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THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE ROSES

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NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE ROSES Summer 2024, Issue 34

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to another journey among roses in *The Vintage Rose.* In this issue we take several different journeys, one that wends its way through the unresolved contradictions of the rose 'Sophie's Perpetual'; another with the late Barbara Oliva as she sojourned from young gardener to lover of Old Roses and their curator; still another a short passage through the roses of a playground. A longer journey leads us into the past of a mid-19th century nursery and the controversy that ensued with the glorious rose 'Marechal Niel'. But perhaps the most profound journey, and one that attests to the mission of The Friends of Vintage Roses, is that excursion led by one of our curators, John Bagnasco. The etymology of the word *journey* refers to a day's travel. However, as these articles and stories show, the journey with and among roses has been ongoing for a few hundred years. And we preserve the commitment that it will go on years and years into the future, if not forever. Thank you for journeying with us.

'Sophie's Perpetual' (photo by D. Schramm)

THE UNSETTLED CASE *of* 'SOPHIE'S PERPETUAL'

Darrell g.h. Schramm

In 1960 Englishman and rose lover Humphrey Brooke apparently discovered the rose 'Sophie's Perpetual' at his place, Lime Kiln in Claydon, Suffolk, England. Six years earlier he had acquired the property from his father-in-law. One wonders why it took him so long to find the rose—or rather, the roses. Perhaps he belatedly took actual possession of the property or had delayed work on the garden. The latter seems likely, given one source that states Brooke began to cultivate roses at Lime Kiln after he had been forced to resign—ostensibly for his bipolar disorder—from the Royal Academy in 1968.

Brooke had married Nathalie Benckendorff, the granddaughter of Countess Sophie Benckendorff (1855–1928). The Countess had designed her own

garden at Lime Kiln, ensuring that it was replete and redolent with roses, 500 of them, many being ramblers, such as the 1910 hybrid *wichurana* 'Aviateur Bleriot' and the 1902 climbing Hybrid Tea 'Lady Waterlow'. Married to the last Czarist ambassador to London, The Countess was widowed in 1918. She lived another ten years.

King Edward VII had asked Czar Nicholas II, his nephew, to appoint Benckendorff, which was done in 1902. An ardent Anglophile and wealthy aristocrat, Count Benckendorf entertained at the embassy more extravagently than any other ambassador in London prior to WWI. He was also often a guest at Windsor and Balmoral, the royal homes of the English monarchs.

According to Brooke, in 1924 Countess Sophie acquired six plants named 'Dresden China', from George Paul's nursery at Cheshunt. On discovering them but not knowing their name, Brooke rechristened them 'Sophie's Perpetual.' The year 1924 seems quite plausible. The rose was in commerce before 1922, for the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* in its 1922 issue reports it as 'Dresden China' from G. Paul of Cheshunt, "very free flowering, sweetly scented China rose of moderate size and a pleasing carmine-rose color." Another source suggests that the rose was bred by Paul even earlier.

However, in a 1986 article published in *The Rose*, Brooke wrote that 'Sophie's Perpetual'

Humphrey Brooke (photo by Russell Westwood)

was "probably raised by Russian botanist Count Shuvalov," father of the Countess. This seems mere speculation and a puzzling change or contradiction to Brooke's earlier story—unless, of course, the Count had given the rose to Paul's nursery for commercial introduction. But Brooke goes on to write—gainsaying his previous account of her acquisition of the rose—that it is likely that her father gave her the rose. If so, did the Countess then buy an additional five roses?

After Brooke acquired Lime Kiln, he found four specimens of 'Sophie's Perpetual' still surviving, three as climbers, one as a bush of about three feet high. He decided to rename the rose in honor of his wife's grandmother and of the nearly year-round bloom of the rose. In 1972, R. C. Notcutt of Woodbridge re-introduced the rose under its current name.

In his October 1974 article of *The Rose Bulletin*, Brooke explains that he also changed the name because he wanted to avoid confusion with the Kordes rose 'Dresden' and because he found the China classification somewhat misleading. Its habit, its fragrance, its cup-shaped flowers, its near absence of prickles were, he asserted, closer to the characteristics of a Bourbon. He did grant the China strain in its exceptional repeat-blooming. As a result, he categorized the rose as a China-Bourbon.

To complicate matters, a more recent article, "Volatile Components in Chinese Roses" (2007) by five Japanese scientists, suggests that, given 'Sophie's Perpetual' fragrance, which emits the same Nerol 2.40 and Beta-phenyethyl alcohol as *Rosa damascena* Miller, the red Damask rose, 'Sophie's Perpetual' may be related also to the Damasks. In that case, it would certainly be closer to a Bourbon than a China.

