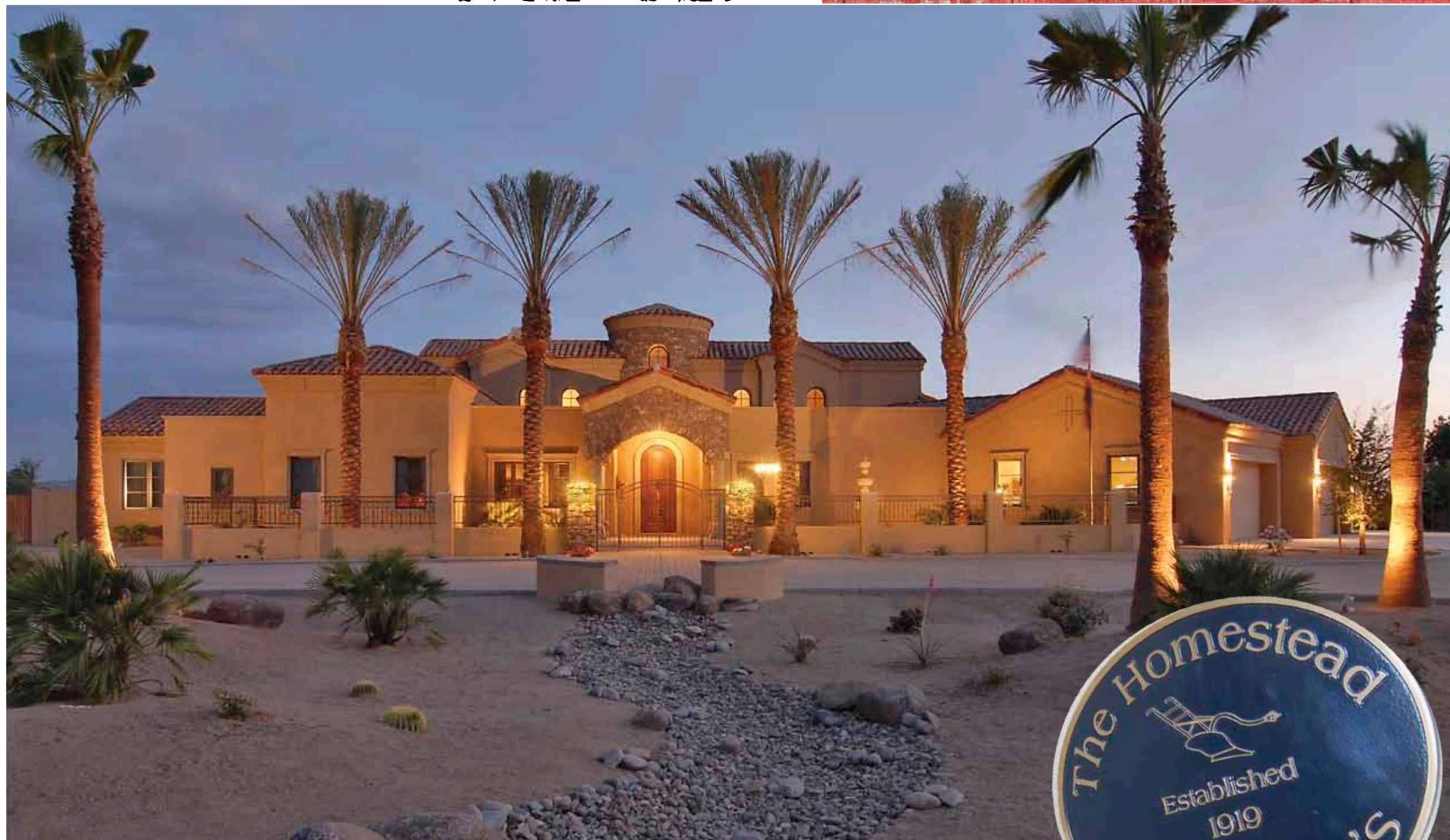


Text by DAVID M. BROWN Photos by SCOTT SANDLER Interior Design by FRIEDMAN & SHELDS Produced by ALEXANDRA SCOTT & STEPHANE SANDERS

