THE *Vintage rose*

Summer 2022, Issue 29

THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE ROSES

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NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE ROSES
Summer 2022, Issue 29

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On the cover: Rosa fedtschenkoana (photo by Darrell Schramm)

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FROM THE EDITOR

Washington, Oregon, California, France, China and Ancient Persia—this issue of *The Vintage Rose* is virtually global. And that is not, of course, even taking into account the provenance of the many roses named throughout this publication. One area or discipline we cannot escape when thinking, speaking, or writing of Old Garden Roses is history. 'Red Radiance' and 'Fantin-Latour' are just two examples in this issue. Of course you the reader and supporter of our enterprise and mission, wherever you are, make all the difference. Without you we could not offer you *The Vintage Rose*, let alone the glorious roses themselves. For that we heartily thank you.

'Red Radiance' (photo by Karl King)

'Red Radiance'

Darrell g.h. Schramm

On June 5th of this year, Gregg Lowery and I attended the heritage rose celebration hosted by the Eugene Heritage Rose Group and its able president Elaine Sedlack. Arriving shortly after Gregg, I found him at a special table devoted to unidentified roses in various vases, speaking to several group members eager to have certain roses identified. He had already identified one or two, but now, handing me a vase of red roses, enlisted my help. Clearly, they were of an early Hybrid Tea. My mind riffled through a file of early 20th century roses: 'General MacArthur'? No. 'Hadley'? No.'Barcelona'? No. "'Red Radiance', do you think?" Gregg asked me. A flashbulb went off inside my

Gregg Lowery and Darrell Schramm at a rose celebration hosted by the Eugene Heritage Rose Group, June 2022.

head. "Yes, yes!" I said. "I think you're right." Then he proceeded to explain why.

'Red Radiance', a rose of 1916, sported from John Cook's most famous rose, the clear pink 'Radiance'. (Cook also had bred in 1888 America's first Hybrid Tea, 'Souvenir of Wootton'.) By coincidence, two red Radiances had sported that year, one in the Pierson, Inc. nursery and one in the Gude Brothers nursery, the latter being the darker red. But within a few years Pierson, Inc. withdrew its less popular rose from the market.

In color the rose has been described as dark, rich red, as cherry red, and as deep rich pink. Australian rosarian Margaret Furness declares it is red only by comparison with 'Radiance.' In fact, one occasionally sees both 'Radiance' and 'Red Radiance' on the same bush.

The rose, of twenty petals more or less, on medium to long stems, exhales a strong fragrance. The profuse blossoms are somewhat tulip-shaped, and it is this shape that caused me to agree with Gregg. They are very long-flowering and have a long blooming season, serving well as cut flowers.

The sturdy plant exhibits a tall, upright growth with good, heavy foliage It is very hardy yet does well in hot climates. Though disease resistant, it may acquire slight mildew in the U.S. southeast and the Pacific southwest.The rose was popular in Florida and the South during the 1920s and 30s, and throughout the United States into the 1950s. It is still sold by Rogue Valley Roses in Oregon and Burlington Rose Nursery in California.

One gardener wrote in the *American Rose Annual* that the red roses 'Hadley', 'General MacArthur', 'Chateau de Clos Vougeot', and 'American Beauty' performed "only passably well" by comparison. Without a doubt, given all the above, there is much to admire and value in 'Red Radiance.' ■

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Sissinghurst Meets the Wild West—PART 2

Margaret Spaulding

Nearly 200 years ago, in June and July of 1823, Father Jose Altimira, a Spanish priest, led a band of men into Sonoma Valley, California, where I now live and grow roses. His troops most likely came across native roses, along with a rich abundance of other flora, as they tromped east into Napa and then back tracked to what is now the town of Sonoma where Altimira decided to establish the 21st and last of the California missions. Native roses would still have been blooming in some shadier or damp locations that summer. In places they may have formed nearly impenetrable thickets where deer sleep in the daytime. If Altimira failed to notice the roses, he saw much else that pleased him.

Living in this valley evokes a constant sense of the history of the place, in part because the colonial history is so recent. Two centuries barely registers on the scale of geologic time, and makes only a minor dot on the cultural and political history of our world. In botanical terms, the greatest of old oaks here were already adults when the Spanish arrived. Our longer history consists of the stories told by the native peoples, mainly Coast Miwok, Pomo and Wappo, who for many centuries lived in villages here, often migrating to the coast in summer and returning to this rich valley for acorns and a plethora of wild plants and animals that nourished them through the winter.

