

ROSE LETTER



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ROSE LETTER

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CONTENTS

Not Set in Stone: Rosa Spithamea	2
The Name of the Rose	5
Nevada City's Pine Grove Cemetery	6
The Roses of Joseph Banks	11
The Fifth Annual Rose Lover's Gathering	20
Celebrating the Celebration of Old Roses	21
Mottisfont Rose Conference	24
Just a Few Old Roses: Chelsea Physic Garden.	27
Cover and Photo Credits	10

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Rosa spithamea

Not Set in Stone: *Rosa Spithamea*

Darrell g.h. Schramm

The state of California is home to nine species of wild roses. Or only six or seven if, according to some experts, two or three are really subspecies of *Rosa gymnocarpa*. Of the nine—*Rosas californica*, *minutifolia*, *nutkana*, *pisocarpa*, *woodsii*, *gymnocarpa*, *pinetorum*, *bridgesii*, and *spithamea*—the latter three may be related to *R. gymnocarpa*, but further analysis has yet to establish that as fact. It is, however, *R. spithameas* that seems the least studied and addressed.

Rosa spithamea, also called the California “Ground Rose,” (though that nickname could apply equally to *R. bridgesii* and *R. pinetorum*) grows in scrub oak and chaparral country from northern Monterey and southern San Luis Obispo counties in the

central western to northwestern parts of the state. Near where I live, I have seen it on Ring Mountain above Corte Madera in Marin County and in the hills of Swett Ranch Open Space, a few miles east of Vallejo along the Pacific Ridge Trail in Solano County. In the latter location I have studied it for three years now.

As its name suggests, it is a low growing rose, no more than twelve inches tall. Most of what grows out of a rocky bank immediately below a stand of oak trees where I observe it is no more than a span—six inches high (*spithama* is Latin for “handspan”). Sometimes among filaree, ferny achillea leaves, wild mint, poison oak, and other understory vegetation, the dwarf plants can be hard at first to spot, especially when not in flower.

Reportedly it blooms with some enthusiasm after a fire, but otherwise it proclaims itself as a reluctant or stingy bloomer. However, in Oregon’s southern Cascades on the south flank of Abbott Butte, hundreds of blossoms have been observed ankle-deep. Indeed, my experience has been that, compared to California’s shot glass, Oregon’s botanical cup runneth over.

Rosa spithamea produces single blossoms, lightly scented, of a medium pink (in other locales it may be deep rose or even merely a blush), the size of a quarter or slightly larger. While old grey stems generally display no prickles, the younger green stems bear prickles and bristles that are dark, fine, and essentially straight. Infrastipular spines are not uncommon. Leaves consist of five, seven, and nine leaflets, but mostly seven. They are sessile and broadly serrate, ovate when young, more rounded when mature. Like raised wings, the first set of leaflets below the apical leaflet point upward. Stipules are glandular-ciliate (i.e., with tiny hairy glands), auricles widespread. The receptacle is distinctive: densely pilose, that is, covered with straight glandular hairs. Underground suckering roots can make it slowly pervasive.

If one looked at the five pink petals alone, the flower might easily be mistaken for nearly any other California wild rose. But location aside, we can distinguish a few traits from some of the others. *R. gymnocarpa*, not a crawler, tends to grow erect and even as tall as four feet, generally in part shade beneath redwood or oak trees. It also drops its ovate sepals and, unlike *R. spithamea*, exudes a strong fragrance.

Rosa pinetorum, on the other hand, found under Monterey pines, bears a glabrous receptacle, that is, one without hairs. And *R. bridgesii* exhibits few prickles and produces roses only in small clusters of two or more and stipules that are ciliate, i.e., with distinct hairs or glands. According to botanist Barbara Ertter, it appears to grow no hips.

Could *Rosas spithamea*, *pinetorum*, and *bridgesii*, all three ground roses and genetically tetraploid, be subspecies of *R. gymnocarpa*, a diploid? Possibly. According to rose species authority Cassandra Bernstein, “Widely distributed diploid plant species that spread into extreme environments”—and *R. gymnocarpa* can be found from the understory of redwoods to the understory of oaks, from the Sierra Nevada foothills to the Pacific coast



—“have been known to mutate, evolve, or hybridize into different ploidies than those commonly reported.” Surely, then, the three ground rose species may be the same rose whose ecogeographic variations have created variations in the species.

If botanist Daniel Chamovitz is correct that environmental stress in a plant seems to cause “a heritable change that is passed on to successive generations,” then one or more of these California species could be morphologically one with *R. gymnocarpa*. Small variations in a species may be the result of environmental stress—drought, severe rainfall, fire, pestilence, salt in air or soil. In fact, claims Chamovitz, “different environmental insults increase the frequency of genomic rearrangements” in plants of both parental and second generations, the latter showing further genetic alteration but more tolerance to stress, often proving themselves more hardy or vigorous in harsh environmental situations.

