

Brick Repair Fort Worth: Tuckpointing, Chimneys, and Mailboxes in Cowtown

What Cowtown Homeowners Actually Call About — Honest
Local Prices and How to Hire Each Job Right

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Chapter 1: Brick Repair Fort Worth — Cowtown's Brick, From Fairmount to Alliance

Fort Worth is a big brick town, and it's not one brick town — it's half a dozen of them stacked on top of each other. The brick on a 1915 bungalow in Fairmount has nothing in common with the brick on a 2005 two-story in Alliance except the word "brick." Different clay underneath, different mortar in the joints, different reasons it fails, different masons you want working on it. After fifty years in Texas masonry, I can tell you that hiring brick repair in Fort Worth starts with knowing which Fort Worth your house is in.

This book is organized the way the phone calls come in. In Cowtown, homeowners call about three things above all else: tuckpointing — the mortar joints giving out; chimneys — the tallest, most weather-beaten masonry on the house; and brick mailboxes — which in Fort Worth are practically a municipal institution. We'll take each one apart: what the job actually is, what it honestly costs here in 2026, and how to hire it right — because the right contractor for a Fairmount chimney repoint is not the right contractor for an Alliance mailbox

rebuild, and knowing the difference is worth real money.

I'll give you the ranges the way the 2026 cost data reports them, with the "depends on" framing, because anybody who quotes your brickwork sight unseen is guessing. And I'll walk you through Fort Worth's housing eras — from the streetcar suburbs to the far-north master plans — so you can read your own walls before anybody tries to sell you something.

Let's start with the ground, because in Fort Worth, the ground is always the beginning of the story.

Chapter 2: The Clay Under Cowtown

The Dallas–Fort Worth metroplex sits on the Blackland Prairie, and the dirt under Fort Worth is some of the most expansive clay in North America. USDA soil data puts more than 75 percent of the DFW area on soils with moderate to high shrink-swell potential. Translation: the ground under your house swells when it gets wet and shrinks when it dries, and it does this every single year, on a cycle driven by our weather.

Here's the annual rhythm. Spring rains soak the clay and it swells, pushing up against your foundation. Summer arrives — a hundred degrees for weeks — and the clay dries and shrinks, sometimes pulling visibly away from the slab. Fall rains swell it again. Winter freezes catch it mid-cycle. Your house rides this elevator year after year, and the brick veneer on the outside rides along with it.

Brick doesn't stretch. So the mortar joints do the giving — they're designed to, which is why mortar is supposed to be softer than the brick. But fifty years of shrink-swell cycling wears out even good mortar, and Fort Worth's cycle is more

violent than most places'. This is why stair-step cracks — the zigzag pattern following mortar joints, usually stepping down from the eaves at the corners — are the signature of Fort Worth brickwork. When you see them, you're looking at the clay's autobiography written in mortar.

Two practical consequences. First: drainage isn't landscaping in Fort Worth, it's structural maintenance. Every downspout dumping at the foundation, every low spot ponding against the slab, every sprinkler keeping one side wet while the other bakes — all of it feeds the cycle that cracks your brick. Second: any brick repair that doesn't account for whether the wall is still moving is a temporary repair. Repointing a moving wall is gluing a hinge. We'll come back to this in the foundation chapter, because it's the most expensive mistake Fort Worth homeowners make with masonry.

The clay doesn't care about your zip code. A historic brick home in Ryan Place and a new build in Alliance sit on the same geology. The difference is what fifty extra years of cycling does to mortar — which brings us to the neighborhoods.

Chapter 3: Fairmount, Ryan Place, and Mistletoe Heights — Old Brick, Old Rules

Fort Worth's historic south side holds some of the finest old brick in Texas, and it plays by different rules than everything else in this book. If your house is in one of these neighborhoods, read this chapter twice.

Fairmount — the Fairmount National Historic District, south of downtown — is the city's biggest historic district: twenty subdivisions developed between 1883 and 1907, a mix of brick bungalows, Tudors, Foursquares, and Prairie-style homes. The brick here is a century old. Some of it is clinker brick — those irregular, almost stone-like bricks you see on true Craftsman homes — laid by masons who are long gone. The mortar is soft. On the oldest work, it's lime mortar: breathable, forgiving, and completely incompatible with modern hard mortar.