This lovely bi-colored rose with its pale center and red outer petals will grow in difficult conditions such as heavy shade and dry banks. Brooke maintained his garden without fertilizers or sprays or pruning, merely dead-heading his roses. Should it be a surprise, then, that after one mild winter his 'Sophie's Perpetual' bloomed for thirteen consecutive months before stopping for a six-week breather? His sustainable garden rewarded him profusely. Though the case, provenance and history, has not been settled, it is definitely a rose worth settling in and gracing your garden. ■

A JOURNEY *into* PRESERVING ROSES: MY NEW GARDEN

John Bagnasco

Stepping into my new rose garden, I'm immediately transported into a world of vibrant colors and intoxicating fragrances. This garden isn't just a visual and olfactory delight; it's a sanctuary for scarce rose varieties, meticulously curated to preserve the rich tapestry of our floral heritage. With a unique approach of grouping roses by country and then by breeders within those countries, I hope the garden stands as a testament to my dedication to conservation and a deep appreciation for the nuanced history of these beloved blooms.

above: Polyantha hill
right: Rainbow (all photos by J. Bagnasco)

A VISION REALIZED

For years, I'd harbored a dream of creating a rose garden that goes beyond aesthetics. My vision was to cultivate a living library of roses, a place where enthusiasts and researchers alike could marvel at the diversity of this iconic flower. Nestled in a serene corner of Southern California, the garden reflects my passion and maybe a meticulous attention to detail.

From the moment visitors enter, it's clear that this is no ordinary collection. Each section is thoughtfully organized, beginning with roses from different countries and special groupings. Dedicated spaces feature roses from France, Japan, Germany,

the United States, and other rose-growing nations. Within these sections, roses are further grouped by breeders, showcasing the unique contributions of each to the world of roses.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

In the French section, roses by renowned breeders such as Joseph Pernet-Ducher, Francis Meilland, and Georges Delbard are prominently displayed. The French have a long and storied history with roses, often credited with creating some of the most romantic and fragrant varieties. Walking through this section, one can traverse through time, witnessing the evolution of rose breeding in France.

I am grateful to John and Becky Hook, who gave me many of the heritage roses from their former nursery, La Roseraie du Désert. Especially wonderful roses from them include 'La Biche' (noisette), 'Anna Olivier', 'Madame Gamon' and 'Madame Azélie Imbert'. John's passion for tea roses undoubtably is responsible for saving many varieties from extinction. The Hooks are also responsible for bringing the impressive 'Joanna Millar' into my landscape.

A new generation of French rose breeders, such as Michel Adam and Joseph Orard, is bringing fresh innovation and vitality to the world of roses. Michel Adam is renowned for his vibrant and disease-resistant varieties, such as the 'Parfum de Grasse', which captivates with its orange-red/yellow reverse petals and strong, fruity, old rose fragrance. Pierre Orard and his son Joseph, on the other hand, have introduced stunning creations like 'Lesotho Prince', celebrated for flowers of extremely luminous orange-vermilion with a lighter creamy hue on the reverse of each petal. Both breeders are dedicated to pushing the boundaries of traditional rose breeding, combining timeless beauty with modern resilience. Their contributions are enriching the French section

above: 'Joanna Millar'; right: 'Catherine II'

of my garden, ensuring that the legacy of French roses continues to flourish and inspire future generations.

JAPANESE ELEGANCE

The roses of Japan hold a special place in my garden, representing a blend of elegance, resilience, and unique beauty. Most of the varieties were rescued from the now defunct Japanese collection at Descanso Gardens in La Canada, CA. One of the foremost breeders from Japan was Seizo Suzuki, whose contributions have significantly shaped the world of roses. Suzuki's work is renowned for creating roses that embody the delicate grace and subtle charm characteristic of Japanese aesthetics. His hybrids often feature striking color combinations and exceptional hardiness, making them beloved by gardeners worldwide. His apricot-orange floribunda 'Manyo' is an abbreviation of Manyosyu, and its meaning indicates people of all ranks. Manyosyu is the oldest extant collection of Japanese *waka* (poetry in Classical Japanese), compiled some time after AD 759 during the Nara period. It is often regarded in Japan as a true expression of the Japanese spirit. The themes of the poems relate to love, elegies, celebrations, family matters, traveling, the passage of the four seasons, nature, and so on.

When the Keisei Rose Nursery was created in 1958, Suzuki was asked to lead its research institute. During the 1960's, he established a great collection of heritage roses at the research institute of Keisei. His most popular cultivars include 'French Perfume', 'Gipsy Carnival', 'Kuroshinju', 'Mikado' and 'Tancho'. There is now a new generation of Japanese breeders like Takunori Kimura and Junko Kawamoto who are producing revolutionary varieties that will be added to my garden. Japanese roses not only enhance the diversity of my garden but also honor the rich tradition and innovation in Japanese rose breeding.

top: 'Tancho'; above: 'Hugo Roller'; right: 'Muriel Humenick'

GERMAN PRECISION

The German section highlights the precision and innovation that German breeders have brought to rose cultivation. Breeders like Wilhelm and Reimer Kordes have left an indelible mark on the rose world with their hardy and disease-resistant varieties. The 'Iceberg' rose, with its pure white blooms and prolific flowering habit, is a testament to the Kordes family's breeding prowess.

I'm particularly struck by the 'Kleopatra' rose, a bi-color beauty. Bred by Tantau, this rose, like many in the German section, demonstrates the breeder's focus on creating resilient plants that can thrive in a variety of climates. German roses, with their blend of durability and beauty, add a robust character to the garden.

Another new plant I obtained is the 'Heidi Klum' rose, named after the famous German model. Its compact growth and vibrant purple-pink flowers reflect the modern trend of creating roses that are not only beautiful but also well-suited to contemporary garden spaces. This, combined with the historical significance of roses like 'Sparrieshoop', highlights the breadth of German contributions to rose breeding.