One could then, without DNA evidence, draw the conclusion that to speak or write of the varieties of *R. spithamea* is to nick-pick or to split hairs. Whether in one county its prickles are broader at the base and in another its prickles are nearly absent, these may be mere environmental distinctions, not characteristics that identify and define this span-high ground rose. And whether it is a subspecies of *R. gymnocarpa* or a species in its own right, *Rosa spithamea* is variable. Though it can be found growing from rocky outcrops, it—like many species—is not set in stone.

THE NAME OF THE ROSE

Why is it sometimes so difficult to determine the name of a mystery rose? As far back as 1827 the famed rose breeder Jean-Pierre Vibert gave one reason (and there are others). Even then there abounded “charlatans,” he wrote, who were “obnoxious to the progress of horticulture.” He went on to declare, “It pains me to state that the French are like that; they travel through several counties in England, selling at great profit some so-called novelties, and fooling the public by every means possible.” The same rose would be sold under different names in each county the nurserymen passed through.

Stephen Scaniello, president of the Heritage Rose Foundation adds a more specific instance: “In 1842, American nurserymen suspected that two popular red China roses imported from France--‘Agrippina’ and ‘Cramoisi Superieur’--were identical. After much debate and heated correspondence among the nurserymen, it was finally determined that the same plant was shipped to the United States under two different names. The discovery cleared the air but forever left open the question of which name was correct.”

Sometimes a rose disappears from nursery lists and gardens, as did our cover rose ‘Slater’s Crimson China’ in the late 1800s. In the late 1900s a red rose named “Belfield” was found in Bermuda; it seemed to match descriptions and illustrations of Slater’s rose, but despite some DNA studies, the verdict is still out. Some mysteries remain unsolved.

Nevada City's Pine Grove Cemetery: Revisiting Old Survivors

Rose curators, Kathy Hammes, Joy Feller and Kathy Granlund.

As many members may recall, Pine Grove is a cemetery in which two adventuresome women set about to replant the Masonic section in the style of a Victorian cemetery garden with the primary focus on old historic roses. Here we are five years later, and as I stand in the cemetery on this Memorial Day, the scope of the bloom is staggering. To be able to see and experience the roses that many of those who now reside beneath me knew in their lifetimes is very humbling. But for all the rose classes that we have reintroduced into the cemetery, perhaps it is fitting that more should be mentioned of the original group that were here when we began and, unfortunately, some of the few that have passed on.



Blanchefleur

‘Blanchefleur’, Centifolia, 1835: It appears we have several plants of this rose in the cemetery. One was a purchase made at the

open garden sale in Sacramento a few years ago, and that rose graces the Naffziger family plot. The next one Joy and I obtained from underneath a sidewalk in front of an old house on Race Street in Grass Valley. The house has since been sold and all trace of the rose is gone. Finally, on a rustle to the Clear Creek cemetery, we got a slip of a rose fighting for its life growing under a live oak. All three bloomed at the same time and were wonderful ‘Blancheffleur’. Such a powder fresh fragrance!

‘Alba odorata’, hybrid bracteata: This rose knows no bounds as it has surrounded the Beckman plot and challenges us to contain it. Here it is the last rose to bloom, and the deer have never been able to restrain the growth of this vigorous rose either.

“Leonard’s Noisette” (Tower Plot Noisette): Mary V. Tower is the only burial in this plot, having passed in July 1866, no birth date given. This rose more than any other in the entire cemetery stops you with the powerful fragrance. Did Mary know the fragrance of this rose while she lived? I am convinced that this rose truly likes me as it is the only one I have successfully propagated, and its child resides on another plot in the cemetery behaving

exactly like its parent.



“Leonard’s Noisette”

“Red Runaround,” Ismert plot: Peter Ismert died in 1876 and Eva in 1900. Both of their headstones say they were natives of France. This original plant now covers

almost the entire plot and survives every summer without water. Maybe the Ismerts brought it with them when they came over?

‘Mme. Joseph Schwartz’, tea 1880: Located on the Rena Williams family plot, this old rose continues to bloom well every

year. Recently on this plant there has been a sighting of pink ‘Duchesse de Brabant’ lurking among her white blooms.

‘Mme. Plantier’, hybrid alba/china, 1835: This incredible rose, found in so many cemeteries and old home sites, graces several plots in Pine Grove. One of our original plants in the Masonic section resides on a plot that is going to receive some badly needed repair work; the whole rear section of granite slabs along with two headstones gave way. but ‘Mme. Plantier’ still blooms from underneath the fallen.

‘Lamarque’, tea/noisette, 1830: The Hutchison plot is outside of the Masonic section but we are still her guardians. This rose blooms profusely throughout the year even though it is very rare that we are able to get water that far.

‘Gloire des Rosomanes’, hybrid Bourbon/china, 1825: My favorite rootstock of all time, the original plant located on the Butler plot near the ‘Lamarque’. We moved a second ‘Gloire des Rosomanes’ into the Masonic section just to have it closer.

On a local rose rustle a couple of years ago, Joy Feller and I made a stop at the Angove family home site in Grass Valley and found a small red rose struggling to bloom in the three-foot high grass that had overtaken everything. With previous permission we coaxed a slip from the ground and planted it at Pine Grove. When Darrell Schramm visited the cemetery recently, he suggested that this may be ‘Souvenir du Dr. Jamain’. A purchase of a ‘Dr. Jamain’ was made from the folks at Rogue Valley Roses about three years ago, so we will compare the two.

