

Ranch Roundup

Intersecting interests in architecture and ecology drive the design of this territorial-style house in California's Central Valley.



The low-slung main house connects to the garage and guesthouse via a covered breezeway. The resulting L-shape provides protection for the courtyard in the center.



Designed for the arid landscapes of the Old West, ranch houses shared a rugged simplicity with their lean looks, broad covered porches, metal roofs, and troughs out front for parched horses. You don't have to live in the past to enjoy such pleasures. Jim Bruner's custom-built hacienda in Davis, California, has all these amenities and more.

Territorial-style architecture has its roots in the former Spanish territories and goes back to the mid-1800s. It's a bare-bones ranch style characterized by a low horizontal stance, deep roof overhangs, and an orientation to courtyards for outdoor living. Territorial style is profoundly traditional yet lends itself to a modern look, says lead architect Murray Silverstein, of Jacobson Silverstein Winslow/Degenhardt Architects in Berkeley, California.

"We tried to create something that would have been typical in an early California ranching or farming setting," says Jim,

whose family has a history in farming. "Building this house was an interesting way to try to get a sense of that." Another part of Jim's abiding interest in the land is his educational background: He majored in forestry and conservation at the University of California, Berkeley, and has a master's degree in wildland resource sciences.

Jim's interest in ecology and building spurred the inclusion of environmentally sound systems in his ranch oasis. The corrugated metal roof reflects the sun, deep overhangs shade

ABOVE | The living room, dining area, and kitchen are one space. "Note the trusses," says architectural team member Amy Guiang. "They were carefully crafted, but they have a utilitarian look."

OPPOSITE | "The use of natural wood comes to life in the living room, where the Douglas fir ceiling and trusses tie in with my sugar pine table," homeowner Jim Bruner says. Polished concrete floors help keep the space cool in summer, warm in winter.







OPPOSITE | The kitchen functions efficiently in the wide-open space, with room for anyone who desires to be involved. Combining to make a functional and pleasant place to work and enjoy company are wood ceilings, concrete countertops, blue-green cabinets, a polished concrete floor, a stainless-steel hood, and a curving-glass breakfast bar.

LEFT | The breakfast nook captures the morning light and provides a view of a lake, where ducks, geese, and herons are active at that time of day. The glass table was designed to match the kitchen's breakfast bar.

A Cohesive Design Theme

Choosing wisely from an established palette of colors, materials, and building elements invests a home with a sense of place and history. Here are some of the design pieces that helped resurrect the territorial-style of this ranch home.

Welcoming Shade

A wood trellis creates dappled light on the front terrace while providing some shelter near the entry. Ranches are all about informal living and grabbing a patch of shade.



Good Grain

Douglas fir lines the upper wall of the breakfast nook. It's a logical choice here because fir is a dominant species in the forests of the Western states.



