



## Perris Press Release

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### Preparations Underway for Centennial Fashion Show

Wedding dresses, evening gowns, outfits worn by flappers and fashion affected by war will take center stage in a fashion show March 19 at the newly renovated Perris Theatre.

The fashion show, part of a series of events taking place to celebrate Perris' Centennial, will begin at 1 p.m. at the art deco Theatre at D and Third streets.

The City-sponsored event is free and open to the public. The first 100 visitors will receive antique-looking photos of themselves.

"We have had small fashion shows in the past but this one will be very big," said Midgie Parker, a member of the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association, the organization coordinating the event. "We have more than 100 outfits that will be displayed, fashions from when Perris was incorporated in 1911 to the present day. It will be quite a show."

Parker said the bulk of the dresses in the fashion show were donated by longtime Perris resident Caran Cowie, who acquired them over many years. Others were sewed, owned and worn by prominent Perris residents dating back to the founding of the City. Those include D.D. Xydias, whose father, Henry Akin, started the first library in Riverside County in Perris.

Other gowns were worn by Kate Archibek, whose family ran the local newspaper and became active in California state politics.

Other dresses were designed by former Mayor Ben Minnich's mother in the 1920s and 1930s. Those creations include several gowns with hand-sewn sequins.

Other items slated for the fashion show include 12 bridal dresses from the 1930s to present and a dozen dresses worn during the 1920s Flapper era. Those are weighted down with hundreds of individually sewn beads.

Still other dresses that will be modeled include loose-fitting designs made with the fabric georgette. The fashion show also will feature several dresses made during the 1940s that feature snap buttons instead of zippers. A shortage of metal during World War II facilitated the switch to buttons. And to represent the 1950s, a dozen poodle skirts will also be modeled in the upcoming show.

Sharron Marsh, a member of the Historical Association who cataloged the outfits in the fashion show, said the work was interesting and enlightening. She noted that many dresses made a century ago would not fit most women today. That's because Americans have gotten larger since 1911 because of higher-calorie processed food that make up much of the country's diet. She said she also came away impressed with the quality of dresses and gowns nearly 100 years old. Painstakingly stitched by hand, they reflect a quality that has kept them available for 21st Century fashionistas to enjoy them today.

"It has been an interesting experience," Marsh said of preparing for the fashion show. "Many of the dresses and gowns have interesting designs that are simple and absolutely gorgeous."



Midgie Parker displays a dress that will be modeled during the upcoming Centennial fashion show.



Sharron Marsh with a wedding gown worn in past decades.



Midgie Parker holds up a 1958 letter jacket from Perris High School.