



Perris News

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

Perris Valley Historic Museum Opens

After years of planning and a week of frenetic last-minute work, the Perris Valley Historic Museum opens Saturday (Jan. 31) to coincide with the City's annual celebration of Fred T. Perris Day.

The museum, located inside the historic Dept building at 120 West Fourth Street, features a survey wagon used by town benefactor Fred Perris as he made his rounds in the valley that bears his name. Also on display are numerous photos, artifacts from the Southern Hotel and the original Post Office and replica Luiseno Indian pottery and baskets.

The Depot, which opened in 1892, was rededicated last year following \$1.8 million in improvements from City, federal and private funds, which resulted in new floors, a new roof, air conditioning and seismic retrofitting.

Special care was taken to preserve the feel and flavor of a Victorian-age train station, from the wood floor to the re-creation of the City's original post office to period clothing worn by Perris pioneers.

Among the dignitaries scheduled to appear at the opening ceremonies are Christina Perris, great-granddaughter of Fred Perris and Mel Levett, a great-grandson of Perris and the architect who designed the red-brick Depot building.

A steam train from the Orange Empire Railway Museum is scheduled to make an appearance. A double-deck bus will carry visitors on tours of the historic Downtown area.

The museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every Thursday through Sunday. Admission is free, but donations are welcome.

"Preserving history is the most important thing in the world," said Katie Keyes, a member of the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association. "You've got to preserve the past for future generations. We've been working very hard to get the museum in shape for the opening, and we're going to make it."

The history chronicles nearly 120 years in the Perris Valley.

Fred Perris came to the area in the 1880s as the chief surveyor for the California Southern Railroad and surveyed much of Riverside County and Southern California, from the Cajon Pass to Temecula to the Perris Valley. In addition to his horse-drawn survey wagon, museum exhibits include photographs of him and his family and a Winchester rifle he once owned.

One photo shows Perris cradling the gun while in the company of legendary lawman Wyatt Earp, who lived in nearby Colton.

Other photos tell the stories of pioneering families like those of Maynard Mapes, who ran a general store at 4th and D Streets for more than 40 years. Some tins of coffee, tea and spices he sold have been preserved and also will be on display.

Pictures tell the story of the Del Rio family, who fled the Mexican Revolution and found safety in Perris and chronicle the Hook family, who migrated from San Francisco seeking cheap land and business opportunities.

There's also a display honoring the Bernasconi family, who emigrated from Switzerland and set up the Southern Hotel, which today is on the National Register of Historic Places. Farm implements, railway lights and Indian pottery and baskets help tell the story of the Perris Valley, said museum volunteer Midgie Parker. A video will introduce visitors to the Good Hope Gold Mine, which produced \$60 million during the 19th and 20th centuries. Little remains of the mine that lies between Perris and Lake Elsinore.

Parker said volunteers will work until the opening hanging pictures, installing displays and fine-tuning exhibits. She said the public will be pleased with the results.

"Things are moving very well," she said.



Perris Valley Historical Museum volunteer Midgie Parker talks about the Indian baskets and pottery on display at the museum, which opens Saturday.



An advertisement for the Perris' historic Southern Hotel.



Museum volunteer Katie Keyes holds a picture of Fred T. Perris, the railroad surveyor whom the City is named.

###

Close this Page

Print this Page