



## Historic Documents Open a Window to the City's Past

City Clerk Judy Haughney calls it a treasure hunt through Perris' past.

For the last several months, Haughney and her staff have been tracking down, cataloging and imaging historical documents since Perris incorporated in 1911. Those treasures include minutes from the very first town council meeting, decades-old resolutions and ordinances as well as photos from the City's past.

The documents took center stage recently during an open house to celebrate Municipal Clerk's Week. The public was invited to view the documents, ask questions of the City Clerk staff and make appointments to receive new or updated passports.

Among the handwritten documents on display including ordinances prohibiting drunkenness, establishing a maximum speed limit of 15 mph through the Downtown area and establishing that all milk sold within Perris contain at least 3.5 percent fat.

"This is like a time capsule," Haughney said. "We did not know what we were going to find. To know someone took the time to preserve it for our community and posterity is really neat. It's important for future generation to know when and how the City of Perris began and for us to continue the traditions here."

Several City residents dropped by during the open house, including some who remembered the City Clerk's office when it was part of Perris High School more than half a century ago.

John Koch Jr. said he moved to Perris in 1933, when he was two years old. He graduated from Perris High School in 1949. In those days, the City Clerk's office houses the high school chemistry lab.

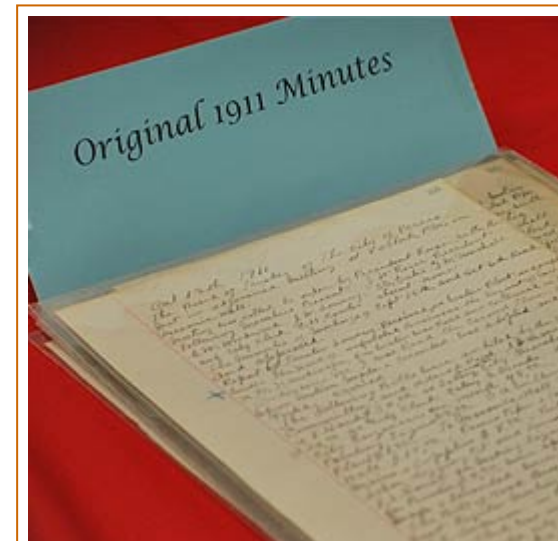
"I think it's a great idea," Koch said of the open house. "I wanted to look at some old documents. It gave me the chance to return to what used to be my old classroom."



Resident John Koch Jr. reminisces about the time when the City Clerk's office was part of the Perris High School campus.



City Clerk Judy Haughney and Deputy City Clerk Vicki Kasad peruse historical documents during an Open House as part of Municipal Clerks Week.



Hand-written minutes from 1911 were among the historical items on display.

The old ordinances brought laughs from the visitors, which included City Councilman Al Landers and Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough along with City Manager Richard Belmudez.

An Aug. 4, 1911, ordinance, for instance, prohibited anyone to "drive or propel" any vehicle—horse, wagon or motorized car or truck—more than 15 mph. A Nov. 8, 1911, ordinance took aim at "drunkenness and obscenity." The ordinance defined drunkenness as to "stagger or walk or stand unsteadily."

The offense was a misdemeanor, punishable by a \$100 fine and 50 days in the City Jail.

A July 7, 1911, ordinance showed Perris officials were concerned about making sure the public knew about their meetings long before any state-mandated laws required such notification. According to this ordinance, notice of public meetings had to be posted in three separate locations—at the D Street home of the Town Council, at the Post Office and at the southwest corner of 5th and D streets.

A quick glance through the log of early ordinances showed Perris officials were solving, or at least addressing, a wide range of issues. They set fees for dog licenses, established rules governing hitching posts for horses and determined that all milk sold within Perris city limits contain at least 3.5 percent fat unless notifying purchase that it "had been skimmed."

Yarbrough commended the City Clerk's office for its commitment to transparent government, saying an informed public is the key to a vital and thriving democracy.

Landers, a former Perris City Clerk, said the clerk's office is making the use of the latest technology to preserve historic records and to make documents available electronically.

"Perris residents should know that the City's vital records are in great hands," Landers said.

Haughney called Perris' records irreplaceable.

"This is the history of our City," she said.

**[See a short video and photos from this event](#)**