



Perris Press Release

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Motte Historical Museum Opens in Perris

For more than a century, the Motte family of the Perris Valley has served the area as farmers, business owners, elected officials, civic leaders and developers.

The Motte legacy began when family patriarchs Alfonse and Marie Motte left their home in France and resettled in Riverside around 1900, continuing their sheep-farming enterprise in America. The couple had five children, two girls and three boys, who would acquire and farm 7,000-acres of potatoes, onions and grains throughout the Perris Valley.

The brothers—John, Frank and Charlie—operated their own garage, other businesses and became known as lovers and restorers of classic cars.

Charlie Motte went on to help form Eastern Municipal Water District and with his wife, Otte, donated more than 500 acres of land to the University of California Reserve System as a living biology lab where scientists study the effects of urbanization on plant and animal species.

The Motte Rimrock Reserve is located just west of the Perris city limits.

Descendants of the Motte family last week dedicated a museum to their pioneering ancestors. The museum includes more than 20 beautifully restored cars, trucks and buses, photos of the Motte brothers from their teen-age years to adulthood, a family tree and a series of panel boards detailing their legacy and impact on the Perris Valley.

More than 100 people attended the Feb. 7 opening of the Motte Historical Museum. Those included Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, City Councilman Julio Rodriguez, Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley and dignitaries from nearby communities.

Busch said the Motte family has left a profound legacy throughout the Perris Valley, helping spur its agricultural development, bringing more people and businesses because of its work with EMWD and serving the community in elected office.

"It's quite an honor to be here," Busch said. "The Motte family has played a pivotal role in the development of this region. This is a magnificent museum. I hope the public will come out and enjoy it. A visit will be well worth the time."

Busch said visitors to a Veterans Day or Christmas parade always enjoy the classic cars the family provides City officials. The vehicles on display at the Motte museum include a 1928 Ford Model A pickup; a 1928 Packard 4-43 Club Sedan; a 1931 Ford Victoria; a 1931 Cadillac Cabriolet; a 1924 Model T school bus used to transport up to 20 students to and from classes and a 1941 Ford Burma Jeep, a World War II transport vehicle and one of only four of its kind known to exist. The Motte brothers have been restoring vintage vehicles since 1951, when John Motte purchased a 1926 Cadillac Touring Car for \$15 and went about getting it returned to its past glory. Many of the vehicles in the Motte museum were owned by family members or close friends.

Rodriguez said he enjoyed visiting the museum because it's a trip down memory lane.

"This is a remembrance of the old Perris," he said. "It helps us commemorate the great history of the Perris Valley." Supervisor Ashley is part of the Motte family. Charlie Motte was his uncle and mentor. He called the family "quiet, understated, resourceful, visionary and appreciative." Charlie Motte died in 2000. John Motte died in 1994 and Frank Motte died in 1972.

"They have been a remarkable force in this valley," Ashley said. "They have served in so many ways. This museum will be here in this valley for generations to come."

Former Perris City Councilman John Motte, his brother, Leon Motte and sister, Yvonne Motte, were among the other family members who attended the opening. The three are the children of John Motte.

"We grew up here," said Leon Motte. "We want to share our family legacy with everyone else."

John and Yvonne Motte said they were heartened by the large turnout at the dedication.

"It's a very heart-warming day," said John Motte.

The Motte Historical Museum is located on Highway 74 about five minutes east of Perris City Hall. The museum is opened from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays; 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. the first and third Sundays of the month. Admission to the non-profit museum is \$1.



The ribbon-cutting signifying the official opening of the Motte Historical Museum: John Motte, Leon Motte, Yvonne Motte, Menifee Mayor Scott Mann, Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley, Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez and Menifee City Councilmember John Denver.



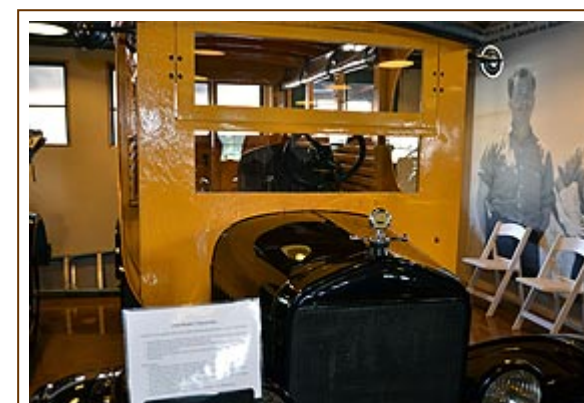
The Motte Brothers in the 1940s, when the family played a major role in Perris Valley agricultural production. From left to right: Frank, John and Charlie Motte.



This cake was cut during the dedication ceremonies of the Motte Historical Museum.



Siblings John, Yvonne and Leon Motte are pictured underneath a photo of their father, John Motte, taken in the 1940s.



This 1924 Model T School Bus is among the vintage vehicles on display at the Motte Historical Museum.