



THE *Vintage rose*

March–May 2017, Issue 16



THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE ROSES

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NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE ROSES

March–May 2017, Issue 16

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DIRT DAYS FOR 2017

Welcome to a new year of glorious days in the sun working with good companions in a beautiful garden! Carolyn Sanders has been keeping you posted for years now, and before her, Luanne Wilson did the same. I am following in their footsteps. By the way, you will still see Carolyn at many of our Dirt Days. She has moved on to other responsibilities for the Friends of Vintage Roses, so I offered to take this very pleasant task from her.

—Paula Larkin Hutton

3/26 – SUNDAY	6/10 – SATURDAY	9/10 – SUNDAY
	6/25 – SUNDAY	9/23 – SATURDAY
4/9 – SUNDAY		
4/22 – SATURDAY	7/9 – SUNDAY	10/7 – SATURDAY
	7/22 – SATURDAY	10/22 – SUNDAY
5/7 – SUNDAY		
5/20 – SATURDAY	8/12 – SATURDAY	11/4 – SATURDAY
(FLOWER PICKING!)	8/27 – SUNDAY	11/19 – SUNDAY



*The old European rose collection
 (photo by G. Lowery)*

Letter From the Editor

In mid-January our president and curator of the Vintage Rose Collection suffered two heart attacks, resulting in a triple bypass surgery. The responsibility and strain of managing and maintaining a collection of rare roses between 3000 and 4000 in number, the largest such collection in the USA, is arduous, stressful, time-consuming, and nearly impossible without a budget that provides for at least two regularly employed workers. Two Saturdays or Sundays a month for nine months of devoted volunteers working to weed, transplant, fertilize, mulch, etc. barely scratches the surface of the collection’s requirements.

While we sincerely appreciate the devotion and work of the eight to fifteen volunteers who give of themselves on those “Dirt Days,” their valiant efforts clearly cannot meet the needs to keep this collection—nor can it keep its curator—in a state of health and optimum life.

Consequently, we implore our members to help us with grant-writing, fund-raising, generous donations, and volunteer work in the gardens. Without a foundational budget of at least \$15,000 a year, this collection cannot survive. The fact that our *curator receives no compensation or salary whatever* for the countless hours he gives in devotion to this priceless rose collection is itself a travesty of justice. With some embarrassment, we plead for your assistance in this vital matter. ■



'Ellen Willmott' (photo by B. Grant)

Our Featured Rose: 'Ellen Willmott'

Darrell g.h. Schramm

The flower is lovely, the foliage night-time green, the plant elegant. 'Ellen Willmott', a Hybrid Tea child of 'Dainty Bess' and 'Lady Hillingdon' was introduced in England by W. E. B. Archer & Daughter in 1936, two years after the death of its namesake.

The flowers are single—five large petals—of a cream color sometimes tinged with lemon and flushed with pale cerise. The anthers are golden, the filaments reddish. Often the edges of the petals are scalloped. The stems attract the eye by their dark purple-green color. This elegant plant manifests an admirable posture—upright, slender, narrow—an Audrey Hepburn of a rose, nothing superfluous, everything style. It blends well with both old garden roses and new.

Ellen Willmott (1858–1934), the person, also exhibited style—and taste—and money. She had inherited her wealth first from her aunt Countess Tasker, then from her parents. She was wealthy beyond

her own understanding and her love of beauty, whether in flowers, furniture, fashion, or the freehold of three estates, Warley Place in England, another in France, a third in Italy. But despite their furnishings, it was their gardens that mattered most to her. More than 100 thousand species flourished in these gardens. At Warley Place alone she employed 102 gardeners.

Not only did Ellen Willmott hybridize numerous plants herself, and not only were many plants named for her, but also she sponsored several plant explorations, not least that of W. H. Wilson's trek to China where he discovered a rose (among several others) not known to the Western world, a species to be named *Rosa willmottiae*.

She is also famous for writing the huge two-volume work *The Genus Rosa*, devoted to species roses the world over. Granted, she erred in some of her many entries here and there, but the work, illustrated by Alfred Parsons, went far beyond John Lindley's superb *Rosarum Monographia* of 1820. Over the



'Miss Willmott's Crimson China'
(illustration by Alfred Parsons)

years Ellen Willmott won several prestigious awards for her work in horticulture.

