



Perris Press Release

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

Perris Hosts Riverside County History Symposium on April 6

More than 150 historians and history-lovers will gather in Perris on April 6, where the day's itinerary includes a walking tour of the Downtown area preserved through a commitment by elected officials and City staff.

The 2013 Riverside County History Symposium is open to the public and will take place in the Bob Glass Gym on the Perris City Hall Campus. Admission is \$25 and includes breakfast, lunch and access to the day of lectures and the walking tour.

Riverside County historian and author Steve Lech said Perris is the perfect gathering spot for history buffs.

"It's exciting to come to a city that is taking its history seriously," Lech said. "The City of Perris is preserving its architecturally unique buildings instead of tearing them down and replacing them with buildings that look like something else. The City of Perris stands behind its history and is using it to their advantage."

Lech will be one of the lecturers talking at the upcoming symposium. He will speak on some of the colorful characters of Riverside County.

Those include Steve Ragsdale, a pioneer who founded Desert Center and Helene Arlington, a hermit who lived atop Box Springs Mountain from the 1940s to the 1970s. Other speakers will be talking about the drive-ins of the county and the history of Mount Rubidoux.

Lech said he is looking forward to the history walk through Downtown, which he called a "fantastic" example of what can happen when a community is determined to preserve and celebrate its past. Buildings on the tour include the 1886 Southern Hotel, the 1892 Depot Building and the 1910-era Bank of Perris—all of which have been restored to their original grandeur.

Perris Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart said the City redoubled its commitment to its history in 2011, when Perris celebrated its 100th birthday. The year-long celebration refocused the City's attention to its early history and founders. City historians created a series of 100 panels celebrating Perris' culture, recreation, agricultural and mining root and famous figures. The panels have been made available to schools, churches and other organizations interested in displaying them. Perris City planners have been honored repeatedly in recent years for preserving municipal history. The City has received awards from the American Planning Association and the Old Riverside Foundation for restoring the Depot, the Bank of Perris, the art deco Perris Theatre and for creating a Downtown Specific Plan that includes commercial, office and residential development and open spaces while preserving the area's historical integrity.

"Perris is on the historical map," Stuart said.

Stuart said historical preservation "binds a sense of community" for those who study Perris' past.

"It deepens the commitment and affection for the town they live in," Stuart said.

Perris historian Katie Keyes said historians and historical associations from throughout Riverside County will be present at the April 6 symposium. She predicted the City will shine.

"A lot of people who are interested in history will see all the great things the City of Perris has accomplished," Keyes said. Keyes asks that anyone interested in attending the symposium contact her at (951) 956-9081 for more information.



Perris historian Katie Keyes in front of the Bob Glass Gym in Perris, a 1932 recreation center that will host the April 6 Riverside County History Symposium.