# THE OLD



Make a right turn at Sossaman Road to Arizona pioneer history. Sue and Jamie Sossaman don't live on Sossaman Road, the north/south arterial in east Mesa that commemorates their pioneer family, but their Queen Creek home celebrates and displays that distinguished history, including Jamie's 24 years in the state Legislature, two as its speaker. ▶

## AT HOME

# HOMESTEAD



Completed in 2007 after a two-year process, their single-story includes approximately 5,000 square feet of livable space as well as an oversized four-car garage, a home theater and a 1,200-square-foot covered rear living area with a fireplace that looks south to the San Tan Mountains.

Both the Sossamans and the Mathers have farmed here since the early part of the last century; the family still works 800 acres of the once 1,200-acre farm for alfalfa, corn, cotton and Durham wheat.

Over the south wall of the back yard are fields tilled by machinery that is music to the Sossamans. Much of that day-to-day farming is now ably handled by their oldest son, Stephen, who lives next door with his wife, Chris, and family. Just down the road live their daughter, Kimberlee, and her husband, Roger Nash, in Jamie and Sue's former home. Sue and Jamie's youngest son, Scott, has recently returned from his third tour in Iraq, where he served as a lieutenant colonel in the Army. He and his wife, Lisa, and family are currently stationed in Virginia.

"Jamie and I have lived on these 160 acres for 54 of our 56 years of married life and raised three children," Sue explained. "It is a privilege that few people have – to experience a way of life that is fast becoming lost."

They asked Queen Creek architect Mike Perry, AIA, LEED AP (he and his family are longtime friends) to design a traditional-style villa and farmhouse that would be large enough and stylistically appropriate to showcase their family treasures and memorabilia. "We had many sit-downs looking at books of historic Old World architecture to identify the concepts and design details that we would reflect in our current-day design translation," said Perry, a partner in Chandler's Whitneybell Perry.

To build their home, they chose Chandler-based Alexander Enterprises Construction and Development Co., recently honored with an AZ Republic/AZ Central Readers & Critics ▶





Choice Award for Best Custom Home Builder. The company had built a home for a friend who was very pleased. The Sossamans toured a few of the company's homes and admired the quality of the work as well as the integrity of the staff, led by Kevin Alexander, its vice president.

As part of his contract, Alexander included an initial interior design consultation with Scottsdale interior designers Jan Friedman, ASID, and Traci Shields, ASID. Happy with their insight, the Sossamans chose Friedman & Shields to complete the project. "They wanted their new home to look like it has been there for years, not newly constructed, and incorporate their antique furnishings and accessories and collections," said Shields.

This tradition-consciousness is apparent immediately. It is posted, in fact, to the front door: "The Homestead Est. 1919." The home is on the original 160-acre homestead proved up by Jamie's grandmother, Nancy Sossaman, in 1919, when the area was called Rittenhouse. She and Jamie's grandfather, Jasper James, had come to Phoenix from Dilly, Texas, around 1910, attracted, no doubt, by word of the agricultural success of the Valley. They had also had a hog farm in Galveston, Texas – a farm destroyed in the 1900 Flood, the deadliest natural disaster in American history. The family Sossamanhausen came

to the states in the late 1700s and lived in Arkansas; Jasper James, 17, fought in the Confederate army and later built covered wagons for those trekking west.

Jamie's maternal line, Mather, is the great New England family that produced legendary Puritan preachers Increase and Cotton Mather, who served up fire and brimstone to pre-Revolutionary America. They zealously disliked Southerners, including the Sossamans, which caused significant nuptial challenges for Jamie's parents – a story which did not end in civil war, fortunately.

When you enter into the Sossamans' domed entry, you see a vaulted gallery hall with traditional columns. Soaring to a turret at one end, this hall opens to the great room and connects both sides of the home: the private, with the master bedroom suite, guest bedroom and office, and the public, including the theater, kitchen and laundry room.