AMERICAN INNOVATION

The American section of the garden is a vibrant display of the creativity and

top left: 'Kleopatra'; bottom left: 'Flamenco Dancer'; above: 'Von Scharnhorst'

innovation that American breeders have brought to the rose world. From the flamboyant blooms of the 'Polo Club' and 'Gardens of the World', bred by Jack Christensen, to the delicate charm of 'Brocade', the diversity is astounding.

My own contributions to this section are evident. My deep understanding of American breeding trends and connections with prominent breeders have resulted in a rich collection that showcases the best of American rose cultivation. My current

searches are for the scarcer works of Gordon Von Abrams, Gene Boerner, Bill Warriner, Herb Swim, David Armstrong and Ollie Weeks. I'm elated that I was able to restore Swim's 'Lemon Chiffon' (listed as extinct in *Modern Roses* 10) to the Huntington Gardens.

A recent acquisition of Von Abrams' rose 'Ebony' encourages me that it will be restored to American Gardens as was 'Sunrise-Sunset' recently.

A GARDEN OF STORIES

Each rose in my garden has a story to tell. As I wander through the different sections, I feel a profound connection to the breeders and the histories they represent. The garden is not just a collection of plants; it is a living narrative of human ingenuity, passion, and perseverance.

Grouping roses by country and then by breeder allows visitors to appreciate the cultural and historical contexts of these roses. It provides a deeper understanding of the regional characteristics and the personal touches each breeder has brought to their creations.

PRESERVATION AND EDUCATION

Beyond its aesthetic appeal, my rose garden serves an important role in preservation and education. Many of the varieties showcased

top: 'Lady Penzance'; above: "Frances Grate's Tea"

here are scarce or endangered, threatened by changing climates and the ever-evolving horticultural industry. By cultivating these roses, I'm safeguarding a genetic reservoir that might otherwise be lost.

The educational aspect is particularly important to me. I've always believed that understanding the history and science behind these roses enriches the experience of appreciating their beauty. In my garden, visitors can learn about the hybridization processes, the challenges faced by breeders, and the remarkable stories behind some of the world's most beloved roses.

About ten years ago, I was struck by the beauty of a particular flower in the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden. The label read 'Fleur Cowles', and it seemed odd that the French word for "flower" was followed by a word that was definitely not French. Returning home with a cutting and logging into the computer, I discovered an amazing history. Fleur Cowles was an American writer, editor, and artist renowned for her eclectic style and vibrant personality. Born in 1908, Cowles made her mark in the publishing world by founding and editing the avant-garde magazine *Flair* in 1950. Though the magazine lasted only one year, its innovative design and content left a lasting impression on the fashion and art industries. The April issue featuring roses is now a collector's item (occasionally offered on eBay). Cowles was also a talented painter known for her colorful and whimsical works. Throughout her life, she mingled with notable figures, from politicians to celebrities, cementing her place in the cultural fabric of the 20th century. Her legacy continues to inspire those in the creative fields.

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

As I reflect on the profound impact that one's dedication can have on preserving our natural heritage, I hope my garden will stand as a labor of love, a testament to my lifelong commitment to roses. It is a place where history and beauty intertwine, where the legacy of rose breeders from around the world is celebrated and preserved.

The rose garden is more than just a collection of flowers; it is a beacon of hope for the future of rose cultivation. It reminds me of the importance of preserving our botanical treasures and inspires to appreciate the beauty and complexity of the natural world.

In a world where many species and varieties are under threat, the garden stands as a sanctuary, a place where the past is honored and the future is nurtured. It is a place where roses can thrive and continue to tell their stories for years to come.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As I continue to work on expanding and enhancing my garden, I remain committed to discovering and preserving even more rare and unique rose varieties. My goal is to create a space where every visitor, whether they are seasoned horticulturists or casual admirers, could find something that captivates their interest and deepens their appreciation for roses.

In the coming years, I plan to introduce new sections dedicated to emerging rose breeding regions and to expand the existing collections with more examples of the breeders' finest works. This will not only add to the garden's diversity but also ensure that it remains a dynamic, evolving testament to the world of roses.

Furthermore, I am exploring collaborations with botanical gardens and rose societies worldwide to exchange knowledge and plant material. These partnerships will help in safeguarding rare varieties and in promoting sustainable practices in rose cultivation.

Creating this rose garden has been one of the most rewarding endeavors of my life. It is a living testament to the beauty, resilience, and historical significance of roses. Every bloom tells a story, every scent evokes memories, and every plant stands as a guardian of our botanical heritage.

To be clear, my garden is far from complete, except in my perhaps overly ambitious mind. In my imagination, I don't have to contend with the challenges of weeds, gophers, water issues, or the passage of time. However, my vision keeps propelling my project forward, and I hope that by sharing its progress, I can inspire others just as I have been inspired by rose lovers around the world. ■

far left: 'The Iron Throne'; left: 'Night Time'; above: 'Four Inch Heels'

REMEMBERING NOTABLE RECENT ROSARIANS

left: "Barbara's Pasture Rose" (photograph by Darrell Schramm)

Barbara Oliva:
How a Garden and Curator Grew

Anita Clevenger

When Barbara Oliva came to help plant one hundred roses in the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery in 1992, she had no idea that this new garden would grow into an internationally-recognized collection of over five hundred historic roses from California's Mother Lode, and that she would become its curator. She simply came to help. Everything grew from that.

