

# Arizona Foothills custom homes

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## RANCH

COURTYARD HOUSE IN MESA

ARCHITECT: McCoy and Simon Architects

BUILDER: Stone Creek Building

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 2,817 (5,228 including patios)

#### RANCH

The Arizona Ranch house has an easy history, says architect Ron McCoy, whose firm recently completed a Mesa home in this style. It begins with the end of the Civil War and ends when the railway came to Arizona in the 1890's. Of course, the style is still seen today in modern adaptations of houses designed to defend their residents. The first Arizona Ranch houses, he says, were fortresses.

Step back in time to the close of the Civil War. Cattle ranchers started to move west, McCoy says, and they needed protection from the Apache Indians. When the Apaches started attacking, the army needed to protect the ranchers. As the army grew, more cattle were needed to feed them and the growing industry. It turns out, he says, that shortly after the Civil War, there were more standing troops in Arizona than anywhere in the country.

The courtyard-style Ranch home originated in Pompeii, was imported to Spain with the Roman Empire, blended with Moorish traditions in Spain and then traveled to North America, according to McCoy. What went to Mexico and then Arizona was, because of

the hostile environment, the urban version of the courtyard house—a walled compound. What went to California was the country version, known as the hacienda.

Simple rooms, thick walls and a lack of porches characterize the Arizona Ranch home. After all, if you're under attack, you don't want a porch, McCoy says. Rooftops were used for defensive purposes—residents could get on their roofs and fight. Outdoor spaces, like courtyards, were incorporated inside the main walls, so they weren't exposed. The style's basic elements are massive walls, exposed-beam roofs and heavy timber construction, although "the defining style of the Ranch house depends on what period you look at," McCoy says.

Technically, the end of the Ranch house came with the railroad, McCoy says, which brought not only wood, but also pattern books of Victorian architecture from the East Coast. Porches moved outside, and wood and brick replaced adobe. But Ranch's history continued with adaptations, as architects and scholars found ways to carry the style into modern times, with several significant stepping stones along the way.





One of these mile markers came in 1946, when Cliff May, in conjunction with *Sunset* magazine, wrote "Western Ranch Houses" to share the style's merits and its place in the Southwest. He actually coined the term family room and described the corridor as the original family room. May adapted the Spanish hacienda version into a wood-framed style for Southern California, which came to Phoenix in the 40's.

SIMPLE ROOMS, THICK WALLS AND  
A LACK OF PORCHES CHARACTERIZE  
THE ARIZONA RANCH HOME.

The next important movement was the Case-Study movement in post-World War II Southern California, which asked, "What is the new home for the American suburb?" "These Case-Study houses are very much the next phase of the Ranch house," McCoy says. Interiors start to incorporate more modern materials—steel, glass and open space. Al Beadle, one of the Case-Study architects, brought that type of architecture to Phoenix.

Though form might dominate function these days—the ability to fight from our roofs and remain secure in walled courtyards is, thankfully, less necessary—homeowners around the Valley continue to be inspired by the Arizona Ranch home.



*WILD WEST In the 1800's, Arizona's first Ranch houses were built with protection in mind.*









ARIZONA RANCH Though materials and interiors have become more modern, the Ranch house is still strongly influenced by its history.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL FERRICH

#### LEAVING A LEGACY

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