

Granbury Brick: Lake Humidity, Limestone Country, and Masonry Care

What the Lake, the Rock, and Fifty Years of Building Have
Done to Hood County Brick — and How to Keep Yours
Standing Straight

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Chapter 1: Brick Repair in Granbury — Why This Town Ages Masonry Its Own Way

I've been doing this 50 years, and I can tell you: every town in Texas wears out its brick a little differently. Dallas clay heaves. Fort Worth wind drives rain sideways into mortar joints. And Granbury — Granbury has the lake.

Brick repair in Granbury, Texas isn't the same job as brick repair in Arlington or Weatherford, and anybody who tells you "brick is brick" hasn't spent enough time on a ladder in Hood County. You've got Lake Granbury holding 8,300 acres of water with 103 miles of shoreline wrapped around this town. You've got limestone ledges under half the county and sandy Cross Timbers soil under the other half. And you've got a housing stock that runs the whole spread — 1880s brick on the square, Brazos limestone buildings older than the state capitol's younger cousins, 1970s lake cabins that got enclosed into full-time houses, brick veneer ranch homes in Pecan Plantation, and new construction going up as fast as the builders can pour slabs.

All of that matters to your brick. The lake keeps the air humid

and feeds morning dew to every north-facing wall in town nine months a year. The limestone rock under your foundation doesn't move the way Dallas clay does — which is good — but it also doesn't drain the way you'd hope, which matters. And the age of your house tells me more about your mortar than any inspection gadget will.

This book is the local version of the straight talk I've been giving Texas homeowners my whole working life. No scare tactics. No "sign today" pressure. Just what Granbury does to masonry, what to watch for, what it costs in 2026, and how to hire the right man when it's time.

Let's start with the big thing — the water.

Chapter 2: The Lake Effect — What 103 Miles of Shoreline Does to Brick

Lake Granbury was impounded in September 1969 when they closed the De Cordova Bend Dam on the Brazos River, and the town has never been the same since. Between 1960 and 1980, Hood County's population tripled — 5,443 to 17,714 — and in the 1970s it was one of the fastest-growing counties in the entire country. People came for the water, and they built houses to look at it. That means an enormous share of Granbury's brick sits within a mile or two of the lake, breathing lake air every day.

Here's what lake humidity does to masonry, plain and simple.

Mortar stays damp longer. Brick and mortar are porous — they drink water. On a house five miles from the lake, a wall gets wet in a rainstorm and dries out in a day. On a lakeside house, that same wall gets wet and stays damp for two or three days because the air itself is saturated. Damp mortar doesn't cure harder; it erodes faster. The freeze-thaw cycles we get in a North Texas winter — and we do get them, every year — hit damp mortar ten times harder than dry mortar.

Water gets into the pores, freezes, expands, and pops the face off the mortar joint. One winter won't kill a wall. Fifteen winters of lake-damp mortar will.

The north and east walls go first. This is true everywhere, but it's exaggerated near the lake. The south and west walls get sun that bakes them dry. The north wall of a lakeside home in Granbury can stay shaded and damp for weeks at a stretch in winter and spring. When I walk a property in De Cordova Bend or Pecan Plantation, I check the north elevation first, because that's where the mortar fails first. If your north wall looks ten years older than your south wall, the lake is why.

Algae, mildew, and that green film. Walk the older lakefront neighborhoods and look at the shaded brick. You'll see it — a green or black film growing on the mortar joints, sometimes on the brick faces too. That's biological growth feeding on constant moisture. It looks like a cleaning problem, and partly it is, but it's also a diagnostic: where algae grows thick, water is dwelling. And where water dwells, mortar is softening. Cleaning the wall helps it look better. Fixing the moisture — gutters, grading, sprinkler heads spraying the wall — is what actually saves the mortar.

Sprinklers are the silent killer. This one deserves its own paragraph because I see it on half the lakeside houses I look at. The homeowner waters the lawn, the sprinkler head arcs right onto the brick, and the bottom two feet of wall gets soaked every morning from March to October. Six months a year, twice a week, the same stretch of mortar never fully dries. In five years the joints at the base of the wall are crumbling while the joints at the top are fine. Adjust the heads. It's a free fix that saves a repointing job.