WHAT DOES THIS HISTORY HAVE TO DO WITH ROSES?

My first garden here, started in the early 2000s, consisted mainly of European and some Asian hybrid roses, along with fruit trees and ornamentals of many kinds. The garden meandered down hill from the house, behind a barn, surrounded by a deer fence. It has the feel of an unruly cottage garden, with tall roses, winding paths, old wooden chairs and hoses galore. It exudes sanctuary, but it doesn't speak to the special identity of this valley.

Eventually, after about a decade, I ran out of space to plant in this lower garden. As I added more and more plants, mainly 18th and 19th century roses such as the Ramblers 'Roserie' and 'Paul's Himalayan Musk', and Centifolias like the stunning 'Marbree', and

'Roserie' on an arbor, 'Marbree' amid native buckwheat grass (all photos by Margaret Spaulding)

top: 'Louis Philippe'; above: 'Meteor'; opposite: 'Brilliant' (Kordes) with native penstemon

Chinas like 'Louis Philippe', the cultivated area began ascending a steep hillside behind the house. I had to take out more and more of what was already here, mainly non-natives like Vinca, Himalayan blackberry, Lily of the Nile, Oleander, more Vinca, and many grasses introduced for cattle over the past century. The hillside also held some native shrubs, mainly *Baccharis pillularis* (Coyote brush) and Toyon, an occasional yarrow and some native grasses, including *Nasella pulchra* (Purple Needle grass), the state grass of California. Continuing to plant up the hill, further and further west, it seemed increasingly important to include more native plants that would add habitat and drought tolerance to the plant palate. Most importantly, these natives honor the history of the hillside, the valley and the life that was thriving here before the early 19th century.

Designing and working in gardens can force many lessons upon us. We may suddenly have to learn about hydrology, geology, seasonal climate, sun angles, growth rates and habits; from the grand and sublime to the name-of-that-bug and is-it-friendly to this-plant-or-not? Add to the list, history. The history of this place, in both botanical and human population terms, has become in intimate part of the choice and placement of every additional plant, stone terrace and arbor. Climbing up and west, I realized, was more than a metaphor for colonizing this place all over again. (My western fence is actually the eastern border of Jack London's original Beauty Ranch, another piece of local history.)

When Altimira arrived in the early 19th century, historians estimate that around 5,000 native people resided in the valley. Their ancestors had been here for as long as 12,000 years. According to local ecological historian Arthur Dawson, who has pored over old maps, diaries, and letters, and interviewed some of the oldest residents of the area whose memories are still sound, my garden has a past worth noting. While largely uninhabited during most of the early 19th century, after Spaniards moved indigenous people

into missions or caused their deaths by the hundreds, my future home became part of General Mariano Vallejo's land grant in the 1830s. The general established a lumber mill just below my property and began logging redwoods and Douglas firs from the nearby slopes. In the 19th and early 20th centuries my four acres were likely used for grazing, perhaps some vineyard, and for growing cannabis.

A horse had grazed dangerously on the too steep hillside when I bought the land in 2000.

A few years back, introducing so many roses into this place began to feel like a form of invasion, a repetition—in however an aesthetic form—of the genocide performed by Father Altimira and so many of his brethren on our indigenous population. Why kill a Coyote Bush when I could plant around it, or I could substitute a native Manzanita in its place, finding leaf shapes and hues that compliment the mainly species roses nearby. Grasses must be cut way back in the summer due to extreme fire hazard, but in the winter and spring the graceful leaves and awns of *Muhlenbergia rigens* (Deer grass) and *Festuca californica* create an elegant contrast to blooming roses.

As always, we need to plan as we plant. The main reason not to integrate roses with our most drought tolerant natives is obvious: irrigation needs vary greatly, and proximity can be fatal to either or

left top: R. setigera; left: 'Queen of the Bourbons'; right top: R. californica; right:'Vanguard' with native fuchsia and salvia

both. However, not all natives are drought tolerant and not all roses need much if any summer water. So the gardener can still have zones for irrigating that accommodate everyone's needs. For example, Gallicas and established species roses do very well with native roses, *R. californica*, e.g. and also with some of the Eriogonums (native buckwheats, *E. fasciculatum*, e.g.) that tolerate some summer water, as well as with a native Clematis, *C. ligusticifolia*.

Roses that really need more water in the summer, which is most of them and all of the modern ones, can be planted with grasses or native Spirea, or *Monardella villosa*, or native penstemon, for example. Experimentation has yielded as many successes as failures, if you count relocating a few times as learning, not failing.

