

Preservation of Historic Winchester



PHW's Membership Newsletter

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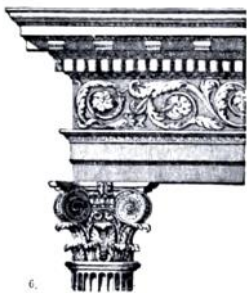
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Porches and Procrastination

Celebrating the Wildly Varied History of the American Porch

While we officially celebrated National Preservation Month with “A House Without a Porch Is Boring” on May 11, there were a few tidbits that could not quite be worked into the main presentation. Settle in with a glass of iced tea on a shady porch to dive into the stranger side of the American Golden Age of Porches.

Do you have a dingle?

Probably not in our neck of the woods, but if you came from New England, you may have used one of these. According to [A Dictionary of Architecture and Building](#) dating to 1905, “In local United States' usage, [a dingle is] an enclosure constructed about an entrance, as a protection from the weather.” This enclosure is similar to a glass enclosed porch, and it is used to create a temporary foyer or airlock around a small stoop during the winter. When the weather breaks, the dingle is dismantled and stored until the next year.

Why do posts have feet?

Wood columns and posts are prone to water seeping into open joints, particularly at the base and the lower end of the shaft. When this happens, the wood will eventually rot. While it helps to keep seams caulked and posts painted, the best way to extend the life of wood columns is by providing separation of the wood deck and posts. These feet were historically as simple as metal “stirrups,” but today can usually be found in a variety of wood, galvanized metal, and PVC options.



Why are so many porch ceilings painted blue?

There are few anecdotal tales of how blue came to be a preferred color for outdoor porch ceilings. One common theory is that the color is a reflection of the sky, furthering the connection of the porch as an outdoor space. This has also led to a folk belief that a blue ceiling would confuse pests like mosquitoes or wasps from hanging out and building nests at the porch ceiling. While there's no scientific evidence the color itself had anything to do with deterring insects from making your porch ceiling home, what is possible is that historic paints were made with often toxic compounds, and when kept freshly painted may have been enough to ward off at least some pests. Another likely source is the association of the color blue with protection against evil. The color would mimic the appearance of water, which evil spirits cannot cross. This superstition led to the common name for the porch ceiling hue in the South —haint blue.

Do you have a Florida room?

Florida rooms, perhaps also known to you by another name like sun porch or winter garden, is a screened-in or glassed-in porch with a sunny exposure. The sun porch was a common choice for relaxation when you didn't want to be fully outside, and enabled a porch-sitting experience even during the cold winter months. As explained by Henrietta C. Peabody in "Porch and Sun Room" (1921), "The prevalence of the porch in American homes has become almost a national characteristic of our houses and is due no doubt to our tendency to live in the open air as much of the time as



climatic conditions will permit. But even those who do not relish the open air features of a porch seem to be aware of the necessity for a room which gives a feeling of outdoors though it may be protected from the actual rigours of temperature. Therefore the enclosed porch or sun parlor as it is frequently called becomes an important adjunct to living room or dining room or both, and owing to its informal character and consequent opportunities for variety of treatment is frequently one of the pleasantest and most lived in rooms of the house."

The rooms were often stuffed full of tender or exotic plants, many of which could be trained to grow along the walls to enhance the feeling of being (at least partially) in the great outdoors. Due to the obvious connection to greenhouses, the rooms could be used to start seedlings before transferring them to the outdoor planters or gardens in the spring. They were also a favorite addition in many resort hotels for providing a comfortable climate in which to relax.

What are those louvered glass windows?

The louvered glass windows often seen on enclosed porches, sun rooms, carport windows, and even some doors are called jalousie windows. The windows are made of parallel glass louvres set in a frame on a track so

