



Rods and Rails Celebrates Potatos and Classic Cars

More than 100 classic cars, trucks and motorcycles took their place in the spotlight during the City of Perris' 11th annual Rods and Rails Festival at the Orange Empire Railway Museum.

There were classic Chevys, fired-up Fords, cream-of-the-crop Cadillacs, muscular military vehicles and a one-for-the-ages Mercedes Benz.

Loudspeakers blared out tunes extolling the virtues of Little Deuce Coupes, Fords and Lincolns, GTOS, Hondas and the quarter-mile strip at Drag City.

Perris' agricultural history also went on display thanks to the Perris Valley Historical and Museum Association, which organized the annual Potato Festival. Volunteers in period costumes explained the history of the potato in the Perris Valley and how the crop helped establish Perris as a major agricultural center in Riverside County. Children were invited to make potato costumes. A blacksmith worked a forge just like when the horse-and-buggy ruled Perris roadways.

Two pioneering farm families—the Walkers and the Uptons—were honored by Potato Festival organizers.

"We don't want people to forget that this was a farming community," said Katie Keyes, a member of the historical museum. "Farming and potatoes helped make Perris what it is."

While youngsters learned about Perris' farming roots, gearheads found plenty to keep them entertained. Old-car buffs like Andrew Zamora came with his 1948 Chevy Fleetmaster Coupe. Mineral blue in color, the car came standard with an in-line six cylinder, 216-cubic inch engine and three-speed transmission. Extras not found on current models, like pipe, umbrella and flashlight holders, put the Fleetmaster a cut above most 1940s cars.

"It's great driving a car like this," said Zamora, of Moreno Valley. "Everybody gives you the thumbs up when you drive by. Even the fire department gives you the right of way."

The 1933 emerald green and pearl white Ford Victoria of Mark and Robyn Moss also drew admirers. In its day, the family model could carry four people. It came with a four-speed, 59 horsepower engine that topped off at 55 mph. Sale price: \$895 off the new car lot. The Victoria's body style was also favored by 1930s gangster Clyde Barrow, of Bonnie and Clyde fame. It was his favorite to steal.

The Mosses called Rods and Rails their favorite venue for a classic car show.

"We love it here," Mark Moss said. "The train museum makes this the nicest place to have a car show. People in Perris are friendly and the City has a down-home feel."

He said the Ford draws plenty of attention when he drive it though town.

"When I drive to a gas station, I plan to spend 30 minutes answering questions from people who want to talk," he said.

Aden Burley's restored military transport vehicle didn't have the classic lines, chrome or fancy paint jobs of many of the other cars and trucks on display. Burley said a sense of nostalgia prevailed upon him while he restored the 1951 M-37 transport vehicle that hauled troops, ammunition, food and weapons in Korea, Vietnam and elsewhere around the world from 1950 to 1979.

There is nothing fancy about the M-37. It came with a four-speed transmission, four-wheel drive and could run between 4.5 and 55 mph. Steering came from the "arm-strong method," that is, two strong arms wrestling with the steering wheel. Air conditioning came from rolling with two windows down.

"In the winter, you wear your rain slicker to stay warm and dry," he said. "In the summer, you cooked." Burley, who lives in Wildomar, said he enjoys restoring and driving old vehicles. Much of the work takes place on weekends.

"My wife always knew where I was on Saturday nights and I never woke up Sunday with a hangover," he said. "I like driving this vehicle. People usually get out of my way."

Gil Miller, of Sun City, said the 1934 Mercedes Benz 500-K he built 18 years ago is the exact same model Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler presented to his mistress, Eva Braun. The two-seater convertible came with an all walnut dashboard and was meant to show off luxury.

"It rides like a dream," he said.

Miller said car shows like Rods and Rails help keep interest in the county's automobile heritage alive. "People always enjoy car shows," he said. "If they didn't, I would not be here."

Event Video

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Andrew Zamora stands in front of his 1948 Chevy Fleetmaster Coupe at the 11th annual Rods and Rails Festival in Perris.



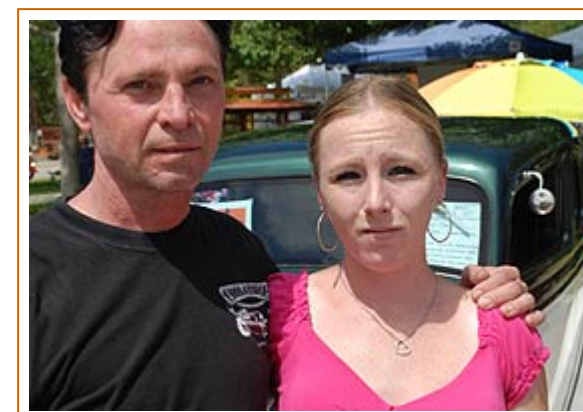
Standard equipment on the Fleetmaster included a pipe holder.



Aden Burley sits in the cab of the 1951 M-37 military transport vehicle he restored.



A 1934 Mercedes-Benz based on the model Adolf Hitler presented to his mistress, Eva Braun.



Mark and Robyn Moss say Rods and Rails is their favorite car show because of its setting at the Orange Empire Railway Museum. The Perris couple love the City for its small-town charms.