

Victoria Avenue

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The 'Ragged Robin' Rose

by Robert Lindquist

The rose known to American gardeners today as 'Ragged Robin' raised a real ruckus among rosarians when it was introduced in 1825.

This particular variety made a clean color break away from the pink and rose shadings of early 'Bourbon' classification of its earliest China/Damask hybrids. Its loosely formed bloom belied the likely cross-breeding of that strain of China roses such as 'Crimson China' and the later 'Archduke Charles' and 'Louis Philippe' that possessed deep red coloring. In fact, rose expert J. Horace McFarland in his book "Roses of the World in Color" lists this variety as a 'Climbing China.' In a surprisingly short time, this cultivar introduced in France by Vibert as 'Gloire des Rosomanes' was being grown and distributed in the United States.

Nineteenth century Americans warmly welcomed 'Gloire des Rosomanes' to gardens, parks and dooryards across the continent following the rage to use roses as decorative elements where and whenever new towns and cities were on the rise. Commensurately, our own domestic rose industry here in California grew and prospered.

Production numbers increased as improvements to rose propagation and culture advanced. Soon it became apparent to growers on both side of the Atlantic that simply raising "clones" of the parent stock from cuttings of the same left much to be desired. In many cases, the cuttings didn't root well, and in others, the variety itself was vulnerable to root disease and adverse soil conditions. Also of concern



Close-up of 'Ragged Robin' flowers

to growers was the inability of certain classifications and varieties to grow with vigor in the two year time allotted to each crop cycle.

The robustness and tenacity of 'Gloire des Rosomanes' was noted early on and producers soon began using this popular garden rose as the parent starter and host to other rose varieties in order to aid field production and ultimately give the end customer bigger, healthier plants.

When Charles Howard established the Howard Rose Company in Hemet, his first crops were largely comprised of own-root cuttings. By 1913, at the behest of his partner and my grandfather, Ernest Lindquist, 'Gloire des Rosomanes' began to serve as the host "root stock" for what were then "grafted" plant varieties. Inserting just the bud into the host plant followed, while all along 'Gloire des Rosomanes' continued to give good service as the host stock. The choice was pretty much universal and soon its garden prowess was outdistanced by its utilitarian virtues and the public, following the practical American rose growers and their field-hands began calling the rose 'Ragged Robin.'

When Victoria Avenue was originally planted with its seemingly endless parade of variously colored and perfumed rose varieties, most of them were grown with 'Ragged Robin' as their root stock. When years stretched into decades, the named commercial varieties grafted and budded to this tough, vigorous understock, began to suffer attrition.

Most of the great Hybrid Perpetuals, Teas, Bourbons, Chinas and early Hybrid Teas that made spring drives out Victoria Avenue unforgettably colorful failed because 'Ragged Robin' was notorious for "taking over" when the grafted or budded unions weakened. Forty years ago, one could still see some other pinks, large reds and blended blooms along in Victoria's rose edged right of ways. But, watering and maintaining Riverside's famous "boulevard of blossoms" waned; the hoary old plants needed more care than could be given them and by the 1980's, only the ubiquitous but endearing 'Ragged Robins' remained.



Hedge of 'Ragged Robin' rose plants near Myrtle Street

President's Corner by Frank Heyming

Our last newsletter contained an article about former Riverside City Councilwoman Rosanna Scott. She made many contributions to Riverside as a strong supporter of beautification and open space preservation. Her contributions to the preservation and restoration of Victoria Avenue and her advocacy for the Victoria Avenue bicycle/walking path helped make Victoria Avenue the treasure it is today. In light of Rosanna Scott's many accomplishments, the board of directors of VAF voted at their January 2012 meeting to request that the City of Riverside name the bicycle trail along Victoria Avenue the "Rosanna Scott Memorial Bicycle Trail." This concept was approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission on May 7th and by the full City Council on May 22nd. The proposed signage (below) would be affixed to the existing bicycle route posts and VAF has agreed to pay the cost of the signage. We hope to announce a dedication ceremony in the near future.

The expansion plans for Washington Park (Victoria Avenue and Mary Street) are moving forward. Victoria Avenue Forever is reviewing the plans and will be making recommendations that we hope will enhance both the beauty of the Avenue and the ease of access to the park for walkers and bicyclists – a place to stop, rest, refresh and enjoy.

