



Perris Press Release

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

Southern California Fairgrounds to Feature Perris History

Harrison Hall at the Southern California Fairgrounds will be transformed into a time capsule celebrating Perris' 100th birthday.

Using enlarged photographs, documents, newspaper headlines and artifacts from Perris leaders and unsung heroes will be on display throughout the entire Southern California Fair, which runs from Oct. 8-16.

Visitors to Harrison Hall will find it transformed into a gallery that features images and words from Perris through the decades—from the small unincorporated farming community of the 1880s to the thriving and vibrant city of 2011 looking toward the future with gusto.

The idea is to compress the City's history so that the casual resident and visitor can take away meaningful memories in a 20-minute stroll.

"We hope the display will give folks a look at how Perris grew, incorporated and developed since its inception," said Dave Stuart, project manager for the Perris Centennial Exhibition. "There is a lot of history in this City and the exhibit tries to visually chronicle the story of a very small rural community that is growing into an urban community thanks to its astonishing growth in the recent past."

Stuart and members of the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association have spent the last several months cataloguing, organizing and readying hundreds of pieces of memorabilia for display at the upcoming fair.

Much of the information will be displayed on 7-foot by 4-foot panels, making it easy to read and view by visitors.

Others working on the project include local historians Katie Keyes, Midgie Parker and Dan Yost. Other items on display will include farm implements through the ages as well as historic cars and one motorcycle. The name of Dr. Bruce Reid—who served Perris in the 1930s and 1940s—will go on display as part of the exhibit.

The exhibit begins in the time before Perris incorporated on May 26, 1911, a time when settlers inhabited a township called Pinacate and when the Good Hope gold mine surrendered millions in precious metals to hard-working miners.

It was in fact a dispute about where to put a railway stop resulted in the establishment of the new township of Perris two miles north of Pinacate. The town was named after Fred T. Perris, chief engineer for the California Southern Railroad and the man who surveyed much of the community. Already, members of pioneering families like the Hooks, Akins and Bernasconis were well-known in the community.

The exhibit examines Perris' cultural, sporting and religious life as well. The historic First Baptist Church, the first black church in Perris, gets a shout out. So does the now largely forgotten "Mockingbird Pageant," a tribute to the Indian history of the Perris Valley. In its heyday decades ago, the pageant was on a par with the famous Ramona pageant and drew celebrated musical performers like the Los Angeles Philharmonic. There will be a tribute to the 1948 Perris High School football team, which claimed the Riverside County championship.

Skiland, a long-forgotten man-made lake on San Jacinto Avenue where boats raced and people water-skied, will also get a look back in pictures.

The history of the art deco Perris theatre will be traced from its early days as an open-air venue to its current renovations that will transform it into a place for concerts and musical and community events.

Yost said he is impressed with the commitment from early settlers who came to the Perris Valley determined to make a new life in a sparsely settled area.

"They wanted to thrive," he said. "The early pioneers were determined to a township built so they could get supplies to themselves. They wanted to succeed. They were determined to succeed."

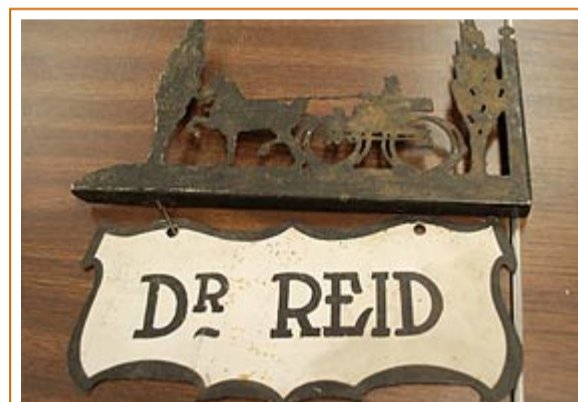
One of those helping Perris residents succeed was machinist Harry Schroeder, a cantankerous sort who operated his shop at 7th and D Streets. Schroeder gained the reputation for repairing all sorts of farm machinery. When local farmers wanted new implements to improve their productivity, Schroeder used his genius to create them in his small shop.

"This is the kind of man who basically kept the farmers in business," Stuart said. "Without his talents, I can see Perris just going away. He is one of the unsung heroes of this valley."

Keyes said the exhibit will not only concentrate on Perris' past but include portraits of the present and future. Those include images from Perris Valley Skydiving, one of the premier parachuting destinations in the world, and from the Big League Dreams sports complex, which is set to open later this year. The most recent census figures show Perris with a population approaching 70,000, a far cry from the 169 parcel owners who voted in the incorporation election a century ago.

"The City of Perris has experienced astonishing growth in the last decade," Keyes said. "The exhibit tells the story of our City. There is something for everyone."

You need to have the Adobe
Flash Player to view this
content.
[Please click here to continue.](#)



The nameplate for longtime Perris physician Bruce Reid will be one of the artifacts on display.



Dan Yost and Katie Keyes in front of a panel with information about Perris' past.



Dave Stuart, who is helping plan the upcoming Perris history exhibit at the Southern California Fair in October, says the display tells the stories of City leaders and unsung heroes.