



A place to relax and tell stories

Vor dem Haus zu sitzen und mit vorbeikommenden Nachbarn ein kleines Schwätzchen zu halten ist nicht nur entspannend — es ölt auch das Getriebe der Gemeinschaft. medium US

The front porch was once an important institution in America, especially in the late 19th and early 20th century. In the days before electricity, people sat on their porches to enjoy the last rays of evening light. Front porches also offered an ideal place to escape the hot, stuffy air inside the house. Above all, the porch was a place for relaxing, for sharing stories with family and neighbors, and for savoring long summer evenings.

Those were also the days before people were jetting around the country — or the world — for their jobs.

Everyone still made it home in time to eat dinner together. Children might play outdoors after supper, but they were usually no more than a shout away from the front porch. Neighbors would stop by for a chat and a cold glass of lemonade or iced tea on the porch. Without television or computers, they relied on each other for stories and entertainment.

Porches were also a place for romance. A young woman might entertain a suitor on her family's front porch. Swaying gently on the swing, listening to the quiet noises of the night, whispering sweet nothings and stealing an occasional kiss — what could be more romantic? The porch provided privacy, while still allowing parents to keep an eye on their daughter.

Architectural styles changed in the years after World War II, and decks became popular. But decks are less "social" than porches. Because decks are usually built onto the backs of houses, they are less inviting to people

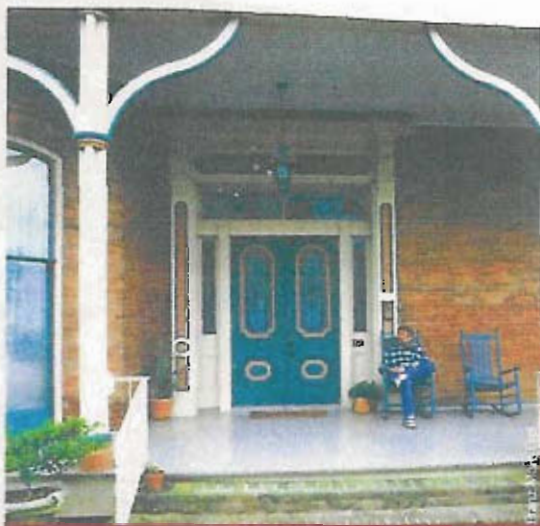
passing by. Deck parties are normally planned events and involve a barbecue, while porch gatherings are open to anyone who simply wants to sit down and relax.

Today, the porch is making a comeback. People are trying to find more time for friends and family and to slow the hectic pace of life. One organization has adopted this idea as its philosophy. According to Crow Hollister of Professional Porch Sitters (PPS), people can improve the quality of their lives by following the motto "Sit down a spell. That can wait."

Crow, who founded PPS in Louisville, Kentucky, explains how the group got its start: "A lot of my friends are artists, activists, grassroots organizers and the like. It seemed like we were attending a lot of meetings with well-organized agendas, but nothing much was getting done." To him, the best ideas came about when he and his friends were just sitting around on the porch talking. In 1999, the group jokingly began calling itself the Professional Porch Sitters.

When PPS published a page on the internet, people from around the country contacted them and asked how they could join. But Crow insists that porch sitting is more a state of mind than a formal group. In fact, to become a member of PPS, all you need to do is sit and chat with family, friends, and neighbors as often as you can. You can hold a meeting whenever you like — preferably on your porch.

"The radical act of sitting around, sharing stories with no specific agenda, is critical to building sustainable communities," says Crow. When people take the time to speak with one another, the feeling of being connected grows automatically. In other words, building a community can be as simple as just sitting on the porch. ●



"Sitting around and sharing stories is an important step toward building communities"

deck [dek]	Terrasse
grassroots ['græsru:ts]	an der Basis arbeitend
occasional [ə'keɪʒənəl]	gelegentlich
pace [peɪs]	Tempo
porch ['pɔ:rtʃ]	Veranda
ray [reɪ]	Strahl
savor sth. ['seɪvər]	etw. genießen/auskosten
spell [spɛl]	Weile
stuffy ['stʌfi]	stickig
suitor [suɪtər]	potenzieller Ehemann, Verehrer mit ernstesten Absichten
sustainable [sə'steɪnəbəl]	beständig, stabil
sway [sweɪ]	schaukeln
sweet nothings [ˌswi:t 'nʌθɪŋz]	Liebesgeflüster; hier: süße Worte
swing [swɪŋ]	etwa: aufgehängte Hollywoodschaukel