Largely through the efforts of board member Kurt Gunther, the Victoria Avenue Forever website is being reworked. To view the website go to www.victoriaavenue.org. We are also starting a new physical inventory of the trees on Victoria Avenue using mapping software. If you would like to assist with this effort, contact board member Tom Wilson at 951-780-2959 or Kurt Gunther at 951-565-8338.

If you have not walked, bicycled or driven Victoria Avenue in a while, take some time to enjoy it. You'll be glad you did.



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From the Editor by Darleen DeMason

Everything is coming up roses!

This newsletter is devoted to the most celebrated and popular of flowering garden plants – roses. In this issue we have three articles about roses: a history by Robert Lindquist of the 'Ragged Robin' rose, which is the most distinctive feature of Victoria Avenue; a tribute to Lorraine Small who is the namesake of a rose garden on Victoria Avenue near Myrtle; and a brief history of rose breeding to put the other articles in context.

We also have an update on activities on Victoria Avenue by our President, Frank Heyming. Take some time to see roses this month. Victoria Avenue is basically a rose garden. A specific garden dedicated to Lorraine Small is near the intersection with Myrtle. Fairmont Park and the UC Riverside Botanic Gardens also have rose gardens. The largest collection of roses nearby is in the Huntington Gardens in San Marino.

More information about roses and specific varieties can be obtained from:

American Rose Society website and publications • www.ars.org
Sunset Western Garden Book
Riverside Rose Society, Inc. website • www.riversiderose.org

The Modern Hybrid Rose and its Old and Wild Rose Ancestors

- You've come a long way baby!

by Darleen DeMason

Roses have been adored and cultivated since antiquity in spite of the fact that all aspects of their form have been constantly changing due to human influence through breeding. The genus *Rosa* consists of about 100 species native to Asia, Europe, North America, and Northern Africa. Although there is variation, these wild roses are woody shrubs with compound leaves and simple flowers. The flowers on wild roses have 5 sepals, 5 petals, many stamens and carpels enclosed in a hypanthium. Of course these plants grow on their own root systems. In contrast, modern hybrid roses have many petals which derive from mutated stamens and are grown on rootstocks of other rose species that are resistant to soil borne pathogens. One might wonder how we got from there to here. An important precondition that allowed such extensive breeding to occur is that wild rose species are easily crossed or hybridized (i.e. they are cross compatible). The 'Ragged Robin' rose on Victoria Avenue, like all rose varieties of the past, has a unique story of its origin and history. So, here is an encapsulated general history of modern roses.

The beginnings of rose cultivation and breeding go back too far to have a recorded history. The ancient Greeks, Romans and Moslem Arabs collected rose species and transported them across continents. The Chinese also cultivated roses since ancient times. But I am going to start my story with Empress Rose (aka Josephine) de Beauharnais of France, first wife of Napoleon Bonaparte. She had the resources through her husband to collect roses from around the world and hire professional gardeners and horticulturists to develop the world's first rose collection in her private garden. This collection was started in 1804 at the imperial Chateau Malmaison in Paris and within ten years there were 250 rose varieties represented. She also hired artists to record all her roses with watercolor paintings, which were published along with botanical descriptions in three volumes entitled "Les Roses." These rose varieties became the ancestors of most modern roses. The old roses in her garden were:

Gallicas – These were varieties and hybrids of the French or western European rose known as *Rosa gallica*. These roses are cold hardy, vigorous with brightly colored, fragrant flowers ranging from pink to deep maroon, but they flowered only once per year.

Damasks – These came from the Middle East and are *Rosa damascena*. They were known from ancient times and are portrayed in frescoes in Pompeii. These varieties flowered more than once yearly and had 10 or so fragrant, pink petals in each flower.

Albas – The first albas were natural hybrids between damask and a native species, *Rosa canina*. These roses were pink or white, fragrant, many petalled, on disease-resistant climbers. They flowered only once per year.

Chinas – These roses had been collected in the "Orient" and were descended from *Rosa chinensis*. Their popularity was based on their ability to bloom continuously or be virtually "everblooming." These varieties, however, were cold-sensitive and had little fragrance.

Teas – These were the first true ever-blooming roses and were an ancient hybrid of China roses and *Rosa gigantea*. They had large flowers, were highly fragrant and were the most elegant roses of their time. They had a long, pointed bud and came in pink, cream, buff and yellow colors. They were cold sensitive. Their popularity was superseded by their descendants – the hybrid teas.