Fireplace Focal Point

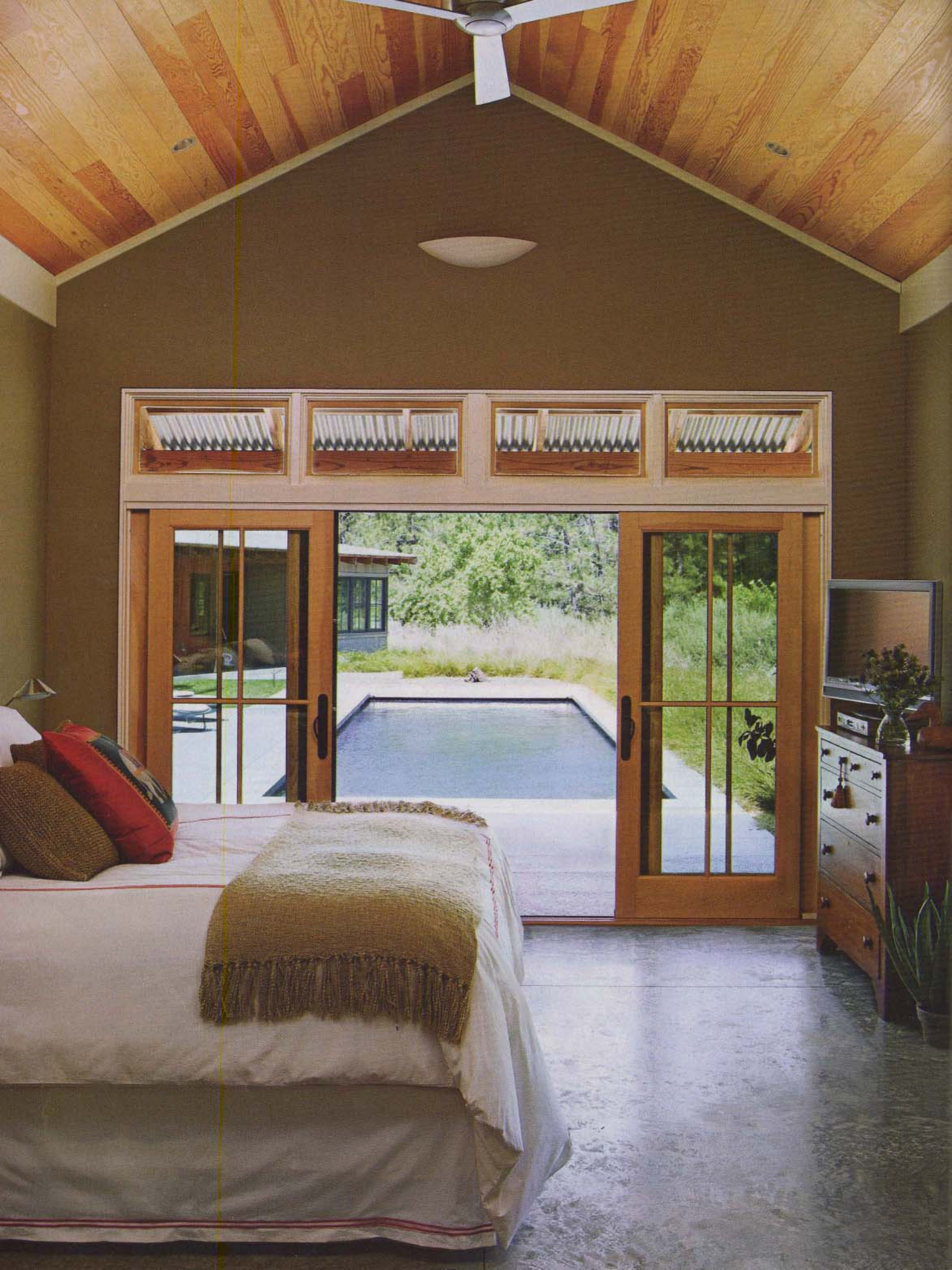
Resting on a limestone lintel and stacked stone, a slab of incense-cedar creates a dramatic fireplace mantel. Grain and texture make it a piece of art.



Natural Outlook

Wood casement windows with unpainted cross muntins frame a view above the tub. The same design might have been seen in a bathroom of the Old West.







the walls, and windows funnel breezes through the rectangular interiors. A concrete floor is naturally cool in the summer, while hydronic radiant heat warms it in winter. Drip irrigation provides what little water the arid-region plants require, including the Canary Island date palm planted near the pool.

"It's such a comfort to live here," Jim says. "The house never gets too hot or too cold, and I love the blend of the materials, with the contrast of my favorite wood—Douglas fir—and the burnished concrete for the floor and the counters. You can see other parts of the house and the outdoors from almost any room." When afternoons become too hot to open the house, a heat pump conditions the air, but nights usually cool into the 60s, so Jim relies on natural ventilation much of the time.

Air circulation is helped by the floor plan that blends the kitchen, dining, and living room into a wide-open great-room under dramatic trusses and a wood ceiling, all of Douglas fir. This is where family gathers when Jim's two grown children

and grandchild visit. Low-voltage lighting is used as an energy-efficient way to beautifully brighten the area after dark.

Contributing to the sense of openness created by the lack of walls in the great-room is the accessibility to outdoor spaces. According to Architect Barbara Winslow, "The floor plan positions every room with a vantage point to the open courtyard and the treed creek bed along the back of the site. The covered breezeways along the edges create a way to move from the indoors out while under shelter, and they provide shade for the interior."