Here's the rule for old Fort Worth brick, and it's non-negotiable: **the new mortar must never be harder than the brick, and it should match the old mortar's strength.** Put hard Portland-heavy mortar against soft century-old brick

and the brick faces will spall off within a few years. The mortar is supposed to be the sacrificial element — when the wall moves, the mortar gives. Hard mortar doesn't give, so the brick gives instead. I've seen beautiful Fairmount chimneys ruined by a well-meaning contractor with a bag of Type S and a grinder. The repoint looked crisp for a year. Then the faces started popping.

Ryan Place — platted in 1911 as Fort Worth's first restricted residential development, with Elizabeth Boulevard's grand early-1900s mansions at its center — holds Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Mediterranean, and Classical Revival brick homes, most from the 1910s through the 1930s. Same rule applies: test the mortar, match it soft, hand-tool near the old brick. These houses also have ornate chimney work — corbelling, decorative caps, multiple flues — that has to be repointed by hand, not ground out with a power tool. It costs more. It's worth more.

Mistletoe Heights, Chase Court, and the Near Southside — more early-1900s Tudors, Craftsmen, and Prairie-style brick, tree-lined streets, mature everything. The trees are the subplot here: heritage oaks fifteen feet from a pier-and-beam or early slab foundation, drinking the clay dry every August.

Root-driven differential settlement plus century-old mortar equals the stair-step patterns you'll see on these blocks. Manage the trees' water competition — root barriers, consistent foundation watering — and the brick calms down.

Hiring for old brick: this is specialist work. Your mason should be talking about lime or lime-rich mortar, test panels for color match (wet mortar and cured mortar are different colors), hand tools around soft brick, and previous historic work you can drive by. "We do all kinds of brickwork" is not a qualification for a 1915 Fairmount chimney. Ask what mortar type he'll use and why. If he can't answer specifically, keep looking.

Chapter 4: The Mid-Century Miles — Arlington Heights to Wedgwood

Between the historic core and the far-north sprawl lies the great middle of Fort Worth: the postwar brick veneer city. Arlington Heights, Ridglea, Western Hills, Wedgwood, Meadowbrook, the TCU area, Berkeley Place, Monticello, Crestwood — miles of single-story brick ranchers built from the late 1940s through the 1970s, brick veneer over wood frame on slab foundations. This is where most of Fort Worth's tuckpointing work lives.

The brick here is modern and hard — good news. The mortar is standard Type N — also good news, because matching it is straightforward. The bad news is age: a 1965 rancher in Arlington Heights has sixty-year-old mortar on joints designed for twenty to thirty years. These houses are the textbook repointing market. The pattern is always the same: the south and west walls powder first (sun and weather), the chimney is ten years past due, the lintel over the garage is rusting, and the mailbox has been leaning since the Bush administration. None of it is an emergency. All of it is

overdue.

This is also the ring where you'll find the widest range of past repairs, good and bad. Sixty years of ownership changes means sixty years of somebody's brother-in-law with a trowel: caulk in the joints (not a repair), smears of mismatched mortar, painted-over rust, a chimney "fixed" with roofing tar. When I walk these houses, I spend as much time reading the old repairs as the original work. The old repairs tell you what the house has been trying to say for decades.

The practical read for mid-century Fort Worth: your mortar owes you nothing at this age — it's served past its design life, and repointing is maintenance, not failure. Partial repointing is usually the honest job: cut out what's failed (the weather walls, the chimney), leave what's sound (often the north and east walls still test fine). Any contractor who tells you a powdering south wall means the whole house needs repointing is selling, not diagnosing. Make him do the screwdriver test with you — sound mortar resists the blade, failed mortar powders and scoops out — and make him write down the actual square footage of failed joint. That's your scope. That's your bid.

Chapter 5: Alliance and the Far North — New Brick, Builder Shortcuts

Far north Fort Worth — Alliance, the master-planned corridors running up toward Keller and beyond — is the newest brick in Cowtown: 1990s through today, big two-stories, brick and stone veneer, HOAs, the works. The mortar is young. The brick is fine. And yet the phone still rings from these neighborhoods, because the problems in new construction aren't age — they're installation.

