INN
At PERRY CABIN
History

The original manor house which became Inn at Perry Cabin was built by Samuel Hambleton in the early 1800's (approximately 1815). Mr. Hambleton was born in 1777. During the War of 1812 he entered the Navy and became the purser, aide de camp to Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry at the Battle of Lake Erie. Hambleton retired to St. Michaels in 1816 and designed the north wing (approximate location of the Morning Room) of the manor house to resemble Commodore Perry's cabin on his flagship "Niagara". Hence, the reference in the name, "Inn at Perry Cabin". The history of the property spans nearly two and one-half centuries. During colonial times the English Crown endowed a land grant on the property which was originally called "Davenport." It later became famous as the family home of the Hambleton's and through various owners the estate has been a plantation, riding academy, a small country inn, and most recently with addition of the award winning restaurant and lodgings expansion it has become a 5 Star Hotel/Inn. In approximately 1926, Charles Fogg, a coal baron owned Perry Cabin and drastically renovated the Manor house to the then fashionable Federal and Greek revival architectural styling including the columned portico on the front entrance facing the harbor.

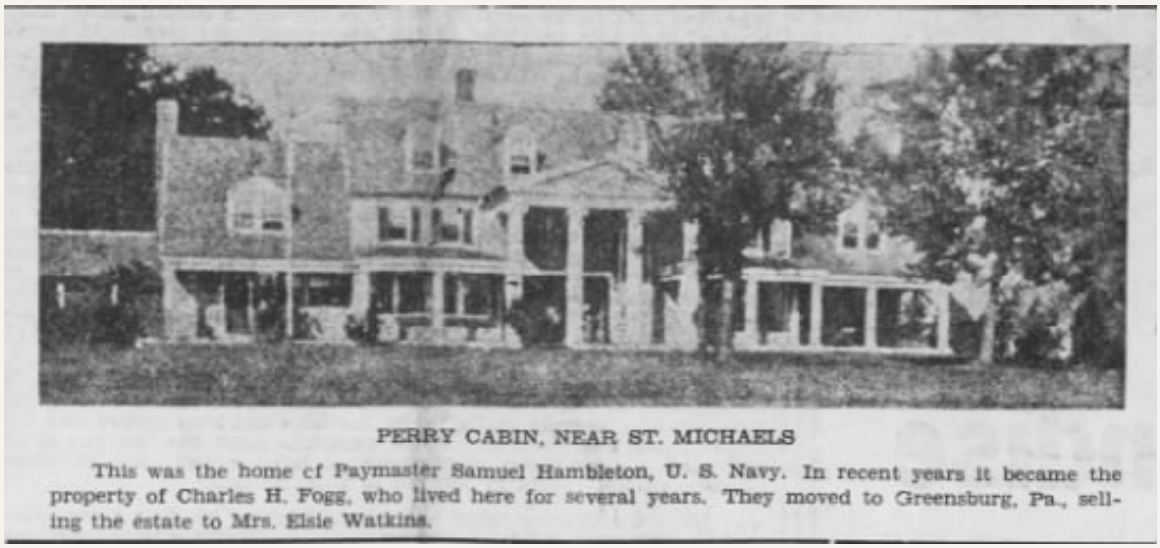
The Watkins family created a riding academy here in approximately 1952. The property included several hundred acres, the original Manor house and stables and a few out-buildings and wharf.

The Meyerhoff's of Baltimore (owners of the Kentucky Derby winning thoroughbred "Spectacular Bid") purchased the estate in 1980. They transformed the country home into a 6 bedroom inn and restaurant which became widely known in the area for hospitality and local entertaining.

English industrialist, Sir Bernard Ashley purchased the Inn in 1989 and began a series of transformations. They totally renovated the original Manor house and the north wing, added the restaurant and the south wing near the Pub; establishing the reputation for fine dining in the restaurant. They included an indoor pool in what is now the large banquet hall, The Commodore's Room. The Ashley's transformations increased the inn to 41 rooms.

In 1999 Orient Express purchased the Inn and made improvements and additions which include the enlarged dining room, The Purser's Pub, the garden pool, new banquet and meeting rooms and the "Crescent," the 3 buildings on the south lawn which contain Studio rooms and Master suites.

The addition of the Crescent brings the total of rooms to 82. Construction on the spa and fitness center was completed in early 2007.



PERRY CABIN, NEAR ST. MICHAELS

This was the home of Paymaster Samuel Hambleton, U. S. Navy. In recent years it became the property of Charles H. Fogg, who lived here for several years. They moved to Greensburg, Pa., selling the estate to Mrs. Elsie Watkins.

