



Perris News

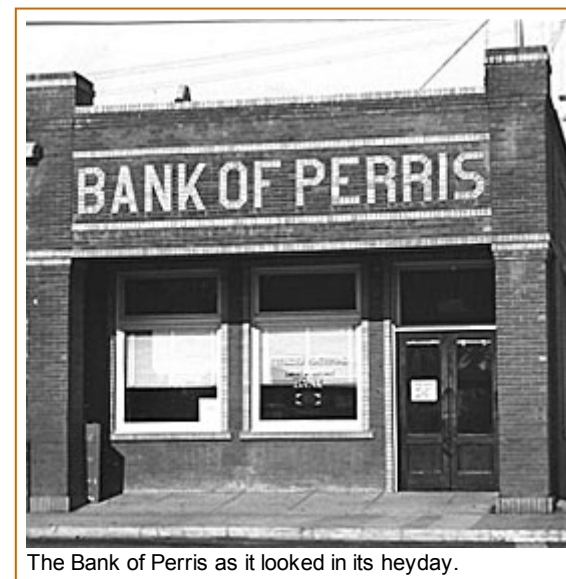
Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

Historic Bank of Perris Undergoes a Complete Facelift

The City's historic bank building is on the road to restoration. A crew of workmen has been scrubbing, jack-hammering and scraping the interior and exterior of the red brick building at 4th and D Streets and meticulously collecting artifacts from its long and storied past.

Already work crews have uncovered marble from the original floor and opened the imposing steel safe that once housed cash and securities from the City's prosperous farmers and merchants who made Perris a center of trade and commerce almost a century ago.

The marble will be restored and re-used in the building along with other replica marble, stained-glass windows and period lighting fixtures, all which will return the Bank Building to its former grandeur. Work on the project is expected to be completed by November and the restored building will become a repository of City historical records, photographs and other documents.



The Bank of Perris as it looked in its heyday.



After applying a mild acid wash, the original letter of the Bank of Perris revealed itself after decades of being covered.

Cost to renovate the Bank is about \$500,000, which comes from development impact fees.

"It's here, it's real, it's now," said Rene Avila, Assistant Director of Development Services.

The Bank is the latest historically significant Perris building to under restoration. The Depot Building, adjacent to the Bank on 4th Street, opened to the public in January after undergoing years of extensive reconstruction, which included a new roof, interior, seismic retrofitting and the installation of air conditioning.

The 1892 Depot now houses the Perris Valley Historical Museum. The 1886 Southern Hotel on D Street also has been refurbished and now houses offices and another museum dedicated to the pioneers of the Perris Valley. The City Hall Campus, which includes two original Perris High School buildings from the 1920s, also has been restored.

The City's Façade Improvement Program, now underway, aims to restore the outward appearance of several buildings along D Street in Downtown to the original brick exterior, replacing decades of plaster. Plans also call for the construction of two new buildings, one at San Jacinto Avenue and D Street and the other at 8th and D Streets, will further contribute to the restoration and revitalization of the City's Downtown, Avila said.

Work on the building began May 11 and it was not long before the old structure began revealing its secrets.

Using a gentle acid solution and a power washer, the work crew scrubbed away decades of grime and coatings to reveal the words "Bank of Perris." The white marble floors appeared beneath several layers of flooring.

The building opened as a bank about 1918. Photos taken from that era show tellers dressed in suits standing behind ornate wooden partitions adorned with stain glass. Bank lore has it the institution was robbed at gunpoint in 1927 and a bank teller named Esmeralda was shot dead during the holdup. Later the Bank served as a real estate office before falling into disrepair. Eventually the building became decrepit.

City officials say a renovated Bank Building will lure visitors and residents to Perris.

Mayor Daryl Busch said the renovations show Perris is committed to long-term improvements in a tough economy. Financing for the restoration comes from specially designated funds and does not burden the City's general fund, he said.

"We are moving in the right direction while maintaining our fiscal responsibility," Busch said.

Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough hailed the renovation as "another piece of our history we have been able to preserve." He said the renovations are the latest example of the City working with volunteers from the Perris Valley and Historical Museum Association for the good all of Perris residents.

"Our strength is our ability to make partnerships," he said. "That enables us to tell and show our history. The only way to do it better is to go back in time."



Longtime teller W.W. Stewart at his post in the Bank of Perris, circa 1928.



Workers uncover white marble from the floor of the Bank Building at 4th and D Streets. The marble will be cleaned and used again in the restoration of the 100-year-old building.