Old hybrid tea/ hybrid perpetual: The famous Cordtz or Corditz plot rose. Another rose that resides outside the Masonic section but under our guard. Many from the Heritage Roses Group have propagated this rose over the last several years; I as yet cannot claim any such victory. I have great difficulty describing the color of its blooms, not true red but a blend of purple, pink, cerise, magenta, I



Corditz Plot Rose

guess. It grows vigorously every year, not bothered by any pests. Since it blooms on and off more like a hybrid tea, a little more pruning this coming winter may be in order. Jeri Jennings suggested that this may be the hybrid tea ‘Kaiser Wilhelm’ from 1909. This rose always impresses with its bloom quality.



“Nevada Street Purple”

Two found roses were moved into the cemetery, both coming from Nevada City. “HEW pink”: We had originally thought this rose to be the centifolia ‘Fantin Latour’, but that has turned out incorrect after having seen the real thing at the Empire Mine. But it will remain a very worthy mystery.

“Nevada Street Purple”: Another one of those tough hybrid chinas most likely. Very tall and arching with a good compliment of thorns. It was the color that caused me to make a u-turn and stop and ask for a slip from the Nevada City homeowner. Very purplish.

Gone from the cemetery are both the ‘Hermosas’ which were flanking both sides of the Grissell family plot. Rose gall had done its work and we could not save them. Both the ‘Maman Cochet’ and the “Frying Pan Rose” (identified by Jill Perry as ‘Alba Odorata’) are gone from the Odd Fellows section as is the ‘Lady

Anne Kidwell'. I can report that all live on again in the Masonic section. The lost Lindsley plot pink rose has also been replaced by the Heritage Roses Group.

Recently members of the Order of the Eastern Star have been made aware of the project and have taken a very strong interest in supporting our efforts and hopefully promotion. A presentation will be made to them at their next meeting, and we will go forward from there. Kathy Granlund joined us a couple years ago—thank you, Jill Perry! In addition to her weeding wizardry, she is a computer tech person who may help with possible web site development. We are hoping that many of the Heritage Roses Groups members can make it up this way to see our preservation efforts.

Cover and Photo Credits

Front Cover ... <i>R. indica cruenta</i> /Slater's Crimson China - Redoute	
This rose was first brought from China to Sweden in 1752. But it wasn't until a few decades later that a captain of the East India Co. saw it in the botanic garden of Calcutta and brought a bush to London where, when it bloomed in 1791, it caused a sensation. Not only did no Western rose have such rich red pigmentation in its genes but also no Western rose bloomed repeatedly as did this. It inaugurated hybridization of recurrently blooming roses.	
Page 2 ...	Darrell Schramm
Page 4 ...	Nolan Olhausen
Pages 6-9 ...	Kathy Granlund
Page 12 ...	Bill Grant
Page 13 ... Old Blush	Darrell Schramm
Page 13 ... <i>R. hulthemia persica</i>	Bill Grant
Page 14 ...	Bill Grant
Page 16 ...	Darrell Schramm
Pages 17 & 18 ...	Bill Grant
Pages 21-23 ...	Jeri Jennings
Pages 24, 25 & 28	Darrell Schramm
Back Cover ...	Darrell Schramm



Joseph Banks, 1773

THE ROSES OF JOSEPH BANKS

Darrell g.h. Schramm

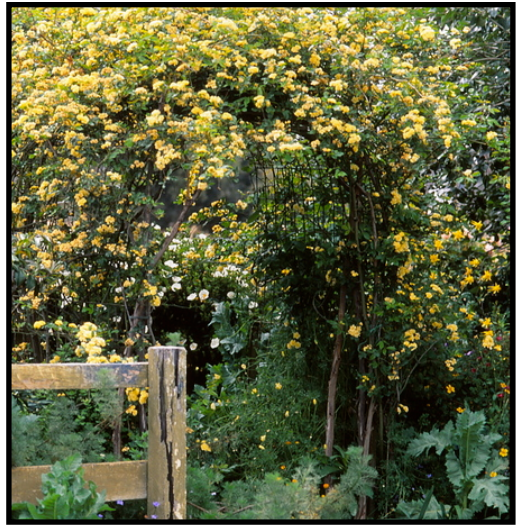
When *banksiae* roses are mentioned, the plant that comes to mind for most gardeners familiar with roses is ‘Yellow Lady Banks’. Certainly it is the most popular and probably the most widely grown. Its primrose yellow blossoms in a double form display themselves in profuse corymbs, the whole plant stretching thirty feet high or more. Though the form in the wild generally has prickles, the cultivated *Rosa banksiae lutea* (‘Yellow Lady Banks’) rarely does. (The same is true for the scented, double white form *R. banksiae banksiae*, ‘White Lady Banks’).

