

Pointing with poise

Equipment that speeds up pointing and repointing of walls and paving

By William D. Palmer Jr.

Getting mortar into a thin joint between already-placed units can be a difficult, messy and expensive operation. Some innovative companies, however, have developed equipment that eliminates much of the agony. This equipment comes in different levels of complexity and cost. The size and complexity of a project dictates which is most appropriate.

The traditional and simplest way to point a masonry joint is to use a hawk—a hand-held steel plate upon which mortar is deposited. The hawk is held up to the joint and, using a trowel, the mason pushes the mortar into the joint. He then comes back with a slicking tool and compresses the mortar into the joint.

It's slightly easier getting mortar into a joint if you use a grout bag to deposit the mortar before tooling the joint. You can also use a hand-operated gun, similar to a caulking gun. These methods certainly are adequate and inexpen-



sive for small jobs but would not be suitable for larger jobs.

Simple and inexpensive

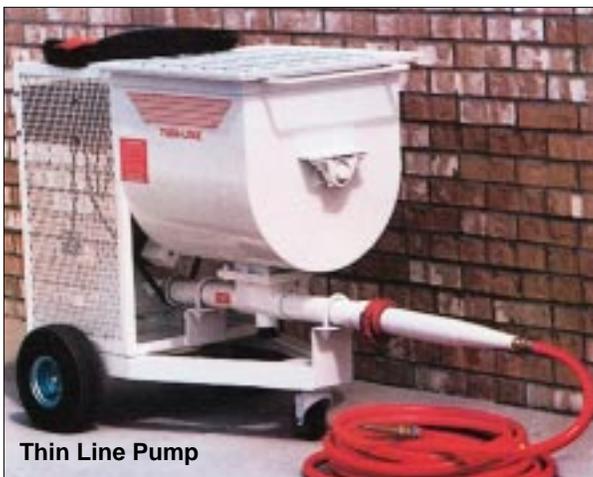
The new Joint Master can place mortar between concrete, brick or stone pavers. The Joint Master has no moving parts; the operator's arm pushes mortar directly into the joint with a small plunging tool that is the same length as the slot in the bottom of the

hopper. The slot width can be adjusted to fit joints from $\frac{5}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch. The mortar flow is stopped when you push the plunger into the bottom of a hopper, plugging the slot. For joints next to walls, one of the runners can be removed. After filling the joint, the mason or his helper returns to tool the joint.

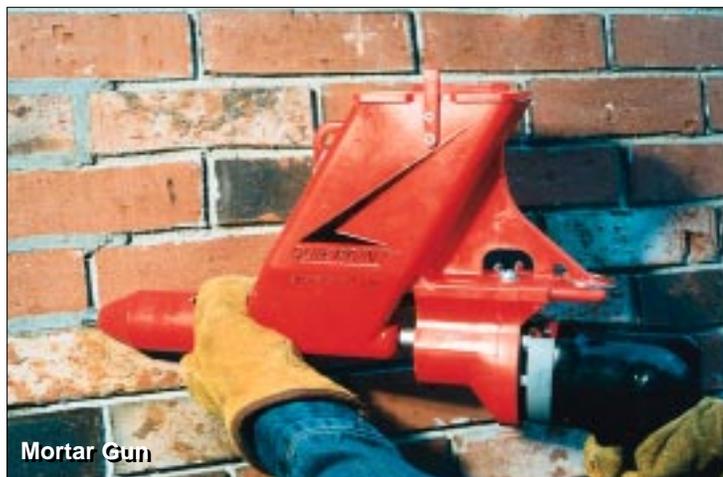
The Joint Master is $6\frac{1}{2}$ x $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the top and $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches high. It saves time on smaller jobs but requires frequent refilling. It also requires the mason to bend over—not a problem for small jobs such as patios or some driveways. Currently the Joint Master is made from steel, but even less expensive plastic versions may be available in the future.

Drill driven

For medium-sized projects, Quikpoint Inc. has two products—the Mortar Gun and the Lightning Grouter. Each is powered by a 110-volt drill motor. The Mortar



Thin Line Pump



Mortar Gun

Gun can be used to point or re-point walls. It holds ½ gallon of mortar that is fed by gravity and vibration into an auger drive. The mortar is then forced through an interchangeable steel nozzle in one of three bead widths. The mortar flow rate can be varied, and the manufacturer states that it can even be used in overhead applications. You can buy the Mortar Gun with or without the drill motor. At about 13 pounds fully loaded (7 pounds empty), it is ideal for many projects but is heavy for a full day of pointing.

For flatwork, Quikpoint has taken a different approach with its Lightning Grouter, which lets the mason stand while filling joints. Using a reciprocating electric motor that forces the mortar through the tip, this device allows the mason to load up to 2½ gallons into the hopper. A 4-inch wheel at the hopper tip helps with handling.

Nozzles come in widths from ¼ to ½ inch. The motor is included.

Mortar pump

Thin Line Pump is the most versatile and highest volume piece of equipment for pointing or repointing. It can pump mortar from 0 to 2 gpm at up to 50 feet. The mortar is extruded through a ¼-inch hose to a standard ¾ inch nozzle. But since the hose uses standard brass fittings, it can be modified easily for any job requirements.

The Thin Line Pump is 26 inches wide, wheel to wheel, which allows it to be moved easily through most doorways. It weighs 280 pounds dry and holds up to 4 cubic feet of mortar. Using 110-volt power, it can be operated in many locations. Since it's necessary to lift only a short wand with the nozzle, you can use it easily on a scaffold, with all but the last several feet tied to the scaffold.

This equipment can be used for pointing flatwork or glass block, and for repointing rehabilitation projects. One recent job in Baltimore used the Thin Line Pump to completely repoint a 14-story brick building. For the upper stories, the pump was put on the roof. It is frequently used to fill voids around door jams, regROUT old brick tunnels and has even been used for mud-jacking. Combined with a compressor and a spray gun, the Thin Line Pump can also spray mortar and texture coating.

Flatwork requires a longer wand of copper tubing. Masons used this longer wand technique on a 1,000-foot-long road of 8-inch-square pavers for testing antilock braking systems. All the joints had to be filled no higher than ½ inch from the top surface to retain water for a water-slickened pavement. ■

Publication #M980033

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