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QUIKRETE® SUPPORTS RESTORATION OF HISTORIC MARTIN HOUSE BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

Expertise, Aesthetics and Practice Vital to Matching Effort of 100-Year-Old Mortar

BUFFALO, N.Y. (Aug. 10, 2007) – The QUIKRETE® Companies supplied specially formulated mortar to aid in the \$23 million restoration of the Darwin D. Martin House complex, designed and built by world-renowned architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Determined to remain faithful to Wright’s original design and materials, The QUIKRETE® Companies expertly matched the new mortar with historic mortar applied more than 100 years ago.



The project, the third in the four-stage restoration/rehabilitation plan, focused on rebuilding masonry walls, restoring face brick and matching mortar for the interior “backup” brick on the 10,000-square-foot main house, Martin House, and a 100-foot-long covered walkway (pergola) connecting the Martin House to an interior garden in the complex’s glass-roofed conservatory.

Amidst high expectations, the project required an extraordinary effort to uncover the mortar formula that exactly matched the historic mortar in texture, grit and color gradation, as well as preserved the home’s historical accuracy and aesthetic beauty.

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Restoration of Historic Frank Lloyd Wright Home – page 2

Under the direction of King Brothers Masonry Contractors Inc., The QUIKRETE® Companies supplied different types of sand from gravel pits throughout the northeast to match the color and texture of the historic mortar. Matching was made particularly difficult as there were no historical records kept on the original masonry-formulations used in the construction.

“There were many issues faced in matching the mortar and the face brick. The home was originally constructed between 1903 and 1905, so time, age, weather and the inconsistency of old material had certainly taken its toll on the landmark,” said Gregg Schiltz, project foreman for King Brothers Masonry. “The large overhangs and the covered porches did not allow the building to uniformly weather, and this irregularity made selection of a consistent mortar color that appeared most frequently on the house difficult.”

Multiple suppliers were utilized unsuccessfully until aggregate was located in Alexander, N.Y. from Frey Sand & Gravel Corp. Once it was determined that the proper sand color, mortar color and texture had been achieved in the mortar, which utilized additional QUIKRETE® aggregate, material and pigment, brick mock-up test panels were constructed to further analyze the visual and physical integrity of the masonry units themselves.



On the home’s exterior, there also were two different mortar colors used with the face brick; one color for the 5/8-inch thick bed joints, and another for the 1/8-inch wide head joints. This forced masons to use two separate trowels and mortar boards to keep the mixes separated.

To further facilitate the matching effort, QUIKRETE® representatives were asked to mix the aggregate by hand for exactly five minutes, using a stop watch, to ensure uniformity was reached in the absorption rate within each batch. More than 60 different test panels were required throughout this evaluation process.

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Restoration of Historic Frank Lloyd Wright Home – page 3

“The overall goal was to recreate the original materials used in the project not only in size and color but also in aesthetics and practice,” stated Dennis Winchester, QUIKRETE® executive vice president. “Our expertise allowed us to respond to these job parameters with effective selection, delivery and consistency solutions. We were privileged to aid in the rebirth of this significant part of architectural and American history; embodied in the Martin House complex.”

King Brothers Masonry used red common brick for the “backup” on the face brick, where in normal circumstances a concrete masonry unit would be standard. This greatly increased the number of masonry units and, subsequently, the amount of mortar needed.

The QUIKRETE® Companies were also responsible for matching mortar used to install interior brick, which was lighter and required the use of white sand. Using an older striking method, masons cut off the mortar flush with the face of the brick and cleaned the masonry unit with a rag at the end of each day. As a result, this combination of materials and technique provided excellent contrast to the exposed interior walls.



All told, King Bros. Masonry used 130 3,000-pound “super sacks” of QUIKRETE® Type N Mortar, formulated with white cement, Type S hydrated lime and aggregate from Frey Sand & Gravel, in addition to 120 “super sacks” of QUIKRETE® Type N Mortar, formulated with white cement, Type S hydrated lime and buff-colored masonry sand.

“Success was achieved due in a large part to the effort, choices and expertise put forth by The QUIKRETE® Companies,” said Schiltz, “Their outstanding quality and service is unmatched, and these factors made our job a lot easier both in the office and out in the field.”

Currently in its final phase, the Martin House complex restoration is scheduled for completion in late 2007.

The multi-structure complex includes the main house; a smaller Barton House; a carriage house; a glass-roofed conservatory; and covered walkway. Requiring more than 50 masons working 10 hours, six days per week, the original construction took nearly two years to complete.

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Restoration of Historic Frank Lloyd Wright Home – page 4

Recognized as a National Historic Landmark, the highest possible federal designation, the Martin House complex is the most extensive “Prairie House” ever designed. The “Prairie” style of design features low horizontal lines and open interior spaces.

Additional information on the restoration can be found at www.darwinmartinhouse.org.

The QUIKRETE® Companies

The QUIKRETE® Companies are the largest manufacturers of packaged concrete in the United States and an innovative leader in the commercial building and home improvement industries. QUIKRETE® products are manufactured and bagged in 86 manufacturing facilities in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and South America, allowing for unsurpassed distribution and product depth. The QUIKRETE® Technical Center ensures that professionals and consumers alike are provided with the most innovative and highest quality products available on the market. For additional information on The QUIKRETE® Companies or its products, please visit www.quikrete.com or call (800) 282-5828.

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