Barbara had spent her life helping things grow. "I simply grew up with gardening being an important part of my life," she said when I interviewed her several years ago. She was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister who was reassigned from town to town. "Ministers can't put roots down or get partial to people. They have to move." The family went from Northern California's Mendocino to Sterling City to Nevada's Tonopah. They may not have put roots down into these communities, but Barbara's mother put them into the ground by creating a flower garden at each new location. Barbara remembered a "big old shrubby rose plant" in Sterling City. "My mother would send me out to prune it, so I went out and did it. I guess that I did ok." In Tonopah, the family had a swamp (evaporative) cooler. Her mother found a moist area under the cooler and planted flower seeds there. In the high desert, the "preacher's garden" was a "90-day wonder," filled with cosmos and French marigolds. Barbara weeded that garden and did a good deal of the work, and learned that "it doesn't take much to buy a packet of seeds, water them, and watch them grow."

Barbara's grandmother Agatha had a terraced hillside garden in Mill Valley, with her house "clear up at the very top of the plot." Her grandfather would meet the family at the bottom of the hill, and they would walk up through the garden. She often dreamt of that garden. "I wish that I had pictures of my grandma's garden," she told me. "It was where I was first taken with roses, which were allowed to grow tall and turn into great big bushy tree-like plants."

Barbara came to Sacramento to teach and became rooted in the community. She lived in the same South Land Park house for nearly 60 years, and gradually transformed her new home's standard landscaping into a plant collector's delight. One of the first roses that she planted was 'Helen Traubel,' a 1951 Herbert Swim Hybrid Tea which stood eight feet tall in her garden, producing beautiful yellow-pink blend flowers. Unlike her grandmother, Barbara didn't have a hillside to plant, but she filled every inch of ground with plants.

Barbara's love of plants and people led her to the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club. One of its founders, Jean Travis, was interested in old roses, and Barbara joined the Yolo and Beyond Heritage Roses Group, too. She heard former Huntington Gardens botanist and rosarian Fred Boutin speak to the

group in Davis. When he and Jean founded the Sacramento Historic Rose Garden and put out a call for volunteers to plant, Barbara was there.

The city asked volunteers to put their names on a list during the first planting day. Fred lived in Tuolumne, a couple of hours south in the Mother Lode, and Jean began spending time in Portland with her daughter. Barbara lived just down the street, so the city staff called her whenever there was a problem with the garden. "I wasn't officially in charge for quite a while. I just did what came to mind—and plenty came to mind."

Barbara and Fred "gravitated toward one another." She didn't know much about old roses, but in her, Fred found fertile ground. Barbara said that he "made sure I was educated," and encouraged her to travel and read. Barbara attended rose conferences and went with rose author and photographer Bill Grant to visit gardens in England and France, trips where she saw roses growing up trees and tumbling over structures. She worked as an usher at the Sacramento Community Center to supplement her retirement income so that she could travel. The companionship with fellow rosarians was enjoyable and useful. "I decided that if I wanted to do all these things, I'd better get contacts and knowledge." Fred suggested, also, that Barbara look for old roses. Sherri Berglund, who was an owner of Willows' B&B Nursery, knew the foothill area and its gardeners, so Barbara came along with her in the search for lost treasures for the nursery and to plant in the cemetery.

Barbara isn't sure when she began calling herself the "curator," but it grew clear that somebody had to do it and she was the one. She felt Fred's "guiding hand all the way." She remembered, "Fred would drop ideas, and I was willing to be used. He and I both agreed about the way a garden should be." Fred's vision was to allow the found roses to grow to their full size where they could be observed and compared. The roses didn't get much pruning at all in the early years, which helped them get established. Fred shared information about the roses and Barbara built a database.

As Barbara grew into a rosarian and curator, she had to figure out more than roses. How do you go about managing a rose garden in a historic, public cemetery, developing volunteers and coordinating with volunteers in other areas of the cemetery, city staff and the Sheriff's Work Project? It wasn't easy.

Barbara thought that working in the classroom and with volunteers have a lot in common. She decided to give classes in old roses, pruning, and propagation. Not only would this educate her volunteers, it would attract new ones. She also encouraged a social element with the volunteers, having meetings over dinner, going for coffee after work days and heading out on road trips together. She believed that her church background showed her the tremendous "strength of having a group of people with like interests come out and do things, socializing and getting acquainted in the process. It's a given."

Barbara served as a Board Member of the Heritage Roses Group, as a trustee of the Heritage Rose Foundation, and a board member of the Old City Cemetery Committee, the non-profit group for the cemetery volunteers. She was recognized for her service by the Sacramento City Council, and the garden was selected for the "Rose Garden Hall of Fame" by the Great Rosarians of the World. "It's been a wonderful activity for a retired person," she said.

For many years, Barbara came to the cemetery every day during the summer to turn on irrigation. Year round, she worked with the volunteers two days a week and worked behind the scenes tirelessly. At age 86, she finally decided to slow down a bit, and then served as the garden's curator emeritus. Her counsel and knowledge was welcome, as was her continued presence in the garden and during fun social times.