The takeaway for lakeside owners: your brick needs to dry. Everything you do — gutters that actually carry water away from the wall, soil graded to fall away from the foundation, sprinklers aimed at grass not brick, shrubs trimmed back so air moves along the wall — is about letting the wall dry between wettings. Brick that dries lives. Brick that stays damp dies young.

The morning dew you don't think about. Here's a Granbury phenomenon most homeowners never connect to their masonry. On calm mornings from March through October, the lake puts a heavy dew on everything within a half-mile of the water — cars, grass, roofs, and brick walls. It's not rain, so nobody thinks of it as "wetting" the house, but a north-facing

brick wall near the lake can start every single day with a film of moisture on it for six months of the year. Dew alone won't destroy mortar. But dew plus shade plus no airflow — the classic setup behind a lakeside home where the builder planted foundation shrubs three feet deep against the north wall — means that wall face rarely sees a truly dry hour between March and November. Then winter arrives and the freeze-thaw cycles start working on mortar that's been damp for eight months. This is why I tell lakeside owners to keep plantings at least eighteen inches off the brick and to prune for airflow, not just looks. The prettiest foundation planting in Pecan Plantation can be the most expensive one if it's holding moisture against your mortar joints year-round.

Efflorescence is your early warning system. That white, powdery crust you sometimes see on brick — especially near the base of walls and on chimneys — is efflorescence: mineral salts carried to the surface by water moving through the masonry and left behind when the water evaporates. A little of it on a new wall is normal and harmless. But heavy, recurring efflorescence on an older wall is the wall telling you water is traveling through it on a regular basis. Don't just brush it off — ask where the water is coming from. Nine times out of ten in Granbury, it's a gutter, a sprinkler, or

grade sloping the wrong way. Fix the water, and the efflorescence stops. Ignore it, and the same water that's carrying salts today will be carrying pieces of your mortar joints tomorrow.

Chapter 3: Limestone Country — Building on Rock in Hood County

Here's the good news about Granbury, and it's buried under your house.

Hood County sits on the edge of the Cross Timbers, where sandy timberland meets limestone country. The Hood County Courthouse — the big Second Empire beauty on the square, built 1890 to 1891 — is made of Brazos limestone quarried right around here. That tells you everything about what's under your feet: limestone ledges, rock outcrops, and shallow soils over stone.

For masonry, building on rock is mostly a blessing. The nightmare soil in Texas is the black gumbo clay of Dallas — expansive clay that swells when wet and shrinks when dry, heaving foundations up and down and racking brick walls until the mortar joints stair-step crack from corner to corner. Hood County's rock and sandy loam don't do that. A Granbury foundation sits still compared to a Dallas foundation. Less movement means less cracked mortar, fewer leaning walls, and chimneys that stay plumb longer.

But rock country has its own quirks, and an honest book names them:

Shallow soil means water runs sideways. When you've got six inches of soil over a limestone shelf, rain doesn't soak down — it sheets across the rock. If your lot slopes toward the house, that sheet of water arrives at your foundation wall and your lowest brick courses. I've seen houses on rocky lots in Granbury where the bottom course of brick sits in a seasonal creek every time it storms. The fix is grading and drainage — French drains, swales, gutters with real downspout extensions — not mortar. Mortar can't outlast standing water. Nothing can.

Blasting and rock excavation. On the rockier lots — out toward Tolar, Lipan, and the hillier ground west of town — builders sometimes had to blast or hammer rock to set the foundation. That's fine, but it means the house is sitting on fractured ledge, and fractured ledge can shift in small ways over decades. If you see stair-step cracking in your brick that looks like foundation movement in a town famous for not having foundation movement, get the foundation checked before you repoint. Repointing a wall that's still moving is painting a car that's still rolling.

Limestone and brick together. A lot of Granbury's nicer homes mix Brazos-style limestone with brick — limestone wainscot with brick above, or limestone columns with brick walls. Two different materials expand and contract at different rates, and the joint where they meet is a maintenance point. Watch the mortar line where stone meets brick. When it opens up, water gets behind both materials. It's a small repair if you catch it — a day's work — and a big one if you don't.

The old-timers built with what was underfoot. Drive the square and look at the buildings from the 1880s and 1890s — the 1885 Hood County Jail (two-story brick), the 1885 First National Bank building, the Nutt Brothers building from 1893. Those masons used local materials and lime mortar, and those walls are still standing 140 years later. The lesson isn't nostalgia — it's that compatible materials and good drainage outlast everything. Modern brick veneer over a wood frame is a fine system, but it only lasts when water is managed. Same as it ever was.

