

Ghosts of McGees come alive at Ottawa Inn

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE FEBRUARY 17, 2011



The classic Windsor Room at Auberge McGee in Ottawa combines antique decor with a high-tech bathroom.

Photograph by: Auberge McGee inn

Although the Country Roads focus usually is on places to stay and things to do in forests and fields, we are suggesting a getaway to Canada's capital city.

Auberge McGee, or McGee's Inn, is in the heart of Ottawa. However, it has many of the elements of a true country inn - a leafy location, a rich history and a fine, fulsome breakfast.

The dignified old manse is on Daly Street, a well-treed residential road in the Sandy Hill neighbourhood near the University of Ottawa. The street boasts an impeccable pedigree, having been home to three prime ministers and several mayors and judges. A man of influence and considerable wealth, John McGee built the three-storey house in the late 1880s for his family, which would grow to nine children.

The inn has an impressive entrance of classic columns under a portico, handsome interiors with crystal chandeliers and nearly four-metre ceilings. It was an important home for McGee, a clerk of the Privy Council, brother of poet and politician Thomas D'Arcy McGee, and father of Frank McGee, a Hockey Hall of Famer.

Today, the Armstrong family, Ken and Judy, son Jason and his wife, Sarah, run Auberge McGee and have brought their own history to the mix. The inn is filled with family heirlooms, like a 1910 player piano and Ken Armstrong's extensive Norman Rockwell collection, which includes the artist's famous posters as well as offbeat items like Rockwell beer steins and salt-and-pepper shakers. True to its