Barbara died on October 14, 2015. Her absence is sorely felt. But she is also remembered for her discovery of the lovely "Barbara's Pasture Rose". For more information on her life, please read Bob Sylva's beautiful article in *The Sacramento Bee*'s March 1, 1997 issue or the May 2014 issue of *Rose Letter*. ■

ROSE JOURNEY

Kien Tran

above: Roses in Hayes Valley Playground; top right: In the Hayes Valley Playground (photos by Kien Tran); bottom right: 'Souvenir de la Malmaison' (photo by Darrell Schramm)

People often say "stop to smell the roses," but what if there's not a rose to smell? This was my story back in 2011, when our neighborhood Hayes Valley Playground reopened after several years of renovations. The playground garden, corner of Buchanan and Hayes Streets in San Francisco, had nothing other than a few drought-tolerant plants. Every day, while waiting for the bus, I couldn't help but wonder, "What if we added a few flowering plants to the garden so we would have something to look at or even smell?" And just like that, we planted flowers one after another, for years and years (and of course with the approval and supervision of SF Rec & Park). And the playground garden expanded its plant selection.

Little did I imagine that small initiative would lead me to pursue degrees in horticulture and landscape design several years later. The garden keeps growing each and every day with more and more plants, from camellia, hydrangea, lilium, chrysanthemum, clematis, magnolia, gladiolus, iris, dahlia, to all kinds of native and drought-tolerant plants, and especially a special collection of old and modern roses, something we could stop to smell.

My love of roses grows in me very naturally, through my participation with the many local rose societies, such as San Francisco, Peninsula, Marin, the Celebration of Old Roses groups, and especially the Friends of Vintage Roses group. I have met so many inspiring rose experts: Gregg Lowery, Stuart Dalton, Maryanne Razzo, Andrew Smith,

far left: 'Honorine de Brabant';
center: 'Sally Holmes';
above: 'Jude the Obscure'
(photos by D. Schramm)

Zenaida, Gail Baugh, and my very dear longtime friend, Trang Bui, who guided and supported me through the beauty of old garden roses. I also have a very personal obsession with David Austin roses.

The playground garden, right in the heart of the city, has big dreams. My goal is to collect as many rose plants as possible, and to preserve and showcase them, and allow people passing by to smell the many varieties of roses, from 'Souvenir de la Malmaison' to 'Teasing Georgia' and 'Spirit of Freedom' and 'Honorine de Brabant' to 'Autumn Damask'. It's never an easy choice to pick my personal favorites among the few hundred roses in the garden, but 'Sally Holmes', 'Dainty Bess', 'Jude The Obscure', and even 'Iceberg' have a special place in my heart.

From a little dream, to something to stop, look at, and smell while waiting for the bus, our neighborhood playground garden has become a destination to many garden lovers, especially rose enthusiasts.

I often ask myself, what will I do if I move one day? At least I know I created and shared a rose garden for everyone to enjoy. ■

PRADEL ROSES *with* SPECIAL ATTENTION *to* 'MARECHAL NIEL'

Darrell g.h. Schramm

Of the approximately 160 Pradel roses bred 170 or more years ago, eight remain in cultivation. The Pradel nursery, located in Montauban of Tarn-et-Garonne in France, was owned and manned by the father Etienne[1] (born 1776) and two sons, Pierre the elder (born 1800) and Géraud the younger (born 1802). Géraud appears to have been the most renowned. He also served as the President of the Rose Society in Montauban.

The earliest surviving rose is 'Mlle Blanche Lafitte' of 1851. That same year the rose 'David Pradel', a Tea rose named for Pierre's son, was released, but it is no longer extant. 'Mlle Blanche Lafitte' appears as a white Bourbon tinged with incarnadine on a vase-shaped bush about five feet tall. Its deep-throated stamens of gold contrast beautifully with the softly curled (reflexed) petals. Vigorous (most old roses *are* if they have survived a century or more), fragrant, and full, its medum-sized flowers bloom in small clusters. One German source claims the rose should not have *Mlle* attached to its name, that the original cognomen was simply 'Blanche Lafitte'.

left: 'Mlle Blanche Lafitte (photo by Etienne Bouret)

above: 'David Pradel' (illustration from from Rosenzeitung *of Sept 1887)*

The breeder François Lacharme (who, incidentally, died the same year as Géraud Pradel, 1887) used this rose several times in conjunction with the Damask Perpetual 'Sappho' to breed several white or whitish Bourbons. For obscure reasons, their off-shoots were often classified as Hybrid Noisettes though they contain virtually nothing of the true Noisette gene.

While I found virtually nothing about Blanche Lafitte herself, history informs us the Lafitte women (and there were several)

1 Nearly all sources give the father's name as Henri, but both the family genealogy and the civil marriage record provide only Etienne as this first name. Possibly his fuller name was Etienne Henri, or since the "enn" sound is common to both Etienne and Henri, the latter was a nickname.

were frequent guests at the salons and balls of Countess Le Hon, wife of the Belgian ambassador to France in the 1830s and 40s.

The following year the Pradels released 'Comice de Tarn-et-Garonne' and 'Mme Pauline Lebonté'. The name *Comice de Tarn-et-Garonne* is somewhat ambiguous to the non-French, for comice can refer to a county or department, or to a show, an exhibit, a fair. Napoleon created the department of Tarn-et-Garonne in November of 1808. It lies in southwest France.

Regardless, of the fifteen Bourbon roses I grow, 'Comice de Tarn-et-Garonne' is one of my three favorites. The rose flaunts large, full and fragrant flowers in a luscious blend of lavender, mauve, and rose-pink colors, repeating its bloom generously. Initially the rose may have been part of a rose or agricultural show, or it may have been meant to show off the virtues of the Tarn-et-Garonne department.

