

Adding new life with outside additions



Handrails installed.

By Paula L. Ratliff

Adding a deck, patio, porch, pergola, veranda, portico, lanai, or whatever you wish to call an outside area is an excellent way to breathe new life into your home, expanding floor space and bringing more of the outside "in".

Every home needs a place outside where people can gather and relax. Historically, front porches emerged in the 1850's and were designated to provide shelter from the elements and creating a barrier from direct entry into the home. It was a place where men folk could sit and chew or the lady folk could set their quilting frames outside, seeking cooler air. It was also a place where people could connect with each other and you could observe the people traveling by horse and buggy.

In the south, porches are often wrap-around which are designed to accommodate tables and chairs allowing people to enjoy a meal outdoors. A good design focused on providing good air flow for the family and farm workers who



New deck before handrails.

would eat outside.

As areas became more populated, the architectural designs changed and porches became smaller and emphasis became placed on the backyard by designing patios, decks, and porticos. These are often designed to accent swimming pools and play sets, accommodating a more privacy driven lifestyle.

However, the trend is swinging back, as New Urbanism focuses on larger porches to help create a sense of community. Perhaps society has missed the conversations from the front porch.



Bently enjoys the sunshine on the deck

Our home has a front porch with a side wrap around. However, it is an area we seldom frequent. A few years ago, we decided to add a covered deck to the back of our farm house which has totally changed the "feel" of our home, providing both a gathering place and a place of solitude.

It has become the place to enjoy morning coffee and watch the sunrise. It has become the place to relax in the evenings as the sunset gives an amber hue just behind the neighbor's farm.

It has become the place for entertaining guests and family,

providing shelter from the sun's rays as the giant ceiling fan stirs the warm summer air. It is almost like an outdoor family room, designed with comfort and a great view of the farm land. We selected lawn furniture to match the railing and we added a chair hammock for the ultimate relaxation.

It has become a favorite spot for our dogs to relax as they watch for impending cars. Sometimes they tire from the watch and just take a nap in the bright sunshine.

Porches, decks, and patios can be