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## Perry Hotel a landmark part of Petoskey's lively downtown

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### A place in history

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By Beth Anne Piehl GoodLife Editor · 1 comments



Learn more about local history and artists just across the hotel's parking lot at Stafford's Gallery of Art and History. Photo: G. Randall Goss/GoodLife

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The Perry Hotel sealed its place in Petoskey's history when its original builder made a key decision: To build it from brick instead of wood.

With kerosene lamps common in the late 1800s, innumerable hotels both in Northern Michigan and around the country succumbed to fires that ravaged the structures and left them untenable.

As Petoskey's number of downtown hotels dwindled from 20, the one that remained was the sturdiest: The Perry Hotel. Its long history here — the hotel was built in 1899 — has made it a local landmark, and the Stafford Smith family has been its caretakers since purchasing it in 1989.

"Downtown Petoskey is a destination, and when you live here, you don't always get to take it all in," said Reg Smith, the hotel's general manager and son of Stafford.

Staying at the Perry presents guests with the best of the past and the present. The history-rich hotel with 79 rooms is outfitted with modern conveniences along with turn-of-the-century furnishings and decor; plus, it's within easy walking distance to downtown shops and restaurants, and Petoskey's waterfront.

There are also four dining options at the hotel: the elegant H.O. Rose Dining Room serving breakfast and lunch daily, with dinners on a seasonal/weekend basis; the more casual Noggin Room in the lower level, a bar and restaurant with entertainment; a new outdoor patio off the Noggin Room on Lake Street; and the serene outdoor setting of the Rose Garden Veranda. There's also a coffee/espresso bar in the main lobby, an inviting space that hearkens back to the Perry's early years.

"We think this lobby is our premier space," said Smith. "This is part of the traditional hotel experience, to enjoy the lobby and the fireplace and to sit back and relax."

The rooms at the Perry cater to all preferences of guests, from the cozier Gaslight wing rooms to larger suites in the Davis wing. When not enjoying the sprawling front porch, quaint rooms, fitness/hot tub/massage area, restaurants or simply resting, guests can take part in special spring deals, such as shopping packages with overnight lodging, wine events and a Titanic-themed dinner program (see sidebar for details).

Or, learn more about local history and artists just across the hotel's parking lot at Stafford's Gallery of Art and History. Located within the former Longton Hall antiques building, the gallery is now the Perry's signature butter-yellow color. The structure itself shares an interesting past, too, having served as an ice house in the

early 1930s. Ice from the lake would be brought inside, broken up and delivered to homes and businesses for refrigeration.

Inside, several rooms are filled with a variety of artwork from local and Michigan artists. There is also a designated room detailing Petoskey's historic hotel past, with photoboards and news clippings from the heydays of the local hospitality industry. The room was organized by Janice Smith, Stafford's wife, who included maps with the details to show where the hotels were located.

"You can come here," Reg Smith said, "and enrich your knowledge of the whole history of this area."

### Special Spring Events

The Perry Hotel offers several fun and innovative lodging packages through the spring months. They include:

Shopping packages: Friday-Sunday, March, April and May. Includes two nights lodging, welcome basket upon arrival, \$60 in Downtown Petoskey Merchant Dollars, breakfast each morning and \$40 in Noggin Bucks. \$350 (plus tax and gratuities)

Weekend of Wine: Friday-Sunday, March 19-21. Includes two nights lodging, wine and cheese basket upon arrival, Friday night entertainment in the Noggin Room Pub, a breakfast voucher each morning and Saturday evening wine dinner with wine from Shady Lane Cellars of Suttons Bay. \$299 (plus tax and gratuities); dinner only, \$45 per person which includes a five-course gourmet dinner complete with wine pairings.

Titanic Dinner: Friday-Sunday, April 16-18. Relive the mystery and intrigue. Includes two nights lodging, a breakfast voucher each morning and a special dinner presentation for two along with an historical Titanic presentation. \$250 (plus tax and gratuities).

For information about the packages or the Perry, call 347-4000 or go online to [www.staffords.com](http://www.staffords.com).

### The Perry's past

1899: The Perry is built by Dr. Norman Perry from Grand Rapids.

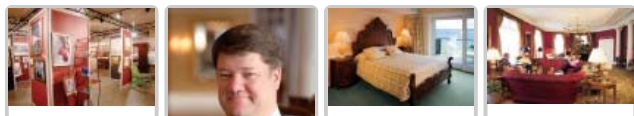
1919: It is purchased by doctors John and George Reycraft, and operated by a nephew, D. Herbert Reycraft. The Reycrafts added a four-story, 46-room wing in 1926, increasing capacity to 300.

1961: John Davis purchases the hotel and changes the name to the Perry-Davis.

1970s: Perry-Davis is purchased by Alan Gornic.

1989: It comes under the ownership of Stafford Smith/Stafford's Hospitality. Extensive interior and exterior renovations are completed on the hotel, which is listed on the National Register.

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