



ROSE LETTER

May 2018

Vol. 42, No.2

Rosa damascena Hebe's Lip

ROSE LETTER

The Heritage Roses Group

©

Editor: Darrell g.h. Schramm

schrammd@sonic.net

101 Benson Avenue, Vallejo, CA 94590

Publishers: Jeri & Clay Jennings

Vol. 42, No. 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Roses and Art of Alfred Parsons	2
Roses of Walter Van Fleet	8
The Roses of Alexander Dickson II	13
The Roses of Jean Laffay	20
Lessons from Robert Buist	26
Image Credits	25
Announcements	28

National Officers of the Heritage Roses Group

Convener: Jeri Jennings--heritageroses@gmail.com

Membership: Clay Jennings--e.c.jennings@gmail.com

Secretary-Treasurer: Alice Flores--aflores@mcn.org

Bill Grant--grant@ebold.com

Pam Greenewald--gardenangel22@gmail.com

Jill Perry--oldtearoses@hotmail.com

Darrell g.h. Schramm: schrammd@sonic.net

THE ROSES AND ART OF ALFRED PARSONS

Darrell g.h. Schramm



It was the Golden Age of illustration, of large informal gardens, of Hybrid Perpetual and Tea roses making way for ramblers and climbers--and Alfred Parsons was an active part of it all. Born in 1847 to a doctor father who painted flowers and was a close friend of William Robinson, the horticulturist and author, Alfred Parsons took evening classes at the South Kensington School of Art while working at a bank as a postal clerk for four years.

Painting in oils and watercolors, he exhibited some of his art work in

1868 at only 21 years of age. In 1871 he began to exhibit at the Royal Academy but was not elected a full member until 1911. From 1868 to 1893, he took part in 201 major exhibitions in London, showing landscapes, gardens, and flowers in his two chosen media. Parsons also exhibited in Paris, Munich, Chicago, New York, and other cities, including at both the Brussels International Exhibition and the St. Louis World Fair. The year after William Robinson asked to buy one of his paintings, 1879, he began illustrating for *Harper's* magazine. He went on to illustrate for other magazines as well and then for books, the most noteworthy, perhaps, being William Robinson's *The Wild Garden*.

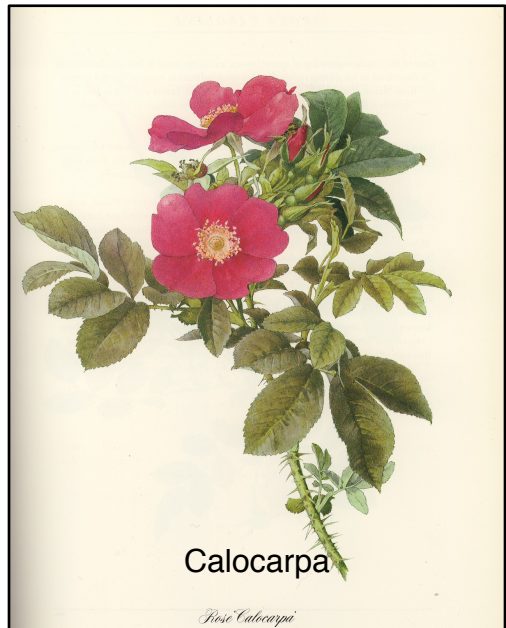


Wild rose on ash tree

Among Parsons' friends, also illustrators, were Edwin Abbey—an especially close friend—Walter Crane, Andrew Lang, and Arthur Rackham. He also associated with the painters John Singer Sargent, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, H.G. Moon, and Edward Burne-Jones. Queen Victoria's daughter Princess Louise, a sculptor who preferred the company of artists and others of the Bohemian set rather than the royal court, became a close friend.

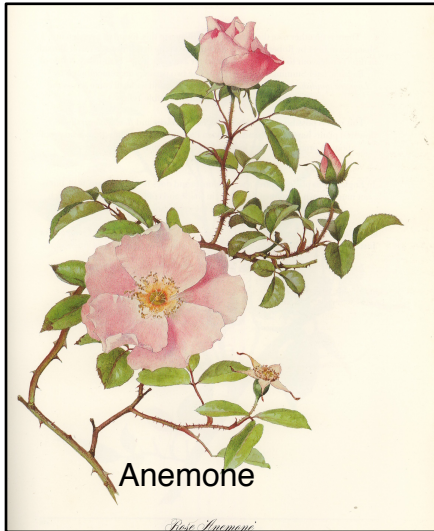
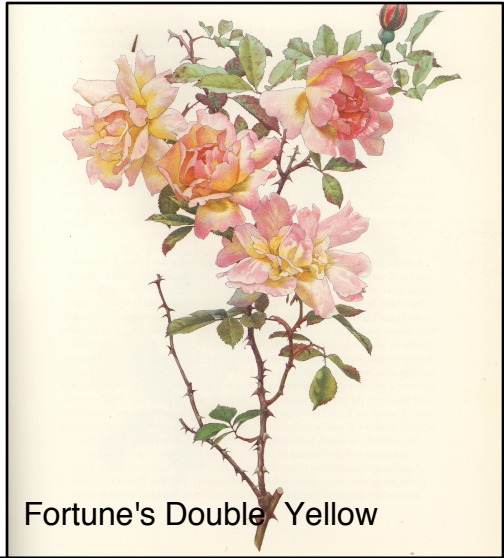
In 1885 Parsons settled part-time in the large village of Broadway in the Cotswolds where many of those in the Arts & Crafts movement had bought or rented houses. Literary figures such as Henry James, Edmund Gosse, James Barrie of Peter Pan fame, and the composer Sir Edgar Elgar found their way to Broadway as well. It was in Broadway where Parsons met Henry Harper and soon became one of *Harper's* magazine's primary illustrators. There too he began employment as a garden designer and consultant, such as gardens for the American actress Mary Anderson de Navarro, for Henry James, and for his own property called Luggershill. But he did his most significant plant advising and designing between 1899 and 1912.

For the estate of Great Chalfield he suggested planting the following roses: 'Alister Stella Grey', 'Carmine Pillar', 'Dorothy Perkins', 'Fellenberg', 'Félicité Perpétue', 'Jersey Beauty', 'Perle d'Or', 'Paul's Single', 'Princess de Sagan', 'G. Nabbonand', 'W.A. Richardson', and—not named—various China roses, a mixed variety of Spinosissimae, and some Polyantha roses. At the Welbeck estate he chose for its sunken garden 'American Pillar', 'Crimson Rambler', 'Delight' (a vanished Walsh rambler), 'Dorothy Dennison', 'Hiawatha',



and ‘Paul’s Blush Rambler’. For the more formal rose garden he suggested Hybrid Teas. Parsons was fond of his own rose garden but seems to have left no record of its roses.

