



Perry Office Building Added a Modern Touch in Downtown Louisburg

April 19, 2018

The William C. Perry office building at 118 North Main Street in Louisburg is closely associated with the improvement of medical care in Franklin County following World War II. It was built by a native of Louisburg who played a key role in medical affairs for more than twenty-five years.

William Clifton Perry, the son of Bennett Boddie and Kate Clifton Perry of Louisburg, was born on October 11, 1908. Perry attended the local public schools and Wake Forest College. He earned his medical degree from Emory University and began practicing medicine in Louisburg in 1935. Perry was instrumental in the establishment of the Franklin Memorial Hospital, which opened in 1951—one of more than 100 hospitals established through the work

of the State Hospital and Medical Care Commission. He served as the hospital's first chief of staff.

Perry built an office building at 118 North Main Street in Louisburg just prior to the end of World War II. On October 17, 1944, he purchased the old W. M. Person office lot from Lucy C. Boddie. *The Franklin Times* reported on March 30, 1945, that Perry would begin his "modern" office building "at once." The building was raised to the second story by May 4, and Perry moved into his new office in early September. The building contained separate waiting rooms for white and "colored" patients.

Perry soon decided to expand the building. By early October 1947 he was adding a two-story addition to the structure. *The Franklin Times* reported that the addition would contain six to eight offices that would be available for rent. A professional column published in the newspaper in March 1948 indicated that Hamilton Hobgood, a local attorney, had moved into the Perry Building. According to longtime Louisburg resident Frank Read, the Selective Service System also rented space in the building during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The ambitious doctor began another addition to the building in February 1950.

When ill health forced Dr. Perry to retire from his practice, he recruited Dr. B. L. Patterson to use his office. Perry also served for a time as Franklin County's director of public health.

Perry married Margaret Button of New Rochelle, New York. They had two sons, William C. Perry Jr. and Bennett Boddie Perry. Dr. Perry suffered a stroke and died at the North Carolina Memorial Hospital in Chapel Hill on November 25, 1964. He was buried in the Oakwood

Cemetery in Louisburg. Margaret Perry continued to rent the Perry Building until 1973, when she sold it to W. J. Cooper Jr. and Gwendolyn B. Cooper.

The Town of Louisburg purchased the property from the Cooper family in 2018. The town is undertaking cosmetic improvements in the hope of marketing the property to an investor who will rehabilitate it for use as a boutique hotel, medical office, or other business. The Franklin County Arts Council may lease the rear portion of the first floor for use as its headquarters. Officials of the State Historic Preservation Office deem the Art Moderne-style building as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places—one that can make a significant contribution to the revitalization of the Louisburg Downtown Business District.