According to Ellen Willmott in 1914, the 21st volume of the *Chih-wu-Ming* describes this yellow form and two white varieties of what we call *banksiae* roses as far back as 1578. The earliest Western reference we have to the yellow form is through botanist William Roxburgh who as superintendent grew both the yellow and the white varieties in the Calcutta Botanic Garden in 1814. In 1823 England’s Horticultural Society sent John Dampier Parks to

China to locate the yellow variety, which he was fortunate to find, bringing back several plants of it in 1824.

By then, however, Sir Joseph Banks, for whom this class of roses was named, had died. Who was he? A naturalist and patron of science, Joseph Banks was born into wealth in 1743. Studying the classics and natural history at Oxford, he once at his own expense brought a renowned Cambridge botanist to give a series of lectures. When his father died in 1761, Banks, now free and self-sufficient, devoted himself to scientific training as a Linnean naturalist, and five years later sailed on an expedition to Labrador and Newfoundland,

carrying back a number of plant specimens now in London's Museum of Natural History. More importantly, he was a self-funded member of Captain Cook's crew on the *Endeavour* on its famous voyage to the South Seas from 1768 to 1771. During an eight-day stay anchored in Australia, he and a colleague collected more plants than from any other site visited on



R. banksiae lutea

the voyage; consequently, their place of anchorage was named Botany Bay.

Back in England, Banks was introduced to King George III, thereafter becoming a close friend and advisor on scientific and agricultural matters, a relationship that led to his appointment as virtual overseer of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. He also served as president of the Royal Society from 1778 until his death in 1820. Having separated from his long-term mistress, Banks in 1779 married Dorothea Hugessen, an heiress of more than sufficient property. It was she, of course, for whom the double

white and double yellow *banksiae* roses were named. Two years later the King bestowed on Banks the title of Baron.

For the next four decades Banks was instrumental in making natural science a primary interest and concern to Great Britain. Part of his endeavor included helping to organize the expedition of the ship *Bounty* under Captain William Bligh from 1787-89, during which the infamous mutiny occurred. Banks also did much to influence the return to France of the large natural history collection that had been pirated in 1795 by the British Navy in the war with Napoleon. And it was Banks, not some duchess, who was greatly instrumental at the request of French botanists to allow plants to be shipped from England to France during the

Napoleonic wars. (In 1803 Empress Josephine had ordered a supply of plants totaling in cost £2,000, and in 1811 more “curious plants to the amount of £700” shipped from Portsmouth.)

Roses, of course, were included in Sir Joseph Banks’ wide interest in plants. Already in 1789, before it was officially introduced in England, he



Old Blush

had acquired from Holland the china rose ‘Old Blush’, where it had been introduced in 1751. Once brought to Kew Gardens in 1793, it was alternately called, among other names, ‘Parson’s



Rosa hultthemia persica

Pink China' 'Common Monthly' and 'Old Pink Monthly'. Banks in 1790 introduced *Rosa hulthemia persica* (*R. persica*), a low, suckering dwarf plant bearing solitary, single bright yellow flowers with a red splotch in the center and purple stamens. He also advised Lord Macartney on his otherwise unsuccessful ambassadorial trip to China in 1793, a journey on which his voyage companion Sir George Staunton made acute observations of China's flora and brought back *R. bracteata*, which Staunton called 'The Macartney Rose'. An evergreen climbing plant, it reaches 18 or 20 feet, decorated with what Ellen Willmott described as "noble ivory-white flowers" whose short stems are concealed by downy bracts—hence its Latin name.

The presumed first *banksiae* rose brought to Europe, *R. banksiae banksiae*, the double white variety, had been sent to England by the plant explorer William Kerr in 1803. In fact, he had sent two sets of the plants



Rosa banksiae banksiae

from China, but they did not survive. The one he sent in 1807 did. (In addition to seeds and dried specimens, at least two dozen of the living plants Kerr discovered in China and sent out survived and were grown at Kew.) Kerr had discovered the double white *banksiae* in a Chinese garden, but it was botanist Robert Brown who named it 'Lady Banks'.

When Clarke Abel, a naturalist, part of Lord Amherst's entourage in the latter's embassy to the Chinese Court, sailed on the Yangtze River into Nanking in October 1816, he remarked on *R. banksiae* growing against the walls of the city. Since no other variety of *banksiae* had yet been discovered by Europeans (with the exception of Roxburgh's yellow form in Calcutta), this rose he observed had to have been 'White Lady Banks'. Also called *Alba*

Plena, this rose, like the yellow, seems to be a cultivated form of the wild species. Unlike the scentless yellow, its small flowers exude what some people declare to be the scent of violets.