In 1887 Parsons met Miss Ellen Willmott. Shortly thereafter he accepted her commission to illustrate with watercolors her forthcoming book *The Genus Rosa*. He began the work in 1890. Some time during the next ten years, he



visited Willmott’s grand French estate Tresserve near Aix-les-Bains; by 1898 he had produced two paintings, *A Savoy Garden—Tresserve* and *Clematis Montana at Tresserve*. He also painted some of the roses there for the book. By May of 1901, Parsons had completed forty of the intended 120 watercolors. June of that year found him drawing at Tresserve and again in May of the next year. Because not all of the roses chosen for Willmott’s book could be found growing in her two great

gardens, Warley Place and Tresserve, Parsons occasionally had to travel elsewhere to paint a rose in bloom. For example, he took himself to a remote area of Cheshire where ‘Janet’s Pride’ grew in the wild and to Lord Brougham’s villa at Cannes to paint *Rosa gigantea*.

And then the rift occurred. Ellen Willmott and her publisher John Murray had selected a printer named Grigg to whom Parsons objected, preferring a printer named Whitehead. However, not only was Whitehead’s estimate of the project twice as expensive as that of

Grigg, but—it was later learned—Parsons had a commercial stake in the paper supplier for Whitehead. When he could persuade neither Willmott nor Murray, Parsons claimed falsely that his work was being printed on inferior paper. Granted, an artist has a right to expect to choose the paper onto which to print his work, but Parsons' letters to both Murray and Willmott were less than kind. By the end of the year, however, he wrote a letter of apology, “a grudging apology,” wrote Bryan N. Brooke, former president of the Medical Art Society, “sufficient to avoid a possible libel suit.” By nearly all accounts, Alfred Parsons was a kind, gracious, and generous man; but no one is without a flaw. Thereafter he did not interfere with the printing, though Miss Willmott could be most vexing to both Parsons and Murray because of her constant delays in decisions, in text for the book, and payments.

As an aside, it is not likely that Parsons painted any of the roses at Villa Boccanegra,

for Willmott did not buy her third property until 1905, the year Parsons concluded his project. In any case, Willmott is said to have duplicated there the flowers she grew at Warley Place. Today, still growing at Villa Boccanegra are the climber ‘Follette’, the China ‘Bengal Crimson’, *R. laevigata*, *R. bracteata*, *R. banksiae lutea*, and several varieties of Albas.

In 1905 Alfred Parsons fulfilled his commission, now 132 watercolors, to illustrate most of the roses in *The Genus Rosa*. No doubt there were a few “last minute” paintings Willmott insisted must be included. For instance, *R. willmottiae* had lately been sent by E.H. Wilson from China in 1907 and would have had to have time to bloom in order for Parsons to paint it. Also one of the last to have been painted would have been *R. hugonis*, whose seeds having been sent from China first





Altaica

flowered in England in 1905. As for *R. canina* v. 'Andersonii', though Graham Stuart Thomas writes that it was first listed in a catalogue of Hillier & Sons nursery in 1912, Parsons painted this rose, and its plate was published in 1911; the Hillier date should not be taken as the year it was bred or released. Willmott herself wrote of 'Andersonii', "It is to be found in many old gardens, though its origins are lost."

The first four sections of the book's

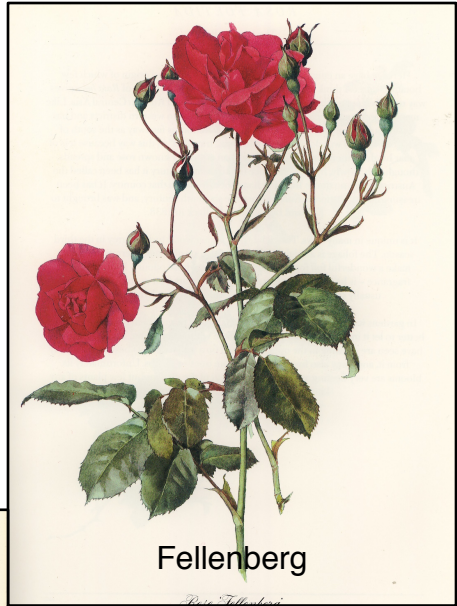
24 were published in 1910, the next twelve in 1911. When the book was completely published in 1914, it also contained nineteen drawings of hips by Phyllis Parsons, Alfred's niece. Of the 180 roses described in the book, about four dozen were not illustrated. No matter. It is said to be "the first great colour-printed flower book" of the 20th century. I doubt that anyone would disagree. The color plates are excellent—not as exquisite as those by Redouté or Bricogne, but excellent. Parsons was faithful to leaf serration, prickles, bristles and glands, stipules, stems, and color. Here and there texture is lacking on leaf or petal, yet as rendered, the pictures are essentially accurate, graceful, and pleasing.



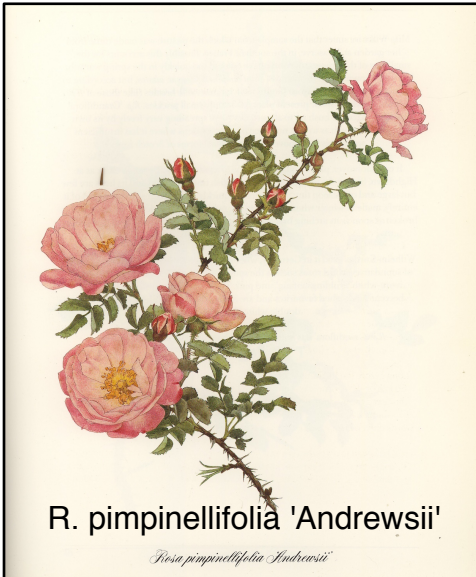
Rosa setigera

Like John Singer Sargent and Henry James, Alfred Parsons never married. In 1914, -15, and -16, he served as a judge at the famous Chelsea Flower Show. At the age of 72, he died on January 16, 1920. During his lifetime his art appealed to high culture as did the work of most of his artist and literary friends; like theirs (even that of Sargent), that appeal declined after World War I, especially as Modern Art

displaced much of Victorian and Edwardian art. By the end of World War II, art critics often considered English Victorian art superficial and for the masses. Gradually it is being reassessed. Surely more exposure to Alfred Parsons' paintings, especially those from a fabulous book few rose lovers can afford to buy, will stimulate an appreciation of his wonderful work.



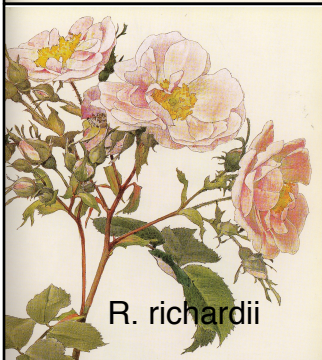
Fellenberg



R. pimpinellifolia 'Andrewsii'



Rose Blanche Moreau



R. richardii



Alfred Parsons (1847–1920), a self-portrait

All paintings in this article are by Alfred Parsons for *The Genus Rosa*.