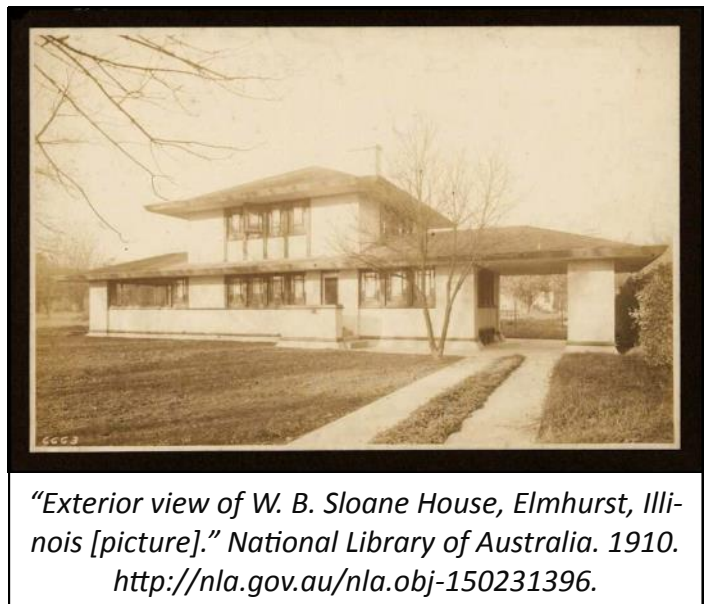
that they may be tilted open and shut in unison to control airflow, usually by turning a crank. A patent for a basic louvered window was granted in 1901 to Joseph W. Walker, of Malden, Massachusetts. We associate them most often with the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, particularly in new construction or porches enclosed at that time. They were a popular choice for providing ventilation combined with some ability to prevent water intrusion even while open, but the windows



often suffered from poor sealing abilities while closed, could be difficult to keep clean, and might pose a security hazard by being easily and near silently removed from the tracks. Even with these drawbacks, if you have a Mid-Century Modern house with jalousie windows, they are a character-defining trait and preservation of them is becoming more common. Instructions on replacing individual glass panes can be found at <http://homeguides.sfgate.com/replace-glass-jalousie-windows-84129.html>

A porch for your car?

A porte-cochère is a covered structure at an entrance large enough for a horse and carriage or automobile to stop for passengers while shielded from the weather, and is still seen in modern construction like hotels and airports. This historic feature evolved into the carport in modern residential construction. The oldest carport in America is said to be that of the W.B. Sloane House in Elmhurst, Illinois, dating to 1910. The house was designed by Walter Burley Griffin, an architect who started as a draftsman in Frank Lloyd Wright's office before striking out on his own for projects in America, Australia, and India.



*"Exterior view of W. B. Sloane House, Elmhurst, Illinois [picture]." National Library of Australia. 1910.
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-150231396>.*

A porch for cats?

Americans are undoubtedly in love with their pets, so it is hardly surprising a special type of porch—usually for cats but sometimes other pets like birds—has become more popular in recent years. This type of screened porch, christened a “catio” by enthusiasts, gives the pets a view of the outdoors without worries of them escaping, being attacked by predatory wildlife, or attacking wildlife themselves. Catio can range from screened-in boxes attached to an existing window opening to elaborate, multi-story screened porches or balconies full of cat amenities for climbing, jumping, scratching, and watching the world go by. There are even catio tours used as educational and fundraising opportunities like PHW has house tours! See some catios in action at <http://thecatcarpenter.com/catios.htm> ♦



Preservation of Historic Winchester

Hexagon House ♦ 530 Amherst St. ♦ Winchester, VA 22601

NEWS

Spring 2017

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UPCOMING EVENTS

June 11: Join us for PHW's Annual Meeting and Awards on Sunday afternoon at the Bell House, 106 North Cameron Street. We will elect the PHW Board of Directors, recap the past year, and present the annual preservation awards, followed by a light reception. Look for your invitation soon!

June 30: Calling all artists! Submit your Bough and Dough Shop artisan jury submissions to PHW at 530 Amherst St., Winchester, VA 22601 or phwinc.org@gmail.com. Please include your name, mailing address, phone, e-mail, type of artisan goods made, price range for products, and 4-10 clear, high quality images of the goods you would provide. Form with more information available online at www.phwi.org/events/2017juryform.pdf

December 2 and 3: Mark your calendars! Holiday House Tour and Bough and Dough Shop at the Winchester Little Theatre. Help out now by making sure your information is current in our volunteer contact list by dropping us a line at phwinc.org@gmail.com or 540-667-3577.

ARE YOU A PHW MEMBER?



Preservation of Historic Winchester, Inc., is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting Winchester's architectural heritage. PHW depends on income from membership and contributions to achieve its goals.

All contributions above membership are tax deductible.

Join today by completing this form and returning it to PHW, 530 Amherst St., Winchester, VA 22601.

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