Another rose named to honor Sir Joseph Banks was bred by the renowned Frenchman Jean Laffay about 1837, specifically ‘*Banksiaeflora*’ (listed in Catherine Gore’s *The Rose Fancier’s Manual* of 1838 as ‘*Banksiana Flora*’). A climber showing off clusters of very double, yellowish white flowers with pale yellow centers, it is more fragrant than all the *Banksiae* except, perhaps, for *R. banksiae lutescens*. It appears to be a hybrid of *R. arvensis* Hud. and *R. moschata* or a noisette, but the name does genetically suggest *R. banksiae* in its parentage as well. Though no longer commercially available, it still grows in the Feneschi Foundation Rose Garden of Italy and in Roseaie du Val-de-Marne of France. Another Banks rose Laffay produced about that same time was a quite thorny variety of a vivid pink, probably the same rose listed in William Robert Prince’s catalogue of 1848 as ‘*Epineux*’. In fact, according to Richardson Wright, Laffay bred “several admirable varieties of *R. banksiae*.” The lost banksiae hybrid roses ‘*Odoratissima*’ (which according to Prince smelled of orange blossoms), ‘*Rosea*’, ‘*Philadephiaeflora*’ or ‘*Philadelphica*’ and ‘*Jaune Serin*’ could be among them. The latter rose, also mentioned by Thomas Rivers in 1846, indicates that two different yellow banksiae roses were in commerce before *R. banksiae lutescens* was discovered. ‘*Jaune Serin*’ produced bright yellow, double flowers, larger than those of Yellow Lady Banks.

In 1844 Robert Fortune discovered and sent to England from China a rose he named *R. anemoniflora* (now called *R. beanii*), which seems to be a hybrid of *R. banksiae* and a variety of *R. multiflora*. Fortune thought it rather resembled *R. moschata*.

In 1850 Fortune sent to England a rose he repeatedly observed in numerous gardens of Ningpo and Shanghai, a hybrid *banksiae*, probably *R. laevigata* x *R. banksiae*, christened ‘*Fortuneana*’. The date 1840 often cited is incorrect, for Fortune did not set foot in China until 1843. No doubt the incorrect date is a typographical error, the numeral four struck in lieu of the five, an error harking back to 1873 in *Les Roses* written by Hippolyte Jamain and Eugene Forney. Fortune himself does not mention this rose in any of his three editions of his first book on his initial visit to China. (He



Fortuneana

changed the title with each succeeding edition.) The first description of ‘Fortuneana’ occurs in 1851, given in Lindley and Paxton’s *Flower Garden*. Parsons on *the Rose*, 1888, clearly states it was introduced in 1850.

Ellen Willmott echoes that date in her 1914 *The Genus Rosa*.

At any rate, belonging to the banksiae family, ‘Fortuneana’ (also ‘Fortuniana’) has shining leaves like those of *R. laevigata*; five leaflets to a leaf; scattered, white or cream-colored flowers the color of natural butter before any dye is added. Fortune himself in 1860 wrote that this rose was “held in high esteem by the Chinese,” that it was frequently used on “Trellis-work formed into alcoves or built over garden walks.” As an aside, Fortune was later honored by a hybrid perpetual rose (listed in Francis Parkman’s *The Book of Roses*, 1866), a full, bright red flower named ‘Robert Fortune’ but now long vanished.

Rosa banksiae clearly intrigued Italian breeders, for it surfaces several times in the hybridization by Italy’s nurserymen. In 1868 curator Paolo Baroni of the Botanic Garden dei Semplici in Florence raised from seeds of *R. banksiae banksiae*, that is, the double white variety, two single-flowered white varieties and one yellow. According to botanist and breeder Dr. E. O. Fenzi, these single varieties bore some seeds each year. Breeder Dr. Attilio Ragionieri, given a white and a yellow of these single varieties from that garden, grew them side by side where they covered a wall “some meters high” with their “profusion of pretty, single, sweet-scented flowers.” The yellow form is known today as *R. banksiae lutea simplex*. And a double white variety, apparently not ‘White Lady Banks’, named ‘Banksia Baroni’ was still growing in 2009 in the Municipal Garden of Rome.

Although its provenance is uncertain, in 1870 Sir Thomas Hanbury (who established his well-known garden La Mortola on the Italian Riviera) introduced *R. banksiae lutescens*, a pale yellow, single rose, by far the most fragrant of all *banksiae*. Indeed, driving along California Highway 99 some miles south of Turlock, CA, in 2012, my window open, I was suddenly swooped down upon by a glorious scent of roses. Feeling like Ganymede, carried away, I quickly turned my head to notice a long stretch of the highway lined with a soft yellow swath of *R. banksiae lutescens*. The single flowers decorate the slender outreaching arms of the plants from shoulders to wrist with an extravagance of bloom. Since even Hanbury was uncertain about this rose growing in his



R. banksiae lutescens

own garden, it is quite possible, as Emmanuel O. Fenzi of Florence (later of Santa Barbara, CA and then Libya) suggested in 1878, that it might be a seedling of a double *banksiae*, yellow or white. Later the rose was much used in the hybridization of Quinto Mansuino's work beginning in the 1930s.

The species *R. banksiae normalis*, sometimes called The Wild Banks Rose, ostensibly was discovered and brought back to Europe from Wushan in 1877 by botanist Dr. Albert Regel. This single white rose, growing from forty to fifty feet high, is considered the original *banksiae* species. In the wild, it usually sports prickles but not so on the cultivated form. It seems, however, to have been in Europe long before 1877. Gardens along the Riviera as well as in Switzerland and Italy were already growing this single, fragrant white rose. As indicated above, the single white and single yellow varieties were often seedlings of double *banksiae* roses. Yet *banksiae normalis* may go back another eighty years from its usual date of introduction.