Here's what I find in ten-to-fifteen-year-old Alliance-area houses: **weep holes painted shut or never installed** — the little gaps at the base of the brick that let the wall cavity drain, sealed over by the painter or skipped by the crew. A brick wall that can't drain is a brick wall that holds water, and held water destroys mortar from the inside. **Flashing done fast** — step flashing at the roof-wall intersections that's more decorative than functional, which is why so many "chimney leaks" in new houses are really flashing leaks. **Mortar droppings in the cavity** — blobs of mortar that fell behind the veneer during construction, bridging the drainage

gap and wicking water sideways. **Unprimed lintels** — bare steel over every opening, already rusting at year ten, right on schedule. **Sprinkler heads spraying the walls** — installed by the irrigation contractor who never thought about masonry, aging one section of mortar in fast-forward.

The diagnosis rule for new-brick problems: if the mortar is failing on a house under fifteen years old, suspect installation before age. A chimney leak in a 2015 house is almost never bad mortar — it's bad flashing or a bad crown. Powdery joints on one wall of a 2012 house usually trace to a sprinkler head or a drainage defect, not to the mortar's lifespan. Fix the cause, then fix the symptom, or you'll be fixing the symptom again.

The HOA factor: far-north Fort Worth runs on HOAs, and HOAs have opinions about brickwork — matching requirements, approved color palettes, mailbox standards, sometimes even approved contractor lists. Read your HOA's architectural guidelines before you hire anything visible from the street. A mailbox rebuild that doesn't match the HOA's spec is a rebuild you'll do twice. And if the HOA sent you a violation letter about the mortar or the mailbox, treat the deadline as real but don't let it panic you into the first

available contractor — a rushed bad repoint is worse than a late good one. Most HOAs will grant a reasonable extension if you show them a signed contract with a real mason.

Chapter 6: Tuckpointing in Fort Worth — What the Job Is and What It Costs Here

Tuckpointing — or repointing, which is what the job actually is in nearly all Texas residential work — is the cutting out of failed mortar and the packing in of new, matched mortar. (True decorative tuckpointing, the thin contrasting ribbon, is a restoration aesthetic you rarely see on Fort Worth homes; when a Cowtown contractor says "tuckpointing," he means repointing, and that's almost certainly what you need.) The mortar is the wall's sacrificial element — it's supposed to be softer than the brick, so it gives when the clay moves the house. After twenty to thirty years of Fort Worth sun, storms, and soil cycling, it gives out. That's when you repoint.

The 2026 numbers for Fort Worth. National 2026 cost data puts residential tuckpointing and repointing at \$5 to \$25 per square foot, with most residential work landing between \$10 and \$25. In Fort Worth, straightforward work — ground-level veneer, standard Type N mortar, easy access — sits at the lower end of that residential range, roughly \$10 to \$15 per square foot. Second-story work, intricate matching, or

historic lime-mortar work runs toward the upper end, \$20 to \$25 and beyond. A defined section — say an 8-by-10-foot wall, 80 square feet — typically runs \$400 to \$2,000 depending on access and condition. Whole-house repointing on a typical 2,500-square-foot home runs \$10,000 to \$50,000, with the spread driven by stories, access, and architecture.

What moves the number in Fort Worth specifically: height and access is the biggest — scaffolding runs \$200 to \$600 on a typical job before a trowel is lifted, and a two-story Fairmount chimney with a steep roof is the most expensive tuckpointing per square foot you'll buy. Cut depth matters enormously — proper repointing cuts at least a half-inch to an inch deep; cheap bids cut shallow, scrape the surface, and fail early. Mortar matching is the craft cost — test batches, sand sourcing, and on historic work, lime mortar expertise. And brick condition: when the mason opens a wall and finds spalled units, those get replaced individually, which adds up.

The Fort Worth discount and the Fort Worth premium.