A prickly, temperamental woman, she followed her passion for roses and other plants, for all things horticultural and beautiful, finding herself bankrupt in the end for lack of understanding finance. Today not a few plants of various species include her name. Of roses there are five: A double Hybrid Tea bred by Bernaix in 1898, now vanished; a sulphury-cream Hybrid Tea bred by McGredy in 1917, also now gone; the aforementioned species, c. 1910; our featured rose; and a China rose called by the English 'Miss Willmott's Crimson China', but known in China as 'Chi long Han Zhu' and in the USA as 'White Pearl in a Red Dragon's Mouth'. Parsons' exquisite painting of this plant (between 1901 and 1910) seems to have been the first representation of this rose in Europe. ■



'Ellen Willmott' (photo by D. Schramm)



'Sally Holmes' (photo by D. Schramm)

Our Shrub Rose Collection

Susan Feichtmeir

Included in the rose collection owned by The Friends of Vintage Roses is a group of Modern Shrub Roses. Although some of these roses are the low, spreading kind that we see in some freeway and commercial landscaping, many shrub roses are large, fountaining plants that don't do well in pots. 'Sally Holmes' is a prime example, grown a great deal around the Bay Area—especially in the East Bay. It is a beautiful single rose of peach-tinted white. Roses can be 3½" across, but they grow in huge panicles of ten to 50 or more roses, so that cutting one stem will give you a ready-made bouquet. This rose

is often used as a climber and can get 10' to 15' in height with support or, unsupported, will turn into a large, fountaining bush of 12' x 12' covered with flowers. And 'Sally Holmes' is only one among many wonderful shrub roses.

Because they do not do well in pots for the long term, I have volunteered to plant the shrub collection in my rose garden and maintain them for The Friends. This will involve opening a new area in my garden, with all the attendant issues: grading for paths, installing irrigation pipe and so forth. One always thinks these projects will take a week or two, when in reality, they are much more time-consuming, laborious, and expensive than one expects. I have decided to keep a little diary of this project for the newsletter.

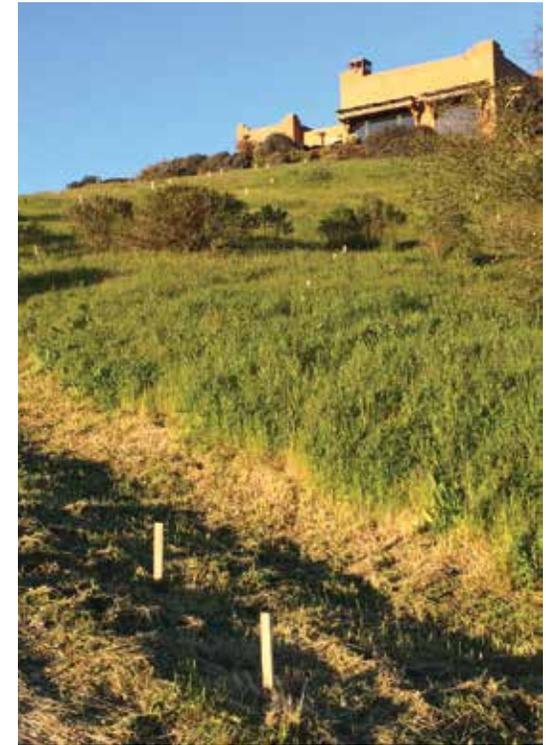
Our first step has been to locate the pots of shrub roses amongst the collection. This should have been easy, since the pots are arranged by rose type; however, over time, some sections had been mixed inadvertently, making it harder to find individual plants. So far, we have located about 55 of the shrub roses in the collection, with possibly another 30 yet to be located. I already have 33 shrub roses in my rose garden bought from Vintage Gardens nursery before it closed. The total of located roses and the ones I already have is 118, so we need to find or re-acquire 132 shrubs to complete the collection as it once was.