Chapter 4: The Square and the Old Brick — Granbury's Historic Stock

If you own one of the older homes near the square — the neighborhoods of wood-frame Victorians, early brick cottages, and limestone houses within walking distance of the courthouse — your masonry is a different animal from the brick veneer in the subdivisions, and it needs a different hand.

Granbury's historic square is the real thing. The Hood County Courthouse Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 — the first courthouse square in Texas to get that designation, called "one of the most complete nineteenth-century courthouse squares in Texas." The 1886 Granbury Opera House is restored and running shows. The buildings around the square went up between the 1880s and the 1920s, and the houses in the old neighborhoods followed the same pattern.

Here's what I want every owner of an older Granbury home to understand:

Your mortar is probably lime mortar, and that's good — if

it's respected. Before about 1930, virtually all brick mortar was lime-based: soft, breathable, and flexible. It's supposed to be the weak link. When the wall moves, lime mortar gives; the brick survives. The mortal sin of historic brick repair is pointing soft old brick with hard modern Portland cement mortar. The new mortar is stronger than the brick, so when the wall moves, the brick faces crack and spall off instead of the mortar giving. I've seen 1890s brick in Texas towns ruined in five years by a well-meaning contractor with a bag of Type S mortar and no understanding of what he was doing. If your house predates World War II, your mason must match the mortar — soft lime mortar against soft old brick. Ask him what type he's using and why. If he can't answer, he's not your mason.

Old brick is softer than new brick. The brick in a 1900 Granbury cottage was fired at lower temperatures than modern brick. It's more porous, more absorbent, and more vulnerable to freeze-thaw and to hard mortar. It also has more character — the color variation, the slight irregularity — which is exactly what you don't want to lose. Repointing historic brick costs more per square foot than repointing a 1990s veneer wall — nationally, historic lime-mortar work runs roughly \$25 to \$50 per square foot versus \$5 to \$25 for

standard work — because it's slower, hand-work, and the matching has to be right. That's not a contractor padding the bill. That's the real cost of doing it without damaging the building.

Painted brick is a commitment. A lot of Granbury's old brick has been painted over the decades. Paint on brick is a moisture trap — it seals the surface so water that gets in can't get out, and in a humid lakeside town, water always gets in. If your painted historic brick is bubbling, peeling, or spalling underneath the paint, the paint is part of the problem. Removing paint from historic brick is delicate, expensive work. Painting over failing paint is throwing money at a symptom. If you're buying an old brick home near the square, look hard at the paint before you fall in love with the porch.

The Opera House lesson. The 1886 Granbury Opera House sat through decades of hard use and neglect, and it came back because people invested in doing the work right — compatible materials, proper restoration, no shortcuts. Your 1910 brick cottage deserves the same thinking at a smaller scale. Old buildings reward patience and punish cheap fixes. Every time.

One more thing about the historic stock: if your home is in a designated historic district or carries a historic designation, check with the city before you start exterior masonry work. Some districts have review requirements for visible changes. Finding out after the scaffold is up is the expensive way to learn.

Chapter 5: Brick Veneer Subdivisions — From Pecan Plantation to the New Builds

Now the other end of the spectrum: most of the brick in Granbury isn't historic. It's brick veneer — a single layer of brick over a wood-frame house — built from the 1970s lake boom onward. And the biggest concentration of it sits on a peninsula in the Brazos River twelve miles southeast of town: Pecan Plantation.

Pecan Plantation is its own world — 4,200 acres, around 2,500 to 3,000 homes, two golf courses, an airpark with fly-in homes, and streets winding through pecan orchards. Development started in the early 1970s, right after the lake filled, and building has continued in waves ever since. Nearly every home there is single-story with brick or brick veneer. The median age skews older — it's a retirement-heavy community — which means a lot of homeowners who've been in the same house for twenty or thirty years. That's exactly the age when brick veneer starts asking for attention.

Here's the brick veneer reality for Granbury's subdivisions:

Veneer is a rain screen, not a structural wall. The brick on

your house isn't holding anything up — the wood frame does that. The brick is a handsome, durable rain screen with a cavity behind it. That cavity has weep holes at the bottom — little gaps in the mortar every few feet — that let water drain out. When those weep holes get clogged with mortar droppings, mud dauber nests, or mulch piled against the wall, water backs up in the cavity and comes through as interior damp spots or efflorescence on the brick face. Before you assume you need repointing, check your weep holes. A wire and ten minutes has saved more than one homeowner a multi-thousand-dollar scare.