The discount: this is a big masonry market with real competition, which keeps honest pricing honest — you're not paying small-town mobilization premiums here. The premium: historic-district work costs more and should. Lime

mortar, hand tools, test panels, and a mason who's done it before — that's specialist labor, and specialist labor bills like it. Don't hire the cheapest bid for a 1920 Ryan Place chimney. That's not where you save money. That's where you spend it once, correctly.

Chapter 7: Chimney Repair Fort Worth — Cowtown's Tallest Maintenance Item

More masonry bids in Fort Worth are written for chimneys than for anything else. The chimney takes the worst beating on the house — full sun on all four sides, horizontal rain in a spring supercell, the occasional hard freeze, constant thermal cycling from the flue — and the mortar fails there years before it fails on the walls. The chimney is the canary. Read it and you know where the whole house stands.

Reading it from the ground: binoculars, after a rain if you can. You're looking for joints recessed back from the brick face, crumbling edges, and white staining — efflorescence — running down the brick, which means water is moving through the masonry. Then the crown: the concrete or mortar cap on top. A cracked crown sends water straight down the flue chase, and no repointing fixes a leak that's coming through the crown. Then the flashing where the chimney meets the roof — in my experience, half of all "chimney leaks" are flashing leaks, not mortar leaks. The mortar's fine; the metal pulled away or corroded. A mason up

there repointing should inspect all three as a matter of course. If he doesn't volunteer, ask.

The 2026 numbers: chimney tuckpointing runs \$500 to \$2,500 for a standard project, averaging around \$1,200 nationally, at \$10 to \$25 per square foot. Most Fort Worth chimneys — one to two stories, normal roof access — land between \$800 and \$1,600. Steep roofs, tall stacks, and ornate corbelling push it up; scaffolding adds \$200 to \$600; permits where required run up to \$300. Crown rebuilds and flashing replacement are separate repairs with separate prices — chimney repairs beyond repointing run \$200 to \$850 for crack and flashing fixes, and \$500 to \$15,000 for crown replacement, leaning stacks, or rebuilding above the roofline. Get them itemized. A bid that folds everything into one number is a bid you can't compare.

The Fort Worth chimney patterns: on the historic south side — Fairmount, Ryan Place, Mistletoe Heights — the chimneys are often the most ornate masonry on the house: corbelled caps, multiple flues, decorative brickwork that has to be hand-repointed. Budget for the craft. In the mid-century ring, the chimneys are simpler but older — sixty years of weather on original mortar, usually never repointed. In the

far north, chimney problems are usually flashing or crown defects on young masonry, not mortar failure. Same symptom — "my chimney leaks" — three different diagnoses depending on which Fort Worth you're in. That's why the mason needs to get on the roof before he gives you a number, not after.

Timing: don't let a flagged chimney ride through spring storm season. Water in a chimney is how a \$1,200 repoint becomes a \$5,000 rebuild. And if you're selling, the chimney is the highest-visibility masonry on the house — it's in every listing photo, it's the first thing the inspector photographs, and deteriorated chimney mortar costs you multiples of the repair in negotiation. Fix it before the photographer comes.

Chapter 8: Brick Mailboxes — The Fort

Worth Special

If chimneys are the most-called-about repair in Fort Worth, brick mailboxes are the most Fort Worth repair. No other city in Texas is quite as committed to the brick mailbox as Cowtown — they're a point of neighborhood pride, an HOA enforcement category, and the first masonry most buyers see. They're also, structurally, one of the worst details in residential masonry: a tall, heavy column of brick sitting on a shallow footing in expansive clay. The soil moves, the column leans. It's physics, not craftsmanship.

Walk any mid-century street in Arlington Heights or Wedgwood and count the leaning mailboxes. Then notice the direction of the lean — toward the street, toward the house — which tells you which side's soil is moving. It's a free geology lesson on every block. By year ten in Fort Worth clay, a leaning mailbox is the norm, not the exception.

Straighten or rebuild? Straightening a leaning brick column — jacking it plumb — almost never works and never lasts, because the footing is the problem, not the column. The

honest fix is a rebuild: take it down, dig a proper footing that gets below the active soil zone where the shrink-swell is most violent, pour it right, and lay the column back up plumb. While it's down, the brick-matching question gets answered honestly: after years of sun, the original brick has weathered to a different tone than a fresh pallet. Often the old brick can be salvaged and reused — which solves the matching problem completely and keeps the mailbox looking like it belongs to the house. A good mason will tell you upfront whether the match will be close or whether you should plan a complementary design.

