

ON LOCATION

Palladian Villa, Preshrunk



1. The 19th-century velvet fainting couch was a gift from George Holt, the designer, who found it under a pile of garbage. The rugs, which took a beating during Hurricane Hugo in 1989, were rescued from the attic of an old mansion.

2. Reid Burgess found two of the antique fans in the house while on tour with his bluegrass band, King Wilkie. "I purchased one at a fair in Missouri," he said, "and the heavy thing rode on the roof of the van for two weeks before we got home."



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3. "I really wanted to do something that was well built and would last a long time," said Mr. Burgess, whose home is solid masonry. "This place will last for centuries."

4. "I guess the fascination with traditional architecture is similar to my pull toward bluegrass," Mr. Burgess said. "I was trying to find something real. Something with a connection to the past."

5. The floor is painted in Benjamin Moore Midsummer Night. The doors on either end of the space were found on the street. "People doing renovations," he said, "they'll just toss out doors."



By BROOKE HAUSER

REID BURGESS has long been enamored of Palladian architecture. As a child, he fell in love with it during a visit to Italy, and as a teenager, growing up in a Chicago suburb, he used to make elaborate drawings of villas for his high school crushes.

One drawing depicted a Mediterranean estate with a large auto court; he named it after a girl called Lauren. Another was a little neoclassical temple with a black-and-white color scheme; he called that one the Black Pearl and gave it to a girl named Jenny.

Now, at 33, Mr. Burgess has finally built a grown-up version of his childhood fantasy. He calls the two-story house, which is about 870 square feet, the Smallest Palladian Villa in the World. And fittingly, he owns it with his girlfriend of 15 years, Sally Eisenberg, 33, an accountant who is as petite, at 5-foot-5, as he is tall (6-foot-4).

"She's my muse," Mr. Burgess said. "She loves small things and small places."

Mr. Burgess, a professional mandolin player who lives in Brooklyn with Ms. Eisenberg, was inspired to bring his dream to life in Charleston, S.C., after reading an article about the work that George

Achieving a dream in 870 square feet, with room to spare for a mandolin.

Holt, a self-taught designer, has been doing there. Mr. Holt, who started a firm called New World Byzantine with Andrew Gould, another designer, has spent the last 20 years restoring old homes and building new ones with a medieval aesthetic, and in the process has helped revitalize rundown neighborhoods.

"I woke up one day," Mr. Burgess said, "and just knew I had to e-mail George."

Mr. Holt eventually put Mr. Burgess in touch with a developer named Gerard Moran, who has been involved in restoring the Elliotborough section of downtown Charleston. And Mr. Moran sold Mr. Burgess a 600-square-foot lot there, adjacent to several of Mr. Holt's projects, for about \$65,000.

As Mr. Holt, who designed the villa in collaboration with Mr. Gould and Mr. Burgess, observed: "The biggest challenge was the teeny site, and the fact that Reid and Sally's place would effectively



6. The Restoration Hardware bed was a splurge (\$590), but the drapes were a steal (\$6 a panel at a local fabric store). The Buddha head was found at an auction house in Richmond, Va.

7. The tiny kitchen is more like "one big cupboard," Mr. Burgess said. The doors are barely visible when closed; they blend into the walls, painted in French Gray from Farrow & Ball.

8. A closet interior is curry yellow, in contrast to the otherwise neutral palette. The drawings are of the city in another time. "I love how Charleston looked before everything was fixed up," he said.

spirit that pulls kids into the woods to put up a tree fort."

The house, which was completed this June, cost about \$200,000, not including expenses like landscaping, permits and legal fees. And it was built to last, with solid masonry.

Mr. Burgess also managed to incorporate recycled materials like bricks and doors he found on the street. One of his favorite features is the fireplace studded with bricks dug up on the property, which he believes were part of fortifications from the War of 1812.

He found the experience of working with Mr. Holt so rewarding that they have started their own venture, a firm called Urban-Ergonomics. So Mr. Burgess and Ms. Eisenberg likely will be spending a good amount of time in Charleston.

When they are there, they occupy the villa's open downstairs space, which is about 300 square feet and was furnished for around \$1,000 with an eclectic mix of finds from Craigslist and eBay. (To save money, they rent out the two upstairs rooms to college students.)

It's a small space, but efficiently designed and big enough for a couple, even when one of them is a man of Mr. Burgess's stature.

"That's why we have the 14-foot ceilings," he said.

be a town house flanked by adjacent buildings."

Financing the house was another challenge. Mr. Burgess met with more than 20 lenders before being approved for a mortgage. In June 2011 he finally began construction under the supervision of Mr. Holt and Mr. Gould, who lives nearby in a house designed to look as if it dates from 1700.

Throughout the construction Mr. Burgess kept a blog documenting his progress.

"Every town needs a castle," his first entry read. "Every castle should be built by that same