

# THIN-BRICK Chimney



# Chase

## Give a metal chimney a historic look with brick veneer

BY FABIANO CRUZ

**M**anufactured metal fireplaces and their matching metal flue pipes are a popular option for homeowners and builders because they cost less and have greater installation flexibility than a similar-size masonry fireplace and chimney. But these manufactured fireplaces have a significant downside: You either have to live with the shiny stainless-steel flue pipes coming through the roof, or you have to hide the pipes in a wooden chase. Unfortunately, a large wood box sticking out from the roof is an eyesore on an older home, especially one with existing masonry chimneys, which is exactly what we were dealing with on the project shown here.

The solution that we came up with is a wooden chase covered with lightweight thin-brick veneer. Because thin brick is real brick, the veneered chimney looks like traditional brickwork, but it weighs and costs less. To add some visual interest and to better match the existing chimneys, we corbelled the top with increasingly thicker layers of brick veneer that we cut from full bricks on a wet saw. The finished result is a real brick chimney, a lower price, and a happy homeowner. □

Fabiano Cruz is the owner of Keystone Masonry in Bridgeport, Conn. Photos by Patrick McCombe.



### **Build a watertight box.**

We start by covering the chase—framed with 2x4s and sheathed with Zip System sheathing—with two layers of #30 felt paper. Metal counterflashing is tucked under the bottom edge of the felt, and will later be bent down to cover the top edge of the sheet metal that will be installed over the 3/4-in. plywood spacers, bringing the flashing in plane with the bricks above.

# BUILD A WOODEN BOX, COVER

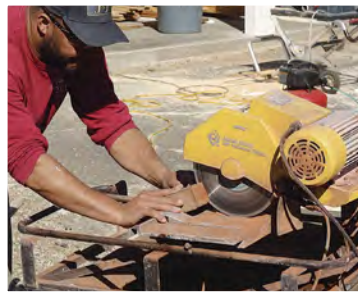
A chase covered with  $\frac{3}{8}$ -in.-thick brick veneer has the look of conventional stacked masonry, but it weighs and costs less. It also doesn't require a massive foundation underneath, so there's less impact on the interior floor plan.



**Stick the brick.** Back-butter each piece of brick before sticking it to the scratch coat of mortar applied to the surface of the chimney box, using  $\frac{3}{8}$ -in.-thick wood spacers to prevent the bricks from sliding down the chase as the mortar sets. For realistic-looking corners, be sure to order L-shaped corner bricks, which eliminate a tell-tale seam.

## Thick brick cut thinner.

To create a corbelled effect near the top of the chimney, you can switch from the manufactured veneer to progressively thicker courses of real brick, cut on a wet saw.



## Stack the corners.

Stack L-shaped pieces—cut from full-size bricks—at each corner atop the three corbelled courses of brick.

Set one brick alongside each corner stack before leveling from one corner to the next.



**Fill in to finish.** With the corners established, set a stringline along the top edge, corner to corner, to guide the placement of each vertical brick in the soldier course.

# IT WITH BRICK



**Grout the joints.**  
After all the brickwork is done, use a grout bag, filled with the same mortar used for setting, to fill the gaps between bricks.



**Strike the joints.**  
After the mortar in the joints has firmed up, strike them smooth with a jointer tool. For a neat look, always strike the horizontal (bed) joints first, and then strike the vertical (head) joints.



**Cap and flash.**  
Once the roof is shingled, cover the stepped wood panels at the bottom of the chase with lead-coated copper. Here we decided to cap the chase with stainless-steel sheet stock cut to accept the two chimney flues.