Like a distinguished meeting space or church, the hall features clerestory windows that provide air circulation (they are electrically operated, either with a timer or manual override) as well as natural light into the center of the home and the many display spaces for the Sossamans' collectibles.

The hall's barrel-vault ceiling features hand-applied half-bricks. ▷





Three craftsmen worked for two-and-a-half months cutting and laying the brick from two-story-high scaffolding. “We saw a similar ceiling in a magazine and showed it to Traci,” Sue explained. “She assured us she knew an artisan who could duplicate it. It has exceeded our expectations.”

For the same aged effect, the beams in the great room and master bedroom are hand hewn and carved. Diligently, Alexander found a craftsman who chain-sawed the Douglas fir beams to age and wear them.

Shields worked with the Sossamans on details reasserting the vintage theme. On the floor is reclaimed oak from a barn in Tennessee, circa 1876. In the great room and out to the patio in the back is tumbled travertine. Tile in the kitchen and bathrooms complement the style as well. Shields also found needlepoint carpeting that recalls Sue’s sewing hobby. Throughout, she also contracted decorative painters to age walls with Venetian plaster and faux finishing.

As the style is traditional, technology is contemporary and environmentally conscious. In the back yard a gray water tank captures rain and run-off from sinks and showers and redistributes it to the landscaping system. In addition, specially constructed green fireplaces, approved by the EPA, allow Jamie and Sue to burn real wood throughout the winter.

As this is an heirloom home, the couple told Shields they wanted to include as much of the existing furniture as possible. The couch and matching chair and one of the piecrust tables in the living room belonged to Jamie’s parents. “New furnishings were carefully selected so that they blended well into the existing pieces,” Shields explained. “Our goal was that it would be difficult to tell which piece was new and which one was old.”

As a couple, they’ve collected many pieces. They purchased the dining room table, the buffet, server and hutch in a secondhand store in Chandler with money Sue had saved from teaching. “We didn’t have room in our other house to have the table fully extended or to have all of the pieces in one room,” Sue explained. Mike measured it all, so the room is sized to fit the table!”

In the master bedroom, Sue and Jamie have a chest that they brought back from Hong Kong in 1955; Jamie had been a Navy seaplane pilot until 1956. Next to it is a fainting couch from Sue’s family, although she doesn’t faint, she said with a smile.

Across from this is Sue’s sanctuary, her sewing corner, where she needlepoints. She purchased the antique oak sewing table in a store years ago. On the inside of the lid is space for scissors, and the top has spool holders and a blue velvet pincushion. ▶





In the living room is a top section of an antique English walnut buffet built into a triangular niche in one corner. The Sossamans found it years ago in a secondhand store in Grant's Pass, Ore. The piece had been sitting on the floor of their old house; Shields suggested elevating it so that they and their guests could appreciate the glass detail and the items it showcased.

Niches throughout the home, in the hallway, by the butler's pantry and elsewhere display their collectibles in custom display cabinets. "We clustered the small scaled antiques to create a stronger presence," Shields noted.

Most of the mementos are from Jamie's family – his dishes as a child, his mittens, his mother's toys, his father's binoculars. In one is the cradle, circa 1870, made by Stuart Mitchell for his daughter, Almira Mitchell Mather, Jamie's grandmother. In another are tools

owned by Abner Mitchell, Jamie's uncle. Still another holds Sue's childhood doll.

Other niches showcase items from their travels: jade from trips to Taiwan and China (gifts from their governments when Jamie was speaker of the House), woodcarvings from Africa as well as Native American kachinas, baskets and pots.

Sue's got more contemporary pots in her kitchen, where she enjoys the expansive island and the copper farmhouse sink. "While I'm not an accomplished cook, I do enjoy baking and watching the rabbits, doves, quail and hummingbirds from the kitchen windows," she said.

When the grandchildren visit, she has the advantage over all Mather and Sossaman grandmothers in her and Jamie's long family line. "They call me," she said with a laugh that would have moved even the strait-laced Cotton Mather to a smile, "the Cookie Grandma." □