According to Mr. E. H. Woodall in the November 1909 issue of the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, he found what seemed a *R. banksiae* growing against a wall of Megginch Castle, Strathhtay, Scotland in 1905. After taking cuttings and growing the rose in Nice, France, he found it to be *R. banksiae normalis*. Making inquiries of Captain Drummond of Megginch, he was informed that an ancestor Robert



R. banksiae normalis

Drummond, who had sailed to China with his brother Admiral Sir W. Drummond in 1796, had brought back various plants, including the single white *banksiae*. If this story is true, then indeed the species form of *banksiae* roses, not ‘White Lady Banks’, was the first to be discovered by Westerners.

The fact is that China grows other forms and hybrids of *banksiae* roses yet to be formally introduced into the horticultural world.

Rosa banksiae has remained popular as a breeding rose among a few hybridists to the present day. In 1923 or 24, Attilio Ragionieri of Italy used Baroni’s *lutea simplex* to cross it with the famous noisette rose ‘Lamarque’, breeding the rambler ‘Di Castello’ (also ‘Ibrido di Castello’), a light yellow flower with a deeper yellow center. His countryman Quinto Mansuino was especially enamored of both ‘White Lady Banks’ and *lutescens*. At age 70 he used the latter form to breed ‘The Pearl’ in 1960 and ‘Purezza’ (‘Purity’) in 1961. ‘Purezza’ accomplished his goal of creating a recurrently blooming *banksiae* hybrid. It won the Rome Gold Medal. Unstoppable, Mansuino went on to introduce other *banksiae* hybrids until 1970, many of them drought tolerant, including ‘Epoca’ and ‘Letizia Bianca’ (1963), ‘Generosa’ (1964), ‘Alba di Primavera’ (1965) and ‘Letizia Rosa’ (1967).

Over the last 100 years, more than 150 hybrid *banksiae* roses have been bred, especially from ‘White Lady Banks’. Perhaps no one has introduced as many hybrid *banksiae* as the American Robert Rippetoe. Among some of his loveliest we find ‘Lila Banks’,

a pale lavender single of 2002; ‘Riverbanks’, a pale violet semi-double of 2005; ‘Golda Banks’ of 2006, a single with a yellow center, paler outer petals, exuding a strong clove scent; and ‘Laura Alice’s Dream’ of 2007, a large, double, very fragrant and arching rose, lilac with violet shading.

After 1995 when A.C. Tunningley introduced ‘The Monster’, a rose he bred by crossing *R. banksiae banksiae* with ‘Old Blush’, that offspring within a decade vanished, or became extinct—but not before it was used as the pollen parent for two other roses. Tunningley himself used it to breed his pink climber ‘Old Lady Gates’, and Rippetoe used it as a cross for his ‘Lila Banks’. I suspect Joseph Banks, were he alive, would be quite pleased to know that, having been one of the first Englishmen to grow ‘Old Blush’, this rose and one named for his wife, ‘White Lady Banks’, together have produced progeny into the 21st century. Sir Joseph Banks lives!

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REPORT ON THE FIFTH ANNUAL ROSE LOVERS' GATHERING

Pam Greenewald

“A great time was had by all” at Florida’s Angel Gardens Nursery on May 31st. The free event, co-sponsored by the Heritage Roses Group, was aptly called “Stop and Eat the Roses.” The theme concerned eating foods made with organic roses in the forms of rose petals, rose water, and rose syrup. Many scrumptious dishes were made by the crew of Angel Gardens in order to taste a line of rose food products the company is introducing in the near future.

The menu included the following drinks: Rose wine sangria, rose lemonade, strawberry rose soda, and organic rose petal tea. The foods consisted of fruit salad with rose petals, rose cake and rose ice cream, salted honey rose pie, meringue rose cookies, rose petal candy, and rose cupcakes.

Gene Waering gave a great talk on using beneficial insects to combat Chili thrips. He also spoke about the little known and under-appreciated hybrid giganteas, the new ones being bred by Viru Viraraghaven. They make wonderful warm weather climbers and shrubs. Angel Gardens will be growing and providing some of these new varieties through Gene’s sponsorship. Pam Greenewald gave a propagation workshop after lunch.

Many great raffle gifts were given away, and rose sales received discounts. Perfect weather and a pre-summer garden of roses kept everyone euphoric with the beauty of the rosy day.

When St. Paul’s Cathedral in London held a service in 2002 to commemorate the victims killed in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it dropped onto the congregation 3,000 rose petals, representing the number of those who had died.



“Jesse Hildreth” at the Celebration of Old Roses

CELEBRATING THE CELEBRATION OF OLD ROSES

Jeri Jennings

For many years, the crowning rose event of a California spring has been the mid-May “*Celebration Of Old Roses.*” Held at the community center in El Cerrito, not far from the home of the late Miriam Wilkins, founder of the Heritage Roses Group, the Celebration draws lovers of Old Roses from around California—and in many years, from around the world.

