



Perris Press Release

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Rods and Rails: Bigger and Better!

Bigger and better.

Those were the words vendors, visitors, performers and City of Perris officials used to describe the 12th annual Rods and Rails Festival that took place Saturday at the Orange Empire Railway Museum.

This year's event, part of the City's Centennial celebration, drew 75 vendors, 150 classic cars, 30 vintage motorcycles and a crowd of more than 5,000.

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Joanne Evans said Rods and Rails 2011 was the best she's ever seen.

"This is awesome," Evans said as she strolled the grounds while taking in the assortment of classic vehicles. "It's bigger than I've ever seen it—more people, more vendors, more exhibits—more than I've ever seen. This is a really special day. It's part of our Centennial. As the year goes on, people are learning what a big deal our Centennial is."

While vintage vehicles proved a major attraction, Rods and Rails offered something for everyone.

Rail buffs got to ride street cars and trains. The annual Potato Festival offered a myriad of activities for children—face painting, gold-panning, candle-making, gourd-painting, biscuit making and brick manufacturing. A blacksmith forged horseshoes.

Puppeteer extraordinary Mallory Lewis put on a show for the crowd, along with her sidekick, Lamb Chop. Mallory Lewis succeeded her mother, Shari Lewis, who first appeared on television with the hand-puppet she named Lamb Chop in 1957. Generations of kids grew up watching Shari Lewis and Lamb Chop performing on the small screen. Shari Lewis died in 1998.

Today, Mallory Lewis and Lamb Chop entertain all over the country.

The pair took home a hand-puppet size key to the city presented by Mayor Daryl Busch. Lewis said she enjoyed her trip to Perris.

"I love the cars, the motorcycles, the trains," Mallory Lewis said. "It's great to see all the families here who are taking part in a nice, old-fashioned activity. That's a nice thing for the community to offer. I love Perris."

Mayor Busch hailed the Rods and Rails Festival as another jewel in the year-long celebration of Perris' Centennial. Perris officials recently buried a time capsule at the City Hall campus that will be unearthed in 100 years. The next City Centennial spectacular takes place July 2 at the Perris Auto Speedway, which hosts a night of racing and a fireworks display.

"Our Centennial just keeps getting better and better," Busch said.

City Councilman Al Landers called Rods and Rails a "great, great event that brings visitors to Perris who otherwise would not be coming to our community." Landers said that the thousands of visitors and vendors create an economic engine for Perris. He said the festival also represents a great source of pride to Perris residents.

"What makes your heart so proud is to see the participation," Landers said. "This is what makes a community great. We are on the edge of greatness."

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said the success of the Rods and Rails Festival proves that residents of the Perris Valley do not have to drive to Orange County or Temecula to enjoy first-rate fun and entertainment.

"This is unique," he said. "I am glad that we are in a position to bring this quality-of-life event to our residents."

Classic car owners began arriving at the railway museum early Saturday morning and were still coming in when the festival began. There was no shortage of variety. The show boasted coupes and convertibles, pickup trucks, Mustangs and muscle cars, roadsters and sedans.

Tim Ramborger brought his red-and-black 1970 Duster Valiant. The car was one of the first hybrids. In 1969, it was a Duster. In 1971, it became a Valiant. In 1970, it was both. Ramborger, who works in Perris, said the car came with a 318-cubic inch engine that provided plenty of power.

But it wasn't a muscle car, he said.

"It was a daily driver," Ramborger said. "The kind of car you drove to the supermarket." Ramborger said he enjoyed the Perris festival and has noticed the City improving in recent years. He said conditions will get better when new shopping centers open and a new interchange at I-215 and Fourth Street is completed.

"Perris is a nice place to work and be at," he said.

Don and Bobbi Riseling came from French Valley to show off their 1940 Ford Deluxe. The car originally came with a flathead V-8 engine and three-speed transmission that enabled it to attain speeds of up to 55 mph.

Don Riseling said he purchased his first 1940 Ford for \$80 as a teen-ager in Oregon. He worked picking strawberries and other crops to earn the purchase price.

"This is the kind of car you got when you left high school," he said.

Both Don and Bobbi said they enjoyed coming to Perris and were impressed by the recent restorations of the Depot and Bank of Perris buildings.

"I loved the old town," Bobbi Riseling said.

Kenny Naucier, of Riverside, brought his 1939 Graham Sedan to the car show. Graham Motors Corp. existed from 1927 to 1941. The 1939 Shark-nose Sedan featured art deco lines and a supercharger, a power-boosting innovation ahead of its time, Naucier said.

Like the other classic car owners, Naucier said he enjoys seeing heads turn when he cruises past a crowd of onlookers.

"It's a great car to drive," he said.

While motor vehicle enthusiasts looked over the classic cars and motorcycles, the Perris Potato Festival paid homage to the pioneering Walker family, who for four generations helped put Perris on the agricultural map of Southern California.

Katie Keyes, a member of the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association, said that during the heydays of the 1940s, 50s and 60s, the Perris Valley was home to 17 packing houses where potatoes were sorted, graded and placed on railway cars for delivery across the U.S. The City became famous for its White Rose potato, which was highly sought because of its thin skin and fluffiness.

"We think it's important not to forget our history," she said.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch presents a puppet-size Key to the City to Mallory Lewis and Lamb Chop, who entertained the throngs at the 12th Annual Rods and Rails Festival.



Bobbi and Don Riseling's 1940 Ford Deluxe features orange flames.



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Joanne Evans and City Councilman said this year's Rods and Rails Festival was one of the best ever.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough brought his race car to the festivities.



Polished motorcycles shimmer in the bright sunshine. The weather for this year's Rods and Rails Festival was superb.