I have been busy on my computer, cataloguing the group by size and color, because I want some order in the way they are planted to display them at their finest. The hill we will plant on faces southwest, and the beds will be laid out in strips across the hill from northwest to southeast. I plan to plant in color bars across the hill, starting with white on the north side and moving through light pink, dark pink, red, orange, peach and yellow. I find that red roses seem to need the most sun, so the darker pinks, reds and dark oranges will be in the center parts of the beds where they will get plenty of sun.

Meanwhile, my gardening assistant Abel and I have staked out the slope for the roses. The first step is to get it graded. Then we will need to install retaining walls where needed. I intend to use old railroad ties. We have done this in another area of the garden, and it has turned out quite attractively. We will also have to install the main irrigation pipes in concert with the retaining walls, because the system will have to run down the hill across beds and under walls. We

will need to control erosion. My current plan is to put black plastic down on the paths—which will later be covered with gravel—and cover the beds with jute fabric to keep the raw soil from washing downhill in the rain. Jute fabric is often used in freeway construction projects. It looks like very, very coarse burlap and is laid across slopes to keep the soil from eroding. It is made from a biodegradable material—although it takes forever to degrade—so we can just leave it on the beds forever and cut through it to plant the roses.

More on the progress of this project soon. ■



*Stakes show site of new Shrub Rose garden
(photo by S. Feichtmeier)*



'Malton', an 1830s rose in the Old Garden

Curator's Report: Our Year-End Crowd Funding

Over the years one section of our collection has given particular pleasure to those who have come to visit. It is the oldest section of the Friends' planted rose garden and is unique in old rose collections in California as it is composed of the old European roses, the oldest known in European gardens. Here have thrived nearly 1000 varieties of Albas, Centifolias, Damasks, Eglantines, Gallicas, Hybrid Bourbons, Hybrid Chinas, Scots Roses, and the oldest of the rambling roses. In our mild winter gardens on the West Coast, these roses may often bloom poorly for lack of winter chill. But in the rural frosts of Sonoma County, they thrive and bloom with abandon. From this collection, over the past 25 years, we have gathered examples of these old roses for display at the Celebration of Old Roses in El Cerrito, the first Sunday after Mother's Day, providing a living glimpse at the old roses of Europe to the many hundreds who attend.

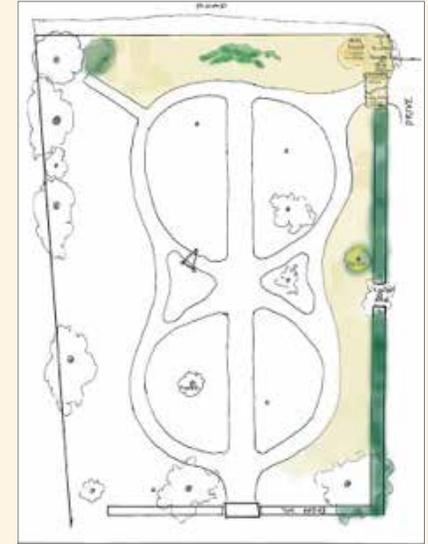
Our concern about the viability of this part of our collection has grown in the past few years. We have feared that all might be lost

without an effort to eradicate invasive blackberry vines that have already strangled and killed many rare old hybrids. Last November we launched a crowd funding on Indiegogo, a non-profit fund-raising website. Our goal was to raise sufficient funds to hire workers to prune and dig out the vines and to assist with an aggressive 'lasagna mulch' effort to keep weeds and berries at bay. We sought \$10,000 for this work on the ½ acre section of the garden.

Though we fell well short of the mark, raising \$3000, we set our plan in motion in December and are close to completing this work on one third of the garden. I will be sharing our progress on our blog on the Friends' website in the coming weeks. Meanwhile our shortfall in donations this year is a serious concern to me; two of our major donors since the start of our non-profit chose to omit us from their charitable gifts in 2016, leaving us challenged to simply hold our ground this year. We have been blessed by several donors who have doubled and even tripled their gifts this year, bringing us closer to our basic needs.

We are living today in times of great uncertainty. Many wonder what they can do to make this a better, kinder and more beautiful world. We hope you will join us in keeping alive something of great beauty, a living piece of the past, a world of roses that tells a hopeful story of human aspirations for a better world.