ROSES OF WALTER VAN FLEET

Connie Hilker

In 2005, I was walking through the yard of a small, unoccupied house near where we lived at the time, feeling sad that the property was sold for development and everything there would be lost. I found a large rose growing beside the home's front porch. There were no flowers on it, but it was healthy and shiny and full of hips. I took cuttings that day, and the plants that grew from those cuttings set me on a path toward a fascination with a very interesting man.

The rose turned out to be 'Dr. W. Van Fleet', hybridized by Walter Van Fleet, introduced in 1910 by Henderson & Co. As I have learned since then, it was no surprise to find it in that particular spot. This rose was the first of what would become known as Dooryard Roses—climbing roses bred for large flowers, fragrance, disease resistance, and ease of care--and it was wildly popular in its time. In the late 19th century, when Hybrid Tea roses were becoming the predominant focus of hybridizers, Van Fleet began working toward creating hybrids with the Rugosa, Wichurana, and other species roses which had been recently introduced from Asia. His intention was to create easy-care

roses that were well suited as garden plants in American growing conditions.

In the 1916 *American Rose Annual*, Van Fleet wrote, “The aim of most raisers of seedling roses, here and abroad, appears to be the prompt production of compact-growing and constant-blooming varieties, suitable for the production of cut blooms under glass or in the garden... it cannot well be denied that continuous-blooming roses, with their strong infusion of tender Oriental [Tea rose] blood, are, with very few exceptions, children of exacting cultural conditions and cannot generally be relied on as home-yard plants. ... More easily managed varieties than are now available, suited for common dooryard culture under the diverse climatic conditions of our broad country, are needed” (p. 27).

Van Fleet wasn’t an average commercial rose hybridizer. Once a practicing physician who dabbled in rose breeding, he left medicine to work for the Department of Agriculture to research improved varieties of all sorts of plants. In addition to roses, he experimented with strawberries, gooseberries, corn, tomatoes, peppers, cannas, gladioli, geraniums, and honeysuckles. He also experimented with the development of blight-resistant cultivars with the goal of resurrecting the American Chestnut (*ARS Annual*, 1922, p. 13-14).

Van Fleet’s work at the USDA’s Bureau of Plant Industry was revolutionary. Roses that he was working to develop during that time were unlike anything that had been seen in the market. F. L. Mulford, a colleague, wrote, “The ideal rose for which he was striving, in his later work at least, was a garden form, that variety that would compare in healthfulness and disease resistance with the best of the rose species; that would be hardy under ordinary garden culture; and that would be a continuous bloomer” (*ARS Annual*, 1922, p. 18).

The Bell Experiment Station, the facility where Van Fleet worked, was designed exclusively for research and did not have facilities to propagate or distribute his roses. In 1920, it was announced that the Bureau of Plant Industry was entering into an agreement with the American Rose Society to make Van Fleet’s roses available to the public:

“The American Rose Society has been legally incorporated in the state of Pennsylvania as a corporation of the first class, not for profit,

in order that it may complete and carry on its favorable agreement with the Bureau of Plant Industry of the Federal Department of Agriculture for the wide and equitable distribution of the rose creations of ... Dr. W. Van Fleet. The first of these roses ... has been named Mary Wallace, and is now in propagation under this arrangement” (*ARS Annual*, 1922, p. 9).

Van Fleet did not live to see this agreement in action. In January 1922, while on a trip to Miami, Florida, he died



Mary Wallace



Sarah Van Fleet

unexpectedly following surgery for a strangled hernia. Six of Van Fleet’s Bell Station hybrids were distributed posthumously: ‘Mary Wallace’ in 1924, ‘Heart of Gold’ in 1925, ‘Sarah Van Fleet’ and ‘Dr. E. M. Mills’ in 1926, and ‘Breeze Hill’ and ‘Glenn Dale’ in 1927.

After my discovery of ‘Dr. W. Van Fleet’ at that doomed little house, I read everything I could about Dr. Van Fleet, and I became fascinated with the possibility of collecting and growing as many of his roses as I could. When I began this quest in the early 2000’s, some of his roses



Dr E.M. Mills

were readily available at nurseries or by mail order, others were difficult to find, a few were out there in gardens but no longer offered

commercially, and the rest had been completely lost. Through purchases, trading plants and cuttings, and a few lucky encounters, I gathered 17 of the 22 Van Fleet roses that are still available worldwide. In the process, I met other Van Fleet enthusiasts, some of whom have become dear friends.

The ramblers in my Van Fleet collection are planted in the front yard, where I can admire them every day. My original 'Dr. W. Van Fleet' holds a prominent spot on the north fence. Last year, it was joined by 'Philadelphia' and 'Mary Wallace'. The fence on the south side of the yard has 'May Queen', 'Alida Lovett', "Pink Van Fleet"* , 'Mary Lovett', 'Breeze Hill', and 'Glenn Dale'. 'Ruby Queen', 'Silver Moon', and 'American Pillar' are farther down the south fence, toward the back of the garden.



My three Van Fleet Rugosas are planted near one another in the back garden. 'Sir Thomas Lipton', a lucky find at Walmart of all places in 2006, and 'Sarah Van Fleet' are each more than eight feet high.



'Rugosa Magnifica' is nearby, six feet high.

The last two roses in the collection are planted near other roses that complement them. 'Birdie Blye' is a good fit with the Chinas and Polyanthas in my Miniature Garden. 'Dr. E. M. Mills', a Hybrid

hugonis that blooms very early, anchors a prominent place in the mixed rose border in our front yard.

My fascination with a hybridizer that began in 2005, and my collection of his roses, is ongoing. I am hopeful that I can gather the

remaining five Van Fleets that have thus far eluded me. I'm actively seeking 'Beauty of Rosemawr' (Tea/China, 1903), 'Heart of Gold' (Rambler, 1924), 'New Century' (Rugosa, 1900), 'Pearl Queen' (Rambler, 1898), and 'Ruskin' (Rugosa, 1928).