The 1970s and 80s lake houses are in the window. Mortar joints last roughly 25 to 30 years before they start needing attention. A Pecan Plantation home built in 1985 is forty years old. A De Cordova Bend home from 1978 is pushing fifty. If your house is in that range and the mortar has never been touched, you're not overdue — but you're in the inspection window, and you should be looking every spring. The south and west walls bake, the north wall stays damp, and the chimney — always the chimney — takes the worst of it.

Enclosed lake cabins are a special case. All around Lake

Granbury there are houses that started life as weekend fishing cabins — small footprints, carports, screened porches — and got enclosed, expanded, and winterized into full-time homes over the years. The masonry on these is often a patchwork: original 1970s brick next to 1990s addition brick next to a 2010 patch, three different mortars, three different bricks. When I repoint a house like that, the matching work is the job. A good mason will tell you upfront that a perfect match across three eras isn't possible and show you the closest blend. A bad one will promise invisible and deliver racing stripes.

New construction: watch the first five years. Granbury's still growing — new subdivisions going up on the edges of town. New brick veneer shouldn't need repointing for decades, but new construction has its own masonry issues: mortar smeared on brick faces during construction (mortar haze), weep holes mortared shut by a careless crew, lintels without proper flashing, and the normal settling cracks of a new house finding its seat. Walk your new home's brick at year one, year three, and year five. Catching a flashing problem at year two is a warranty conversation. Catching it at year nine is your wallet.

Chapter 6: Granbury Chimney Repair — The Tallest Problem on the Block

Ask any mason in Hood County what the most common brick job in Granbury is, and he'll say the same word: chimney. Chimneys fail first on every house in every town, but Granbury's lake humidity and winter freeze cycles make its chimneys work harder than most.

Your chimney is the most abused masonry on your property. It gets full sun, driving rain, and every freeze-thaw cycle winter can throw at it, plus constant thermal cycling — heating up when the fireplace runs, cooling down after. The mortar joints on a chimney are the canary in the coal mine: when they start crumbling, the chimney is telling you water is getting in.

Granbury chimney repair costs in 2026, based on current national contractor data: a standard chimney tuckpointing or repointing job runs **\$500 to \$2,500**, averaging around \$1,200. Per square foot, chimney work runs \$8 to \$30 because it's high work — scaffolding or roof staging adds \$200 to \$600 on a typical job, and a two-story chimney with a steep roof can

run up to \$7,000 for extensive work. Those are national ranges; Granbury labor sits in the middle of the national range, and where your job lands depends on height, access, and how far the deterioration has gone.

But tuckpointing is only one chimney job. Here's the rest of the menu, with 2026 ranges:

- **Chimney cap replacement:** \$200 to \$850. The cap keeps rain, animals, and debris out of the flue. A missing or rusted-out cap is an invitation to water damage.
- **Crown repair:** \$200 to \$700 and up. The crown is the concrete slab on top of the chimney that sheds water off the masonry. A cracked crown funnels water straight into the stack.
- **Crown replacement:** \$1,000 to \$3,000. When the crown is beyond patching, it gets torn off and repoured — properly this time, with an overhang and a drip edge, not the thin mortar wash a lot of 1980s builders slapped on.
- **Flashing repair:** \$300 to \$1,800. The flashing is the metal where the chimney meets the roof. When it fails, water runs down the outside of the chimney and into

your attic. On a lakeside home with wind-driven rain, flashing earns its keep.

- **Flue tile repair:** \$65 to \$100 per square foot. Cracked flue tiles are a fire safety issue, not just a masonry issue.
- **Partial rebuild (above the roofline):** \$1,000 to \$5,000 and up. When the top courses of brick are too far gone to repoint, they come down and go back up new.
- **Full chimney rebuild:** \$4,000 to \$15,000. The nuclear option, and sometimes the honest one on a chimney that's been neglected for thirty years.

Here's my standing advice, and it's free: when a mason is up on your chimney for any reason, have him look at the crown, the cap, and the flashing while he's there. The inspection costs nothing extra, and catching a cracked crown early is the difference between a \$400 seal-and-patch and a \$2,500 crown replacement. Any mason who volunteers this without being asked is a keeper.