What drives the cost: the column's height and design, whether the old brick is salvaged, the footing work (depth should be in the bid — if it isn't, the mason is planning to repeat the original mistake), and the extras: the box itself, address numbers, a light, stone accents. A simple column rebuild is one of the more affordable masonry jobs you'll buy. An elaborate monument-style double box with stone veneer and lighting is a different animal. Get the footing depth, the brick source (salvaged or new), and the extras itemized separately.

The HOA chapter of the mailbox story: in far-north Fort

Worth, the mailbox is often regulated down to the design — approved styles, approved colors, sometimes a single approved look for the whole subdivision. Check the architectural guidelines before you build. In the historic districts, the mailbox should suit the house — a 1920s Tudor doesn't want a 2005 monument box. And everywhere: a plumb mailbox with clean joints is the cheapest curb appeal in masonry. If you're selling, it's in the listing photos. If you're staying, it's the thing that stops annoying you every time you pull in the driveway.

One more Fort Worth mailbox note: the leaning mailbox is also a quiet signal to buyers and inspectors about the soil on that lot. A mailbox leaning hard at year eight suggests active soil movement — which is worth knowing before you buy, and worth mentioning to your inspector. The mailbox is the canary for the lot the way the chimney is the canary for the house.

Chapter 9: The Other Calls — Lintels, Cracks, Spalling, and Stains

Tuckpointing, chimneys, and mailboxes are the big three, but the phone rings for other things too. Here's the quick field guide to the rest of Cowtown's masonry calls.

Lintels. The steel angle iron over every opening — garage door, front door, windows — carrying the brick above. In Fort Worth it's rusting, on nearly every house, because builders install it bare or with a token coat of paint. Rust expands to several times the steel's volume, jacking the brick courses above it upward. First sign: a horizontal crack in the mortar joint just above the garage door, or rust staining bleeding through. Maintenance — clean, treat, prime, paint — every several years, and the lintel outlives the house. Neglect it for a decade and the expanding rust cracks bricks and pushes the veneer outward, and now you're rebuilding a wall section. Walk your lintels every spring. Ten minutes.

Stair-step cracks. The clay's signature: cracks zigzagging through mortar joints, usually stepping down from the eaves at the corners. Most are cosmetic — the veneer did its job,

cracking in the mortar instead of the brick. Read them by width (hairline to an eighth-inch is normal; over a quarter-inch gets attention), by path (through mortar is normal; through bricks is a bigger hit), and by movement (mark with a dated pencil line; stable is history, growing is a professional evaluation). Growing cracks, displacement, or cracks paired with sticking doors mean the foundation gets evaluated before the mason gets called. Structure first, masonry second — always.

Spalling brick. Faces flaking or popping off the brick. On historic brick, it's usually hard modern mortar or a non-breathable sealer trapping moisture — the brick can't breathe, so it sheds its face. On modern brick, it's usually water: failed joints or bad drainage saturating the wall, then freeze-thaw doing the demolition. The fix starts with the water, not the brick — stop the saturation, then replace the spalled units. Spalling that keeps spreading after the water's handled means the wrong mortar is in the wall, and that's a bigger conversation.

Efflorescence. The white staining on brick — mineral salts carried out by water. A little, once, is cosmetic: brush it off, find the water source. A lot, or staining that keeps coming

back after every rain, means water is moving through the wall steadily, and the joints are the highway. Find where the water's getting in — usually failed mortar, bad flashing, or buried weep holes — before you worry about the stain. The stain is the symptom. Water is the disease.

Painted brick. Fort Worth flips love painted brick, and buyers should know what they're buying: paint on brick is a one-way door. Once painted, the maintenance cycle becomes the paint's cycle, and moisture management changes — non-breathable paint on brick veneer traps moisture and causes spalling. If you're buying painted brick, you're buying the paint job's future. If you're thinking of painting to freshen the house: fix the mortar first, use a breathable mineral-based coating if you must, and understand you've just signed up for repainting forever.

