
Porch on Piers Better than a Porsche with Beers

Contributed by C. Mason Hearn
Friday, 18 July 2008

Mason,

I just purchased a home in the Bon Air area. It has a nice screened porch on the back which I simply love. My only concern is that it is built on piers. It appears to be structurally sound but it concerns me that it does not have a complete-solid foundation. Am I over-reacting or is this something I should be concerned about?

- BP, Chesterfield, VA

Congratulations on your new home! It is so exciting to make a move!

One question: When you refer-to "piers", are you talking about something like pressure-treated 4x4's?

Mason

No-they are brick piers. B

Dear BP:

There is nothing inherently improper about pier foundations, as long as there is a footing below those (which is likely), and the framing between the piers is appropriate for those spans.

I asked about the nature of the piers, for we see a great number of screened porches and enclosed additions built atop of old decks (which had wood piers). The foundation and framing requirements for an open wood deck, as you might imagine, are vastly different from those for anything with a roof above.

Sounds like you're probably okay, but if you have indications for concern, such as any instability or a bouncy floor, you might want to engage a professional engineer to take a look.

Mason

ps... reminds me of an old porch remodeling joke (get ready for this!):

There's this well-to-do guy that hires a not-too-bright (and appropriately low-cost) painter, gives him a gallon of bright yellow paint, and instructs him to go out in front of his beautiful home, and paint his porch. Painter comes back a few hours later, with the canary-colored pigment all over him, and tells the guy, "jobs done, boss, and y'know wut... that akshly weren't no Porche, dat suh, wuz a Ferrari, ain't it?"