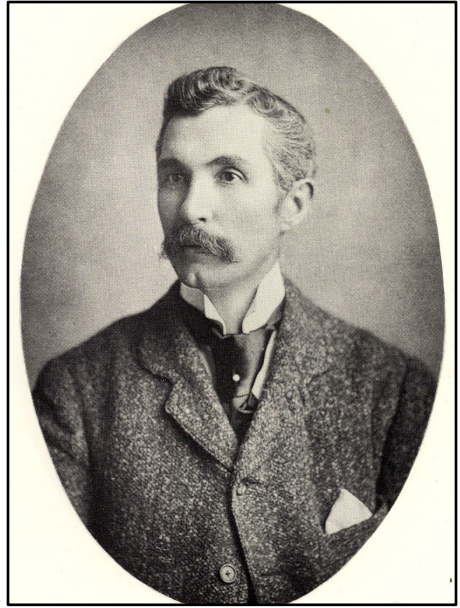
*About "Pink Van Fleet": in 2007, I read about three Van Fleet ramblers that were introduced in 1915-1917 by J. T. Lovett's nursery in Little Silver, NJ, and named for Lovett's three daughters. I ordered 'Mary Lovett' from Vintage Gardens and 'Alida Lovett' from Appalachian Roses. (Sadly, both of these nurseries have closed.) No source could be found for the correct 'Bess Lovett', the third rose, in nursery collections or gardens on Help Me Find. I posted a query about 'Bess Lovett' online, and was met with a very generous reply. Nick Weber offered cuttings of a rose in his garden that he believed to be 'Bess Lovett', collected twenty-or-more years before from the USDA blackspot trial grounds in Beltsville, Maryland. "Pink Van Fleet", which is how the rose was listed in the facility's records, appears to be a good match for 'Bess Lovett', based on old descriptions. I like to think that the three Lovett sisters, Mary, Alida, and Bess, are now reunited, growing on the fence in my garden. I have propagated "Pink Van Fleet" and 'Mary Lovett', neither of which is commercially available, and have shared plants with others around the country, to insure their survival and hopefully, one day, to bring them back to the market.



THE ROSES OF ALEXANDER DICKSON II

Darrell g.h. Schramm

If you haven't grown or seen at least one of these roses, you have probably heard of it: 'Alexander Hill Gray', 'Irish Elegance', 'Killarney', 'K of K', 'Mrs Foley Hobbs', 'Red-Letter Day', 'Shot Silk'. They won gold medals and/or other awards, and all were very popular in their time. Some were parents of many offspring; all were bred by Alexander Dickson II. He had entered the rose business in 1872 and by 1900 had won more gold medals for his roses than any other breeder in the U. K.



A Scotsman, Alexander II's grandfather Alexander I had moved from Scotland to Northern Ireland and opened a nursery in 1836. He sired two sons, George and Hugh, who acquired their nursery knowledge from the father and became part of the firm. Hugh would later launch into a rose business of his own. Of George Dickson's four sons, two were interested in horticulture: Alexander II, born in 1857, and George II shortly thereafter. Alexander joined the nursery in 1872. When George Dickson saw Henry Bennett's exhibit of "Pedigree Hybrids of the Tea Rose" in London, he became excited and began breeding roses in 1879. At first the roses were a failure. Then in 1886, Alexander II exhibited three Dickson roses in London, which were warmly praised.

Thereafter father and son began introducing new roses nearly every year. In 1892 they exhibited a new Hybrid Tea, 'Mrs W. J. Grant'. The National Rose Society (NRS) awarded it a gold medal; indeed, it was the very first Hybrid Tea to receive the award. Siebrecht and Wadley Nursery of New York quickly acquired the rose but renamed it 'Belle Siebrecht'—hence, the occasional name confusion today. Along

with Henry Bennett, it was the Dicksons in Ulster who put the U. K. on the map as a rose source no longer dependent on France.

Soon they added more acreage to their small nursery, and by 1895 also bought land in Herefordshire to grow roses for exhibitions. Next they opened two seed warehouses, one in Belfast, one in Dublin, as well as another nursery branch in Dublin. Remarkable roses continued to appear from the hand of Alexander II. By the time he retired, he had given the rose world—not counting the dozen or so sports he discovered—about 240 new roses. Of those roses, at least eighteen are still available.



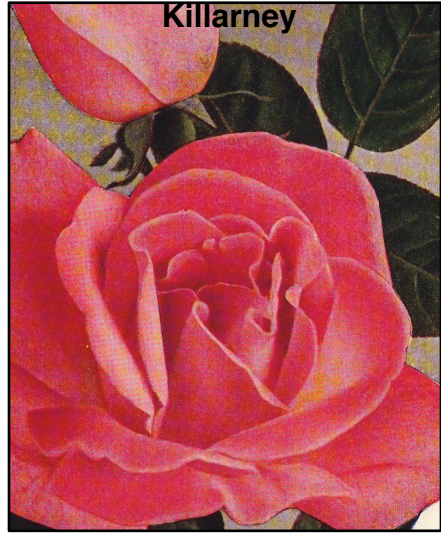
‘Marchioness of Londonderry’, a light pink Hybrid Perpetual of 1893, was named for the wife of the 6th Marquess of Londonderry, a British politician, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland from 1886-1889, and a patron of agriculture. She had an affair with Henry Cust, a Member of Parliament, and when her

love letters to him were discovered, the Marquess wished a divorce but was discouraged from it by social etiquette. Yet he never spoke to her again in private, only in public, and denied her entrance to his room, even when on his deathbed. She died in 1919.

The Hybrid Perpetual rose ‘Tom Wood’ of 1896 has a namesake so common it seems nearly impossible to ascertain any facts or gossip about the man. One possibility is Thomas Wood, a liberal MP for Glasgow and later Parliamentary Secretary for Scotland. Regardless, according to the 1913 Biltmore Roses catalogue, ‘Tom Wood’ “is worthy of a place among the elect, for it is a healthy, robust grower and hardy enough to withstand the most cruel neglect.” That assessment and both its shapely form and deep cherry-red coloring may explain why it is still with us today. In Germany the rose is referred to as “the little brother of ‘Ulrich Brunner’.” A striped rose is sometimes sold as ‘Tom Wood’ in the U. S, but that is wrongly labeled.

‘Ards Rover’ of 1898, a crimson to maroon Hybrid Perpetual climber, does well as a pillar rose, though Alexander II seems to have viewed it as a rover, that is, a rambler. Sparsely recurrent, it produces a strong fragrance. Its name refers to the peninsular district where the Dickson nursery in Newtownards is located.

That same year the informal, twinkly pink Hybrid Tea ‘Killarney’ celebrated its coming out. The petals are large but perhaps insufficient, making the scented blooms semi-double. The foliage mildews during its first year or two, but once acclimated, it does well. The rose has produced at least a dozen sports, some double, some white, one striped, etc. It has also been a parent to another ten or so roses. Killarney is, of course, a town in County Kerry in southwest Ireland.



In 1900, the Dickson enterprise became a limited company. By then it had exported 100,000 plants to the United States and received the Royal Warrant of Queen Victoria. Though no longer sold today, the rose ‘Liberty’ of that year deserves mention for its popularity and its 37 first-generation descendent roses. It was one of the finest deep red Hybrid Teas of that time, so popular in the U. S. that 80,000 were sold there.



‘Betty’, a lovely blend of copper, salmon, pink, and yellow coloration, blooms well even in wet weather. This Hybrid Tea of 1905 emits a delicious perfume. I have always wondered if it was named for the same person as was ‘Betty Uprichard’. Only Rogue Valley Roses of Oregon sells it.

