

## Paint or Stain?

by Henry Spies

### Finish For Weathered Siding

**Q.** I have been told that the oils in a penetrating oil-base stain will improve old, dry clapboards. Is this true, or would it be better to seal the weather checks with a high-quality oil-based or latex paint?

**A.** If the final finish is to be a solid color, I would recommend an oil-based primer for weathered wood. A high-quality oil-based primer will replenish the oils in the wood as well as an oil stain. But the primer will fill the weather checks, which the stain won't do. Two top coats of paint, either latex or oil, should be applied over the primer.

### Cold Chimney Cure

**Q.** For a brick fireplace and chimney on a gable end wall, how should the joint between the framing and the brick be sealed? Can a thermal break be included in the masonry to stop heat loss?

**A.** If the chimney and fireplace are solid masonry, the usual procedure to seal the joint is to bed a trim board in a good elastomeric caulk against the brick and the sheathing.

I do not know of any material that would provide a thermal break and that has the required fire resistance and bearing capacity to be included in a solid masonry fireplace. It is possible to insulate a brick-faced fireplace by filling the cavity between the outer wythe of

masonry and the flue with perlite or vermiculite (see illustration). A chimney-top damper can then be used to keep cold air from flowing down the flue.

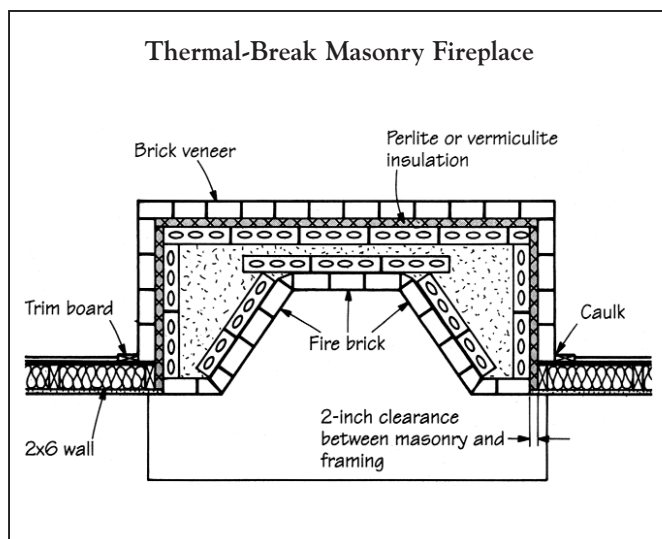
The difficulty insulating a chimney chase and firebox is one reason prefabricated metal fireplaces, which can be installed in an insulated frame wall, are so popular.

### Lifetime of Hot-Mopped Roof

**Q.** What is the life expectancy of hot-mopped asphalt on a flat roof? Will aluminum paint extend the life of the roof? If so, how often should the roof be recoated with the paint?

**A.** The average life expectancy of a hot-mopped asphalt roof is 15 years. If the roof drains well, its life span might be longer. The edge details are critical to the life of this type of roof. Joints in any edge metal must be maintained regularly, since the metal expands and contracts at a different rate than the roofing, which tends to crack the roofing at the joints. An aluminum coating can extend the life of the roof because it reflects more heat, reducing alligatoring. The aluminum paint should be reapplied every three to five years. ■

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A solid masonry fireplace can create a thermal short circuit through a wall. This can be prevented by building a cavity wall filled with perlite or vermiculite (shown in gray).