



## Refurbished Bank Dedicated as a Community Archive

The City dedicated the newly refurbished Bank of Perris building as a repository of community records archives Thursday, completing renovations well under expected costs and restoring a building critical to the life of the business district for a century.

The City spent \$700,000 to refurbish the building, restoring the luster that decades of neglect and vacancy had stolen from the red brick building at the corner of 4th and D Streets. Work crews spent months cleaning the building, replacing broken windows, restoring teller cages and rebuilding the old vault.

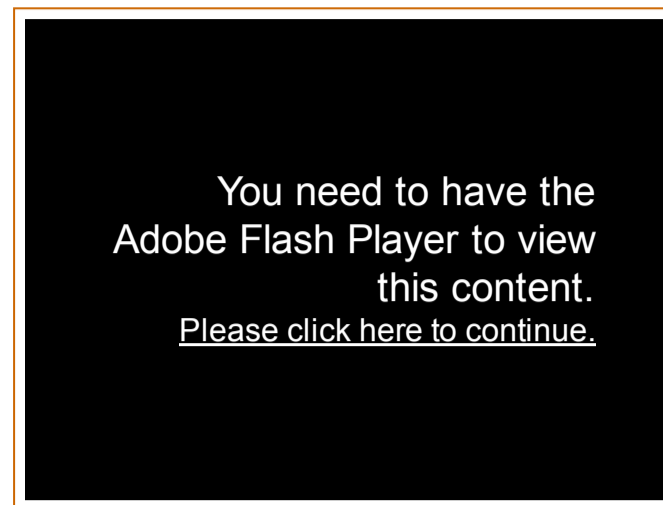
Mayor Daryl Busch, in remarks to the crowd of about 75 people who attended the dedication, called the restoration of the Perris Valley Museum Historical Archives "an excellent job" and said it will add to ongoing renovations in progress along D Street.

The City is in the process of restoring the art-deco Perris Theatre building just north of the Bank and several businesses have or will receive new exterior facades. The City last year also reopened the 1892 Depot Building across the street from the Bank.

"This is a great project and I am very pleased," Busch said. "A lot of historical buildings are used to store archives but this building is an archive itself."

Perris City Councilwoman and Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers said the refurbished Bank building will continue the vibrancy on D Street.

"It is always so special to see a piece of history restored," she said. "This is a great day."



Perris City Councilwoman and Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers praises the restoration of the 1916 Bank of Perris Building while Mayor Daryl Busch looks on.



City Manager Richard Belmudez said Perris saved \$300,000 on the expected price tag to complete renovations.

City Manager Richard Belmudez said Perris saved about \$300,000 on renovations. The City was able to obtain lower-than-expected bids because of the tough economy. Funds for the project came from Library Development Impact Fees, he said. The City received an American Planning Association Award in May for its renovations of the Bank.

Belmudez credited the work of City Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart, Assistant Director of Development Services Rene Avila along with City Council members, staff and contractors with making the renovations a success. Volunteers from the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association will help operate the archives.

"It's one thing to see a building restored but to bring life to that people, it needs people," he said. "A lot of cities have nice buildings but people outside this region are starting to realize that our buildings have a sense of place. They had a role in our City's history and development."

A sense of history ran throughout the dedication. Christina Perris, the great-granddaughter of Fred T. Perris, the railroad surveyor for whom the City is named, will serve as archivist. Glenn Stewart, the grandson of Bank of Perris founder Wilfred W. Stewart, also attended the grand opening and gave a history of the bank. Originally the Bank of Perris opened in 1909 at 3rd and D Streets. Nine years later, it relocated to its present location.

Stewart said that in its day, the Bank of Perris was a center of business in Perris. And it was well-protected. Besides its state-of-the-art vault, a .45-caliber pistol was kept within easy reach if trouble arose. There was also a sawed-off shotgun to discourage any would-be robbers.

Stewart's grandparents operated the bank until 1947, selling it to the first of what would become a series of financial-institution owners. He presented the Historical Archives with the original clock that kept time in the bank. Christina Perris said her new job as archivist is a dream-come-true.