Chapter 10: What Each Job Costs in Fort Worth in 2026

Let's put the honest numbers in one place. Every range below is 2026 data with "depends on" built in — the job defines the price, and any contractor who quotes without measuring is guessing.

Tuckpointing / repointing walls: \$10 to \$25 per square foot for residential work. Straightforward ground-level veneer: the lower end. Second-story, intricate, or historic lime-mortar work: the upper end and beyond. A defined 80-square-foot section: \$400 to \$2,000. Whole house (typical 2,500-square-foot home, ~2,000 square feet of wall): \$10,000 to \$50,000. Partial repointing — the honest job for most houses — prices on actual failed square footage, measured and written down.

Chimney repointing: \$500 to \$2,500 per standard project, averaging around \$1,200. Most Fort Worth chimneys land \$800 to \$1,600. Scaffolding or steep-roof access: add \$200 to \$600. Beyond repointing — crack and flashing fixes: \$200 to \$850; crown replacement, leaning stacks, rebuilds above the roofline: \$500 to \$15,000. Small repairs can be as little as

\$300.

Brick mailbox rebuild: one of the more affordable masonry jobs for a simple column — the price moves with height, design, footing depth, brick salvage versus new, and extras (box, numbers, lighting, stone accents). Get the footing depth in writing. An elaborate monument-style mailbox is priced like the small construction project it is.

Lintel service: maintenance-level work — clean, treat, prime, paint, repoint the cracked joints above — is modest. Full lintel replacement with brick rebuild above is a bigger job: scaffolding, brick matching, multiple days. The cost curve is the entire argument for catching rust early.

What moves every number: access and height, actual failed square footage versus quoted, cut depth (half-inch minimum — shallow cuts are how cheap bids cheat), mortar matching method (test batches cost time; one-bag-fits-all costs you later), brick condition (spalled units replaced individually), and protection and cleanup (grinding dust goes everywhere; the bid should say how it's handled).

The Fort Worth market note: this is a big, competitive masonry market, which keeps honest pricing honest — but it

also attracts traveling crews after every hail season, and the dramatically-cheap bid usually belongs to a crew you'll never see again. The mason who'll drive back across town to honor his warranty is worth a premium. Never pay in full upfront; deposit for materials is normal, balance on completion after you walk the work. A real workmanship warranty on repointing runs two to five years — "lifetime" on mortar is a sales line, because mortar wears and the clay keeps moving.

Chapter 11: Reading a Fort Worth Bid — Job by Job

A bid is a story about the work. Here's how to read it for each of Cowtown's big three — and what the too-cheap version leaves out.

The tuckpointing bid should list: each elevation and its square footage, the square footage of joint actually being cut (not just "repoint south wall"), cut depth, mortar type and color-match method ("test batch" are the magic words), access equipment, protection and cleanup, schedule, price, payment terms, and warranty. Missing cut depth means he's planning to scrape and smear — looks fine for a season, pops early. Missing matching method means one bag of gray for the whole house. On historic work, the bid should name the mortar — lime or lime-rich — and describe hand-tooling near old brick. If it doesn't, he's not equipped for your 1920s chimney.

The chimney bid should list: the repoint scope separately from the crown work, the flashing work, and any flue or cap work — itemized, not bundled. "Chimney repair: \$1,800" tells

you nothing; "repoint 60 sq ft chimney \$1,100, rebuild crown \$450, replace flashing \$250" tells you everything. It should also state how he's getting up there — ladders, roof jacks, scaffolding — because access is where surprise charges breed. And it should include the inspection: crown, flashing, flue condition, in writing, before the work starts. The mason who finds the cracked crown mid-job and presents it as a surprise is either inexperienced or strategic. Neither is what you want.

The mailbox bid should list: footing depth and dimensions, brick source (salvaged from the existing column or new — and if new, how the match was verified), mortar type and color, the box and hardware (new or reused), extras itemized, and cleanup including the old footing debris. No footing depth in the bid means he's pouring another shallow pad and you'll be reading this chapter again in ten years.