—Gregg Lowery



A map of the old European garden collection of The Friends with areas under renovation highlighted.



'Henri Fouquier' (photo by P. Barden)



'Dupuy Jamain' (photo by D. Schramm)

Thornless Roses

Darrell g.h. Schramm

PT. II: MEN WITHOUT ARMATURE

Strictly speaking, all roses are thornless. Most roses have prickles, small sharp accessions or outgrowths that can be snapped off from the bark or epidermis of a cane, stem, or stalk. True thorns are stiff inherent parts of the stem, that is, a modified branch. Given its common but incorrect usage regarding roses, I will use obligingly the word *thorn(s)* interchangeably with the correct term *prickle(s)*.

An earlier article, Part I, addressed thornless roses named for the female gender; this article addresses such roses named for men. There are a fair

number, such as "Adam Messerich" (a Bourbon), "Dupuy Jamain" (a Hybrid Perpetual), "Henri Fouquier" (a Gallica), "Jean Ducher" (a Tea), "Omar Pacha" (a Bourbon), "Papa Hemeray" (a China), and "Souvenir du Dr. Jamain" (a Hybrid Perpetual). What follows are the details of seven others.

'Hippolyte' is the oldest rose in this treatise, an atypical Gallica bred by Louis Parmentier around 1800 or shortly thereafter. A fragrant rose of a deep wine color, sometimes more violet, with shades of purple, all coloring more intense when grown in dappled or semi-shade, it extols small flat flowers, very thick and full, displaying a button eye. Sometimes a greyish or reddish petal appears, accenting the deep color of the other petals. The plant grows from three to five feet tall. Humorously, the famous nurseryman and breeder Peter Beales once wrote that the stems arch downward on purpose, "causing one to stand on one's head to observe its many flowers (the effort of doing so is well worthwhile)." So far I've not been forced to view my plant from down under, but then it grows in a terraced bed higher than the garden path.

The rose may have been named for Hippolyte (Hippolytus) in Greek mythology, illegitimate son of an Amazon queen Hippolyta and the famous Theseus who killed the Minotaur. When Theseus's wife attempted to seduce the young man, he refused her advances to his own tragic end. Hippolyte was also a fairly popular male name



'Hippolyte' (photo by D. Schramm)



'Prince Charles' (photo by D. Schramm)

in 19th century France.

Another rose with scarcely any armature is 'Prince Charles', a Bourbon of 1842 bred by Alexander Hardy. Popular in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, it is, unfortunately, not found on the frivolous market of the United States. It grows four to five feet high, exhibiting loose, double flowers of crimson to maroon, fading to pale magenta,

at which point the purplish veining on the petals becomes quite apparent. The base of the petals is nearly white. The rose is both very fragrant and shade tolerant. Like most Bourbons, its leaves are broad and thickly textured.

The rose was named for Prince Charles Stuart (1720–1788), also known as the Count of Albany, The Young Pretender, and Bonnie Prince Charlie. As a young man, he was a heroic military leader, attempting to restore the Stuart family to the thrones of England and Scotland. But his brave endeavors in 1745–46 ended in heroic failures. The defeat of his cause may have been the cause of his alcoholism. Last of the Stuart line, he died in Rome where he was born. He is buried in the Vatican.

'Duc de Cambridge' is a beautiful Damask rose but somewhat odd on two counts. Although it is generally naked of prickles, occasionally a young lateral stem will be dressed in this needle-like armor, only to lose it with age. It is also odd in that it is given to a



Nether side of sepals showing phyllody on 'Monsieur de Morand' (left) and phyllody on 'Duc de Cambridge' (right) (photos by D. Schramm)

phenomenon known botanically as *phyllody*, more commonly called either proliferation or profoliation. This strange mutation is such that a new rosebud, and sometimes leaflets as well, emerge from the center of a flower. The famous poet Goethe wrote in 1790 of this profoliation appearing in some China roses, and the painter Redouté depicted a few Centifolia roses, a Gallica, and a Damask showing phyllody. (Some modern roses do the same—'Bonica', for example.) Some years on my 'Duc de Cambridge' only one rose or none will exhibit this strangeness, but in 2011 about half the roses on this plant appeared in profoliated form.