Species roses, in particular, seem to fit well with this rustic, naturalistic arrangement. Among the roses that look at home in this setting are *R. glauca*, *R. eglanteria*, *R. pomifera*, and *R. setigera*, for example.

It's my belief that the good folks who insist we should grow exclusively native plants can suffer from a narrowness of vision, both aesthetically and culturally. The integration of plants can work as a model for the integration of human cultures if we think carefully and work with an open mind and heart. And fabulous gardens result. ■

'Salet' in foreground; 'Marbree' and 'Roserie' in back

The Untutored Gardener

Jeff Panciera

I have what is called a "collector's garden," a mishmash of roses, alpines, trees, peonies, spring bulbs, irises, fuchsias, lilies, wild flowers and various perennials. This nightmarish mishmash is mainly organized by color, by what will climb into what, and by pure chance.

For example, I often bought *Anagallis monelli* because I like its blue color. I assumed it was an annual or a tender plant because it was always sold with hanging basket plants. I put it at the base of a fuchsia where it disappeared immediately under the carpet of veronica.
A few years later, I decided to move the fuchsia to a shadier location where it would flower better. Next spring I noticed a blue-flowering plant had invaded that whole area. I was delighted, of course, but confused. I called a neighbor, a professional gardener, and he told me it was Anagallis.

Another surprise happened when tall, lavender Campanulas grew up through my 'Charles de Mills'. I call these unexpected pleasures "chaos" in the garden and I love when they happen.

left: "fighting it out"; above: 'Eugene de Beauharnais' (all photos by Jeff Panciera)

I planted a Chilean Glory Bower vine against the back fence and to encouraged it to climb, I placed wire mesh over the fence. It climbed to the top of the fence (six feet) and then launched itself into the 'Climbing Sutter's Gold'. These small triumphs are due to my dark, fertile soil and serendipity.

I bought my little house in 1999, not for the house, but for the yard. It is a corner lot, not very big, but with a

left: serenity; below: 'Jaune Desprez'; right: 'Duchess of Portland'

front yard facing south and a fenced backyard which can be enjoyed from a back porch that goes the width of the house. West of the house is a wall that separates me from my only neighbor, whose property is four feet below mine. Between this wall and the house is a thin strip where I planted creeping comfrey, Phygelius, and a winter honeysuckle. The street along the front bank is planted with junipers; a north-south street runs along the east side of the house past the fence. Arbitrarily I decided that the south side on my house (the front yard) would host red, blue and purple flowers, and the east side would have red, orange and yellow ones. This would be the publicly viewed part of the garden, whereas the backyard would be the more private part, where most of the once-blooming OGRs would go, and white and pink (my least favorite floral color) would be allowed.

There is a small crabapple at the southeast corner of the yard and from there toward the north is a rockery planted with alpines. From a side porch with the "front door", the bed continues with English roses in alternating colors, red and yellow, and against the house there are roses such as 'Colonial White', 'Francesca', 'Casino', and ending with 'Colette', which arches over the sidewalk to the back door, my principal door.

above: 'Capitaine John Ingram';
right: the back yard

Inside the backyard, starting at the southwest corner going north, I planted 'Mme. Plantier', 'Königen von Danemark', 'Yolande d'Aragon', a mock orange ('Belle Étoile'), 'Aviateur Blériot', 'Mme. Alfred Carrière at the corner, and moving east, 'Variegata di Bologna', 'Mme. Isaac Pereire', 'Léontine Gervais', 'Climbing Sutter's Gold',and 'Abbaye de Cluny'. Moving south, 'Orfeo', 'Étoile de Hollande', 'Dreaming Spires', 'Crépuscule', another crabapple, 'Jaune Desprez'and a honeysuckle. Moving inside, there is a jasmine on the end of the back porch, 'Souvenir du Docteur Jamain', 'Francis Dubreuil', 'Alfred Colomb', 'Général Cavaignac', 'Reine des Violettes', 'Tuscany Superb', 'Eugène de Beauharnais', and a wintersweet.