The historic village of St. Michaels is just a stroll away. The quaint town boasts as "The town that fooled the British!" This is a reference to a bombardment of the town during the War of 1812 that may or may not have occurred. Legend informs us that the local residents eluded direct hits by hoisting lanterns into the treetops and onto tall poles. The gun crew aimed for the lights and overshot the town – hence the town that fooled the British! Numerous houses in the town have historic significance and date to the early 1600's. St. Michaels served as an early port and shipbuilding center along with the town of Oxford, MD. Safe harbor was readily found in the sheltered waters of the Miles River a tributary to the Chesapeake Bay.

INN
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Timeline

1812 Samuel Hambleton began construction on the Inn which would be his private residence when he returned home from the War of 1812. He named it Perry Cabin Farm after his commanding officer Commodore Oliver Perry.

1816 The original Inn, built in 1816, (now the north wing of the manor house) was designed and built by Purser Samuel Hambleton, a War of 1812 Navy veteran and aide-de-camp to Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry.

1850 Hambleton's Niece died on the property, she was upstairs sleeping best guess in the area of what is now room 39 and she went sleepwalking down the stairs and out into the river. By the time anyone realized she was missing she had already died.

1851 Samuel Hambleton dies here at Perry Cabin and is buried next door on Old Martingham Farm which is where his family grave plot is located.

1926 The exterior of the Inn is drastically changed with the addition of the Greek columns out front.

1952 The Watkins family (hence the Watkins Lane) purchases the inn and turn it into a riding academy. The Commodore room was an indoor riding ring complete with a crystal chandelier

INN
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Timeline continued...

1980 The Meyerhoff Family from Baltimore who owned the horse Spectacular Bid purchases the property and turns it into a 6 bedroom inn. They also built the famed gazebo bar then used out on the point. They turned the indoor riding ring into and indoor pool.

1989 In September, global entrepreneur and co-founder of Laura Ashley plc, Sir Bernard Ashley, purchase this property as well as Keswick Hall. They increase the size of the inn from 6 rooms to 42, launch our famous culinary department as well as renovate the grounds into the beautiful property that it is today.

1999 Belmond, at the time known as Orient Express Hotels, purchases the property and builds 3 additional buildings bringing the room total to 78 as well as building the spa and pool area and turning the indoor pool space into the Commodore meeting room.

2014 In March, Orient-Express Hotels changed its name to Belmond, and the hotel was renamed Inn at Perry Cabin by Belmond.

The People of St. Michaels

Verrazano may have explored these peninsulas in 1524. Captain John Smith cruised this "delightsome land" during the summer of 1608. William Claiborne, the Virginia Secretary of State, a friend of John Smith, and later a pirate (Shomette), founded a trading post and settlement in 1631 just 10 miles from the current town of St. Michaels on the lee side of Kent Island across Eastern Bay. About thirty years later, the Calvert family (the Lords of Baltimore) supported settlements in Talbot County, named for the sister of Cecilius Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, and wife of Sir Robert Talbot.

Frederick Augustus Bailey (later known as Frederick Douglass), famous abolitionist and later U.S. representative in Haiti, worked as a slave in and near St. Michaels before he escaped from slavery in the 1830's. Robert E. Lee slept in one of the local homes; presidents and statesmen from all over the globe vacationed on nearby Jefferson Island. James Michener lived here while researching and writing Chesapeake, Bill Veeck (as in "wreck") was a resident; Harold Baines (Chisox and Baltimore Orioles) was born in St. Michaels and has a home here.

The Early History of St. Michaels: Land grants dating from the 1640's to the mid-1670's established much of the present periphery of the town. The river and (probably) the tiny village were known as St. Michaels before 1658. It is likely that the current name of the river, the Miles, is a corruption of the town name, and there is at least one citation, in the will of William Hambleton of Martingham, in 1675, which refers to the "Myles" river. In about 1677, the Christ Episcopal Church of St. Michael the Archangel parish was founded on a narrow neck of land between the Miles River and Broad Creek.

During the next hundred years, forests were cleared, ships were constructed with the timber and the land tilled for tobacco. The village remained small, but attracted a number of shipwrights and craftsmen to support the small shipbuilding industry. The tobacco market waned with the advent of the American Revolution and agricultural production turned to wheat to feed Washington's troops.

In 1778, James Braddock, an agent for a British firm, purchased approximately 20 acres and subdivided St. Michaels into a planned community of 58 lots (Touart). Its contemporary neighbors then and now were already on the map. Both the nearby town of Oxford and the private ferry service from Oxford to Bellevue were already almost a hundred years old; Tilghman Island had already been a political entity for 70 years; the village of Talbot Court House (later Talbot Town. now Easton) developed in the early 1700's and had some Quaker structures from the late 1600's.