Nonetheless, the normal blossoms are stunning, a full flower in deep grenadine or mauve, depending on soil and climate. Probably the darkest of Damasks, it exudes a strong, delicious perfume. The bush grows from three to six feet. It was bred by the prolific French breeder Laffay who introduced and described it in 1841.

The Duke of Cambridge (1774–1850) was born Adolphus Frederick



'Duc de Cambridge'
(photo by D. Schramm)

at Buckingham Palace, the tenth of fifteen children, the seventh son and apparently the favorite of his father King George III, he of Revolutionary War infamy. Another man inclined to bear arms, the Duke served in the British and Hanoverian armies, was wounded in 1793, promoted to British field marshal in 1813, then viceroy of Hanover until that kingdom separated from Great Britain in 1837. He also carried the titles of Earl of Tipperary and Baron Cullodin. Indeed, King George believed his favorite was entitled to titles. Marrying his cousin, a princess, the Duke and she produced three children—clearly not as fruitful as his father who died deaf, blind, and mad.

Like the rose, the Duke did manifest a few eccentricities. Apparently he had the habit of repeating things three times (known as triptology): “So true, so true, so true” is an example as is “I believe it’s a Damask. I believe it’s a Damask. Yes, I believe it’s a Damask.” He was also given to thinking out loud. One historic source writes that, though respectable and liked, he was a boring man. How utterly unlike the rose named for him.

Another unarmed rose named for an armed man is ‘General Kleber’. A Damask Moss rose of 1856, it is atypical of its class for its virtual lack of prickles. Its wide, light, somewhat shiny pink blooms are, according to its breeder, “nuanced with lilac.” Double and quite

fragrant, they grow on a bush four to five feet high. From its thick stems to the end of its sepals, the rose comes clothed in the softest of light green moss.

Unlike his namesake, the real General Kleber (1753–1800) was known to be rather prickly. Born Jean Baptiste Kleber in Alsace, he began an early career in the military. Prone to a quick loss of temper and often believing he did not gain his just desserts, he finally joined Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt in 1798 where he shone heroically. When he triumphed in battle at Mt. Tabor where he was enormously outnumbered, Napoleon, on leaving for France, gave General Kleber command of all



'General Kleber' (courtesy of
Museo Giardino della Rosa Antica)

French forces.. Kleber regained Cairo, but in that city in 1800 he was assassinated with a dagger. He was 47.

‘Paul Neyron’ is a Hybrid Perpetual practically without prickles. Of old garden roses, it produces one of the very largest of flowers, five to six inches across, and this on a short shrub of about three feet high. Very fragrant, the flowers are a warm lilac-rose color which bloom happily again in autumn.

The rose was bred in 1869 by Antoine Levet and named for his non-combative friend, a medical student who died as a result of the siege of Paris and the turmoil of the Commune that followed.

During the Franco-Prussian War, the Prussians laid siege to the city in September 1870, their “Iron Chancellor” Otto von Bismarck having remarked complacently, “A week without *café au lait* will break the Parisians.” But the Parisians held out for over five months, having endured one of the most severe winters in decades, surrendering only after shooting their zoo animals—including two elephants—for food, having been reduced to eating rats, and after smallpox became a health issue. The Prussian army then supplied the populace with wagons of food and left.



‘Paul Neyron’ (photo by D. Schramm)

Quickly, citizen groups and co-operatives formed a Commune to manage the city, but the Versailles government would have none of it. The citizens erected barricades throughout Paris to fight against the Versailles troops. But after seven days of street fighting and 30,000 Communards dead, power to the people was quashed. In the aftermath, the medical student Paul Neyron, apparently weak and

fatigued, perhaps half-starved and sickly himself from doctoring the sick and the wounded, died. That was in 1872.

‘G. Nabonnand’, with the typical exception of small prickles on the underside of the rachis (the leaf stem), is thornless. Like many Tea roses, the color of this Tea (aka ‘Gilbert Nabonnand’) can also be variable, but mostly it’s a gentle peach with dark pink hues or a yellowish cream flushed with pink—all soft pastel colors. The large,

loose, and profuse blossoms reflex their petals with age and emit a fruity scent. The bush is large and tall, the foliage dense. It blooms especially well in winter.