The front yard also has its OGRs, but they are more or less along the wall overlooking the neighbor's yard. They are 'Maiden's Blush', 'Ghislaine de Féligonde', 'Charles de Mills', 'Honorine de Brabant', 'Duchess of Portland', 'Souvenir du Président Lincoln', 'La Belle Sultane', 'Capitaine John Ingram', 'Quatre Saisons Blanc Mousseux', 'Laneii', 'Cardinal Richelieu', 'Auguste Gervais', 'Paul Ricault' and 'Erinnerung an Brod'. There is a *Pittosporum tobira* planted in front of the house shared by 'Auguste Gervais', 'Sénégal', and 'Gloire de Dijon' and a *Fuchsia magellanica,* and soon a new rose, generously named by Pam Temple for my uncle, 'Pvt. Arthur Panciera' who was killed in the Second World War.

I depended on what I found at the Antique Rose Farm, what I could buy from Rogue Valley Roses and Greenmantle Nursery. and a good friend who owned a small nursery. I am not a good gardener, neither am I a devoted gardener—I have other interests and activities. But I try to provide water when needed, support to encourage, fertilizer (if I have time, which I didn't this spring), mulch if I can find time. Because my yard is rather on the small side but my admiration for plants is boundless, I tend to cram things in. My garden guru, Rose Lee, has termed this "let them fight it out". A little competition seems to be stimulating, and I rarely have to intervene to save a life.

A friend of mine, whenever he came to see my garden, said, "You have a good relationship with your garden." I never really understood what he meant, but I guess I agree. I don't have any design sense, I'm not talented at combining companion plants, so I just read up on each plant and try to put it in a place where it will be happy and not need emergency services. They lean on each other, climb into one another, stand together as a community of plants that I chose and love. Being fluent in French has been a plus in that I can easily read historical records of the 19th century French rose breeders. This way I learned that Docteur Jamain, memorialized by Lacharme, was an esteemed surgeon in Paris and author of a much used surgery text.

My plants coexist and occasionally surprise me in the ways they have found to live together. The OGRs are the bones of the garden—the large structures that line the fences, spill over them, climb into trees and bear beautiful, fragrant flowers that end up in bouquets for my friends (none for my house, which is too small for bouquets).

My flower farm is giving me too much work these days (my 80th year), and I am slowly losing the battle with invading grasses and buttercups. But I hope to keep the garden in fairly good shape for some time, but will give away my plants to friends rather than lose them under a horde of weeds.

My garden is a jungle of perfumes and colors in which I try to avoid Darwinian tragedy by keeping all the plants fit so they never lose battles. I feel a responsibility in having summoned plants from alpine habitats, different continents and environments and from the glorious past of the queen of flowers, the rose. I've read Theophrastus who was informed of a multi-petaled rose growing on a mountainside in Greek Macedonia. Naturally, people from the nearby town trooped up the mountain, dug the roses up for their gardens and nature's experiment was co-opted. The Rose has a long and mysterious history, full of rumors and theories. Even DNA won't answer all our questions, so we grow these mainly 18th and 19th century beauties to serve as a souvenir of the depth of our ancestors' respect and love for the beauty of roses. A few years ago I was having breakfast at a quayside outdoor cafe at the Old Port in Marseille, a slot-like bay. I was enjoying that beautiful place and I realized that several thousand years ago, this protected and lovely port was undoubtedly surrounded by a fishing village. And roses were already there. OGRs are a way of hanging on to a history we will never recover or understand. We are in a long tradition of gardeners who invite the forces of nature into our yards and enjoy the beauty and the surprises we are accorded. ■

above left: 'Sutter's Gold'; left: 'Souvenir du Dr. Jamain'; above: 'Crimson Globe'

Persia: Home of the Garden Rose

top: R. hulthemia persica (photo by Bill Grant); above: R. fedtschenkoana (photo by D. Schramm); right: R. foetida bicolor (photo by Karl King)

Darrell g.h. Schramm

This past spring The Historic Roses Group and The Gardens Trust, both of the UK, hosted five online talks on roses. While all were in one way or another informative, and that on Hinton Ampner my favorite, it is a statement made by Jennifer Potter in her superb and highly knowledgeable presentation that has engendered this article. She said, "I think it was the Chinese who started cultivating the rose before anyone else." I was pleased that she wisely prefaced her supposition with "I think." (Too many writers on roses are prone to state as fact what is merely conjection, opinion, or unproven assumption repeated over the years.)

To Potter's credit, contemporary Chinese scholars claim the rose in China goes back as much as 2000 years. But before the 10th century, the rose was not part of China's literature and art. True, many a wild rose does recede to those distant times in China, but, unlike the Persians, the Chinese did not develop a passion for growing or gardening the cultivated rose. Plum blossoms, peonies, chrysanthemums, and lotus were likely to be considered, addressed, grown and painted before the rose. We do know, however, according to Weiping Zhang, that 40 different double-flowered, repeat-blooming roses were in cultivation in the North Song Dynasty (960–1127 CE).