The current St. Mary's Square was the centerpiece of Braddock's plan. By the time the Treaty of Parts was signed to end the Revolutionary War in 1783, "there can be no doubt that ... (St. Michaels), though small, was firmly established (Touart). The village was incorporated as a town in 1804. Between 1804 and 1806, the village was re-surveyed and platted as three squares: Harrison's square at the north end, Thompson's square to the southwest and the original Braddock's square on the southeast end. Many of the current homes and some shops date from the late 1700's to the late 1800's and the aura on main street (Talbot Street) and the homes on side streets pleasantly reflect colonial, Federal and Victorian eras.

The Town That Fooled The British: In the dark morning hours of August 10, 1813, a number of British barges had planned an attack on the town and a fort on the harbor side. The residents of tiny St. Michaels, forewarned, hoisted lanterns to the masts of ships and in the tops of the trees, consequently tricking the British by causing the cannons to overshoot the town. This first "blackout" was effective and only one house was struck. Now known as "The Cannonball House" a cannon ball penetrated the roof and rolled down the staircase as Mrs. Merchant carried her infant daughter downstairs. The house still exists as a private residence. The St. Michaels Museum and The Maritime Museum sell books and booklets with contemporary accounts of the siege as noted by American and British counterparts.

ISt. Michaels derived its name from the Episcopal Parish established here in 1677. The church attracted settlers who engaged in tobacco growing and ship building. In 1805, an area was set aside for a public market known as "St. Mary's Square" (One block east of Talbot between Mulberry and Chestnut Streets). Here stands a bell cast in 1841 which rang at 7a.m., noon and 5p.m. to measure the workday for the ship's carpenters in the nearby harbor and the remains of a cannon used in the defense of the town during the War of 1812.

St. Michaels in the 19th Century: After the War of 1812, St. Michaels declined as an ocean-going shipbuilding center and after a brief depression in the 1820's, began to rise as a seafood processing and packing center. Oysters and blue crabs were the principal fare. The opening of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal in October, 1829 added new seafood customers in Philadelphia, Wilmington and points north. Boat building of small, shallow draft craft supported the seafood industry, and served those which harvested the waters and those which carried the booty to Baltimore, Annapolis and other newly-developed ports. These unique bay craft, constructed in St. Michaels, evolved to maturity during the last half of the 19th century and included "bugeyes", the majestic Skipjacks and, particularly, the log canoe. (Nearly twenty log canoes, some from that era, still race regularly just outside the St. Michaels harbor.) In the 1870's and continuing into the early 1900's, St. Michaels was one of the hot spots in the Chesapeake's famous "Oyster Wars". During those tumultuous years, St. Michaels was a disorderly village known more for its hard living watermen (Wennersten-Oyster) than for its significant contributions during the War of 1812.

St. Michaels in the 20th Century At the turn of the 20th century, steamboats and the railroad ferry "bridge" from the western shore began to act as a conduit for the seafood harvest in one direction and "boardinghouse" visitors from the western shore in the other direction. In the late 1930's, seafood packers such as the black-owned Coulbourne and Jewett Company (on the site of the present Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum) were shipping 1,000,000 (a million!) pounds of crabmeat a year and up to 12,000 gallons of oysters per week to wholesalers and retailers in Baltimore and Philadelphia. The site was used for seafood processing until it was bought by the Maritime Museum in 1965.

In the 1930's, 40's and 50's visitors came to the St. Michaels area by auto to enjoy a leisurely waterfront vacation in one of the many "mom and pop" boarding houses, cottages and inns which dotted the local landscape. They came to fish and crab. They came to enjoy the quality of life "on the Shore". In the mid-1950's, after the William Preston Lane Memorial Bridge (the "Bay Bridge") replaced the Sandy Point (Annapolis) ferry, more came. It was a good thing, too. They began to form the base of the tourism industry which now supports these picturesque peninsulas. By the mid-1960s, The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum dream had materialized and was becoming the magnet for a new kind of tourist, landlubbers who shopped at the "boutiques" and ate at the local seafood restaurants. They also came because they recognized the charming, classic character, ambiance and permanence of the town. (The names on the old tombstones and the current P.O. boxes are remarkably the same and read like a Professor Henry Higgins' aspirated historical litany: Higgins, Harrison, Haddaway, Hambleton.). And boaters came with powerful craft on weekend Bay excursions. Today, the maturing St. Michaels' nautical and historical attractions are becoming the magnet for the museum as St. Michaels clearly leads the small, vintage port towns on the Delmarva Peninsula in opportunity, diversity, excitement and leisure. It has become a place to "hobnob" with the rich and famous.