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Annual Rods & Rails Festival Shows the Best of Perris

America's love of the automobile—glorified by chrome, tailfins, rumble seats, souped-up engines, fiberglass bodies, fuzzy dice hanging from mirrors and unique hood ornaments—took center stage June 14 at Perris' 15th annual Rods and Rails Festival.

An estimated 3,000 people attended the annual homage to the horseless carriage at the Orange Empire Railway Museum, proving once again that Rods & Rails remains a signature showcase for Perris. Besides the 200 cars and motorcycles on display, the railway museum operated its trains and trolley cars, showcasing another mode of transportation on display as the "rails" part of Rods and Rails.

The show featured the width and breadth of American auto-making ingenuity, featuring convertibles, coupes, Model Ts, station-wagons, sedans, muscle cars and family rides. Most featured an array of features and options not available when the cars first arrived on showroom floors. Many were painted in eye-popping colors and polished so highly the sun glared off them.



Mike Kidd gives the thumbs-up for the Rods and Rails Festival in Perris, an event that drew 200 classic cars and motorcycles and 3,000 visitors.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch led a contingent of City elected officials and administrators who attended the event. The mayor noted that while the weather was warm and sunny, the venue provided lot of shade from trees and there were picnic tables to enjoy lunch and snacks. More than 70 vendors offered food selections to suit any palate as well as lots of crafts and gift options. Entertainment was headlined by the 1970s rhythm and blues band "Rose Royce," which performed all of their hits from their golden age on the City of Perris stage.

"As usual, we have an excellent turnout," Busch said. "People are enjoying themselves, looking at cars, riding trains and eating food. Events like this are helping the City of Perris grow because people see it's not just a car show. It also exposes our rail museum to the public."



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, City Councilman Al Landers and City Manager Richard Belmudez at the 15th annual Rods and Rails festival.

Perris City Councilman Al Landers said events like Rods and Rails make Perris a must-visit destination for Inland Southern Californians.

People want to come to see events like this," Landers said. "Perris is second to none when it comes to great events—we are at the top. But they don't happen by themselves. It takes a lot of work from people behind the scenes, our staff and vendors, to make them happen. For that, I am grateful!"

Danny Arant, of Riverside, agreed that the Rods and Rails venue was hard to beat. He came to the show in his commemorative 1953 white-and-red Chevy Corvette, a vehicle that proclaimed itself as "America's first sports car." The '53 model proved to be a dud with the driving public. It was underpowered, had no power steering or brakes, no air-conditioning, no side windows and no exterior door handles. Doors had to be opened by reaching inside.

"There were only 300 made that first year and they cost \$3,000, so they were pricey," Arant said.



Trolley rides courtesy of the Orange Empire Railway Museum were also part of the Rods and Rails festival.

The Corvette soared in popularity after Chevy beefed up the engine in 1955 and added a 4-speed transmission and fuel injection a little later. Unlike the ride, the Rods and Rails festival doesn't need improvement.

"I love it here," Arant said. "Lots of other car shows the only people who show up are the ones with the cars. Here there's so much to do that it attracts the public. And there is a lot of public. It's just about my favorite venue."

Mike Kidd came to Rods and Rails with his 1956 Chevy 210 Station Wagon. The car could easily hold a family and plenty of grocery bags or luggage for trips to the grocery store or across country. With its 265-cubic inch engine, the wagon got about 14 miles-per-gallon. The restored version includes a 400-cubic inches, air-conditioning, overdrive, power steering and disc brakes.

He said his ride is sure to attract looks when he's motoring down the freeway.

"People look at you as you're keeping up with new cars," he said.

As for Perris, Kidd said the venue is hard to beat.

"The atmosphere is very unique," he said. "You've got trees, trains, a park and cars. It's awesome."



Lines of classic cars took center stage as part of the Rods and Rails festival in Perris.

Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez said the crowds seemed larger than in previous years and he was pleased to see that increasing numbers of residents and visitors are enjoying Rods and Rails.

"I am glad to be part of this great event and to see it grow," Rodriguez said.

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough brought a 1956 Volvo P-1900 to Rods and Rails. It's one of only 68 ever produced and one of seven remaining in the U.S. Yarbrough said Rods and Rails is like no other event in Perris, as it "showcases our City from one end to the other."

"Perris began as a destination for a train route," Yarbrough said. "The City lies on historic Route 66. Cars are so important in this country. Our neighbors and friends rave about how great this show is. It makes me proud."

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