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Perris Valley Historical Museum Acquires Victorian-era Hook House



A recent image of the historic Hook House on Seventh Street. The property was acquired recently by the Perris Valley Historical Museum and Association, which has plans to renovate it and open it for public tours in the future.

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The Perris Valley Historical Museum and Association has acquired the Victorian-era Hook House on West Seventh Street and eventually plans to restore the two-story building, return it to its former grandeur and open the residence as a museum to the public.

The residence, between B and C Streets, once belonged to Albert Walker Hook, who with his brother, Joseph, moved to Perris from San Francisco and settled in the City in 1887, where they became prominent business owners. The two-story home was built in the early 1890s.

Local historians Katie Keyes and Midgie Parker said the local historical association is delighted to add the Hook House to Perris' other historical buildings.

Those include the 1892 Depot Building (which houses the Perris Valley Museum), the 1918 Bank of Perris (which serves as the repository of historical documents), the 1886 Southern Hotel (which was restored by private owners) and the 1910 Perris City Council Chambers.

Parker said just a handful of Victorian-era homes remain in Perris.

"If we had not acquired this property it would have been sold and likely demolished," Parker said. "We have got to save what history remains in Perris. Our ultimate goal is to turn this into a showpiece that explains the legacy of the Hook family and their impact on Perris."

Keyes said the house is important because it was occupied by generations of the pioneer family for more than a century.



Midgie Parker and Katie Keyes, members of the Perris Valley Historical Museum and Association, in front of the Victorian-era Hook House on Seventh Street.

"We want to be known as a City that keeps its history alive," Keyes said. "The Hook family added to the history of Perris."

The home was donated to the Association by Christine "Christy" Hook Tostenson, the great-granddaughter of Albert Hook and heir to the property. She grew up in Perris and lived in the Hook House. The home needs some renovation but it is habitable.

The museum association will seek grants and hold fundraisers to pay for necessary repairs.

From Maine to San Francisco to Perris—and into history

The story of the Hook brothers begins 3,000 miles from Perris, in Maine, where the pair were born.

The siblings moved to San Francisco and, seeking a warmer climate, located to Perris in 1887.



The historic Hook House is featured in an image from the early 1900s, shortly after it was built to house the family of Albert and Mabel Hook.

Quickly developing a reputation as fair, honest and hard-working, Albert and Joseph Hook, along with their partner, Ora Oaks, built an impressive two-story general store on the southwest corner of D and Seventh streets. The partners stocked the store with farm implements, mining tools and household goods. They even built a mill to help the farmers so they didn't have to travel out of town with their crops.

By the early 1890s, the Hooks prospered sufficiently to build a trio of elegant Victorian-era homes. Albert Hook built one for him and his wife, Mabel, on Seventh Street, which the museum and historical association now owns.

Next door, he built another home for his mother-in-law and her sister. Joseph Hook built the third Victorian home just to the west of the others, at the intersection of Seventh Street and Park Avenue. All three survive.

In 1904, Albert and Joseph Hook built a dry goods store called Hook Bros. on the corner of Fifth and D streets. They also got involved in the Good Hope Mine and Santa Rosa Gold Mine. The brothers' partnership lasted until 1921 when Joseph moved away.

Family legacy

Albert and wife Mabel Hook had two sons, Rolla and Rufus.



Albert W. Hook, father of Rolla Hook and Rufus M. Hook Sr., grandfather of Rufus M. Hook Jr., great grandfather of Christine Hook Tostenson and David Ellis Van Houten

Rufus Hook married Cora Pet Ellis, the daughter of a prominent Riverside Superior Court Judge.

In 1916, Rufus Hook built the Perris Garage on D Street north of Third Street selling Studebaker wagons and repairing cars. They had two children, a son, Rufus Jr., also known as "Bud" and a daughter, Bette Hook Van Houten.

Rufus Hook Jr. assumed control of the business after returning from World War II in 1945 when his father died. He expanded the business, turning it into the Rufus M. Hook Company where it became an award-winning Chrysler dealership. Rufus Hook Jr. died in 1981. His widow, Peggy Hook, continued living in the home that was by then nearly a century old.

Upon her death, Rufus' and Peggy's only child, daughter Christine "Christy" Hook Tostenson, became heir to the family home and, wanting to preserve it and her family's legacy, donated the residence to the Perris Valley Historical Museum and Association in late 2017.

Christy's story

Tostenson said she is thrilled the residence is now in the hands of history-lover committed to restoring and showcasing it.



Mabel Hook, wife of Albert and their sons, Rolla and Rufus.

As a kid, she played in the downstairs parlor, passed leisure hours in the playroom housing a Victorian-era table and chair. Her second-floor bedroom required negotiating a winding and somewhat narrow staircase.

"Idyllic," Tostenson said, describing her early years.

It was a time when the City was home to mostly farming families along with pioneer clans like the Courdureses, Kirkpatricks and Holloways. Neighbors included well-known Perris families such as the Hughes, Longs and Thompsons.

"I didn't realize I was a City girl!" said Tostenson, a 1963 graduate of Perris High School. "Perris was a small town that was very friendly and welcoming. It was a close-knit community. City leaders cared that Perris grew and thrived. My parents were very involved in Perris. My dad was the first commander of the American Legion (Post 595) and my mom started the Ladies Auxiliary."

Tostenson said she appreciates the City's commitment to preserving its past.

"The City has done a lot to keep its history alive," Tostenson said. "The City has been supportive of the (history museum) and my family."

