Your Home's Brick Exterior: Options for a New Look

Stone veneers provide beauty, strength, and permanence

Older Barrington homes are often full of charm, but sometimes it's difficult to completely un-date your dated home. Take your typical home built in the 1970s. You may have removed the old, dark trim molding, changed the windows, redone the kitchen, and modified the landscaping – but you still have that dated dark brick exterior and the family room fireplace that probably has the same matching brick. It can be difficult to change such fundamental elements of a home, but it can be done.

Stone veneers are a perfect solution for fixing exterior brick as well as matching brick fireplaces. Stone veneers are typically 1" to 1½" thick and come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and styles. The veneers can be made of natural stone or a manufactured stone. Over the last 40-plus years, manufactured stones have become so realistic that it's very difficult to discern what is genuine from what is a veneer.
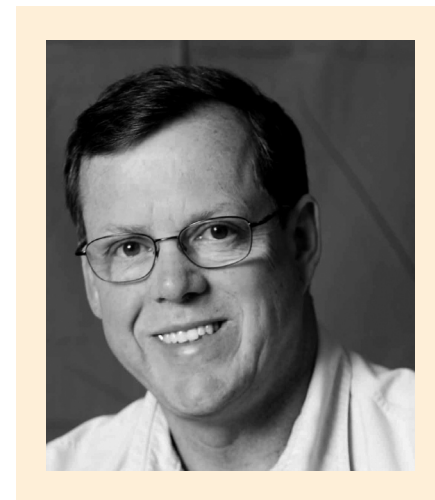
The advantage stone veneers have over full-cut natural stone are both weight and thickness. In new construction, the architect can specify a brick ledge in the foundation that will support the weight of either brick or natural stone. But in existing homes without this foundational support, such as those older 1970s models, renovators have to find a "work-around" solution to the weight

and thickness issues of natural stone. That's where stone veneers are a valuable tool for changing the appearance of your home.

You can purchase stone veneers at brickyards or directly from a manufacturer. The stone veneers are attached directly to the brick, using mortar to attach the veneer to the stone. A skilled mason dealing with stone veneers will provide the best installation, so it's best to leave this task up to the professionals. It's possible to do the project yourself, but you must consider that when installing the stone veneer, you're dealing with multiple sizes, colors, shapes, and textures of stone. Achieving a natural look by blending the stones properly takes years of experience.

When selecting your mason, look at examples of the mason's work; inspect the placement of the stone and the mortar joints. Is the mason doing this type of work every day or is he or she doing mostly brick and block work?

Design and trim are important considerations when you and your mason are selecting the placement of stone. Typically, stone veneers are placed directly over the existing brick, but in some cases an addition has been added, so the mason will need to blend the new in with the old. Existing doors and windows will need to be carefully considered, as will trim accents such as door open-

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ings, sills, and address stones. Generally, a 2½" saw cut will be made on the sides of the windows and doors where there is existing brick. This allows for full window and door openings and gives you the flexibility to change windows and doors at some time in the future.

The ideal time to plan to renovate your home's exterior brick is during the warmer months. Exterior stone installation should be done when the nighttime temperatures will not fall below 32 degrees. The exteriors can be done in colder temperatures, but tenting and heat will be required, with accelerants used in the mortar. In cold weather, there is chance the mortar might not cure properly. In the colder months you can address interior uses of stone such as for fireplaces, wine cellars, and themed basements.

So don't let that 1970s brick date the appearance of your renovated Barrington home. Take a look at stone veneers and see if they might be the right solution to give an updated look to your older Barrington charmer.

Cobble Stack Stone was used to rejuvenate the exterior of this home.