And one Granbury-specific note: if you burn your fireplace regularly — and plenty of folks around the lake do through our short winters — get the chimney inspected and swept on a schedule. Creosote plus a cracked flue tile is how chimney

fires start. The masonry and the fire safety are the same conversation.

Chapter 7: The Hood County Care Schedule

— What to Do and When

Masonry doesn't need much. But it needs attention on a schedule, the way a truck needs oil changes. Here's the care schedule I give Hood County homeowners. It's simple, it's cheap, and it will add decades to your brick.

Every spring — the walkaround (30 minutes, free). Walk all four sides of your house and look at the brick. You're checking for: mortar joints that are crumbling, cracked, or recessed; white powdery deposits (efflorescence — mineral salts left behind by water moving through the wall); spalled brick faces (the face of the brick flaking off); cracks, especially stair-step patterns; and anything growing on the wall that shouldn't be. Bring your phone and take pictures of anything suspicious. Date them. Next spring, compare. That photo log is worth more than any gadget — it tells you whether a crack is old and stable or new and moving.

Every spring — gutters and grading (an afternoon, cheap). Clean the gutters. Make sure downspouts carry water at least four feet from the foundation — not into a splash block that

dumps it right at the wall. Walk the perimeter and check that soil slopes away from the house, not toward it. On rocky Hood County lots where water sheets across the stone, this matters more than anywhere. Most "masonry problems" I get called to are actually drainage problems wearing a masonry costume.

Every fall — the chimney look (free from the ground, or a pro inspection every few years). Before fireplace season, look at your chimney from the ground with binoculars. Missing mortar, leaning, white staining, a cap that's rusted or gone — any of that means call somebody before you light the first fire. A professional chimney inspection every two to three years is cheap insurance; basic inspections run in the low hundreds.

Every 2–3 years — weep hole check (free). Walk the base of your brick veneer walls and find the weep holes — small vertical gaps in the mortar at the bottom course, every few feet. Poke them clear with a wire. If mulch or soil has been piled over them, pull it back. This is a five-minute job that prevents thousands in moisture damage.

Every 5 years — sealant review (varies). The caulk and sealant around windows, doors, and where brick meets trim

doesn't last forever. Cracked, shrunken, or missing sealant lets water behind the veneer. Re-caulking is a weekend DIY job or a small handyman ticket — either way, it's maintenance, not a project.

Every 25–30 years — repointing evaluation (the big one).

This is the normal service life of mortar joints. When your house hits this age without repointing, get a mason's eyes on it — not a salesman, a mason. He'll tell you which walls need work and which don't. Repointing runs \$5 to \$25 per square foot nationally for standard work, and a typical defined job — say an 8-by-10 wall section — runs \$250 to \$1,600. A whole 2,500-square-foot brick house runs \$5,000 to \$40,000 depending on how much wall is actually failing and how hard it is to reach. Where your job lands in that range depends on height, access, mortar matching, and how deep the deterioration goes. Anybody who quotes you a whole-house number without measuring your walls is guessing — make him measure.

As needed — the lake-house extras. If you're on the water: keep sprinklers off the brick, trim vegetation back from walls for airflow, and watch the shaded north wall like a hawk. If you're on rock: keep drainage moving away from the house.

If your home is pre-1940: everything above applies double, and only let a mason who understands lime mortar touch your joints.

That's the whole schedule. None of it is expensive. All of it is cheaper than the repair it prevents.

Chapter 8: What Brick Work Costs in Granbury — Honest 2026 Ranges

Let's talk money plainly. I'm going to give you the 2026 ranges the way the national cost data reports them, and then tell you where Granbury sits.

Repointing and tuckpointing: \$5 to \$25 per square foot for standard work, with most residential jobs landing between \$10 and \$25. Basic repointing (no decorative work) can run \$3 to \$20. Work above eight feet costs 20 to 40 percent more because of scaffolding — that's \$200 to \$600 in access equipment on a typical job. Historic lime-mortar work, the kind the old brick near the square needs, runs \$25 to \$50 per square foot because it's slow hand work with custom-matched mortar.