OPPOSITE | "My bedroom is a magnificent place to catch a break," Jim says. The transom-topped doors frame the pool, native grasses, and guest cottage. "This is where the first sunlight hits the house," he says. Note how the corrugated roof creates an interesting pattern through the transom windows.

ABOVE | The master bathroom feels like an outdoor space. Local products were used: natural stone, polished concrete, and Douglas fir.



Jim says, "You're in and out from the living room, the entryway, and the master bedroom all the time. Everything is open and usable virtually all year round."

The master bedroom embodies how this connection to nature is felt with particular strength. Away from the home's public areas, the bedroom takes in views of the courtyard and beyond through glazed doors.

Not only does the inside/outside connection shape the design, but so does the lot. The house is located at the end of a cul-de-sac, which makes the front of the lot the narrowest point on the property.

Jim says it's not uncommon for passersby ask for a tour of the house, which he is glad to oblige. "I think people are drawn by the color of the stucco and the galvanized metal roof. The Mexican feathergrass landscaping creates a feel from earlier ranching times when homes were functional and planned to blend with the site." *

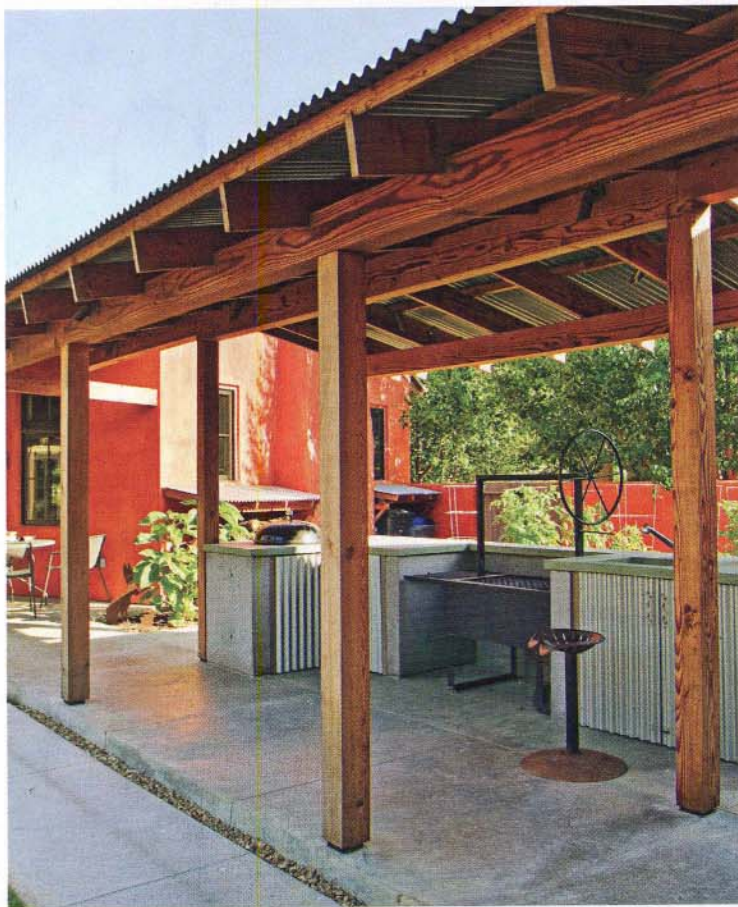
In Memory: "My builder and friend, Barry Landy, was tragically killed shortly after completing my home. He deserves a great deal of credit, and I would like his family and friends to know his project lives on." – Jim Bruner

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ABOVE | Visitors enter from the street by walking through a dry garden and past a galvanized-metal stock tank/watering trough complete with a spigot. It's whimsical, yet in keeping with the home's theme of ranch life.

OPPOSITE | Every ranch needs a place to barbecue. Here, the outdoor kitchen was stationed under a simply constructed pine shelter with a corrugated metal roof, another Western motif.