‘Irish Elegance’ also premiered in 1905, an elegant rose of five petals. Like all singles, it shrugs off rain and fog. It does fade in heat. The color is a variegated pink, apricot, and bronze. Some noses sense a clove fragrance.

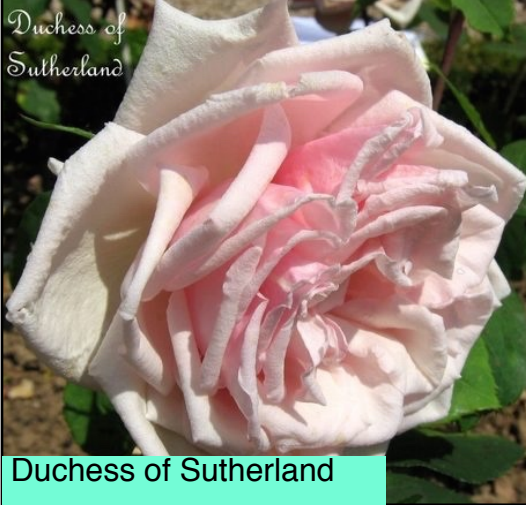
The Tea rose ‘Harry Kirk’, a light sulphur yellow with whitish edges, was introduced in 1907. With traits approaching those of a Hybrid Tea, the plant is quite hardy. Its petals create a semi-double to moderately double flower with some scent. Dry climates excepted, it is susceptible to mildew. It was another of Dickson & Sons Ltd. gold medal winners.

‘Lady Ursula’, a dependable, palest pink Hybrid Tea of fine veining, arrived in 1908 with a curtesy, if indeed it is named for the little girl Lady Ursula of Limerick (1902-1978), daughter of the 2nd Duke of Westminster. Shortly before the rose was named, she had had her portrait painted. She boasts herself a nearly flawless, fragrant rose of fine form, full and floriferous—but not given to alliteration. With thick petals, it’s a large rose, like that of ‘Paul Neyron’, on a tall, dense bush. It tolerates all weather conditions, rarely hosts a fungus, and blooms rather continually.

Unlike ‘Lady Ursula’, the lovely ‘Molly Sharman-Crawford’ is a low-growing Tea rose, but of the same year. Off-white with a hint of green, especially in the center, this rose, mostly without prickles, was enormously popular. Likely it was named for Colonel Robert Sharman-Crawford’s sister Mary, for whom Molly is a pet name. On the other hand, if his daughter Helen Mary went by her middle name, then the Molly may refer to her.

The next year (as listed in the National Rose Society’s catalogue of 1910) saw the birth of ‘Alexander Hill Gray’, a lemon yellow, very double Tea rose that intensifies its color with age. It won a gold medal. I’ve written at least twice of this rose, so suffice it to remark here that the man Alexander Hill Gray, an ardent rosarian and explorer, damned mildew as “the original sin” of roses.

‘Mrs Foley Hobbs’, also a Tea, made her entrance in 1910. A magnificent, huge, ivory-white rose, it was one of few Teas still popular in the U.K. after World War II. The petals are silky; the fragrance is Damask-like. Foley and Hobbs are fairly common surnames in Ireland, so the real Mrs. Foley Hobbs remains a mystery. Perhaps the name



ought to be hyphenated?

The year 1912 brought in two new roses: 'Duchess of Sutherland' and 'George Dickson'. The first is a Hybrid Tea of pale pink veiled in palest lemon, with petals that seem formed of crepe. Not to be confused with one of the first Hybrid Perpetuals of 1837 still found in a few botanic gardens and other collections, it is now sold only by Richard Huber

in Switzerland. It was named for Millicent Leveson-Gower, the 4th Duchess of Sutherland (1867-1955). She was married three times; her first husband, the Duke, died; her second was unfaithful, her third was homosexual. During World War I she organized an ambulance unit in Belgium. Trapped behind enemy lines, she managed to escape to England but soon returned to the continent where she directed hospitals in the field. An admirable, unstoppable woman.

As a tribute to his father, Alexander II named a large Hybrid Tea 'George Dickson'. Of strongly veined blackish-scarlet-crimson, it makes a fine exhibition rose. It seems to dislike the garden, where it is easily prone to mildew. Though not in the USA, it is popular abroad.

'Mrs Wemyss Quin' of 1914 should be mentioned, for she was the best yellow Hybrid Tea at that time and for several years thereafter. But another rose, the Hybrid tea 'Red-Letter Day' also appeared that year. Its dark, velvety red petals, fully open, reflex and twist backward and forward like ribbons knotted to a



stick and tossed by the wind. The shape speaks to those fond of the unusual. The plant blooms well in autumn. A cinnamon scent wafts from the semi-double center.

But in 1917 ‘Kitchener of Khartoum’—usually called ‘K of K’—superseded ‘Red-Letter Day’, “a great advance,” as Courtney Page of the NRS put it. A rather branching plant, this dazzling, fragrant, single rose of ten petals, (a gold medalist) continued to be popular into the mid-1980s. Today it is sold only by Oregon’s Rogue Valley nursery.

In 1920, Alexander II gave the management of the Dickson & Sons Ltd. company over to his son Alexander III. He, however, continued to breed new roses. (Later the firm would change its name to Dicksons of Hawlmark, and finally to simply Dickson Nurseries.)

Another gold medalist, popular for decades, is the two-colored Hybrid Tea of 1922, ‘Betty Uprichard’. The outer face of petals shows a dark chalky pink, the inner a salmon pink with some apricot shading at the base. It emits a soft verbena scent. Mildew is not a problem; cool weather is an ally.



Betty Uprichard



Shot Silk

It was named for a friend of Alexander Dickson II, who delighted in following the hounds. She was killed in such a hunting accident.

Alexander II produced at least five new roses in 1923, one a gold medalist, but none that have survived. A year later, 1924, ‘Shot Silk’ dropped into the rose world’s colorful bazaar. An excellent rose with

disease-free foliage and of a strong, bushy and branching habit, its leaves display a glossy sheen. It exudes a Damask or strong honey and *je ne sais quoi* scent, the first Pernetiana type to waft a pronounced fragrance. The colors create a beautiful yet subtle blend of brilliance—pink, cerise, orange, buttercup yellow—hence its name. It was one of the most popular roses in England until World War II.

The rose ‘Dame Edith Helen’ won a certificate of merit in 1925 and a gold medal when it was introduced in 1926. Exceptionally fragrant, the flowers emerge on long stems, making them ideal cut flowers that last long in a vase. A strong and compact grower, its autumn flush is excellent. Dickson had first considered naming the rose ‘Marchioness of Londonderry’, but Dame Edith Helen demurred, for an earlier rose held that title, and it was also a name suggesting the wrong (and perhaps unsavory) marchioness. The current one was Edith Helen Vane-Tempest-Steward, the 7th Marchioness of Londonderry. In WWI she became Colonel-in-Chief of the Women’s Volunteer Reserve, renamed The Women’s Legion. She was also known for creating one of the most beautiful gardens in the U. K. on the Londonderry estate which was proposed for a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Dame Edith Helen donated her gardens to the National Trust in 1957. She died in 1959.