Around 120 BCE, Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty in China established the Silk Road. According to the *Shang Lin Yuan*, an ancient book on imperial gardens, the emperor and his wife Fey-yen grew wild Rugosa roses in their Changmen Palace garden, whether transplanted or raised from seed, we do not know. However, history suggests the Persians had raised roses in gardens much earlier. Historian and botanical author Charles Joret (1839–1914) in writing of the Medes (predecessors of the Persians) and of the Persians

themselves, asserts northeastern Iran, especially in the region of Mazandaran, was abundant with "extensively cultivated" roses.

German rose historian Gerd Krussmann echoes Joret that this region "could well have been the cradle of European garden roses."

above: R. persiana; right: R. hemisphaerica (photos by D. Schramm)

More strongly, I contend that the development of the rose points to Persia. Though he does not mention the rose per se, the philosopher Georg Hegel asserts, "The principle of development begins with the history of Persia; this constitutes, therefore, the beginning of history." Development of the rose is synonymous with its cultivation, perhaps first for rose water, rose oil, and medicinal purposes, but also for cross-breeding and propagation of clones, whether of wild species or garden varieties. Indeed, according to one co-authored source, the Persians may have "done more for the development of the rose than any other people."

According to archeological studies, the origins of agriculture began about 9000 years ago in the fruitful Middle East, stretching from the Levant through Iraq and Iran, that is, ancient Persia. Wheat and barley were the primary crops. By contrast, China's agricultural origins began about 8000 years ago with rice and 7,500 years ago with millet. Domestication of food crops could easily over a thousand years have led to domestication of other plants in Persia, such as roses.

Mesopotamian culture is also the site of the earliest known writing, 6,400 years ago. The earliest known script in China goes back only to the Shang Dynasty, 3,500–3,200 years ago. The earliest written documents known are the cuneiform tablets of the Sumerians and Akkadians of the Fertile Crecent area (later, ancient Persia), dating to the first centuries of the second millennium. The first written use of the word *rose,* in conjunction with rose water and rose oil, is found in these tablets dating sometime between 2250 and 2100 BCE. Also recorded on these cuneiform tablets is a reference to Sargon I, King of Akkadia (2684–2630 BCE) bringing back from a military campaign in lands across the Tigris River saplings of roses. Along with that reference, we find in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*—of which there are several versions—an instance when Gilgamesh is told to search for an underwater plant, one that has "a prickle, like a thorn, like a rose." This seems to be the first written description, however brief, of a rose.

These clay tablets were found in the ruins of Nineveh destroyed in 612 BCE under the rubble of the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal's library. Nineveh, like Sumer and Babylon, was part of ancient Persia's empire at its greatest extent. Founder of Nineveh, King Sennacherib brought water from the Sagros Mountains via aqueducts to irrigate

his orchards, parks, and gardens. Did he grow roses? Possibly.

left: R. beggeriana (photo by Kurt Steuber); above: R. moschata (photo by Karl King)

About a hundred years after the fall of Nineveh, around 715 BCE, King Midas ruled Phrygia where he grew roses, some of them of sixty petals, clearly hybrids. His kingdom survived until the time of Cyrus the Great, becoming a satrapy of Persia. Clearly, if Herodotus is to be believed, full roses, not just single, species roses, were already being grown. In other words, roses had previously been cross-bred, if not by human beings, then by nature—winds, bees, birds.

Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian empire, who freed the Jews from their Babylonian captivity and issued the Cyrus Cylinder, the world's first human rights document, ruled 550-529 BCE. According to Persian horticultural authority Penelope Hobhouse, Cyrus "will have grown . . . native roses." Were these *Rosa foetida* bicolor, red on one side, yellow on the reverse? the double yellow *R. persiana*? *R. persica*, yellow with a dark brown center? the single *R. hemisphaerica v. rapinii*? the white *R. beggeriana*? *R. britzensis,* its pale pink turning white—or any of the other eighteen or so species native to Iran? Or even a full, many-petalled rose such as Midas grew? Regardless of variety, the rose became the official symbol of Cyrus the Great.

