioned earlier, brick Expressionism had taken hold in northern Germany, and the Ruhr area in particular. Huge projects like the Chilehaus in Hamburg, Böttcherstrasse in Bremen, and a whole host of other public buildings—the beautiful Ohlsdorf crematorium, to name just one—meant that the brick industry in Bockhorn began to suffer capacity issues. They were expected to deliver the majority of bricks to these projects and were struggling to produce enough. The company had started to use tunnel kilns, which did make the production line more efficient, but it also meant that the popular clinker bricks became rarer (due to the more even atmosphere in tunnel ovens). Clinkers now had to be specially ordered and fired using the old kilns. This was the reason Bockhorner initially sent a load of yellow, lower-quality clinkers to Krefeld. Mies's contractor refused this shipment and returned the bricks. Mies was not a big enough name, however, and ironically enough he struggled to get hold of the clinkers he wanted because the Expressionists had used up all the newly-fired bricks in their ornamental, decorative façades. After six months of being pestered, Carl Friedrich Lauw sent the old crow-depot clinkers the three hundred or so kilometers down to Krefeld. These met Mies's specifications to a tee, and the number of bricks was more or less precisely what was needed.