As for 'Mme Pauline Lebonté', it is a Tea rose of flowers large, full, and fragrant also, but salmony pink with vanilla-cream edges. Sometimes the petals are mottled. The flesh and blood Pauline Labonté remains a woman of mystery. Though the rose seemed to have disappeared, in 2009 nurseryman John Hooks in southwest France discovered a rose growing out of a hedge by a roadside where a cross (according to locals) had once stood. He gave it the study name "Fusterouau Tea" but believes it to be 'Mme Pauline Labonte'.

above: 'Comice de Tarn-et-Garonne' (photo by D. Schramm)

above: 'Mme Pauline Lebonté' (photo by John Hook)

top right: 'Omar Pacha' (photo by D. Schramm)

'Omar Pacha' was launched in 1853. *Modern Roses* 10 through 12 give the date as 1863, no doubt a typographical error no one has bothered to correct. The flowers elicit a silvery-grey, sometimes with a slaty pale purple cast to them. On the other hand, Francis Parkman in 1871 assigned the color "Brilliant red" to the flower, but he must have observed a mislabeled rose. That may have been the case also for *Modern Roses*, which states the color as "cherry red." However, the earliest description, written in 1853, the year of that rose, is "tender pink, shaded bluish purple."

That describes the rose today.

The flowers are thickly full, sixty or more petals to a blossom, with imbricated petals, i.e. camellia-like. The petiole shows small glands above and two or three prickles beneath. The fairly flexible canes produce

a few scattered brown or grey prickles, their light green nearly the same color as the new leafage. 'Omar Pacha' is a long-lived flower, both on the bush and in the vase, sending—to my nose—a light Tea rose scent. After two or three years, it may send out a few six-feet-long canes; since they are flexible, especially in the spring, they can be pegged to the ground or trained horizontally against a trellis to encourage more blooms.

Omar (also Omer) Pacha, a Serb, was born Mihajlo Latas (or Lattas) in either 1801 or 1806 in Croatia under the Austrian Empire. Charged with embezzlement in 1823, he fled to Bosnia where he tutored a merchant's children, converted to Islam and changed his name. When the merchant family moved to Constantinople, he accompanied them. There he married a wealthy heiress. Later he was made a colonel, then became the Military Governor of Constantinople. In 1842, he was appointed Governor of Lebanon. Then, as commander of the Ottoman forces, he fought in several battles for years, and by 1850 fought in Bosnia where he plundered and dissolved its historical aristocracy.

Three years later he was fighting in the Crimean War at its beginning, triumphing over the Russians at Kalafat and the next year taking possession of Bucharest. The English and the French had sided with Turkey against Russia, but it was Omar Pacha who drove back 40,000 Russians at Eupatoria north of Sebastopol, repulsing them again in the Caucasus. Generally, he was under the incompetent command of Lord Raglan[2] of the British forces. The British army, perhaps more so than the allied French, was disorganized, undisciplined, and sometimes a drunken lot, resulting in thousands of needless casualties. Had Pacha, a "foreigner"with superb diplomatic skills, been in command, the carnage might have been less horrific, if not avoided altogther. Eventually Russia sued for peace.

'Marechal Niel' (photo by Chaumot of Wiki commons)

After the Crimean War, Omar Pacha became Governor of Baghdad for nearly two years. A clear thinker, a stern disciplinarian, boldly decisive and determined, and repeatedly victorious, he was not much liked by his allies, especially the British. But his own men respected and even revered him. He died in 1871.

The next Pradel rose, launched in 1863 or 1864, is the famous 'Marechal Niel'. Much controversy regarding its provenance has pursued this rose, known to put forth a thousand flowers or more each season. This voluptuous rose prefers warm and sunny climates and dislikes wet weather. Though it blooms profusely, training branches horizontally rather than upright will produce even more flowers. As for all Noisettes and Tea-Noisettes, rather than reducing the length, reduce the number of canes or shoots. When 'Marechal Niel' was introduced, nothing so golden yellow and luxurious had heretofore been seen in roses. It became popular immediately. Given the

2 A reddish purple Hybrid Perpetual rose was named for him in 1854, still sold in Europe, and a dark red Bourbon, no longer extant, was named in his memory—he died in the war in 1855.

bright or neon yellow of most modern roses, the softer yellow of 'Marechal Niel' continues to appeal to many rosarians. No doubt the color is one reason the rose remains so popular.

The controversy about 'Marechal Niel' arose in 1882 when a Louis Castel asserted the rose had no known breeder but did have a propagator, Eugéne Verdier. Letters to the *Revue Horticole* and *Journal des Roses* aimed to clarify the origins of the rose, a clarification that by 1895 seems to have satisfied the various correspondents and the six or eight people most closely involved.