Alexander II went on to produce at least a dozen more new roses, then retired in 1930. Not only was he the most prolific breeder of roses among the several generations of breeders in his family, but he was also the most honored with gold medals for their excellence. The proof lies before us in the many roses he bred still available in nurseries and surviving in gardens today. Alexander Dickson II died in 1949.

Combined Rose List 2018 is an annual publication of roses in commerce worldwide and of where to find them, edited by Beverly Dobson and Peter Schneider. The publication lists roses by official name and aliases, year they came into commerce, type, color and a list of nurseries that carry them. There are no photos. To order it, go to <http://www.combinedroselist.com/combined-rose-list.html>.



THE ROSES OF JEAN LAFFAY

Elaine Sedlack

Monsieur Laffay's first nursery, established in 1825, occupied an area in Auteuil* (west of Paris) on what would eventually become part of the Bois de Boulogne during the reign of Napoleon III. [*Note: Marcel Proust was born in Auteuil.] Jean Laffay was

born in Paris, on August 17, 1795. There doesn't seem to be a surviving photograph. What does survive is a historic legacy of rose introductions that became known as the newest class at that time, the Hybrid Perpetuals. He is considered to be the innovative creator of this popular class of repeat-flowering, hardy roses. These he referred to as "*Hybrides Remontants*." 'Princesse Helene' (1837) was the first Hybrid Perpetual traced to his pioneering efforts. These large-flowered, fragrant roses transformed the rose-growing world dramatically, inspiring many to acquire these new varieties, doubtlessly feeding an even greater demand for them. The sheer numbers of all the different varieties of roses—not only Hybrid Perpetuals—offered by French nurseries in the first part of the 19th century is staggering, and they increased exponentially during his time. As Vibert wrote, "*In 1828, Monsieur Desportes, in his Rosetum Gallicum enumerated 2,562 cultivars. Today [1852] one can count up to five thousand.*"

His second nursery, where he produced the majority of his hybrids between 1837 and 1855, was located in the Bellevue-Meudon area of Paris. It must have comprised a vast acreage, as he was known to sow up to 10,000 seeds in a season, growing these plants in order to select the most promising. Laffay always looked for the newest roses and

latest novelties on the market. In 1843 he estimated that he was growing 60 to 100 thousand seedlings. Jean-Pierre Vibert reported that he grew 200,000 a year! Having a large tract of land available for these trials obviously didn't diminish his chances of success. Still, his introductions were restrained in proportion to the sheer number of plants he raised, indicating a man of discerning taste.

He first served as gardener to a nurseryman named Ternaux in Auteuil. His first nursery was adjacent to the Ternaux property. His earliest efforts date to this time, primarily with Chinas: 'Bengale



d'Automne' and 'Le Vesuve' were introduced in 1825 and 'Archduke Charles' may have been also. These floriferous Chinas are still grown to this day, incredibly almost 200 years later. One wonderful example of

his work is the Damask Perpetual 'Indigo' (pre-1845), which fades to a shade very close to denim blue.



After the Bourbons appeared, he also produced many notable Hybrid Bourbons and Hybrid Chinas, and many more Hybrid Perpetuals, using Damask Perpetuals and Bourbons along with 'Athelin' and 'Celine'—both HP's. 'Celine' was also used as rootstock. The gene for

remontancy is at first recessive, which is why most first generation Hybrid Chinas don't repeat, even though the original Chinas themselves do repeat – well, some never quit! However, by the next generation, crosses can acquire this trait. Most prominent among his



Hybrid Chinas are the richly colored 'La Nubienne', the pale blush 'Duchesse de Montebello', and the incomparable 'Juno'.

Two other roses, 'Brennus' (HCh, 1830) and 'General Allard' (HP, c. 1835, now thought to be extinct), are on record as parents of later Hybrid Perpetuals. Gregg Lowery conjectures that the

'General Allard' as grown in the Vintage Gardens Collection may actually be 'Mme. Laffay', a seedling of the 'General'—a potentially great find. One of Laffay's most famous roses is 'La Reine' (HP, 1842). Hundreds of 'La Reine' were sent to England in one year alone. This queen became the progenitor of a number of descendants that inherited her lilac-pink, globular form.

It is said that Laffay was not solely interested in roses. He must have been one of those nurserymen susceptible to the beauty of plants in general, though obviously most smitten by the rose. He traveled extensively to search out new varieties. He visited England many times, where he exchanged plants with his friend and fellow rosarian William Paul. He traveled to Belgium and Holland, and maintained a correspondence with growers in Italy. Later in life he even went to live in Algeria, in 1859. He also cultivated dwarf varieties of pear trees.

Although he is known for introducing the first Hybrid Perpetual, among roses he seems to have entertained broad interests. He also grew Damasks, including 'Quatre Saisons Blanc Mousseux' (1837); and then,

when the Hybrid Chinas and Bourbons became available, he also had these to work with. Later he focused on Mosses. Laffay put great store in the Mosses, believing them to soon “*play a great part in Horticulture*” (Letter to Wm. Paul 1847, Dickerson). Among his most beautiful still extant Mosses are, from the most fragile and palest: 'La Daphane' 1848) and 'Gloire de Mousseux' (1852), to the carmine-red 'Henri Martin' (1863) and 'Laneii' (1846--“one of the most common found roses in California,” according to Lowery--to the darkest black-reds: 'Capitaine John Ingram', 'Nuits de Young' and 'William Lobb'.

Two Noisettes are attributed to him: 'Bouquet Tout Fait' and 'Nastarana'. He introduced only one Tea rose, 'Le Roi de Siam' (1825, now extinct). He was reluctant to

spend too much time on the Teas and Noisettes, since they are not reliably hardy. Laffay did collect some species roses. Here, via Dickerson, are references to a few of them:



Rosa roxburghii 'Pourpre Ancien' “*This pretty rose bloomed for the first time last year [1829] at Monsieur Laffay’s in Auteuil*” And: “*There still exist, after 40 years, several varieties [of R. rubiginosa] at Monsieur Laffay’s, in Bellevue, near Paris, which grow pretty much in a wild state, among the brambles and chestnuts of his garden.*” And then, interestingly: “*Only centifolias and centifolia mosses do well on Rubiginosa understock.*” A question arises: Since he specialized in Mosses, could these surviving plants of *R. rubiginosa* have originally been understock to grafts of Moss roses which had died and reverted?

