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The Victorian Watts house and the old National Garage in Park City will soon open as a distillery and restaurant as construction crews try to finish up before the winter season begins.



Soon vodka and whiskey from the High West Distillery in Park City will be sold from the old National Garage and Watts house next door as they near a historic renovation that cost about \$3 million.

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HOSPITALITY

Historic site to bloom as whiskey distillery and restaurant.

Park City's newest draw has spirit

By **CHRISTOPHER SMART**

The Salt Lake Tribune

Park City » It's been a long pull, but David Perkins' dream of a destination whiskey distillery is almost a reality.

He has formulated his recipes down to the drop. And partner James Dumas — along with a small army — are lashing the finishing refurbishments to the historic National Garage and the Watts property at 703 Park Ave. near Park City's Town Lift.

The High West Distillery and Saloon is just weeks away from its first belch — or whatever sound it is that stills make — as they transform corn and rye into that

Please see WHISKEY, C2

magical American libation called whiskey.

"It will be the world's first ski-in gastro-distillery," Perkins said, smiling.

It's been a stretch coming. Perkins quit his lucrative job in pharmaceuticals in 2004 and set out to become a student of whiskey. He learned the trade at the foot — or the spout — of the Kentucky masters.

In 2005, Perkins bought the landmark house and garage on Park Avenue from the municipality for \$1.4 million. By the time the 18-foot-tall German-made brass still is erected inside, he will have sunk another \$3 million into the place.

He'll have to break even. And he just might.

Perkins' High West Rendezvous Rye came home with Top 10 honors at the 2008 San

Francisco World Spirits competition.

"For a little company in Utah, we're pretty proud of that" award, Perkins said.

High West actually has been distilling whiskey in a Salt Lake City warehouse for four years, anticipating the completion of its new Park City home.

You can buy High West rye and vodka at some Utah State Liquor Stores. It also is sold in Nevada, California, Illinois, Georgia, New York and Washington, D.C.

And soon you'll be able to buy it with a meal on Park Avenue, where Dumas, a veteran Park City chef, is building a menu, as well.

The High West Distillery and Saloon will be open to the public for tours, dining

and sipping. It will cater to private parties, too.

"We don't want to be a bar," Dumas said. "The whole concept with the food and the facility is that we want to educate and entice."

Patrons, if they choose, can take a quick tutorial to witness with their own eyes and noses how whiskey gets from grain to glass.

"We want them to see it, smell it and taste it," Dumas said.

And, of course, customers will be able to buy a bottle or two on site.

Locals, no doubt, will be im-

pressed with the liquid products. But they'll also take note of the property's historic renovation.

Perkins and Dumas have spared no expense in bringing the Park City treasure into the new century, while retaining 80 percent of its original materials — enough to keep it on the National Historic Registry.

The house features several dining rooms and a bar. The historic garage, or livery, is large enough to host business and social groups. The place has two kitchens, both below ground.

The renovation included, among other things, moving the structures, excavating basements and pouring footings and foundations.

The plumbing and heating and cooling systems required for distilling are no simple matter. But patrons will see only a historic house transformed into a comfortable restaurant.

From the street, it looks like the same old National Garage — except for that big still in the window.

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