

## Portland sleeping porches span a century

By Kathy Eaton

Medical doctors desperate to find a cure for tuberculosis (TB), the leading cause of death in the 20th century, concluded that patients needed fresh air to treat this disease. The spread of TB coincided with the emerging Industrial Revolution when poor factory conditions and crowded living conditions in cities all over the world made it difficult to contain the deadly disease. Sanatoriums emerged in Europe and the United States to treat patients afflicted with TB and other diseases. In 1911, the Arequipa Tuberculosis Sanatorium near San Francisco invited 25 TB patients to work and earn money by decorating pottery in a well-ventilated, sunny room. Arequipa provided new skills in the arts while promoting healing of TB.

### Advent of sleeping porches to access fresh air

Prior to the decline of the sanatorium movement with the onset of World War I, followed by the Great Depression of the 1930's, those who could not afford to leave their homes and families to get fresh air were encouraged to practice outdoor sleeping. The "fresh air" phenomenon inspired change in the way Americans used their front porches and prompted the invention of sleeping porches. At that time, architects and building designers were incorporating fresh-air sleeping spaces into the designs of upper- and middle-class homes so people could reap the benefits from hours of breathing pure, clean air. Sleeping porches, often attached to a main bedroom, were open, outdoor rooms designed to repel water and accommodate furnishings that could withstand the elements; common materials were cast iron for beds, and wicker for other furniture.

Consistent with homes built during this era and recognizing the medical benefits of sleeping in fresh air surroundings, contractors built many homes with sleeping porches in Portland's neighborhoods.

A grand example of a sleeping porch can be visited at Portland's Pittock Mansion located 1,000 feet above downtown. Henry Pittock, owner of the first daily Oregonian newspaper, commissioned architect Edward Foulkes to design and build the Pittock Mansion, which was ultimately listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Many unique features are showcased in the mansion, including the sleeping porch used by Pittock's grandchildren. The sleeping porch was regarded as therapeutic and featured windows that open and a canvas floor sloped to allow rain run-off. In 1964, the city of Portland purchased the Pittock Mansion, which is available for public tours ([pittockmansion.com](http://pittockmansion.com)).

Not all homes had sleeping porches, however. To meet the demands of the new fresh-air craze, manufacturers began making fresh-air sleeping quarters that could be added to any home. In 1912, at an Architecture League Exhibition in Los Angeles, the Co-Ran Fresh Air Bed Company featured beds that looked like roll-top breadboxes. The company marketed the innovative outdoor sleeping beds, combined with window seats, to economize space and promote health benefits.

Ultimately public-health intervention, including the availability of antibiotics and vaccines, became key in controlling the spread of TB in cities where it was most prevalent.

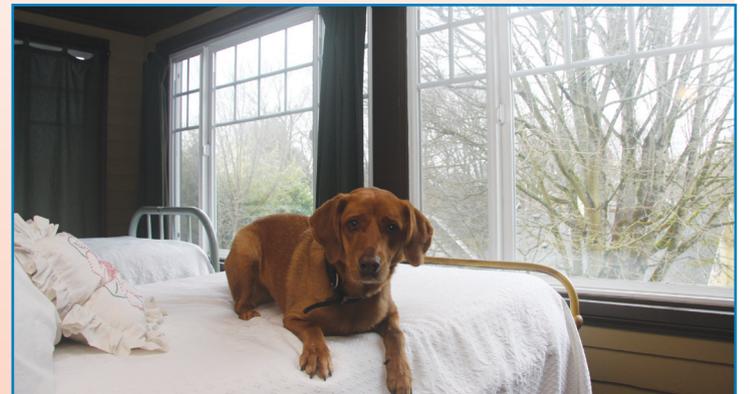
### Decline of porches corresponds to economy

After a period, homeowners enclosed their porches, installed permanent windows and converted some of the outside spaces into sunrooms. The added space became usable on a year-round basis, welcoming visitors indoors and creating additional space for multi-generational families.

"The decline of porches could well have been a response to the economy, reflecting the Depression-era," said CJ Hurley, a Northeast Portland artist, designer and Roycroft Renaissance Master Artisan. Hurley provides design input to homeowners, contractors and architects to preserve the architectural features of historic Portland homes, many of which can be found in the Hollywood, Irvington, and Laurelhurst neighborhoods.

Homeowners could gain square footage by enclosing the porch and avoiding severe weather conditions. "Ultimately the front porch declined in the 1950's in favor of the barbeque where the backyard became the private paradise for families to gather," said Hurley.

Ten years ago, CJ Hurley and his wife Barbara Pierce restored a sleeping porch in their Four Square Arts & Crafts home in Laurelhurst. Their dog Sasha enjoys the space. — Photo by Judy Nelson



Ten years ago, Hurley and his wife Barbara Pierce restored a sleeping porch in their Four Square Arts & Crafts home in Laurelhurst. They replaced the leaking sliding windows and fixed screens with new, weather-tight windows and furnished it with two vintage iron beds. They covered the floor with rugs, reclaiming it as a fresh-air sleeping space. The sleeping porch, located directly above their mudroom, overlooks a small garden in the backyard.

Lane Cooper, president and owner of Cooper Designbuild, remodeled a sleeping porch in his 1911 Arts & Crafts home in Irvington. Committed to preserving the character of the original house, Cooper expanded an upstairs bedroom by knocking out a wall between it and the original sleeping porch, leveling the floor and moving fir flooring from another bedroom to create a modern master bedroom suite. By adding a gas fireplace, he has a cozy sitting area with new wood windows matching the original wood pattern to allow natural light in while maintaining the home's character.

"The challenge of old sleeping porches is they're drafty and cold," said Cooper. "Homeowners today want comfort and energy efficiency." According to Cooper, modern uses for old sleeping porches include art studios and small home offices that can accommodate a desk and computer. "Code restrictions are not a big obstacle in remodels; our company knows the codes. Our clients are an integral part of the project design to make their dream home a reality," said Cooper.

For more information about Cooper Designbuild: 4076 N. Mississippi Ave., (503) 282-0545, [www.cooperdesignbuilders.com](http://www.cooperdesignbuilders.com).

To learn more about Hurley's consultation services on color and historical feel of homes, visit [cjhurley.com](http://cjhurley.com). For educational programs about historic preservation of buildings and neighborhoods, visit the Architectural Heritage Center (AHC), located at 701 S.E. Grand Ave., contact their marketing director, Barbara Pierce, at [visitahc.org](http://visitahc.org).

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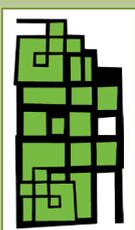
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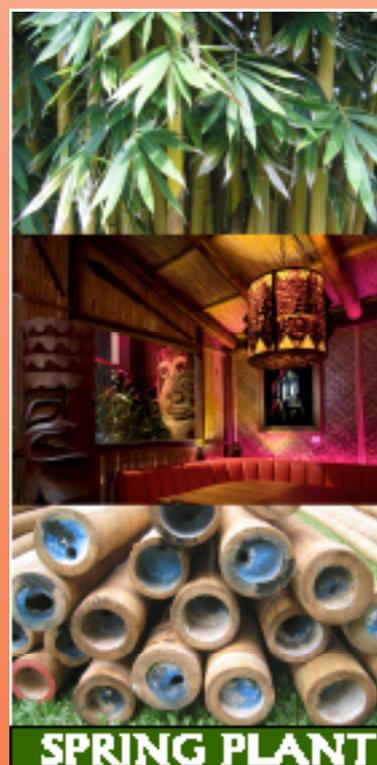
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