Laffay also obtained (probably from his friend Vibert, who introduced it from England to France in 1824), the single white, wild-occurring (and thorny!) species, *Rosa banksiae* f. *normalis*. Here are excerpts from Vibert's writing, describing a horticultural outing to Laffay's nursery in Auteuil, in 1827:

“At exactly six in the morning we began our excursion to the fanciers’ and growers’ places, those who, in the area of Paris are most particularly known to us for being worthy of the interest of connoisseurs for the beauty and choiceness of their roses.... Before 7 a.m. we had already gotten to Auteuil and the grounds of Monsieur Laffay. This able grower showed us his precious collection, as robust as it is rich in all the beautiful varieties already known, as well as those which he recently raised in his fields of seedlings... At the start of the first area beyond Auteuil, to which Monsieur Laffay conducted us, leaving the gardens of Monsieur Ternaux... We saw right away a Hybrid China... [then] ‘Nubienne’ [HCh]... ‘Renoncule Rose’ [G]... a Damask... . We also noted a rose... known by Monsieur Hardy as an exact duplicate of the one already known to fanciers under the two names ‘Zerbune’ and ‘Desbrosses’” (This scenario is all too familiar to those of us today who puzzle over roses which have lost their identities.) *“Finishing off our visit, we invited Monsieur Laffay to be so good as to bring us together again so that we could continue our explorations, which he accepted with an openness of heart which we will remember warmly.”*

Years later, George Paul recounted visiting Laffay with his father: *“My first recollection of roses was of the occasion when I went with my father as a lad to Paris to see the first great French Exhibition in 1855, and visited Mr. Laffay, who had retired to a house and garden amongst the woods of the suburb of Belleville [sic], taking with him his seedling roses”* (qtd in Dickerson).

1

Jean Laffay had been one of the founding members of the Societe Nationale d’Horticulture in 1827, and by the end of his life he was recognized as an honorary member by this prestigious organization. His prolific and unique rose introductions are his enduring gift to us. By 1877 he had returned from Algeria, finally retiring to the South of

France, to the Villa Apollonie (named for his wife) in Cannes, where he died the following year on April 15, 1878.

References: *The Old Rose Advisor*, Brent Dickerson, Timber Press, 1992; *The Old Rose Adventurer*, Brent Dickerson, Timber Press, 1999; “History of Roses: the Hybrid Perpetuals,” Jerry Haynes, American Rose Society, Web; and *Magazine of Horticulture*, 1845.

IMAGE CREDITS

Page 2Alfred Parsons in *The Wild Garden*
Page 7Alfred Parsons' Self-Portrait
Pages 8,10,11, & 12 left Connie Hilker
Page 12 right Lina Schmidt-Michel
Page 14 Ingrid Wapelhorst
Page 15 topJ. Horace McFarland
Page 15 bottomKarl King
Page 17 top & p. 26.....Etienne Bouret
Page 17 bottom*Rose Annual 1929*
Page 18, 20, 21, & 23Darrell Schramm
Page 22Bill Grant
Front & Back Covers--Alfred Parsons, *The Genus Rosa*

TO JOIN OR RENEW MEMBERSHIP IN HRG

Send \$16 for the print format of *Rose Letter* (4 issues a year) or
\$10 for the digital online format
to Clay Jennings, Membership Chair
22 Gypsy Lane, Camarillo, CA 93010
or contact him at e.c.jennings@gmail.com

Visit us online at www.heritagerosesgroup.org



LESSONS FROM ROBERT BUIST

Darrell g.h. Schramm

In 1830 Philadelphia was home to fewer than 100 rose bushes, but by 1845 rose culture had mushroomed to boast at least 35-40,000 plants. In between those years Robert Buist wrote *The American Flower Garden Directory* of 1832—which went through six editions—and *The Rose Manual* of 1844, America’s first book on rose culture and now an American classic. During those years he also bred three new Noisettes and nine new China roses, roses much in vogue at the time.

Robert Buist (1802-1880) had served as manager of the well-known Edinburgh Gardens before leaving Scotland for Philadelphia in 1828. Shortly thereafter, he set up his store, Buist’s Garden Seeds. With Thomas Hibbert in 1830, he bought Bernard McMahan’s old nursery and named the firm Hibbert & Buist. In 1831 he boarded ship for England to visit nurseries, then in 1832 for France where he met Alexander Hardy of Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. He was especially excited about the Damask ‘Mme Hardy’. From then on, he began importing roses from the continent, most of them from Mr. Hardy, though some from the exceptional breeder Jean-Pierre Vibert.

When Thomas Hibbert died in 1837, Buist moved his growing

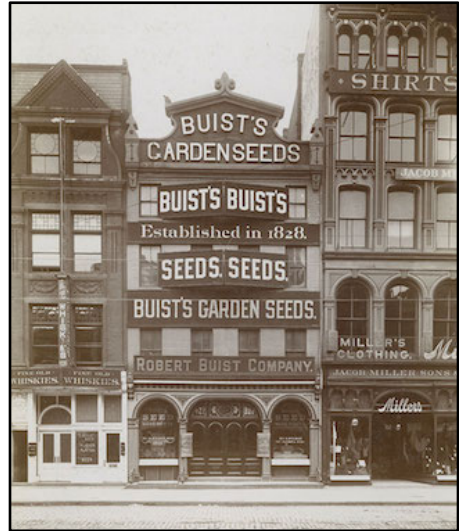
enterprise, renaming it Buist's City Nursery & Greenhouses. He would move twice more. By 1845, Buist's rose collection was the largest in the country, but Charles Hovey, also of Philadelphia, would soon surpass him. Such was Buist's reputation that when A. J. Downing, father of American landscape architecture, began publishing his magazine *The Horticulturist*, it was Buist to whom he turned for advice.

Though his *The Rose Manual* calls all white roses Albas, calls the Centifolia the Provins Rose rather than the Provence or Provincialis, names some roses Noisettes which are not, and does not give 'Champneys' Pink Cluster' its due as America's first cultivated rose, this classic book abounds in guidance and good advice still relevant today for growing roses.

On Planting: ** "Never plant a rose in the same soil that a rose has been growing in before." ** Incorporate manure with some light soil and some decayed leaves when planting in heavy soils like clay. Mix it well twelve to eighteen inches deep, or even two feet deep. **Rose soil should be "of a friable nature." ** Unless the soil is "of a wet and retentive nature," winter is the best time for planting. Do not plant in viscous or soggy soil. **Avoid crowding the plants. **Do not expect perfection the first season after planting. Roses take time to become established.

On Transplanting: **Once a rose has been transplanted it should be watered thoroughly "once or twice a week in dry weather" during its first season. **Place moss or manure around the plant to prevent evaporation and parching of the soil from sun. [Compost is excellent for the same reason.]

