

# Adjustable Framing Braces

by Carl Hagstrom



**H**ow do you define a good tool? It must save time, improve accuracy, be reasonably priced, and nearly indestructible. When does a good tool become a great tool? When you can't wait to use the damn thing.

That's how I've come to feel about the Proctor wall braces I bought a couple years ago. There's not much glamour here, just an 11-foot piece of square steel tubing with a threaded insert in one end and a revolving nail flange at the other. But when you're framing walls, this no-nonsense tool turns the tedious task of line bracing into a no-brainer.

**Time saver.** I use these braces on every house and addition I build to quickly plumb and line the walls before the roof framing goes on. I also use them to plumb roof trusses, bring wooden beams in line, steady tall batter boards, and brace concrete forms.

Gone are the days when the crew struggles to steady a frame wall against a stiff breeze, waiting for the guy with the level to scream, "Nail it!" only to watch the laborer hit his shin instead of the nail in the brace.

With the Proctor braces, all that's necessary is to get the wall close to plumb and nail the brace to the wall and the floor deck. The threaded insert allows you to adjust the wall in or out about four inches by turning the square tubing. You don't need wrenches or forearms like Charles Atlas. Adjusting the walls in or out is literally a simple twist of the wrist.

**Accuracy.** No matter how well you nail off a wooden line brace, the walls always seem to creep a little as the nails settle in, frustrating any attempts to achieve a high degree of accuracy. By contrast, the Proctor wall braces allow tolerances in the range of 1/8 inch. If the walls creep, or get a little out of whack during the course of the job, adjusting the braces brings the walls back in line. Being able to simply adjust these braces is particularly helpful when you come

back after a weekend of rain and discover that your rain-soaked walls decided to head off in crazy directions. A little wrist action tweaks them back where they belong.

**Durability.** These braces are definitely rugged. I'm sure somebody could figure out a way to break one, but I have found them nearly indestructible. The mason working on a house I built last year dropped an 80-pound chimney block onto one from 16 feet up. It's bent, but still in use.

One more thing I appreciate about these braces as a contractor: They help make the job site a little safer. We no longer create booby traps when we forget to clean the nails out of wooden braces and their deck blocks.

**Price.** At \$55 each (plus freight), Proctor wall braces are a pretty good buy. A dozen have served me well, but you could get by with six or eight if you had to. Plan on spending at least \$400 for a set. You'll use them every time you frame, and I doubt you'll ever wear them out. For more information, contact Proctor Products, P.O. Box 697, Kirkland, WA 98083; 206/822-9296. ■

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*Nate Seymour of Hagstrom Contracting brings a wall in line with a quick twist of a Proctor wall brace.*