As with a conventional rose show, the visitors are participants, who *make* the show, bringing Old Rose blooms from their garden, to be set out on display tables by class. But, at THIS rose show, there are no judges. Visitors are encouraged to pick blooms up—touch them—smell them—compare them to blooms of other roses.

Though Teas, Chinas, and cluster-flowering Noisettes are the best roses in my own coastal Southern California garden, I am often drawn to the side of the table devoted to the old, once-blooming European roses. Where else, after all, am I going to enjoy

these ancient, often mysterious beauties? (Surely not in MY garden, where lack of winter-chill dooms them.) Even so, I have to visit the Teas, Chinas, and Noisettes. (There might, after all, be something there I NEED.)

No one should fail to visit the arrangements, displayed in the back of the long room. The table of unidentified roses is another “*must see.*” And while you walk from place to place, be sure to check out the vendors, selling “*rosy*” merchandise, from delicately hand-painted china, to books, to jewelry and on and on.

This year, I worried that late winter heatwaves might have limited the display. Most bloom WAS early this year. I should not have worried. There was certainly ENOUGH bloom to make the room colorful, festive, and fragrant.

Outside the building, in front, and in the courtyard, you could buy the roses you most covet.



Gregg Lowery & Darrell Schramm at Information and Membership Table

Friends of Vintage Gardens were there to sell own-root roses in well-grown bands. There, I found the very well-grown band of ***N 92 Nanjing*** I had longed for. The Bay Area HR Group sold roses. Tom Liggett brought and sold roses. At the HRG “*Local Groups*” table, several rarities were offered in Silent Auction.

The Heritage Roses Group itself, for the first time, sold well-grown one- and five-gallon own-root roses, many propagated for the event by Board Member Alice Flores* (and sold by Alice and her lovely granddaughter).

Those roses included cultivars that are simply no longer in commerce—or which, as rare Found Roses, have NEVER been in commerce.

I have been privileged to make my pilgrimage to the Celebration every spring, for many years. Some years, there have been more roses – some years, fewer. Some years, more visitors. Some years fewer. I left this year’s event with a feeling of joy and hope. We had somewhat fewer visitors, BUT we saw a



Judy Eitzen & ORG Mascots

high percentage of new faces. Our **“Local Groups”** table was busy all day, fielding questions from younger gardeners, who had only recently dived into the beauty of Old Roses. These folks were filled with questions. They sought recommendations. And many of them bought roses to take home, choosing carefully with an eye to where the new additions would fit into their gardens.

We took in new memberships, and membership renewals (and we, ourselves, bought a few roses).

The day WAS a Celebration. It began in beauty, and ended in beauty. We’re already looking forward to next



Susan Walker,
Victorian Rose Lady

year—and hope you can join us. It occurs every May, the Sunday after Mother’s Day.

**Alice Flores – Many of you may recall Alice’s excellent small nursery – White Rabbit Roses.*



Mottisfont Abbey



Lycoris, a rare Gallica rose of 1832 at Mottisfont

MOTTISFONT ROSE CONFERENCE

The Editor

For three days, from the morning of June 23 to the evening of the 25th, the Heritage Rose Foundation hosted its international rose conference just outside Winchester, England—an ancient town of narrow cobbled streets and a cathedral more than 1000 years

old (consecrated in 1093), housing the graves of Jane Austen, King Canute, and other royalty.

June 23rd began with a talk by guest-of-honor David Stone who, after 36 years, was retiring as head gardener at the Mottisfont estate. (It had once been an Augustinian priory founded in 1201.) Stone, who had succeeded Graham Stuart Thomas on *his* retirement in 1978, spoke on the history of the place, on G.S. Thomas' influence and work, on gardening methods, and on the roses themselves and their companion plants.

A young man, John D. Woods, head gardener at Hinton



Ampner, a fourteen-acre country manor, which we conference guests would tour later in the week, spoke next. Lord Ralph Dutton, who had inherited the estate from his parents (it had been in family for over 300 years), redesigned the house and grounds. Finding the famous, compartmentalized gardens at Sissinghurst to be too claustrophobic, he landscaped his gardens to flow and spill into each other.

Maurizio Usai from Sardinia talked on Mediterranean issues and techniques of gardening, using his own increasingly well-known garden on the southern-most part of the island as an example. Among his heat-and-drought tolerant roses—teas, chinas, noisettes, and ramblers—he grows alstroemeria, the fragrant Lily *formosanum*, opium poppies,

watsonia, and other companion plants, striving for contrasts of texture, color, and shape.

The incomparable Peter Boyd lectured on Scots roses and related spinosissima, their history, locations, growth, popularity, and use. His book *Scots Roses, Rosa spinosissima, and Other Pimpinellifolia* is expected out next year. It promises to be a ground-breaking text.

Johnny Bass, the head gardener elect of Mottisfont, held forth on the conservation of his legacy. And short ten-minute talks were presented as well, some during dinner. Dr. Malcolm Manners addressed current DNA studies of roses at Florida Southern College. For example, he and his team have determined that the roses named ‘Eugene E. Marlitt’, ‘Maggie’, ‘Kakinada Red’, and ‘Pacific’ are all the same rose—but that does not mean that ‘Eugene E. Marlett’ (sometimes preceded with ‘Mme’) is the original name of this particular rose. Pamela Temple spoke on her preservation work of ramblers and climbers in the mountains above Ukiah, California; and the renowned Viru Viraraghaven informed us of his current work in breeding new roses for a more tropical climate in India.

