



## Perris Press Release

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### Warren Family to be Honored at Annual Pioneer Day

A family who moved to Perris during the Great Depression and started a business which served the community for more than 60 years will be honored Saturday at the annual Fred T. Perris Day and Pioneer Family Day.

Descendants of Robert Warren Sr. and Clara Warren will be among those attending the Pioneer Day celebration at the historic Santa Fe Depot in Perris, 120 West Fourth Street.

Festivities begin Jan. 28 at 11 a.m. and will include historic photos of the family and descendants relating personal stories about the Warrens.

"The Warren family played a vital role in the business and civic development of Perris and the City's political life," said Katie Keyes, president of the Perris Valley Museum Association. "They have been an important part of Perris history for much of Perris' history. They are most deserving of being recognized as a Pioneer family of Perris."

The Warren family operated the Peoples' Store at Fourth and D streets from 1940 to 2002. Robert Warren Jr. served six years as Perris Mayor during his time on the City Council from 1960 to 1968.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said Robert Warren Jr. was one of the youngest mayors in Perris history when he assumed the office at the age of 30 in 1960.

"They have been a great asset to this community," Busch said. "They have been very involved in the fabric of our City." The story of the Warren family begins long before they settled in Perris. In fact, both Robert Warren Sr. and Clara Warren trace ancestors back to the American Revolution and later called Texas home.

Robert's father was the first elected County Clerk of Upshur County, Texas. Clara's family farmed 160 acres near the small town of Ben Wheeler in Van Zandt County, Texas.

The 160-acre farm still belongs to Sandra and David Kitsmiller, Clara and Bob's daughter and son-in-law. The state of Texas recognized the farm with a centennial plaque after having been in the same family for over 100 years.

As a young man, Robert Sr. took piano lessons and became quite a piano player. For a time he traveled a vaudeville circuit. But he soon became interested in what was to become his lifelong pursuit, the retail selling of clothing and shoes. He worked for several men's haberdashers on Elm Street in downtown Dallas during the early 1920s.

One day he met Clara who was visiting in Dallas. As their relationship blossomed, Robert would often drive his Model-T Ford, down to the Alexander farm in East Texas to visit Clara. And on November 12, 1921 Robert and Clara were married at the family farm surrounded by relatives and friends.

Clara enjoyed retailing also and both of them often worked side-by-side in the same establishment. Sometime in the late 1920s Robert and Clara were asked to assume management of a store in Phoenix, Arizona, which they did. They remained in Phoenix until 1930, when they returned to their home in the Highland Park area of Dallas due to the approaching birth of their first child, Robert E. Warren Jr.

By 1936, the Warren family had lived in Greenville, South Carolina; Mobile, Alabama and San Antonio. Robert Sr. had managed clothing stores in those locations.

The family came to Southern California in 1936, again at the request of firms with whom Robert Sr. was acquainted. He worked at Farley's in downtown Los Angeles, in San Diego and at Lee's Department Store in Huntington Park. While at Lee's, Robert Sr. learned that old friends, Tom and Elizabeth Sharpe and their son Ted, were also living in Southern California in El Cajon. Attempting to find the family, Robert Sr. found that they had sold their business in El Cajon and now owned a pool hall in Perris.

In 1939, the Warren's visited the Sharpe family for the first time in many years. Perris at the time was a small agricultural town of less than 1,500 people. After several visits to Perris, Robert Sr. and Clara Warren began to seriously consider what had always been their dream--opening a store of their own.

The People's Store was born.

Getting their business license in 1939 they opened for business in January 1940.

The People's Store would continue for 62 years under the management of Robert Sr., his son Robert Jr., and his grandson Robert Terry Warren.

After opening in 1940, people would often wave as they passed by or stop to chat.

When "The People's Store" opened in 1940, the Warren family lived in the back of the store, which became an advantage during World War II began, since gasoline was rationed. But sometimes it was a disadvantage, since customers would often rattle the front door late at night needing something to wear to a dance or for an appointment early the next morning. Robert Sr. and Clara's second child, Sandra Sue Warren Kitsmiller was born August 5, 1942.

At this time the family still lived in the back of "The People's Store." In 1945 the family purchased a home and move to the corner of First and A streets. Robert Sr. and Clara were long-time members and supporters of the First Congregational Church of Perris. Robert Sr. served several times on the board of trustees and often played the piano for special occasions.

In 1957 the Warren's remodeled "The People's Store" by removing the wall between the existing business and the storefront to the south and remodeling the front.

The store became a modern structure with expanded floor space. Soon after the remodel, the business was passed to Robert Jr.

Robert Sr. still came down to the store almost daily because he liked the familiar customers and routine he had known all those years.

In 1971, Robert Sr. and Clara returned to the "old home place" in East Texas to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. In 1978, Robert Sr. and Clara moved back to the "family farm" in East Texas to be near their daughter, Sandra, and son-in-law

David Kitsmiller and to enjoy their leisure time. Robert Sr. died October 30, 1984 and Clara died July 1, 1985. They are both buried near family in Edom, Texas



Robert and Clara in 1921.



Robert Warren Sr. pictured soon after opening of People's Store. Original store front.



Robert and Clara Warren following their wedding in 1921.