Ardishir I (224/226–242 CE), who established the Sassian Empire of Persia, built his Palace Firuzabad south of Shiraz where he grew

'Autumn Damask' (photo by D. Schramm)

red roses. In fact, the red roses *were cultivated for export to China*, India, and Egypt. Medieval chroniclers mention Firuzabad's roses, its rosewater, and other fragrances. That red roses were exported to China suggests not only that China did not deliberately produce red roses (a wild red rose *Rosa moyesii* does grow in western Sichuan province) but also that Persia was in the forefront of rose domestication in the world. It also implies active trade routes. In fact, in the second and third centuries Persia traded with China, importing apricot and peach trees and exporting grape vines, alfalfa, onions, cucumbers, saffron, jasmine, and roses.

Rose historian Roy Shepherd in 1954 asserted, "Roses from the northern part of India and neighboring China were sent as far westward as Spain, European varieties reached the East, and those of Persia and surrounding countries were distributed both east and west." No doubt maritime routes as well as the overland Silk Roads, which crossed Persia, played a major role in rose distribution. Indeed, the provenance of many old roses appears more complicated than one mere place of origin and one destination. En route, merchants by sea would stop at various ports to unload and re-supply goods just as overland merchants would stop at caravansaries for rest and replenishment, and then likely trade goods on a small scale before reaching their ultimate destinations. Trade items often changed hands a number of times on journeys to and fro along the Silk Roads. This frequent exchange of goods might explain, for example, the ménage-á-trois ancestry of the 'Autumn Damask' rose.

Indeed, 'Autumn Damask' may have originated in the mountain and valley area where Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgystan and Kazakstan more or less meet. DNA has shown that *R. damascena* contains *Rosa gallica*, *R. fedtschenkoana*, and *R. moschata* in its genes. *R. gallica* has been found as far east as Kyrgyzstan; *R. fedshenkoana* in Kazakstan and Uzbekistan, and *R. moschata* in Afghanistan and Iran. Where these regions overlap, Robert Mattock has shown, is a strong likelihood for the provenance of the Damask rose. A southern route of the Silk Roads at the southern end of the Oxus River (now Amadaria) would have carried the rose through Bactria (Balkh) to Merv and Nishapur and into central Persia, and from there to other lands such as the Levant, Turkey, Greece and Italy.

Granted, rose culture was becoming popular in China in the fourth and fifth centuries, and by the Song Dynasty (960–1279) there were references to recurrently blooming roses. (It was early in the Song Dynasty that the Silk Road declined, its overland northern route in China blocked by warlike nomadic hordes.) While 'Autumn Damask'—which repeats its bloom—may have bloomed in Persia at this time, the other roses of Persia bloomed probably once a year only.

But the garden rose in Persia goes back farther than the Song and even Han Dynasty, if not about 4000 or more years.

More than 3000 years ago rose cultivation had spread throughout Persia. Already 2,500 years ago at the outset of the Persian Empire,

the Persians had contact with the rose-loving Greeks whose influence they no doubt felt through trade with Constantinople, only a hopscotch jump across the water from Greece, and even more so once Alexander the Great ruled the world. Rome had also traded with Constantinople in the third century CE, which was connected to China's Silk Roads crossing Bactria (roughly Afghanistan and parts of Iran), eventually leading to Bruges (in today's Belgium), Ypres, and Antwerpen in the Low Countries. Between the 10th and 13th centuries, an active trade also occurred between Russia—its center in Novogrudok—and Islamic countries, which includes Persia. That trade could well have been another source of Western rose introduction and cultivation.

That brings the history into modern times. Though this subject is remote from the sphere of my observation, I have drawn conclusions from both ancient and modern texts. And while it is true that many facts of this history serves as circumstantial evidence, they intimate a logic and a linkage that confirm the possibility, probability, and plausibility of Persia as prime mover in the development of the garden rose. In short, they point to Persia as the origin of the cultivated rose. ■