All of the writers who contributed to the background story of 'Marechal Niel' were writing twenty to thirty years after the fact. That quite likely accounts for the differing dates given to some of the occasions and events. Briefly, then, these are the annals regarding the origin of 'Marechal Niel':

- 1858—Géraud Pradel sowed rose seeds, some from 'Chromatella'.
- 1859—A healthy yellow rose appeared, but Pradel did not market nor promote it. Instead from it he grafted several plants.
- 1860—Pradel gave a cutting or small plant of it to a customer who had lost her 'Chromatella'. This was the start of his dispensement and dispersion of the rose before a release onto the market.
- 1861—Géraud Pradel gave Mme la Marechal Niel a bush of this plant. That same year Mons. Louis Castel bought every plant of the rose that Pradel owned.
- 1861 or 62 or 63—(Each writer on this event gives a different date): Marechal Niel himself, who inaugerated the opening of the Jardin de Horticulture in Montauban, noticed the rose on exhibit and recognized it as the one he and his wife owned. The rose was then named for him.
- 1862—Mons. Rupin noticed the rose growing in Mons. Chateau's garden and was given several cuttings or branches of it.
- 1863—An article appeared lauding this yellow rose. When Pradel realized his rose had been shared and distributed by various folks throughout the region, he claimed the rose and protested its name, asserting it was meant to honor the marechal's wife. But his protests were in vain; for two years people had been calling it 'Marechal Niel'. So he allowed Eugéne Verdier to put the rose on the market.
- 1864—Verdier asked Mons. Castel to send him every plant of the rose he could obtain and thereafter began to promote it commercially.

Scipion Cochet, rose breeder and editor of *Journal des Roses*, analyzed the controversy and concluded the breeder was Géraud Pradel and the primary propagator was Eugéne Verdier.

And if the tale is true that G. Pradel refused thereafter to sell any 'Marechal Niel' to customers until they bought first ten other roses, that manipulative sales strategy would have occured after 1864.

'André Leroy' (photo by Alan Buckingham)

In 1860 Pradel introduced 'André Leroy', a Hybrid Perpetual, scented, beautifully formed, growing to five feet. The blushing pink outer petals blend gently into the swirl of stauncher pink central petals. Suggesting a China rose parent, the flowers usually darken with age.

The rose honors André Leroy (1801–1875), French botanist and nurseryman who at age 21 took over the management of the family nursery plantation of 200 acres. During his lifetime, it became one of the most

important nurseries in Europe. In the 1850s Leroy introduced the grafting of roses onto 'Manetti' rootstock. From 1840–1845 and 1848–1870, he served as a city councilor in Angers. Between 1858 and 1864, he served as president of the Angers Horticultural Society. At one time he was also elected as the vice-president of the Botanical Society of France. A busy man, he also landscaped a new garden for his city which opened to the public in 1859. In 1851 his daughter Marie Léonide had married the painter Eugéne Appert, a disciple of Ingres who had been born in Montauban. André Leroy is buried in Angers.

above: 'Deuil du Dr. Reynaud'; right: 'Mme Thiers' (photos by Etienne Bouret)

In 1862 Pradel placed another Bourbon on the market. Indeed, the Pradels favored Bourbons, followed closely by Hybrid Perpetuals and Teas. This Bourbon, 'Deuil du Dr. Reynaud' (meaning "mourning for Dr. Reynaud") strikes me as a very dark-shadowy crimson rose, that is, the petals and the spaces between them seem darkened with shadow. A double rose, it yields a very strong, old-rose fragrance, and, happily, it repeats its bloom. It discloses the good form of 'Mme Isaac Pereire' but, unlike that rose, it is disease resistant. Truly, it deserves to be far more grown than the latter rose.

The name of the rose remembers Dr. Maurice Reynaud (1834–1881). This man discovered Reynaud's syndrome (a malady the afflicts me in cold weather). He lived and worked in Paris where he was elected an officer of the Legion of Honor. To his credit, he wrote a number of books on medical subjects, from the early *Medicine in Moliere's Time* to a much later book, the result of combined research with Louis Pasteur. Having suffered for several years with heart disease, he died of heart failure at age 46.

'Mme Thiers' is a later Pradel Bourbon of 1873. A full rose, it manifests a lovely pink, the center usually brighter, the petals edged with pale violet. It carries a mild fragrance.

Mme Thiers was a baroness, wife of Baron Thiers and erstwhile President of the 2nd French Republic and later first President of the 3rd Republic. He was also a notable but biased historian of France. Before his presidency, he and others were essentially responsible for driving the last Bourbon king, Charles X, into exile. Unfortunately, he believed in the Gospel of Greed is Good. A corrupt man, he revised history in his writings, undermined democracy, and remained ever opportunistic and self-serving. Responsible for the massacre of the Communards, he rejoiced at the butchering of 20,000 men, women, and children. When the surviving populace of the Communards burned down his mansion, he appropriated a million francs from the treasury and had the state rebuild it, but larger and grander.

Mme Thiers was the wife of Baron Adolphe Thiers, erstwhile Prime Minister of the 2nd French Republic and later first President of the 3rd Republic from 1871 to 1873. He was also a notable but biased historian of France. Before his presidency, he and others

were essentially responsible for driving the last Bourbon king, Charles X, into exile in 1830. Unfortunately, he believed in the Gospel of Greed is Good. A corrupt man, he revised history in his writings, undermined democracy, and remained ever opportunistic and self-serving. Responsible for the massacre of the Communards (1871), he rejoiced at the butchering of 20,000 men, women, and children. When the surviving populace of the Communards burned down his mansion, he appropriated a million francs from the treasury and had the state rebuild it, but larger and grander.

