

Product Review: Roberts Brick Mortar Formula

By John Darlington



A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO, I was rummaging in N.B. Klein's with no particular purpose in mind when I came across this white jar next to the cash register called Roberts Brick Mortar Formula. I read the application instructions which appeared to be rather simple so I decided to give it a try. Now those of us who have tried it before know just how difficult it is to reproduce a mortar effect on brick walls in N Scale which have such small and narrow mortar lines. I have tried any number of techniques over the years with decidedly mixed results. Additionally, if you have a building that has already been constructed and painted and you want to improve the mortar effect (I call it "retro-painting"), some of those techniques I have used in the past do a poor job. This is why I was so happy to try a product that would solve some of those problems.

The whole process can be accomplished in three or four easy steps. I usually paint the brick surfaces of a building I am con-

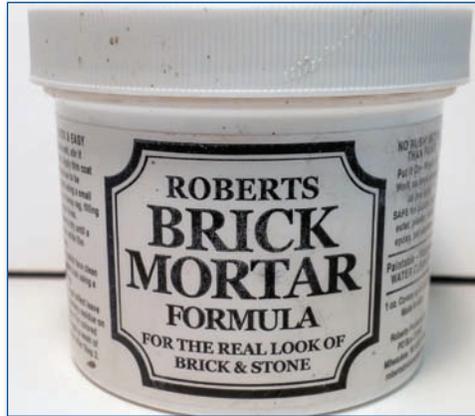


Figure 1: Freshly painted wall.

structing prior to final assembly (Figure 1). This is the best time to use this mortar mix.

Next I apply the mix as instructed being sure to cover all of the mortar lines. I tried a wide brush, but I found that it did not apply the mix into all if the mortar joints on either N or HO scale brick. After experimenting a bit, I found that a soft medium horse hair

brush was the best tool to use without having to "flood" the surface which leaves an excess of mortar mix on the brick surfaces. The next step is to wait for the mix to dry into a powdery film and



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then to remove the mix from the brick surface leaving the mortar joints filled. The instructions say that you can use a soft damp (not wet!) cloth for a clean brick surface or a dry cloth if you want to leave an "aged" look. (That is what I chose in my photo – Figure 2) I have found that you may have to repeat this process a couple of times to get the desired effect even in the larger scales (HO, O) The third photo (Figure 3) is of an HO scale brick wall on which I applied two coats of the mortar mix. The fourth photo shows (Figure 4) the mortar mix that has been rubbed off in spots to get a realistic "aged" look.

Finally, the photo (figure 5) below shows a "retro-painting" job on a building that had been already constructed and painted. I bought it some years ago at a train show and repainted it. I wanted to see how the product worked so I decided to "sacrifice



Figure 2: Excess mortar removed.

it" as an experiment. I was so pleased with how it turned out that it is now the switch tower in my yard. With retro-painting you need to use a dry cloth to remove the white film.

It's a fun product to use and the results are pretty good! 

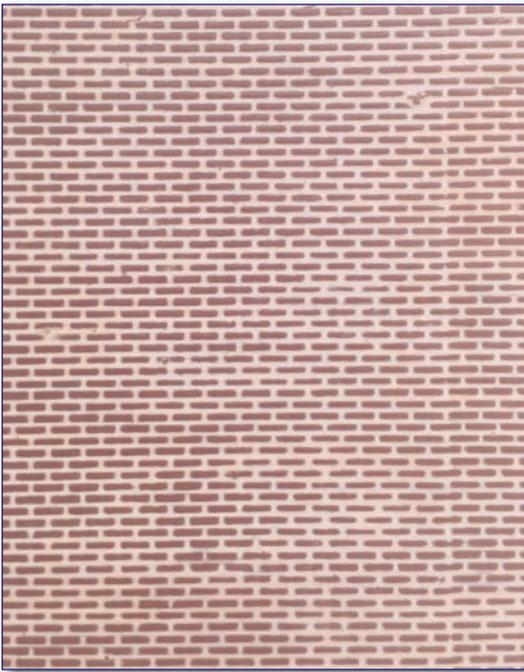


Figure 3: Two coats on HO brick

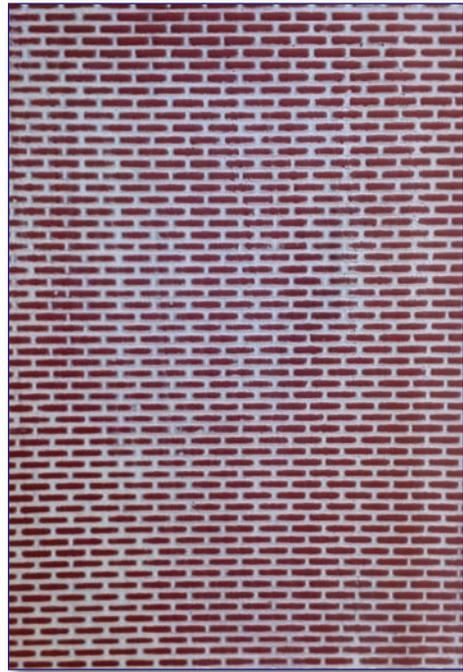


Figure 4: Mortar removed from spots.



Figure 5: A rehabilitated building.