The last two days were spent on instructional and entertaining tours of Mottisfont (more on that in the next issue), the incredibly beautiful grounds of Hinton Ampner, and the gardens of Loseley Park. All in all, the conference was smoothly organized, informative, captivating, uplifting, and definitely worthwhile.

To Join or Renew Heritage Roses Group:

Send \$16 for the print format of *Rose Letter*
or \$10 for the digital format

to Clay Jennings, Membership Chair,
22 Gypsy Lane, Camarillo, CA 93010
or contact him at e.c.jennings@gmail.com.

Visit www.theheritagerosesgroup.org for more information.

Print format for Overseas membership is \$26 in U.S. funds.

September 27: Autumn in San Jose’s Heritage Rose Garden. Rose sales! Spring & Taylor Sts. San Jose CA

JUST A FEW OLD ROSES: CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN

The Editor

Should you find yourself in London for a few days or more, do visit the Chelsea Physic Garden. Situated near the Thames embankment, this 340 year-old garden of living history was established in 1673 by the Society of Apothecaries of London. The word *physic* then referred to things natural rather than metaphysical, and more specifically to things medicinal. Plant-based healing and medicines reach back to Medieval times and farther; monasteries were once the repository of such plants, including *Rosa gallica*, ‘The Apothecary’s Rose’.

By 1795 the Physick Garden (so it was spelled then) was growing some 3,700 specimens. Earlier, around 1718, Philip Miller had been appointed head gardener there, a post he held for nearly fifty years. Not only did he make the garden world famous, but also he wrote *Gardeners Dictionary*, which went through eight editions, becoming for years the standard reference work for nurserymen and gardeners in both Great Britain and the colonies. Miller also corresponded with the nurseryman John Bartram of Philadelphia, sending him rose plants and seeds in the 1750s, a fact which suggests how American acquired some of its early non-native roses.

Although Miller was given a moss rose in 1727 to plant in the Chelsea garden, no moss rose grows there today. However, a few others do; *Rosa gallica officinalis* is one. *Officinalis* means “from the monastic storeroom (*officina*)” where medicinal plants were stored. Linnaeus, who gave us the Latin botanical nomenclature we use today, chose the word *officinalis* as a species name for plants with strong medicinal properties.

Other roses in the garden are labeled *R. centifolia*, *R. pimpinellifolia*, *R. x odorata* ‘Bengal Crimson’, and ‘Himalayan Musk’. The latter has climbed at least 30 feet into a tree. Also known as *Rosa brunonii* Lindley, it was introduced from Nepal to Europe in 1822. It has been used for skin irritations, gastric distress, and eye diseases. If you should visit the Old City Cemetery in Sacramento, be sure to look for it in the Historic Rose Garden.

‘Bengal Crimson’, sometimes called ‘Sanguinea’, was introduced from China in 1804. This attractive red china rose, a single, blooms almost continuously, more or less profusely depending on the season. It is known to be medicinally effective for pharyngitis and stomatitis.



Bengal Crimson

Rosa centifolia can be traced back in Dutch paintings to the early 1600s, but it is likely older. Centifolias tend to be rather floppy shrubs, which may be why the one in this garden is tightly surrounded by other plants. As

an infusion it seems effective to stop tickling coughs and as an ointment to soothe and heal chapped skin and skin abrasions.

Rosa pimpinellifolia is a somewhat vague name for the rose in the Physic Garden, given that *pimpinellifolia* is one of over a dozen variants of *R. spinosissima*—although it’s possible that the labeler named it such as a synonym of *spinosissima*. Its tomato-shaped black hips are ostentatious. *R. spinosissima* is believed to have the world’s widest distribution of all rose species.

Philip Miller had encouraged the young Joseph Banks in his botanical interests. Unfortunately for rose lovers, while a bed is devoted to plants introduced by or named for Banks, it does not contain any roses.

Another bed is named for Robert Fortune, who was curator at the garden from 1846 to 1848, the year he set out again for China. The bed includes a number of his introductions but no roses.

William Curtis, who worked at this Chelsea garden from 1772 to 1777 and who in 1787 founded *Botanical Magazine*--still published today--has a bed containing plants named for him. He was the grandfather of Henry Curtis famous for his illustrations in *The Beauties of the Rose*.

Today Chelsea Physic Garden continues to serve botanical, ethnobotany and pharmaceutical studies; it also serves as an international seed exchange system and a source for public education of natural medicine. The roses there are few, but this supremely diverse garden offers the lure of knowledge and surprise.

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**SAVE THE DATE! Autumn in the Heritage Rose Garden.
Saturday, Sept. 27, Spring & Taylor Streets, San Jose**



“Spy Rock Perpetual”
A found rose from the Spyrock vicinity of
Mendocino County, California