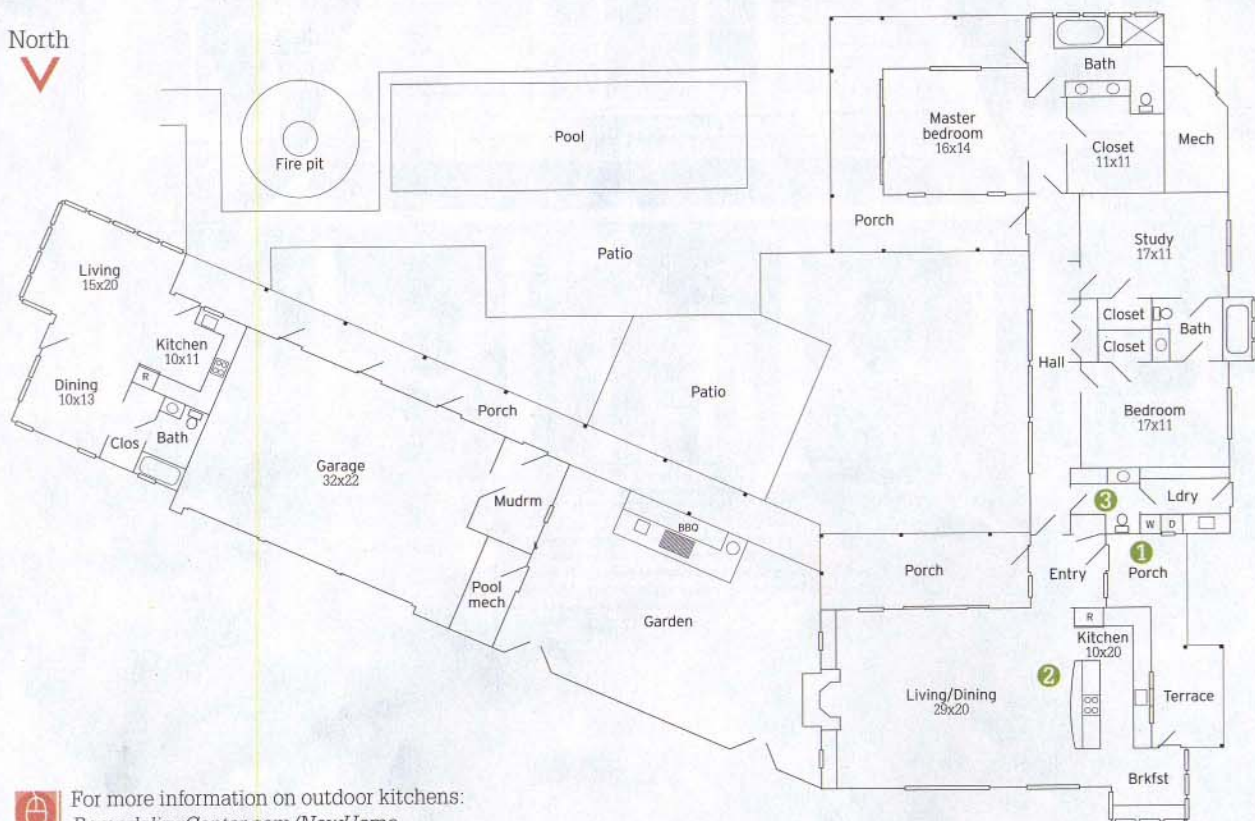
About This Home

SQUARE FEET: 2,600
BEDROOMS: 3
BATHROOMS: 2 full, 1 half

FOOTPRINT: 50x90 feet
LOCATION: Davis, California

- 1 Indoor/outdoor connections.** When visitors step through the entry, they can go left into the living/dining/kitchen area; go right toward bedrooms; or go straight ahead into the rear courtyard.
- 2 Established boundaries.** Setting space boundaries is essential when the living, dining, and kitchen spaces occupy one large room. By placing the kitchen island where it is, this room gains definition.
- 3 Convenient services.** Positioning for the laundry room couldn't be better. It's just down the hall from the bedrooms, where most laundry is generated. The rest often comes from the nearby kitchen.

North



For more information on outdoor kitchens:
RemodelingCenter.com/NewHome