The rose is named for Gilbert Nabonnand (1829–1903), who was first apprenticed to the famous Jean-Baptiste Guillot, breeder of the even more famous rose ‘La France’. Having moved to Avignon in 1858 where he began to cultivate roses, Nabonnand met Lord Brougham who had introduced his fellow English elite to the Riviera and who invited Nabonnand to the Côte d’Azur. There he



‘G. Nabonnand’ (photo by M. Furness)

established his famous nursery where he bred mostly Tea roses, which he most often named after the rich and famous, those of the “cosmopolitan winter colony” such as Archiduc Joseph, Bardou Job, Captain Philip Green, Comtesse Festetics Hamilton, General Gallieni, Lady Waterlow, and many more. When he retired, his sons Clement and Paul took over the business and created roses themselves. Among the three Nabonnands, they introduced more than a thousand Tea roses and won 220 Grands Prix and other medals for themselves. Of all those roses, about 75 still remain in commerce, some worldwide, some only abroad.

I leave my favorite for last: ‘Monsieur de Morand’. This perfumed, prolific, exquisite Hybrid Perpetual rose blooms in all four seasons. Though it rests between flushes, I fear that this huge and lovely rose may bloom itself to death—and it’s not available commercially in the United States. The canes are strong and straight, easily bearing the big-bosomed blooms. Its perfumed beauty thrives, richly



'Monsieur de Morand'
(photo by D. Schramm)

colored in lilac dress, hinting at soft purple.

Apparently a seedling of 'General Jacqueminot', the rose was introduced by the Widow Schwartz in 1891. For whom did she name the rose? While there have been a number of noted M. de Morands—a playwright, a secretary of the Academy of Savoy, a writer and globetrotter and friend of Proust, the

Widow Schwartz most likely named it for a nurseryman and horticulturist from Alençon, France, a Raymond de Morand, apparently not to be confused with an actor of the same name. Over the years from 1866 at the International Horticulture Expo in London into the 1890s at the Exposition of Alençon, he won various medals and awards for artichokes, begonias, geraniums, chrysanthemums, and other plants. At least four times in different publications, he and the widow are mentioned in the same paragraphs. Was there more than a horticultural connection? According to the recently deceased rosarian Andre Eve, Morand was very popular in Lyon at the beginning of the 20th century, then seems to have vanished or at least retreated into obscurity. The rose named for him must not.

Roses without prickles are not better than those that may claim drops of your blood. With or without armature, they can be equally beautiful. Consider how intriguing and wondrous it might be to wander through a rose garden without thorns. Yet, I would never surrender the armed beauty of my roses. A prick, a scratch, a minor infection—these are nothing compared to the gift of fragrance and beauty that armed roses offer to fascinate and exhilarate my life. ■



'Papa Hemeray' (photo by D. Schramm)

A Love of Old Roses

Darrell g.h. Schramm

Why do certain people love old roses? Why have a number of active Heritage Rose organizations formed, first in our country, then in England, France, New Zealand, Australia, Germany?

For some rose lovers, these heritage roses are nostalgic. They are the roses that grandma or even great-grandma grew. The shape, the colors, the perfume bring back pleasant memories, days of happiness in a garden or on a porch with a climbing rose nearby.

For others it's the beauty of the roses—so much less predictable than the modern Hybrid Teas or Floribundas. The form, the texture,

the colors of those old roses are different, in a category of beauty all their own. Beauty surprises yet contains the familiar. We recognize them as roses, but their different beauty surprises us; they contain a complexity within simplicity. They move our hearts.

Still others appreciate these old roses even more because they have survived. Heritage roses by definition are enduring. Some have been around for 100, 200 years—some even more. To value what is enduring is to deepen ourselves. Through these roses we connect to growers and gardeners of the past, to botanists and breeders of a time gone by, to the stories behind the heritage roses.

For some rosarians, these old roses are what the Parthenon and the Cathedral of Notre Dame are to architects, what the *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper* are to artists—something that is beautiful, something that lasts, something that remains in the memory because it affects the inner self.

