

Run-down building gets new life as Hudson Guest House — Mary Beth Breckenridge

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Architect Allan Sveda has purchased and refurbished his share of run-down buildings.

But a house just east of Hudson's square, he said, was "probably the worst one I ever bought."

Floors and ceilings sagged. The roof structure was decrepit. The basement had been dug by hand, and its dirt walls sloped.

Sveda, however, saw its potential.

Now the house has new bones and a fresh face, with all its 19th-century charm intact. Sveda has turned it into the Hudson Guest House, a two-bedroom cottage he opened this summer and rents out for short-term stays of two nights or more. He will show it off to the public during an open house Sunday afternoon.

The house was originally one of two matching wings on the 1830s building that is now Johnson-Romito Funeral Home, just around the corner on East Main Street. Both wings were removed in the 1870s when the owner decided to change that building's style from Greek Revival to what was then the more fashionable Italianate, Sveda said.

The wing that is now the guest house was moved and enlarged. What happened to the other one is a mystery, he said.

Sveda has long been buying up, renovating and renting out older homes in Hudson, so he always takes note when a for-sale sign goes up in a yard. This one, near his office, was no exception.

The homeowner had died, and the house had been vacant for about four years, he said. His bid didn't win when the house was auctioned, but the buyer apparently had second thoughts and offered to resell.

Tearing off an addition in the back of the house gave Sveda access to the foundation to rebuild it and shore up the house, an undertaking he admits probably cost more than the rest of the structure. Then he built a new addition and reconfigured the rest of the post-and-beam building, even adding an old supporting post to replace one that had been inexplicably removed.

The project was a hands-on one for Sveda. Besides doing the architectural work, "I'm also the guy who does the demolition and a lot of other stuff," he said.

He kept elements like the old pine and poplar floors wherever he could and incorporated salvaged components such as an antique fireplace mantel and old rim locks on the interior doors. Wherever he could, he reused materials from the old house, such as concrete wheel tracks from the old driveway that became a retaining wall and old street bricks from the basement floor that were used to create a landing area just outside the front door.

But even though he strived to retain the home's old-house character, he said his goal wasn't to restore it. He wanted it to feel like an old house but live like a new one.

So the two-bedroom guest house has an old-fashioned parlor with a fireplace, but it also has an informal keeping room with a smart TV and a full kitchen and laundry room. The house comes equipped with Wi-Fi, a modern must-have the home's earliest residents could never have dreamed of.

Sveda's daughter, Hudson interior designer Candace Sveda, decorated the house in traditional style and painted the trim in classic Colonial colors such as slate blue and soft gray-green. They used Allan Sveda's own furniture, including a drop-leaf kitchen table decorated in an American flag theme by artist Warren Kimble.

Sveda said his children weren't interested in his furniture, so he was happy to have an appropriate showcase for pieces he loves but no longer needs.

"If this deal doesn't work out," he joked, "I'm moving in."