"It is the dream of every archivist to found a new archive," she said. "The City of Perris has given me the Taj Mahal of archival facilities. This City has a well-organized, well-preserved set of archives. I am truly honored to have this position."

Perris said the archives will house photos, deeds, historical records and other materials. One of the gems is a letter written by Fred T. Perris to his future wife in 1858. The letter, written in ink and "in beautifully straight lines" on unlined paper, detailed Fred's apology for getting into an argument with his special girl. The pair married the following year and remained married for more than 50 years.

Perris said her great-grandfather would be "humbled, surprised and embarrassed that something from his time would be preserved."

Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley once owned the Bank of Perris Building, purchasing it with the idea of renovating it himself. When those plans fell through, he sold it to the City of Perris, which experienced its own financial woes in the 1990s. He praised the current Perris City Council for "restoring the financial strength" of Perris and for following through on their collective vision of restoring Downtown Perris.

"It is marvelous what you see going on down here," Ashley said. "I could not be prouder. I am sure the City will put this to good use."

City officials said they expect the archives to open to the public by July 8.

Other City officials who attended the opening included City Councilman Al Landers, Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin, Planning Manager Brad Eckhardt, Redevelopment and Economic Development Manager Michael McDermott, City Planners Diane Sbardellati and Nathan Perez, City Clerk Judy Haughney and Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart.

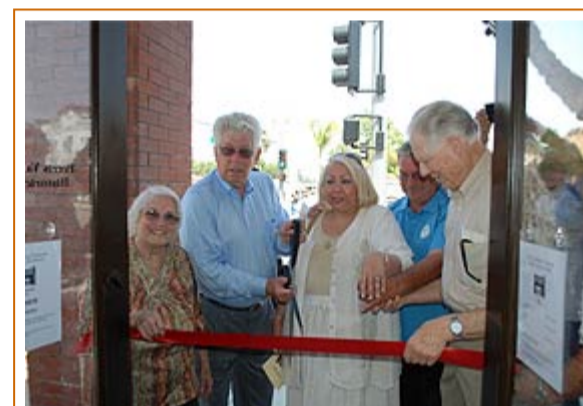
Below is the article that appeared in the Perris Progress newspaper on July 18, 1918, announced the opening of the new Bank of Perris Building.

### **New Quarters For Bank Bank of Perris to Open for Business...In New Up-to-Date Building Just Completed**

The building is of dark red pressed brick, with buff pressed brick trimmings, modern in every detail and an ideal banking room. The interior finishing is of mahogany and marble. The floor of the lobby is of white marble. The large vault is divided into two parts, one of which will be used as a safety deposit vault and will be equipped with the latest and best steel deposit boxes.

The banking room is thoroughly equipped with the most modern and up-to-date furniture and fixtures. Nothing that makes for the convenience or accommodation of the patrons of the institution is lacking.

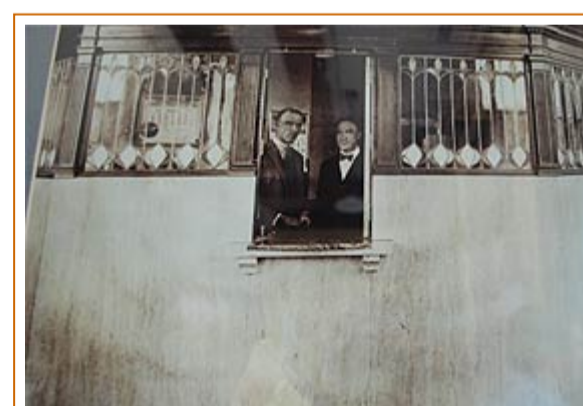
The building was built for the bank by Mr. W.W. Stewart and represents, together with the fixtures and furnishings, an expenditure of approximately \$10,000 and is quite an acquisition to the business section of the city.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch (holding scissors) and Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers and City Councilman Al Landers cut the ribbon during Thursday's dedication ceremonies.



Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez chats with March Joint Powers Authority director Lori Stone and Perris City Councilman Al Landers prior to the dedication of the new City Archives.



This historical image hangs in the archive lobby.