Because the Empress brought all these different roses together in a common garden, the magic of Mother Nature (and bees) took its course and provided hybrid seeds and seedlings with combinations of characteristics from different parents. In particular, hybrids between the European and Chinese roses provided the French Horticulturists with the raw materials to become the world's leading rose breeders for a century. They

used these resources to start producing new varieties of hybrid roses, also known as Old Roses.

Other Old Roses

Bourbons – The ancestor of this class of roses was a natural hybrid between China and Damask roses that was found by a French botanist on the Isle of Bourbon (now called Reunion) adjacent to Madagascar. The seeds sent back to France produced plants with deep pink, semi-doubled flowers with repeat blooming and were vigorous semi-climbers with shiny dark leaves and reddish stems. Many varieties were developed in this group and one descendant is the 'Ragged Robin.'



A simple rose with few petals and many stamens, similar to wild rose species

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Lorraine Small's Rose Garden

by Jim Montgomery

Lorraine Small made an enormous contribution toward making Riverside the distinguished community that it is.

She served on the Riverside Park and Recreation Commission for eight years. She was Editor of the Garden Page of the *Riverside Press and Enterprise*, writing her popular column "Small Talk" for forty years. She was also very active with the annual Flower Shows in Riverside and neighboring cities. For several years Lorraine and her husband Waldo taught Horticulture in Riverside area night school classes, including some classes at UCR. She also had a keen interest in encouraging very young children to be interested in plants.

In 1957 Lorraine and her good friend Zelda Lloyd founded the Riverside Rose Society. In 1969 she received the Riverside Citizen of the Year Award. She also served on the Board of the University of California at Riverside Botanic Gardens.

Her crusade on behalf of Victoria Avenue led to the creation of the Victoria Avenue Forever organization and she was one of the original Board Members. In 1994 the Riverside City Council named a planting of 277 roses in the median at Victoria Avenue and Myrtle the "Lorraine Small Commemorative Planting".

Lorraine was known for her outgoing, friendly personality. She laughed easily, at herself as well as with others. She was a marvelous teacher and developed a loyal following of backyard gardeners. She did not need to wait for the liberation of women—she felt she was "born liberated" in her own words. She will be long remembered for her contributions to the beauty of the City of Riverside.



Entryway to the
Lorraine Small Rose Garden



Dedication plaque in the
Lorraine Small Rose Garden.

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The Modern Hybrid Rose

Hybrid Perpetuals - This was the most common garden rose in the early 19th century. Their ancestry contains all the previously known roses. A large range of colors were available and the plants were vigorous growers with cold-hardiness. Flowering was abundant in the spring and less predictable for the remainder of the summer. The flowers tended to be large, multi-petalled and wide.

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A modern hybrid, yellow rose with many petals and tightly packed petals

The Modern Hybrid Rose

Hybrid Teas – By definition, the beginning of modern roses is 1867 when the first hybrid tea was introduced. The hybrid teas have Hybrid Perpetuals and Teas in their background. This is now the most popular class of rose. The flowers are large and pointed in the bud. There is one flower to each long stem and hence they are called “long stemmed roses.”

Floribundas – This class is characterized by having flowers in clusters on stems. Typically the flowers and plants are smaller than hybrid teas. Planted in groups they provide mass color in the garden.

Miniature Roses – As the name suggests these are miniature replicas of modern hybrid teas and floribundas. Flowers and foliage are reduced in proportion. These are nearly all grown on their own roots and propagated by rooting cuttings.

So, take some time to smell the roses this month. And while you are doing this, take a moment to think about how this beauty and serenity, the hybrid rose, came to be. Mother Nature provided the raw materials; the Bonapartes contributed an important step; and many anonymous gardeners and plant breeders also played important roles. We are all a part of a long standing and ever changing love affair between humans and roses.

Contributions to the Endowment Fund March 2012 – May 2012

Endowment Fund Contributions

Thank you to all who contributed to Victoria Avenue in memory of, or in honor of, your loved ones. Your gifts will be used to help protect and care for Riverside’s living legacy – Victoria Avenue. We want to make sure to acknowledge every one. If your gift is not acknowledged in this issue of the *Avenews*, it will be in the next one.

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