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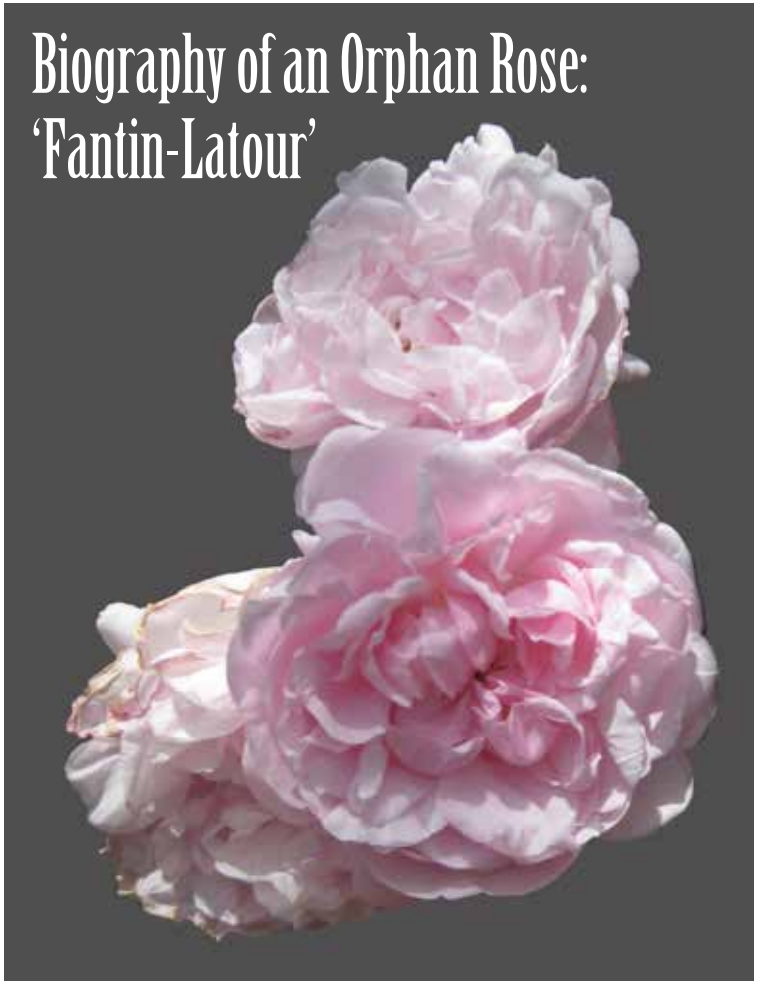
Biography of an Orphan Rose: 'Fantin-Latour'



Darrell g.h. Schramm

It's a glorious rose, a fragrant rose, a rose out of a mysterious past, an orphan rose. 'Fantin-Latour' is a powder pink flower, large and full, on a bush of few prickles, about five feet high. It can climb higher, in which case, given its heavy blooms, it will probably need support. Initially the flowers are cupped much like many of David Austin's roses, the looser outer petals usually paler than the inner ones. A button eye reveals itself as the petals open further. The plant is not averse to hot, dry summers; once-blooming, it puts on its show for a long month.

'Fantin-Latour' is a mystery rose. Neither its breeder nor its date of origin are known, making it an orphan arrived from the mists of the past. Nor do we know with certainty its class: most rosarians consider it a Centifolia, though likely not a pure one.

Precisely what do we know of this rose? Very little precisely. Graham Stuart Thomas re-introduced—but did not name—the rose in 1945. According to his 1992 article "Rose Nomenclature," he had received it from a Mrs. Ruby Fleischmann who dubbed it 'Fantin-Latour' because it called to mind roses in that artist's paintings. Mrs. Fleischmann had been given the rose by Mrs. Messel of Nymans, an English garden in West Sussex owned by three generations of Messels, now under the supervision of the National Trust.

The rose, however, had been in some, perhaps limited, circulation before 1945. Connoisseur and author Edward Bunyard had listed a rose by that name in his 1938-39 catalogue. Furthermore, in the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) ledger for September 1939, an entry indicates that Colonel (Sir Frederick) Stern dispatched cuttings of 'Fantin-Latour' from Highdown in West Sussex to the RHS garden at Wisley. Clearly, a rose by that name was in existence in southern England prior to World War II.

To complicate matters, a possibility exists that 'Fantin-Latour' became confused or conflated with another rose in Bunyard's possession, one he described as equally "new" but merely called 'Best Garden Rose'. Still another puzzlement is Bunyard's classification of both 'Fantin-Latour' and 'Best Garden Rose' as Hybrid Perpetuals. Hybrid Perpetuals had long lost their popularity. If Bunyard

'Fantin-Latour' (photo by D. Schramm)

was correct, could the two roses have been seedlings of Hybrid Perpetuals? Yet today 'Fantin-Latour' is most often classified as a Centifolia but sometimes a Bourbon hybrid.