On Rose Care: **If a rose appears to decline, lack of nourishment is generally the cause. Dig manure or rich compost three or four inches deep around its roots. **Provide sufficient water. "An occasional watering with soap suds is also very beneficial."



On Pruning: **Pruning is best done in winter. **Climbers, roses on pillars, and tall Hybrid Chinas should have their tops cut off a foot or two. Older wood of about four years should be thinned and “the short shoots or twigs cut to within two eyes.”

** Noisettes that have grown twelve to twenty inches should have their shoots cut to within three or four eyes; if growth is three to ten feet, the canes should be shortened to between two and six feet. **Austrian briars, ‘Harison’s Yellow’, and Spinosissimas, including ‘Stanwell Perpetual’, should be pruned sparingly; if crowded or overgrown, shoots can be shortened more.

On Bourbon Roses: **These roses require high nourishment of “rich soils or copious waterings with liquid manure.” **In cold climates, prune them close in early spring. **Deadhead them as soon as flowers have faded in order to produce more flowers.

The book is worth reading both for such good advice and for a sense of history of old roses.

When Robert Buist died in 1880, his son Robert Jr., who had worked with him, inherited the nursery, operating it—and becoming a millionaire—until his death of pneumonia in 1910. The final name change of the Robert Buist company was, appropriately, Rosedale.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Heritage Roses Northwest Rose Society will hold its annual Old Garden Rose Display at Jackie McElhose’s Antique Rose Farm, 12220 Springhetti Road, Snohomish, WA on Sunday, June 17, 2018. Public display hours will be from noon until 4:00 PM. We welcome your visit. For more information, please contact Margaret Nelson, oldrosen@gmail.com.

Celebration of Old Roses: Sunday, May 20, 11:00 to 3:30, at Veterans Memorial Bldg, 1325 Portland at Carmel, in Albany, CA..

www.celebrationofoldroses.org. More details on page

30.

HERITAGE ROSES GROUPS

Bay Area Group

Convenor: Kristina Osborn
Contact: Joan Helgeson
184 Bonview St., San Francisco, CA
94110; 415-648-0241
brunner1941@yahoo.com

San Diego Group

Becky Yianilos
1364 Nightshade Rd, Carlsbad 92011
760-822-8812; bekizoo@aol.com

South Bay Group

San Jose & Santa Cruz area
Jill Perry
829 32nd Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062
oldtearoses@gmail.com or
perry@calcentral.com

Central Coast Group

Jill Perry (same as above: South Bay)

Yolo & Beyond Group

Sacramento, Davis, Folsom areas
Anita Clevenger; anitac@surewest.net

Bidwell Heritage Rose Group

Butte, Glenn & Tehema Counties, CA
Julie Matlin, 341 West Lincoln
Chico, CA 95926; 530-893-5418
Sherri Berglund, 2578 County Rd.
Willows CA 95988;
rsericea@yahoo.com

North Central Coast

Mendocino Co. & vicinity
Alice Flores, P.O. Box 601
Albion, CA 95410; aflores@mcn.org

San Juan Bautista HRG

San Benito Co., CA
Loryn Ross: Loryn000@aol.com
<http://sjbheritageroses.weebly.com>

Gold Coast Group

(L.A, Ventura, Santa Barbara & San
Luis Obispo counties
Jeri & Clay Jennings
22 Gypsy Ln., Camarillo, CA
93010; heritageroses@gmail.com

North Central Florida Group

Pam Greenewald, 352-359-1133
gardenangel22@gmail.com

Eugene Heritage Rose Group

Elaine Sedlack
1645 High Street
Eugene, OR 97405
elainesedlack@gmail.com

Cascadia Heritage Group

Pacific Northwest Area
Claire Acord; cacord@gmail.com
Angelique Laskowski
bluecascadia@gmail.com and
<https://sites.google.com/site/cascadiahrg/home>

Heritage Roses Northwest

Washington, Idaho, Oregon, &
Canada
Margaret Nelson
32904 4th Ave SW, Federal Way, WA
98023; 253-874-4007;
oldrosen@gmail.com

Old Dominion Group

Virginia & Adjacent Area
Connie Hilker
335 Hartwood Rd., Fredericksburg,
VA 22406; c.hilker@comcast.net



Celebration of Old Roses!!

Sunday, May 20, 2018 from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

!! NEW LOCATION !!

Over 100 feet of beautiful roses on display! Purchase heirloom and hard-to-find roses. **Rose experts will be available to answer questions.** Vendors will be selling perennials, crafts, china, books, honey, jam, and jewelry all inspired by roses.

Sponsored by Heritage Roses Group Bay Area

Children are welcome!

Children will receive a FREE rose plant

(While supplies last!)

Admission is FREE! Food and Soft Drinks.

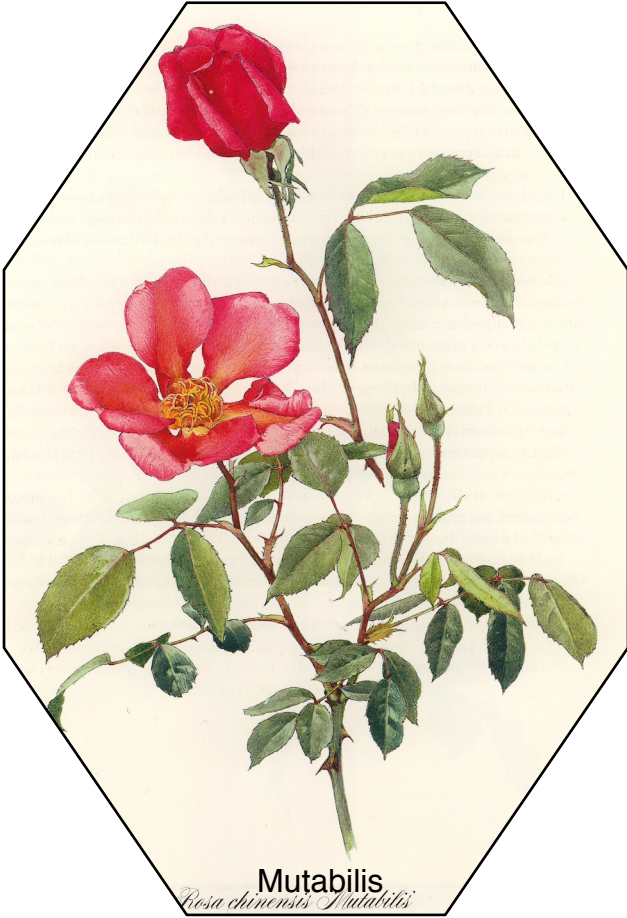
▶ VETERAN'S MEMORIAL BUILDING - ALBANY ◀

1325 Portland at Carmel.

Hwy 80 or 580 to Albany, Buchanan St. exit. Go east to San Pablo, then left to Portland

www.celebrationofoldroses.org





Mutabilis

Rosa chinensis Mutabilis