



Perris Press Release

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Finishing Touches Underway on Perris History Display

Volunteers from the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association worked frantically to put the finishing touches on an exhibit featuring 100 years of Perris history that opens Saturday at the annual Southern California Fair.

A small group of dedicated historians, artists and long-time Perris residents continued working Thursday to transform Harrison Hall at the Lake Perris Fairgrounds into an exhibit featuring newspaper accounts, farm and kitchen implements, posters and even the original City of Perris incorporation documents that tell the story of the City's first century.

Volunteers said they are prepared to work as long as necessary to get the display in shape before the fair opens to the public at 11 a.m. Saturday.

Members of the City Council and Administrative staff, along with visitors from other communities and business leaders got a preview of the exhibit during a Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce mixer Thursday. They all came away impressed.

"The City of Perris has always had an illustrious history," said Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley, who has lived in the City for 75 years. "It is a very successful City."

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch called the historical display "amazing" and said it provides visitors "a chance to learn about our history in a quick and easy manner."

"It is a fantastic effort," Busch said. "I commend the volunteers for their hard work and commitment to this worthy project."

Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez said volunteers have spent more than six months culling through hundreds of photographs, documents, records and newspaper accounts of the City since it incorporated on May 26, 1911.

"This Centennial celebration allows us to capture the history of Perris in an exhibit," Belmudez said. "We wanted to make it fun for the visitors and wanted to make it more than an exhibit that was all reading. The old cars and furniture remind us where we came from."

The old vehicles include tractors and threshers with steel wheels, a potato digger invented in Perris in the 1930s, trucks used to deliver produce to market. There's a collection of small engines used for a variety of purposes on the potato farms that put Perris on the map in the 1930s. The exhibit also includes kitchen appliances like an ice box and an antique washing machine. There's a replica of the Hook Brothers general store, a mainstay of Perris a century ago. There's an old-fashioned telephone and military uniforms from World War II.

Lots and lots of photos help illustrate the stories of Perris pioneering families like the Picos, Ashleys, Hanifans and Mottes.

Midgie Parker, a member of the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association, said that people visiting the Harrison Hall exhibit will learn that City farmers delivered 4,692,280.09 worth of produce to market in 1944-1945. The bounty ranged from \$329 worth of figs to \$1.8 million worth of potatoes and \$988,951.80 cents worth of barley.

They will also learn that Cowie Ranch in the Perris Valley was home to a watch tower--staffed by women during the day and men at night--who kept their eyes peeled for enemy approaching Japanese airplanes. The tower was put up with the cooperation of military officials at nearby March Air Force Base.

"We've spent months doing research and the last two weeks have been a whirlwind," Parker said. "It's exciting but tiring."

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Joanne Evans was delighted when she discovered a picture of her husband, taken with his family in the 1940s when he was just a boy.

"It's like going down memory lane," Evans said. "It's phenomenal. Anyone who doesn't know anything about Perris will know when they come see this exhibit. They will know why we have pride in our community."

Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers said the historical exhibit provides "a great opportunity to market our City."

"It's a touch of history," she said. "To have this exhibit available is phenomenal."

Muralist Rob Padilla has created a series of five 10-foot panels depicting Perris through the decades. The panels contain drawings of significant Perris sites and activities, like skydiving and auto racing. Fair-goers will get a chance to color in the drawings beginning Saturday.

"There's a lot of great information that will be presented in a way that is anything but boring," Padilla said.

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said the Harrison Hall exhibit provides the chance for fair-goers to "see Perris from its inception to its current greatness to its future."

The Lake Perris Fairgrounds is located at 18700 Lake Perris Drive.



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Joanne Evans spots a photograph of her husband, Iral, as a youngster--part of the City's Centennial Exhibit on display at the Southern California Fair.



Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers stands in front of an antique gas pump at the Centennial Exhibit.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough details a drawing created for the Centennial Exhibit. The drawing will be painted beginning Saturday at the annual Southern California Fair.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch addresses the crowd of more than 200 who gathered at a Centennial Exhibit preview.



Midgie Parker, a volunteer for the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association, stands in front of a panel that explains a portion of Perris' history. Volunteers spent months organizing the exhibition.