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Tumbled-travertine floors in the great room (top) and dark wood floors salvaged from a 19th-century Tennessee barn create a backdrop for a designer's successful melding of old and new items that makes the Queen Creek home of Sae and Jamie Sossaman (above) look ageless.

New home, OLD SOD

By Susan Felt
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Jamie and Sae Sossaman were adamant. They wanted to open the door of their new home and see the Santan Mountains. It's a view Jamie has had all his life. And one he shared with his grandmother, who, in 1919, came to this corner of Maricopa County to homestead.

The Sossaman family are pioneers in this Queen Creek community that 90 years ago had no more than a handful of families, said Dave Solge, president of the San Tan Historical Society. Many of the roads in this area bear those families' names: Warner, Rittenhouse, Power, Germann and Sossaman.

There was only one place for the Sossamans to build again — the familiar 1919 family homestead

The Sossamans continue to farm 800 acres and to live on the land where the family's first home was built. That is why, nearly four years ago, Sae and Jamie had only one place in mind for their new home: right where they already were.

"We wanted to stay on this land," Jamie said.

But when Salt River Project decided to build a substation at the intersection of Ocotillo and Sossaman roads near their home of 50 years, they decided to move. They had raised their three children in the ranch house they'd built on the family land.



PHOTOS BY MARK HENLE/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

From the front door of their expansive new Queen Creek home, the Sossamans can see their beloved Santan Mountains.

Sossamans put down old roots

COOL HOME

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It was from there that Sue had helped her husband run the campaigns that resulted in his being elected to 18 years in the Arizona House of Representatives and six years in the state Senate. (He served two years as speaker of the House.)

But the construction and noise seemed more than they wanted to cope with at this stage of their lives, so they looked elsewhere on the 800-plus acres that the Sossamans still farm. It was their son Steve who suggested that the logical place to relocate was near his home, west of his father's but within easy view of the intersection and the highest peak of the Santans.

Wish lists

When they contemplated building a new home, each had a few things on a wish list. For Jamie, it was a home theater and a four-car garage with room for a workshop. For Sue, it was an office and a place to relax, do needlepoint and read.

And they wanted to use the furniture they had, pieces like antique lawyer's glass bookcases, a liquor cabinet and living-room suite inherited from Jamie's mother. And there were those they had collected on their own antiques hunts.

This new home also had to include ample display space for a lifetime of mementos from their ancestors, Jamie's time as a state legislator and their own prodigious travels.

They needed a home that blended their rich heritage, furniture and furnishings they didn't want to part with as well as updated conveniences they could now afford. They didn't want a museum to their past, but they did want the keepsakes of their lives around them.

They wanted a home that looked as if they'd lived there all their lives, and not an awkward marriage of past and present.

The challenge for interior designer Traci Shields, of Friedman and Shields Fine Interior Design in Scottsdale, was to put small-scale antiques in larger-scale rooms with higher ceilings, clerestory windows and a massive stone fireplace.



Faux-finished walls render an "aged" patina that complements the wood beams and stone fireplace in this room.



The new home holds plenty of space for cherished items such as furniture, furnishings and art collected over the years.

"They had come from a typical ranch house with a low ceiling where every nook and cranny had something that meant the world to them," Shields said. "I didn't want these pieces to get lost in the new home."

New pieces, especially for the high-ceilinged great room, had to be large in scale. A sofa that once anchored their living room would become a love seat in the great room. The table that had anchored their kitchen would become a sofa table/desk.

Shields used embossed-leather furniture, antique metals and needlepoint rugs to meld the old with the new.

Salvaged floors

Faux-finished walls add an aged patina. Tumbled-travertine floors in the great room and dark wood floors salvaged from a Tennessee barn built in 1876 combine with the stone fireplace and beamed ceilings to create a backdrop that makes this new home look ageless.

It is difficult to tell which pieces the Sossamans brought with them and which are new, so careful is the blending.

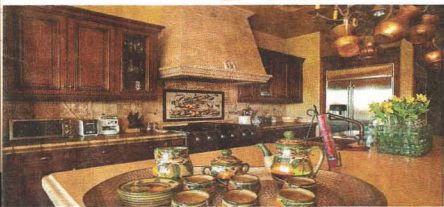
Mementos like his grandfather's shaving mug, a handmade doll from Sue's great-grandmother and a stuffed toy monkey Jamie had as a child are in glass cabinets built in hallways throughout the home.

Some cabinets hold items given to the Sossamans on trips abroad during Jamie's tenure as a state legislator. Others display Native American pottery, baskets and figures collected or given to the couple. A coral-bead necklace, a gift to Sue from the Taiwanese government, sits on a shelf in a cabinet near a vase they found in China. Jade pieces, chopsticks and figures come from Jamie's tour of duty during the Korean War as a Navy pilot.

The pair share an office filled with items from his 24 years in the state Legislature. On the office wall is the property deed signed by Calvin Coolidge in 1928, documenting that the family had successfully established the homestead.

Today, four generations of Sossamans carry on the farming venture. Two of Jamie and Sue's children have homes on this land. Son Scott, on his second tour of duty in Iraq, plans to move back with his family and build a home here with its perfect view of the highest peak in the Santans.

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The kitchen achieves the Sossamans' goal of incorporating old pieces and new conveniences into a warm, comfortable, inviting whole.

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