

# Country Roads: Landmark Hanover Inn gets a makeover

## Built in 1780 on Dartmouth campus

BY ROCHELLE LASH, THE GAZETTE FEBRUARY 22, 2013 10:16 AM



The 233-year-old Hanover Inn, part of Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H., has undergone a major restoration. The lobby features a massive granite table, modern rugs and art, paired with traditional furniture.

**Photograph by:** Eli Burakian

It takes a lot to transform a dowdy 233-year-old doyenne into a stunning, fresh-faced ingénue, but the Hanover Inn in New Hampshire is blessed with devoted supporters and ample resources.

The landmark inn was built in 1780 on the campus of Dartmouth College, which has been the venerable, pastoral centrepiece of the town of Hanover since 1769. With about 6,000 students, Dartmouth is the smallest of the Ivy League's eight prestigious schools. Some say it also is the most exclusive. Strongest on undergraduate programs, it also is recognized far and wide for its medical school, the Tuck School of Business and the Thayer School of Engineering.

With its distinguished reputation, Dartmouth is a major draw for alumni, professors, researchers, consultants and dignitaries from around the world. As a testament to its international reach, the Hanover Inn's website is available in 66 languages, including Urdu, Basque, Macedonian, Icelandic, Swahili and Yiddish. The college counts about 80 alumni from the greater Montreal area plus a handful of current students.

Many of Hanover's visitors are affluent, well-travelled and influential, and when they are in town, they need somewhere good to stay. Back in the day, the Hanover Inn played host to — well, it seems like

the whole world — Babe Ruth, John Wayne, Walter Cronkite, Nelson Rockefeller, Dwight Eisenhower and scores of other VIPs. More recently, the guest register has included the likes of U.S. President Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Meryl Streep and Johnny Depp.

I actually feel a teensy bit sorry for those latter-day visitors because they all slept at the Hanover Inn before its recent \$50-million makeover. I peeked in the front door about a year ago and the hotel was dark and dowdy, a hodgepodge of modifications made during two well-worn centuries. But now, the renowned university town has an exciting, progressive and upscale lodging establishment that befits its stature and that of its guests. It was time.

The restoration took the old gal right down to concrete and studs and rebuilt it into a stylish, sophisticated boutique hotel with terrific cuisine and gorgeous interiors. General manager Joseph Mellia invited me for a second look, and I was bowled over.

I stepped into a new and beautiful world where modern design and striking artworks complement the classics of handsome New England décor. In the lobby, a new skylight brings out the best of creamy off-white walls, a discreet fireplace reading corner and a nearly 1,300-kg table of impressive New Hampshire granite. A New York interior designer worked with the local Pompanoosuc Mills to customize antique-style furniture with such slender lines and inviting shapes that there is no mistaking everything has been thoroughly updated. The rooms and suites are spacious and impeccably appointed with an elegant country look.

Throughout the hotel, there are hints of Hanover Inn's link to Mother Dartmouth, especially with the use of forest green, the college's official colour, which has its own place on the Pantone scale — No. 349. Some walls, furniture and accessories are dark green and each bed has a cute collegiate cable-knit blanket folded at the end, again in green and white stripes.

Previously, Mellia had worked at a major five-star hotel in Boston and now is implementing big-city services in Hanover. The hotel has opened several impressive banquet rooms for grand entertaining, plus a fitness room with a television for each of the seven Cybex cardio machines. The Hanover also has turndown service with chocolates, room service until 10 p.m. and high-security door locks activated by touch key-cards.

The inn's stylish new restaurant, opening in a few weeks and overlooking the Dartmouth campus, will be called PINE (spelled all uppercase for emphasis). It will keep the theme with wooden floors for a casual New England ambience and a board menu announcing micro-brews and wines.

"We'll do local meats and cheeses and New England seafood," says executive chef Justin Dain.

Calling his style "refined American cuisine," he is planning a menu of hangar steak, roast veal, wild salmon and updated comfort dishes such as a deluxe burger, gnocchi with pancetta and pecorino cheese, clam chowder and roast chicken with French haricots and fingerling potatoes. Dain ran a temporary bistro at Hanover Inn while planning PINE and I thought his food was excellent. Our table tried pan-seared scallops with apple, truffles and potato; short ribs braised in red wine; and

homemade ravioli with wild mushrooms

With the hotel's reconstruction, it now has an indoor corridor linking it to Dartmouth's illustrious arts venues: the new-in-2012 Black Family Visual Arts Center; the Hood Museum of Art; and the 50-year-old Hopkins Center for the Arts, which will present such performances as New Sounds from the Arab Lands, Tuesday; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, March 1, 2 and 3; and the Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia, which will adapt bunny stories to the stage, March 23.

#### IF YOU GO

Hanover is a three-hour drive from Montreal via Vermont Highway 89 south and Highway 91 north.

The Hanover Inn: 800-443-7024, 603-643-4300, [www.hanoverinn.com](http://www.hanoverinn.com); 2 East Wheelock St., Hanover, N.H. Pet-friendly, \$50 extra per night, incl. dog bed and treats.

Price: Rooms, junior suites and suites, incl. breakfast, fitness room and daily Wall Street Journal, until April 14, \$241-\$511 for two, per night; from May-July, \$291-\$651; in Aug., \$281-\$531; Sept.-Oct., \$341-\$691. Dartmouth Alumni get a \$50 voucher for use at the hotel.

For children: Family Fun Package: adjoining rooms, breakfast for two adults and two children, admission to museums or Upper Valley Aquatic Center, until March 31, \$324 per night for four; DVDs and cribs available, and babysitting at [www.care.com](http://www.care.com).

Packages are available with skiing at Dartmouth Skiway, cooking classes at King Arthur's Flour and golf at Hanover Country Club.

Dartmouth College: 603-646-1110, [www.dartmouth.edu](http://www.dartmouth.edu), Hanover, N.H.

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