What moves a Granbury job up or down inside those ranges:

- **Lake proximity and exposure.** A lakeside chimney with deep freeze-thaw damage needs deeper cut-outs and sometimes partial rebuilding — more labor, higher in the range. A sheltered wall in town with

surface deterioration is a straightforward job.

- **Height and roof pitch.** Granbury has plenty of two-story homes and steep-pitched roofs, especially in the lake neighborhoods. Second-story chimney work is the most expensive masonry per square foot you'll buy.
- **Mortar matching.** A 1985 Pecan Plantation veneer in standard gray mortar is a straightforward match. A 1910 cottage near the square with soft lime mortar needs test batches and a mason who knows historic mixes. Matching is craft, and craft costs.
- **How much is actually failed.** Not every joint needs cutting. A good mason measures the deteriorated area and quotes that — not the whole wall by default. Ask: "How many square feet of joint are you cutting out?" The answer should be a number.
- **Hidden conditions.** Sometimes the mason opens a wall and finds spalled brick, a failed lintel, or flashing that's shot. Brick replacement from crown to roofline runs \$1,000 to \$3,500. A good contractor warns you upfront that hidden conditions can change the number — get that warning in writing.

Chimney work (from Chapter 6): \$500 to \$2,500 for standard tuckpointing, up to \$7,000 for tall or complex stacks; caps

\$200–\$850; crown repair \$200–\$700+; crown replacement \$1,000–\$3,000; flashing \$300–\$1,800; partial rebuilds \$1,000–\$5,000+; full rebuilds \$4,000–\$15,000.

Waterproofing and sealing: \$150 to \$820 and up. A breathable masonry water repellent on a lakeside home's most exposed walls can be money well spent — but it must be breathable. Non-breathable sealers trap moisture inside the wall and cause exactly the damage they're supposed to prevent. If a contractor proposes sealing your brick, ask for the product name and confirm it's vapor-permeable. If he can't name the product, don't let him spray it.

The Granbury rule of thumb: budget in the middle of the national ranges. Our labor market isn't Dallas-expensive or rural-cheap — it's right in the middle. What pushes your specific job around is the conditions above, not the zip code. And if a bid comes in dramatically under the ranges in this chapter — half the price of the other two bids — something's being skipped: shallow cut-outs, no mortar matching, no scaffolding line item, no cleanup, no warranty. The cheapest bid in Hood County is always the one with no paper behind it.

Chapter 9: Beyond the House — Lakefront Walls, Outdoor Masonry, and the Brick You Live On

Around Lake Granbury, the masonry doesn't stop at the front door. Retaining walls hold back the hillside lots. Bulkheads and seawalls face the water itself. Outdoor kitchens, fireplaces, and fire pits get used hard from March to November. And brick mailboxes, entry columns, and garden walls take the same beating as the house with none of the maintenance attention. If you own a lake place, this chapter is for you.

Retaining walls are structural — treat them that way. A lot of Granbury's lakefront and hillside lots are terraced with segmental block or stone retaining walls, some of them holding back a serious amount of earth. A retaining wall that's leaning, bulging, or weeping water through its face is telling you the drainage behind it has failed. Water builds up behind the wall, pressure builds, and the wall moves. The fix is almost never "stack the blocks back straighter" — it's relieving the water pressure with proper drainage (drain tile,

gravel backfill, weep outlets) and then rebuilding. A dry-stacked garden wall under three feet is a weekend project. A six-foot wall holding up your driveway is an engineered structure. Know which one you have, and don't let a handyman rebuild the second kind on a handshake.

Bulkheads and shoreline masonry live the hardest life of all. If your property runs to the water, you may have a concrete or stone bulkhead at the shoreline. It gets wave action, water-level fluctuation, and constant wet-dry cycling — the most aggressive environment any masonry faces. Inspect it every spring: undermining at the base, cracks running through the face, sections leaning lakeward. Shoreline work usually needs permits — the Brazos River Authority manages the lake, and work at or below the shoreline typically requires their approval before you start. Find that out before the contractor mobilizes, not after.

Outdoor kitchens and fireplaces. Granbury might be the outdoor-living capital of North Texas — the lake, the long warm seasons, the patios. Brick and stone outdoor kitchens and fireplaces are everywhere, and they fail in predictable ways. The firebox of an outdoor fireplace needs firebrick and refractory mortar, not standard mortar — regular mortar

crumbles under direct heat cycling. The chimney cap on an outdoor fireplace is even more critical than on the house chimney because there's no attic and no roof to catch what the cap misses. And outdoor kitchen counters with stone or brick bases need the same drainage thinking as everything else: water that gets in must have a way out. If your outdoor fireplace is spalling brick around the firebox opening, that's heat damage, and it needs firebrick repair — not a cosmetic parge coat that'll pop off by next summer.

