



Perris Press Release

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Perris Honors Pioneering Hunter Family

A family who arrived in Perris nearly a century ago as farmers and well-drillers and religious leaders will be honored as City pioneers Saturday at the Perris Depot.

The family of Lewis and Lucinda Hunter will be honored during the annual Fred T. Perris day of festivities from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Depot Building, 120 West Fourth Street. Several descendants of the pioneer couple are expected to attend. Perris Mayor Daryl Busch is scheduled to present the family with a proclamation honoring its contributions.

"Through five generations and more than a century, the Hunter family and its descendants have played a keen and vital role in the history of Perris," said local historian Katie Keyes. "They have woven themselves deeply and inextricably into the fabric of this City.

Lewis and Lucinda Hunter arrived in Perris in 1910 from Missouri, where Lewis toiled in the coal mines. Seeking for a healthier climate to work and raise their family, the couple headed west and ended up in Perris, at the time the center of a major agricultural bread and fruit basket.

The couple had two daughters, Beulah and Opal. The family moved into a home at Seventh and A streets.

Dixie Heldoorn, a granddaughter of the Hunters, grew up with Lewis and Lucinda, recalling their home as a friendly place where neighbors and neighborhood kids were always welcome.

"Grandpa hated silence," Heldoorn said. "When things got too quiet, he would invite the neighbors over to make taffy. We had a great childhood. We could go play in the hills or catch crawdads in the San Jacinto River. We had lots of fun."

Over time, the Hunters became deeply entrenched in the fabric of Perris.

Lucinda Hunter earned the reputation of a top-notch cook and seamstress, making everything from suits to wedding gowns. The family raised cattle, chickens, goats and pigs for meat and eggs. They grew potatoes, carrots, radishes and berries in their garden and even sold tomatoes at the Mission Inn in Riverside. Lucinda Hunter operated a gas station on First and D Streets. A gallon fetched 13 cents.

Lewis Hunter became a successful well driller but also served Perris as a police officer and worked at a farm owned by Hollywood movie mogul Louis B Mayer, of MGM Studios. He also served as a minister.

After World War II, Lewis Hunter paid \$2,000 for a surplus building from Camp Haan near March Air Force Base and relocated it to Van Buren Boulevard in Riverside, starting the Woodcrest Community Church on that site. The building remains standing today. Lucinda Hunter died in 1961; Lewis in 1968.

Over the decades, the family continued to thrive.

Lewis and Lucinda's daughters, Beulah and Opal, were educated in Perris and graduated from Perris Union High School, beginning a tradition that now stretches to four generations and includes 32 graduates.

Opal Hunter married Roy Mix and they had a son, Norman, and a daughter, Sharon.

Beulah married Harry Scott and had two children, Lewis and June. Harry was killed in a well drilling accident and later Beulah married Millard Hunter and had three daughters—Janice, Audrey and Dixie, who will attend Saturday's festivities honoring her family.

Dixie Hunter married Floyd Heldoorn of Perris and raised seven children in the Perris Valley. The couple has many grandchildren and great grandchildren still living here.

Dixie Heldoorn said she is proud and honored that her family is being recognized for its contributions to the City of Perris and Perris Valley.

"They added to the community," she said.



Lucinda and Lewis Hunter (center) are pictured with their daughters, Beulah (left) and Opal (right). The couple moved to Perris in 1910 for a healthier climate to raise their family.



Dixie Heldoorn and her husband, Floyd, stand in front of the building her grandfather moved from Camp Haan to Riverside to begin his ministry at the Woodcrest Community Church.



Lewis Hunter purchased this building for \$2,000 and moved it to the site of Woodcrest Community Church on Van Buren Boulevard in Riverside.