Stated another way, to some collectors, admirers, and growers, these antique roses are what a modern Chinese philosopher has described for certain art objects, “objects of reverie, satisfying to the touch, intriguing to the eye, mysterious to the mind,” in short, both experiential and inspirational. ■

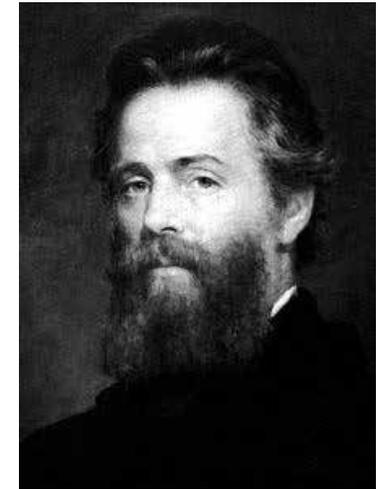
Longing for Eden: Herman Melville and Roses*

Darrell g.h. Schramm

Do not call me Ishmael. Though I’ve been on a few yachts, I’ve never been on a ship at sea, only on the Queen Mary in dock. And though I’ve seen a whale spouting, I prefer to see a rose sprouting. I allude, of course, to Herman Melville, known for his novels such as *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*.

What I suspect most people do not know is that in the last fifteen years or so of his life, Melville (1819–1891) immersed himself in roses. He read about roses, he wrote poems on roses, he grew roses. In fact, according to one source, roses became for him a kind of religion, his “rose-religion.” Not particularly Christian, he saw himself as a “New Rosicrucian,” meaning not part of a sect but a true lover of the rose. Over and over again during his last years as he worked on his poetry, the rose surfaced as image and symbol.

As early as 1868, he had acquired a book written by the 13th century Persian writer Sadi (also Sa’di or Saadi), a book of proverbs, parables, and other tales entitled *Gulistan* (also Golistan), that is, Rose Garden. Melville seems to have marked the margins of the book with some enthusiasm, apparently resonating with Sadi’s fervor for life and the creative mind. For Sadi the rose was a metaphor for his own life (“Sadi is a rose but to the eye of his enemies a thorn”) and for the imagination that creates (“Take a leaf from my



Herman Melville

* This article first appeared in the Feb. 2014 issue of *Rose Letter*.

rose-garden" by which he meant the wisdom in the book he had written; "A flower endures but five or six days. But this rose-garden is always delightful"). In the *Gulistan*, the garden is the site of the imagination.

Around 1880 Melville began growing roses. Since in his poems he mentions the Sweet Briar, the Damask, and both Moss roses and Hybrid Musks more than once, it is conceivable that he grew these. When he refers to a red rose with reflexed petals, could it have been the Hybrid Perpetual 'General Jacqueminot'? 'Empereur du Maroc'? The days of the popular Hybrid Perpetuals roses still shone in all their glory, though they were soon to give way to Tea roses, Hybrid Teas, and Ramblers. If Melville grew any of the latest Hybrid Perpetuals, among them might have been one or more of these still surviving heritage roses: 'Archiduchesse Elizabeth d'Autriche', 'Pride of Waltham', 'Ulrich Brunner fils', 'Heinrich Schultheis', 'Duc de Marlborough', 'Duc de Bragançe', 'Comtesse O'Gorman', 'Marchioness of Lorne', and 'Buffalo Bill'.

Because Melville had come to cherish roses, on his 65th birthday his wife Elizabeth presented him with the seventh and latest edition (1883) of Dean Samuel Reynolds Hole's *A Book About Roses*. (Is it a coincidence or a cosmic connection that both Melville and Dean Hole were born in the same year?) Given Melville's many markings in the margins of this little volume, it seems clear that the book spoke meaningfully to him.

In section IV of "Naples in the Time of Bomba," a long narrative poem by Melville, a flower girl in Naples pins to the lapel of the narrator "a red and royal rose/A rose just flowering from the bud." After he pays her in coin, she vanishes with a smiling good-bye, but he moves on through the streets feeling "ruddy now/Flushed with the rose's reflex bloom." This part of the poem echoes an actual occasion in London that Dean Hole records in his own book. By contrast, Dean Hole, however, did not continue his stay in the

city. Sensing the rose urge him to "come home," he cut short his visit and set out for home with the rosebud pinned to his coat, to wander in his own more rural garden. The rose has power to bring a true rose lover home, away and apart from the materialism and distractions of the world.