Mailboxes, columns, and entry walls. The brick mailbox at the end of the driveway and the entry columns at the gate take full weather with zero overhang protection, and nobody looks at them until they're leaning. A leaning brick column is usually a foundation problem — the little footing under it has settled or washed out — not a brick problem. Straightening the brick without fixing the footing is a redo waiting to happen. When you get your house brick inspected, walk the mailbox and the entry, too. It's a two-minute add-on.

The lake-house maintenance mindset. Here's the truth about lakefront masonry: it needs about 30 percent more attention than the same masonry five miles inland, and it repays that attention completely. The houses around Lake

Granbury that look great at forty years old aren't lucky — they're owned by people who walk the property every spring, keep water moving away from everything, and fix small things before they're big things. Be that owner. The lake gives you the view; the maintenance keeps the view framed in brick that stands straight.

Chapter 10: Hiring a Masonry Contractor in Granbury

There are good masons working Hood County, and there are storm-chasers who roll through after every hailstorm with a ladder and a smile. Here's how to tell them apart.

The honest bid has: the square footage of joint being cut out, the depth of cut, the mortar type and how it's being matched, access equipment listed, protection of your property and cleanup described, a schedule, and a warranty in writing. Plus the contractor's name, insurance, and — where applicable — license information.

The bid that's too cheap is missing at least two of those. The classics: no cut depth specified (he's scraping the surface, not cutting to sound mortar); "matching mortar" with no method (one bag of gray for the whole house); no scaffolding line on a two-story job (the price goes up mid-job when reality arrives); no protection or cleanup (your landscaping is your problem now); cash price with no contract (no warranty, no recourse).

Interview the middle. Throw out the lowest bid and the

highest. The lowest is cutting something. The highest might be gold-plating. Interview the middle bids and listen for specific answers versus vague ones. "We'll cut to a minimum three-quarter-inch depth and match with a Type N blend we'll test on the north wall first" is specific. "We'll make it look good" is vague. Specific is honest. Vague is a warning.

Granbury-specific checks:

- **Ask about lake-humidity experience.** "How do you handle mortar curing on a shaded lakeside wall?" A local mason will have an answer — scheduling, curing compounds, moisture management. A traveling crew won't.
- **Ask about lime mortar if your home is old.** "What mortar type will you use on my 1920s brick, and why?" The right answer involves the word "lime" and an explanation about mortar being softer than brick. The wrong answer is a blank stare.
- **Check local references.** Not just reviews — addresses. Drive by a job he did three years ago and look at it. Mortar work that still looks good after three Granbury summers and winters is the only review that matters.
- **Beware the hailstorm circuit.** After a big hail event,

out-of-town crews flood Hood County offering "free inspections" that find thousands in masonry damage. Some of it's real — hail does chip brick and knock mortar loose. But get a local second opinion before you sign anything with a crew that's here this week and gone next month. Your warranty is only as good as the man behind it, and the man needs to still be here in two years.

What I'd do if it were my house: get three bids, all from masons who actually put a tape on my walls. Ask each one the mortar question and the lake question. Pick the one whose answers are specific, whose references check out, and whose bid has all seven elements above. Then leave him alone and let him work — good masons do their best work without an audience.

If you're looking for [brick repair in Granbury](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) done by folks who know this town's brick — the lake houses, the square, the subdivisions, all of it — that's what we do. And if you want to keep learning before you call anybody, all of my books are free at the [free brick repair books](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>) library. Read them, share them with a neighbor, and go into the conversation with your contractor knowing more than he expects you to know. That's the

whole point.

About the Author

Travis Nech has spent 50 years in Texas brick, masonry, and foundation work. He owns [Champion Brick Repair](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) — (817) 900-6324 — [Metro Foundation Repair](<https://metrofoundationrepair.com>) — (817) 670-4474 — and the [LintelLOCK](<https://lintlerepair.com>) lintel system — (469) 730-0650. All his books are free at [Travis Nech's Free Book Library](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>).