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Style Publishing Group

P.O. Box 1676

Frisco, Texas 75034

Phone: 972.335.1181

Toll Free: 877.781.7067

Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com

Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306



A Romantic Local Escape

By Keena Pratt

TAKE A STEP BACK in time to a romantic era and experience the ambiance of a beautiful Victorian home nestled in the enchanting heart of historical downtown McKinney. The Tartan Thistle Bed and Breakfast offers an individualized blend of hospitality and comfort to fulfill all of your desires of an intimate Valentine escape weekend for two. It promises a one-of-a-kind, truly memorable experience.

Originally built in the late 1880s, this historic home was extensively expanded and remodeled in 1902 by Louis and Louise Scott and remained in the Scott family until the late 1960s. Despite vandalism and near destruction, the home was fully restored in 1983 with modern conveniences but has retained the authentic Neo-classical Victorian architecture. The home is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a Texas Historic Landmark.

Innkeepers Tom and Karen Watson had a vision to open a bed and breakfast



*The Tartan Thistle (lower left);
Tower Room (above)
photos by Chris Fritchie*

and upon moving to McKinney in 1996, they purchased the historical home that would eventually fulfill their dreams. After four years of hard work and renovations, the Tartan Thistle Bed and Breakfast opened in the year 2000. The Watsons have welcomed guests into their home from near and far, many of whom return for special occasions.

This charming home is exquisitely decorated with antiques that capture the essence of the period of time in which the home was built. Many of the antiques throughout the home are from previous



The Paisley Room

photo by Chris Fritchie

owners and have remained permanent fixtures, adding to the home's authenticity and offering guests a touch of the past. The name "Tartan Thistle" was derived from Scotland. To enhance the Scottish theme of this bed and breakfast, the Watsons have displayed an array of their personal collections, including bagpipes and a well-tuned baby grand piano, which are available for musical guests to enjoy.

We want our guests to enjoy the simple things in life and to remember the way things used to be.

This romantic escape features a stunning wrap-around veranda and a second floor front porch area surrounded by 12 pecan trees that were planted about 50 years ago by the Scott family. The veranda offers an ideal setting to relax and take in the beautiful surroundings of McKinney's

historical area. The town's square is located only three blocks away and is a haven of antique shopping, historic interests and fine dining with award-winning chefs – all within walking distance.

"We want our guests to enjoy the simple things in life and to remember the way things used to be," Mr. Watson said. "People need to have the chance to slow down from the busyness of life."

The Tartan Thistle Bed and Breakfast offers extraordinarily clean, affordable accommodations with luxurious settings located throughout the home to allow guests to retreat from everyday stresses. The parlor and adjoining dining area are both adorned with beautiful antique furnishings where guests are welcome to experience the wonderment of days gone by. The home's octagonal tower with stunning stained glass windows and original carved woodwork serves as the centerpiece of the parlor and provides an intimate setting for guests to unwind from their day or curl up with a good book.

Aside from being one of the most romantic getaway locations in the area, the Tartan Thistle offers the perfect setting for many special occasions,

including a peaceful weekend for two, a whole-house reunion, small meeting or business retreat. Tom and Karen Watson have hosted more than 200 events in these rooms, including weddings and receptions, bridal and baby showers, family reunions, musical performances and high teas, accommodating up to 70 guests. No matter what the occasion, the Watsons will ensure that you leave well-rested and rejuvenated.

Guests of the Tartan Thistle can choose from six beautifully decorated rooms, each featuring a private en suite bath. Every room is thoughtfully equipped with a TV/VCR, including HBO/CNN, high-speed wireless DSL, desk, telephone and data port, ceiling fan, clock radio, iron and board and hair dryer. A computer with high-speed Internet access is also available for guest use at no additional charge. These items are inconspicuously placed, as guests are typically motivated to escape to a world of serenity during their time spent at the inn.

Each guest room is meticulously ornamented with period décor. Guests may choose, according to their own tastes and desires, from a variety of rooms, each with a variety of furnishings from an



*Hash Brown Crust Quiche (left); Antique tea pot & Scottish salt & pepper shakers (below)
photos by Chris Fritchie*

earlier era that have been collected over many years, adding their own charm to each room.

The Heather room is located on the second floor at the rear of the home and includes a sun porch, separated from the main room with double French doors. This setting makes an ideal space for guests with children or multiple guests.

The Tower room is a favorite for a Valentine getaway or

honeymooners, featuring a sitting area enveloped by the octagonal tower. A private connection to the almost hidden treasure of the Moors room provides a two room, two bath suite.

The Tartan room is located on the east side of the home, as are the 12 pecan trees that seem to engulf this remarkably scenic room. The large room gives the sense of being high in a tree house tucked away from the cares of the world. This serene setting can also be enjoyed in the elegant Thistle room.

The Paisley room is the only guest room located on the first floor and is certain to leave guests feeling like royalty. The room's spacious accommodations are in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA accessible) and include a private entrance from the veranda.

Breakfast is served between the hours of 8 and 9 a.m., or as arranged, in the beautifully fabric canopied dining room featuring a cozy hearth with authentic coal fire. Guests enjoy a three-course full cooked buffet breakfast, including dessert, on the weekends and throughout the week. Karen Watson's signature dish is French Toast Decadence, which is a dessert of cinnamon swirl French toast with a

cream cheese center, baked in a caramel sauce and topped with blackberries and whipped cream. Additional food services included with room rates are scones, shortbread, afternoon tea, fruit and non-alcoholic beverages. Special meals are available by request.

"We really enjoy having guests in the home," said Mr. Watson. "Having a bed and breakfast works well for our lifestyle. We wouldn't know what to do if we didn't have it!"

Tom and Karen Watson share all of the responsibilities required to run a well-appointed home. Tom has enjoyed the renovations and maintenance of the home, while Karen's talent is clearly in the home's elegant décor and cooking. She has purchased many additional antique pieces from shops in the historic town square. Karen is constantly generating new recipes to add to her extensive breakfast menu.

The Tartan Thistle Bed and Breakfast offers quiet serenity, hospitable innkeepers, superb breakfasts to start the day and is a convenient location to all attractions and historical sights within the downtown McKinney area. This quaint home is a magical place of refuge from the bustle of life, reminding guests to indulge in the simple things in life. Designed for guests to feel miles away from their every-day ways of life, this bed and breakfast and its innkeepers will leave you wanting nothing and feeling completely pampered. Experience a perfect romantic getaway at the enchanting Tartan Thistle Bed and Breakfast that is truly a piece of Texas history. The Tartan Thistle is located at 513 West Louisiana Street in McKinney.

Keena Pratt is a special contributor living in Frisco.



HASH BROWN CRUST QUICHE

- 1 lb. pkg. shredded hash brown potatoes
- 3 Tbsp. melted butter
- 5 eggs
- 1 c. half & half
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- Pepper, tabasco to taste

Press potatoes into a deep dish pie plate, pressing up on sides to form a crust; drizzle with melted butter. Bake at 425 degrees for 25 minutes. In the baked potato crust, layer choice of chopped vegetables, (green onions, mushrooms, peppers), shredded cheese, diced cooked ham.

Whisk remaining ingredients together; pour into crust. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 50 minutes or until a knife inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from oven.

Sprinkle 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese over top of quiche to melt while cooling for 10 minutes.
Serves 6

from The Tartan Thistle Menu