Trigtintipetala (photo by D. Schramm)

The rose is a lure. In another Melville poem, a speaker asserts it was roses that lured men and angels from "heaven's own seventh heaven," for both angels and human beings were "tired out with perpetuity." Beauty offered so much more. And the very evanescence of a rose adds to its variety, its annual or seasonal anticipation, its call to desire.

In the poem "The Rose Farmer," Melville juxtaposes two viewpoints, one of a Persian who prizes the attar or rose oil that he distills from his Damasks, no doubt *Trigtintipetala*, and the other view of the farmer



'Gloire de Dijon' (left); 'Cramoisie Superieur' (right) (photos by D. Schramm)



'Marechal Niel' (photo by B. Grant)

who prizes the rose itself. The Persian claims that attar is better than the flower, for not only does the attar require more labor to obtain it, but also it outlasts the Damask rose. While Melville would agree that the perfume of a rose is alluring, for elsewhere he writes that the subtle influence inhaled from a rose flatters and seduces us, the farmer of the poem in the end realizes it is the very transience of the rose—its spiritual but

fleeting beauty—that charms his soul again and again.

Melville appears to have treasured Dean Hole's book and apparently revered its author as well. Accordingly, it is altogether likely that Melville chose for his own garden some of Dean Hole's favorite roses.

If, wrote Hole, he were allowed only one rose, he could choose the climbing Tea 'Gloire de Dijon'. His two other favorites were the Hybrid Perpetual 'Charles Lefebvre', "at its best, the best rose of all," and the Noisette 'Marechal Niel', which, like 'Charles Lefebvre', he described as "magnificent." But he also spoke glowingly of 'Cramoisie Superieur', 'Juno'— "all that a good Rose ought to be"—'Oeillet Parfait', 'Coupe d'Hebe', 'Charles



'Charles Lefebvre' (from Louis van Houtte's catalogue of c.1865)

Lawson', and 'Senateur Vaisse', a red Hybrid Perpetual now long lost. Melville may also have grown the rose, a Gallica, that first won Dean Hole's heart, 'D'Aguesseau', a vivid violet-red or crimson rose of a clarity and brightness rare in the plant world. And since Dean Hole opined that he who sees no beauty in 'Old Blush' is no rosarian, Herman Melville may have cultivated that ancient rose as well.

For Dean Hole, as for Sadi, roses were metaphorical or symbolic, and so they became for Melville. Dean Hole did not approve of the "pseudo-Rosist" (his word), meaning, I think, those who see the rose only as exhibition material meant to compete for a prize—though a



'D'Aguesseau' (photo by D. Schramm)

true Rosist might well take part in such a competition. He also meant that the pseudo-Rosist is one who is whimsical, only partly committed to the rose, one who discards last year's beauty for any new fashion this year. He calls those people "foes" who "care nothing for the Rose itself . . . only for the prize it may win." Do we praise only the cut rose, the extraction of the rose, the awarded transaction

of the rose, or do we extol the whole plant, the living beauty of the rose, the real thing with its power to move us, uplift us?

True devotees of the rose, maintains critic William Dillingham, are "not only loyal to the rose as queen of beauty" but also aware "that love for it reflects a longing for Eden from which all human beings are exiled," That longing is why we are caught in the rose—with or without prickles or thorns—why we can't let go, why old heritage roses are so important, bringing us closer to a lost Eden. That quiet longing may be so implanted within our being that we cannot toss one rose aside for the latest new bloom on the market, why for us the old rose breathes intimations of immortality, or at the very least, of a lost childhood. Herman Melville was onto something. He wrote that we are natives of Eden, that we are "blessed in banishment," for we have and love the rose. ■

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The Friends of Vintage Roses exists to preserve and enhance the unique and extensive collection of historic roses developed by Gregg Lowery and Phillip Robinson, to establish the collection in a garden, and to share the collection with other public rose preservation efforts, all for the purpose of educating the public about the importance of the rose to human history, cultures, technology, and science.

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