The universal tells. Three bids, interview the middle. Specific answers are honest; vague answers are warnings. "We'll take care of it" is not a scope of work. Photos are not references — addresses you can drive by are references. Everything in writing: scope, materials, schedule, price, payment, warranty, exclusions. The cheapest bid is missing at

least two of those, and what's missing is what you'll pay for later.

The Fort Worth-specific check: ask where he's worked. "Fairmount and Ryan Place for fifteen years" means something for old brick. "All over the metroplex" means nothing for your 1915 chimney. Local knowledge — which neighborhoods have the soft brick, how the clay behaves on your side of town, how to schedule around a Fort Worth summer so mortar cures instead of flash-drying — is worth money on every one of these jobs.

Chapter 12: Who to Hire for What — Mason, Chimney Specialist, or Handyman?

One of the most common Fort Worth mistakes is hiring the right trade for the wrong job — or the wrong trade for the right job. Here's the breakdown.

Hire a mason for: all repointing and tuckpointing, chimney repointing and rebuilds, mailbox rebuilds, lintel replacement, spalled brick replacement, and any work where mortar matching matters. Repointing is masonry work — not handyman work, not painter work. Ask how many repointing jobs he's done, ask to see one you can drive by, ask what mortar he'll use and why. The answers tell you everything.

Hire a chimney specialist for: flue liners, chimney caps and crowns involving the flue system, anything involving fireplace safety and draft, and chimney waterproofing systems. There's overlap with masons on repointing — many good masons do excellent chimney work — but when the job involves the inside of the chimney (liner, smoke chamber, damper), you want the chimney specialist. If your mason says "I don't do liners," that's honesty, not a deficiency. Hire both.

Hire a handyman for: none of the big three. I'll be direct: a handyman repointing your chimney is how you get caulk in the joints and smeared mortar on the brick faces — work that's nearly impossible to undo without damaging the brick. The materials cost almost nothing; it's all skill. Save the handyman for the downspout extensions, the gutter cleaning, the sprinkler redirect — the water work from the other chapters. That's honest handyman work that genuinely protects your masonry.

The historic-district rule: for pre-1930s brick anywhere in Fort Worth — Fairmount, Ryan Place, Mistletoe Heights, the Near Southside — hire the mason with historic experience specifically. Lime mortar, soft brick, hand tools, test panels. This is a sub-specialty. The best subdivision-veneer mason in Alliance is not automatically the right mason for a 1915 Fairmount chimney, and a good contractor will tell you so.

The one-call option: if you'd rather not assemble the trades yourself, hire the masonry contractor who'll tell you straight which parts are his and which parts need the chimney specialist — and who'll coordinate rather than improvising outside his trade. That's what we do: [brick repair in Fort Worth](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) across all of Cowtown's neighborhoods, honest about what's ours and what's somebody else's. And if you want to keep learning before you call

anybody, my [free brick repair books](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>) cover the rest of what your walls are trying to tell you — tuckpointing, chimneys, cracks, all of it.

Chapter 13: The Cowtown Walk-Your-Walls Checklist

Twenty minutes, a screwdriver, binoculars, and this chapter. Do it once a year — spring is ideal — and you'll know whether you need a mason this year or in five, and you'll buy smarter when the bids come in.

The chimney. Binoculars. Recessed or crumbling joints, white staining running down the brick, cracked crown, flashing condition where it meets the roof. The chimney is the canary — its condition predicts the walls by years.

The sun sides. South and west walls first. Screwdriver test a dozen joints per wall: sound mortar resists, failed mortar powders or scoops out. Note the approximate square footage of failed joint per wall — that's your scope number.

Above every opening. Garage door, front door, windows — the horizontal crack above the lintel, the rust bleed through the mortar. Note which openings show it. This is your lintel maintenance list.

The corners. Stair-step cracking stepping down from the

eaves. Date-mark any crack with a pencil line; check monthly. Stable is history. Growing is a professional evaluation — foundation first, mason second.

The base of the walls. Mortar crumbs mean active deterioration. Mulch and soil must sit below the weep holes — buried weep holes drain nothing. Look for the weep holes; if you can't find them, that's information.