Rose specialist Leonie Bell suggests the rose is a hundred years older. In 1980 she asserted her belief that the rose masquerading under the name of 'Fantin-Latour' is actually 'Celine', a hybrid Bourbon introduced (she wrote) about 1845 and for some time widely used as an understock. While her date is incorrect—'Celine' was introduced by Laffay in 1824—the rose still remains an orphan, for the parentage of 'Celine' remains likewise unknown. While I have many times seen the actual rose by the name of 'Fantin-Latour', I have seen only photos of 'Celine', and that of the bloom only, not the whole plant. On that scant basis alone, the two roses appear not to be the same; the blooms of 'Celine' show fewer petals, no button eye, and a different shade of pink. I will be the first, however, to concede that those facts are too few and probably inconstant to compare and identify the rose correctly.

Henri Fantin-Latour himself (1836–1904) is often categorized as a flower painter, but that is only partially true. In his homeland, the French knew him as a portrait painter—often of group portraits—especially of other famous artists of the day, such as Monet, Manet, Whistler, Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Rimbaud as well as many a self-portrait.. Because of his English agents, most of his 800 or so still lifes, mostly of roses and other flowers, sold inexpensively in the United Kingdom. Through the eyes of the English, then, he is seen as a flower painter. Americans seem to have followed their views. Whether his paintings were of flowers or of faces, through his delicate and luminous brushwork, Fantin-Latour helps us to see people and plants in another light, in a non-traditional way, broadening our own perspective.

Having endured several wars and political crises—the Crimean War, the Franco-Prussian War, the Commune of Paris, the assassination of a president—Fantin-Latour apparently became somewhat paranoid whenever he saw soldiers, to the extend that he would walk in another direction or cross the street when he saw a soldier approaching. His cottage in a village was no doubt a welcome retreat from Paris.

Fantin-Latour cultivated his own rose garden at his weekend cottage Croix Fantin in the village of Bure, Normandy. According to the photographer and writer of garden books, Derek Fell, in the late 1990s, the present occupants of the cottage told him of the painter's last day there. Supposedly one late August day in 1904 while having lunch on the terrace, Fantin-Latour began to feel ill and decided to stroll in the garden. There, not knowing he had lyme disease, he suddenly collapsed among the roses and died. ■

A CALENDAR FOR YOU

October 23, Sunday,
10 am to 2 pm
Workshop on Rose Care and Planting (bring a bag lunch!)
Free to Guardians of the Rose, $25 for all others

November 13, Sunday,
10 am to 2 pm
Dirt Day (bring a bag lunch!)

Curator's Report Summer to Fall 2022

The Friends of Vintage Roses have experienced growth in supporters' donations and a significant increase in sales of plants over the past two years. We have turned that increase into employing help with the maintenance of our several thousand roses. And we have been able to put significant resources into stabilizing the mother plants that have survived in the ground.This summer we changed how we water plants in the ground—hand watering each plant weekly, and no longer setting sprinklers. We saved a great deal of water, and made strides in controlling weeds as a result. Large areas in the garden are now ready to plant. Our work through winter will, we hope, include lots of planting!

Our goal has been to achieve our preservation mission by utilizing the garden space we lease to improve the condition of the portions of the collection that will remain here. And we have continued our outreach to rose preservationists who continue to join us as collection curators. As of this report in late September, we have stuck more than 3000 rose cuttings and will continue to root more through year's end. The bulk of these will go to curators of all of the collections, not the least of which is the collection of old European roses, adopted by Erin Benzakien in Washington. We are working on the propagation of more than 500 cultivars that we'll supply Erin over the next few years.

Devoted customers of our rose sales have benefitted from the extra plants that appear regularly in our sale lists. While our mission stays focused on building a community of rose preservationists, we think that every rose we send from here is helping to preserve these living works of art.

The work is immense. The weeds, the labels, the pots, the lists, the correspondence.

Your support amazes us and keeps us focused on our mission.

Thank you for your cheers, rosy swoons, and for your monthly reminders that you want us to succeed.

—Gregg Lowery

YOUR DONATIONS

Mulch, compost, fertilizers, water, tools, etc. are constantly renewable needs for any garden, let alone a rose collection of several thousand plants. And so we ask for your continued support. Also, consider supporting us by volunteering for our Dirt Days. See the Volunteers page on our website for details. The work goes on.

And if you haven't done so yet, you can become a sustaining donor to The Friends of Vintage Roses. Just sign up at PayPal to give a little each month. Donating a small, recurrent sum is so easy you'll hardly miss it. You'll be sent a letter at the beginning of each year for the total amount you donated in the previous year. And. of course, you can cancel at any time.

And should you wish to donate in honor or in memory of someone, send us the name of the person or persons, and we'll publish the news in our next newsletter.

MISSION STATEMENT

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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