



The Bennich home features 14-foot open beam ceilings through the living, dining and kitchen areas, which flow together. Furniture and accessories are from California Design Center.

Photos by Linda Seeger Salazar, The Arizona Daily Star

Daring to be different

Starr Pass-area territorial stands out

By Thom Walker
The Arizona Daily Star

Seeking refuge from the icy winters of their Swedish homeland, Hans and Eva Bennich recently had a \$350,000 custom home built at Starr Pass.

But they've found that it also can get a bit chilly in Tucson.

Their next-door neighbor isn't speaking to them, the Bennichs say. For a while, there were ominous rumblings about lawyers and legal action.

Nothing came of it, but it has left the couple feeling a little unwelcome in their adopted home away from home.

"It's very un-American, I would say - very unfriendly," said Hans Bennich.

All because of their new house.

Or rather, the burnt-adobe color of their house in a neighborhood where house colors and designs are dominated by dun-hued, frame-stucco pueblo and Mediterranean styles, the Bennich home stands out - for its Territorial-style architecture as well as its red-brick masonry.

Bennich, a retired immunologist who taught at the University of Uppsala in Sweden, said that was exactly the effect he and Eva had wanted. Looking around the Starr Pass area, they were struck by the sameness of the houses, he said.

"I wanted to build something different."

The difference has been a sore point with Alvin A. Winn, their next-door neighbor.

Winn said his opposition was based on the fact that the Bennich home "doesn't seem to conform to the architectural guides here." He said that he consulted a lawyer but decided to drop the matter after learning that the home had the full approval of the Starr Pass architectural board.

The 3,000-square-foot, three-bedroom home, designed by Alexandra Hatch Hayes and built by Olson-Hannah Building Co. draws on many See DIFFERENT, Page 5G



The distinctive Bennich home departs from the sameness of its neighbors, left. All appliances and light switches in the kitchen are in contrast to blue tiling, above.



Architect's 'Mission' took root in India

Alexandra Hatch Hayes says she decided to become an architect during an overland trip from Turkey to India.

Her father arranged the "adventure" as a present for her 21st birthday. It proved to be a life-altering experience. "I saw so much suffering and poverty all over the place," Hayes says.

It was then that she decided to devote her life to providing shelter for people who had none. It would be her "Mission."

There would be some detours, though. Hayes earned a degree in architecture from the University of Arizona in 1981.

She then worked in the Northeast and in Hawaii, on projects ranging from the Vanderbilt mansion in Vermont to an equestrian center in Malaysia.

All very fine, but not exactly what she started out to do. So in 1992, Hayes took the leap - went to Nairobi, Kenya, hoping to work on low-income housing.

But there was no work to be had. "What little money there was for public projects had been stolen by corrupt politicians," she says.

She stayed a month, then decided to come back to Tucson. Since hanging out her shingle here in 1994, she's handled the design for several homes and remodeling projects, and gotten married. She's working now to build a nest egg that will give her the freedom to do what she wants.

Then, Hayes figures, she'll finally be able to do it. Get to work on The Mission.



Hayes