After Géraud Pradel died in 1887, his son Pierre Maximilien, nicknamed Prosper, may have taken over the nursery, for he was a horticulturist. He died in 1898. However, he seems not to have bred any roses. Although one rose, 'Mme Louis Depaygne', a Tea bred by Pierre the older brother, is reported as being released before 1885, the last definite date given for a Pradel rose put into commerce is 1875. Clearly, if any Pradels after Géraud's death bred any roses, they were not introduced. Thus ends the Pradel rose saga. ■

Churchyard in St. George's, Bermuda (all photos by G. Lowery)

ADVANCING OUR MISSION TO PRESERVE

REACHING ACROSS THE OCEAN

In March the Bermuda Rose Society celebrated its 70th anniversary. Malcolm Manners of Florida Southern College and I were invited to speak and to engage with the public in workshops and consultations with BRS members, Garden Club of Bermuda members, and the Bermuda Botanical Gardens staff. The BRS was the first rose society in the world to put rose preservation in their mission statement. The famous mystery roses of Bermuda have traveled around the world in an effort to preserve them and perhaps to unlock their mysteries. The stories that surround those varieties grow from four hundred years of European exploration and collecting of plants from afar. Bermudians were at the forefront of the early international heritage rose conferences, and continue to promote their mission to preserve.

I was able to share how the BRS has inspired efforts like ours to keep old roses in the hands of garden-makers of the future. I spoke about our curatorship program that continues to grow a community of passionate rose lovers, but I also spoke about opportunities for Bermudians to take advantage of modern breeding that is focused on creating roses suitable for tropical and subtropical gardens.

I encouraged them to learn more about the work of M. S. (Viru) Viraraghavan and his life partner, Girija. The two were honored with the Great Rosarians of the World award at the Huntington Gardens in 2006, for their work to create "evergreen" roses. Pam Greenewald of Florida, who has recently joined our curators, celebrated the creation of a Viraraghavan rose collection at her nursery, Angel Gardens in Florida, this Spring. She will provide a second home to our collection of Hybrid Gigantea roses, recently expanded with roses brought from France by Becky and John Hook—featuring a number of very old Chinese roses.

DOWN TO EARTH

Back home we continued our work to put more of the mother collection out of pots and into the ground where the plants can thrive. This Spring we began planting our species roses and single-flowered collection. The garden spaces that we are currently able to utilize are part of the original garden layout of roses in a timeline of history. These wild roses, and those showing the species roses' five-petaled form are the starting point, and we know their establishment will allow us to teach more about the history of roses and their leap from the wild into cultivation. Wild roses are more and more a rare item in botanical collections, and where they are grown we do not see many of the first generation hybrids that gardens were built around.

KEEPING IT ALL TOGETHER

For two years now I have been training a new gardener, David Chavez who does much of the work on the collection. It has been his first work with roses, but he is a wise and committed apprentice. Keeping David at work has become possible thanks to the generous donations of so many of you. The steady monthly donations of the Guardians of the Rose are providing us with an ability to budget and maintain a consistent level of care. *I appeal to all of our supporters to join as guardians*. Your ten dollars a month will be securing the lives of some of your most treasured roses. I will be sharing

left: 'Bettina'; above: 'Mme Eouard Herriot'

in an upcoming email a new thank you to Guardians, with my personal commitment to help you replace a rose you have lost!

REACHING OUT FOR SUPPORT

This year we are applying for two grants that we intend to use for special projects that will advance our efforts to share our rose collection with the public. As you all know, we have not opened the garden to the public for more than a decade. Each step we take brings us closer to that goal. We preserve these roses "for the purpose of educating the public about the importance of the rose to human history, cultures, technology and science." Preserving these living plants, the tools that future gardeners will use to create new gardens, is our paint box in a time capsule!

HELP US FIND SOS

Climbing roses bring scale to the garden, lifting up our eyes and embracing us with grandeur. Whether you plant a pillar or a pergola, or simply let the plant become a haystack, a big rose bush inspires us and punctuates the season with a crescendo. Big roses scare many folks, but only because they haven't considered the simple possibilities like the rebar arch or the side wall of the garage.

As a result, our remaining un-adopted roses are mostly climbers. Many climbing rose varieties are vanishing from gardens. When one dies, there is no one to turn to for cuttings. So, we too have lost many climbers when the collection was going through hard times. And in this issue I offer you a list of another ten roses that we have lost and would like to replace and preserve. Can you help us?

- Autumn, Climbing 1951
- Bettina, Climbing 1958
- Caledonia, Climbing 1936
- Flash 1938
- Golden Dawn, Climbing 1935

- Heart's Desire, Climbing 1945
- Jonkheer J. L. Mock, Climbing 1909
- Lady Forteviot, Climbing 1935
- Mme. Edouard Herriot, Climbing 1920
- Le Reve 1904

Please Help Us Find These Roses!

Thanks to last issue's list of lost roses, we succeeded in locating one variety that we will be able to take cuttings from, 'Augustine Guinoisseau', the white sport of 'La France'. Let's see if we can increase that number.

If you or someone you know has one of the ten roses above, and would be able to share cuttings or budwood with us, we would be grateful. We have searched for several years, are familiar with the listings on HelpMeFind/Roses and have followed up on the few remaining sources. Please contact the curator at: *curator@thefriendsofvintageroses.org*

Thank you!

—Gregg Lowery

top: 'Jonkheer J. L. Mock' (Revue Horticole, *1912)*
above: 'Lady Forteviot'

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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