Where the sprinklers hit. Every head spraying the wall is fast-forwarding that section's mortar. Redirect today — free — repair later.

The mailbox. Plumb or leaning, and which direction. In Fort Worth clay, a lean by year ten is normal; the direction tells you about the soil on that side of the lot.

After a rain. Walk the downspouts. Any discharge near the foundation gets an extension. Any ponding against the slab gets regraded. This is the free work that determines how long the paid work lasts.

The historic-district extras. In Fairmount, Ryan Place, and Mistletoe Heights, add: check for spalling faces (soft brick + hard mortar or trapped moisture), check previous repointing for hardness mismatch (tap it — hard, glassy mortar against

soft old brick is a problem), and look at the trees — root competition on the dry side of the house plus old mortar equals corner cracking.

What you're not doing: diagnosing structure. Displacement across a crack, horizontal cracking, bulging walls, cracks through bricks — photograph them, note them, and call a professional. Don't repoint over active movement.

Write it down. Hand the notes to the mason. The homeowner who's done the walk gets better bids — the contractor knows you're paying attention, and he prices accordingly.

Chapter 14: When the Soil Is the Problem — Foundation Before Masonry

This is the chapter that saves Fort Worth homeowners the most money, because it's about not buying the wrong repair in a city built on moving clay.

Brick veneer is a curtain. It hangs on the house; it isn't the house. When the curtain cracks, the instinct is to fix the curtain. But in a city where 75 percent of the ground has moderate to high shrink-swell potential, the crack in the curtain is often telling you about the rod — the foundation and the soil. Repointing over an active foundation problem is the most expensive kind of wasted money: you pay for the masonry, it cracks again, and then you pay for the foundation work anyway.

Call the mason first when: cracks are hairline to an eighth of an inch, stable across a season of pencil-mark checks, doors and windows work fine, floors feel level, and the damage is in the mortar joints — not through bricks, not with displacement. That's maintenance. Repoint it with confidence.

Call the foundation professional first when: cracks exceed a quarter inch, they're growing, doors or windows stick, floors slope, cracks run through bricks rather than just mortar, there's displacement across a crack, or the same stair-step pattern shows up inside on drywall. That's movement, and the masonry waits until the movement is understood and addressed.

The Fort Worth gray zone: the stable-but-wide crack. Not moving, but open enough to bother you and let water in. It can be repointed — but go in with eyes open: the clay may move again and the crack may reopen. A good mason tells you this upfront and doesn't warranty against the earth moving. Nobody warranties against the earth moving.

The trade-separation rule: foundation work and masonry work are different trades, and the person selling you one shouldn't be diagnosing the other for profit. The foundation company that "also does brick repair" and the mason who "also levels foundations" both deserve a second opinion from the other trade. Get the foundation evaluation from a foundation specialist, the masonry bid from a mason, and make your decision with both pieces of paper in front of you. In a clay city like Fort Worth, this discipline is worth

thousands.

The insurance note: homeowners insurance almost never covers any of this. Worn mortar is maintenance, and clay-soil movement is typically excluded as earth movement — foundation claims related to expansive soil are among the most frequently denied in Texas. Don't let anyone sell you a masonry job on the promise of an insurance claim for "settling." The claim will be denied and you'll own the bill.

A Final Word Before You Call

You now know what most Fort Worth homeowners never learn before hiring: which Cowtown your house is in — the historic south side with its century-old brick and soft mortar, the mid-century miles with their honest sixty-year-old veneer, or the far north with its young brick and builder shortcuts. You know the three jobs this city calls about — tuckpointing, chimneys, mailboxes — what each one honestly costs in 2026, and who to hire for each. You can read a bid, read a crack, and read the clay underneath it all.

The mortar on your walls has one job: be the part that gives so the brick doesn't have to. In Fort Worth's clay, it gives a little faster than it would somewhere else. That's not a defect

— that's the deal this city made with the Blackland Prairie. Honor the deal: control the water, watch the lintels, read the cracks before you erase them, match the mortar to the brick, and pay the honest price once instead of the cheap price twice.

Your walls have been talking. Now you speak the language.

About the Author

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