

Historic Roses of Ventura County

By: Ingrid Wapelhorst

Some of the joys of being part of any family are the shared heritage, experiences, and personal mementos passed down from previous generations. For centuries, roses have been shared with family members and passed down through generations. They not only offer added beauty in the garden, but they also serve as a reminder of the life and times of loved ones no longer with us. They may even shed some light on the history of the roses themselves. There are several known examples of these “family heirlooms” in Ventura County.

“The Mariah Wood”: This rose was given to the Stagecoach Inn by Janet Sandell of Oxnard in honor of her Great Grandmother, Mariah Wood Herren. Mariah Wood married Samuel Herren in Missouri in 1868 and moved to Garden Grove, CA, in 1888, where they started an orange grove and planted this rose. Each generation took a cutting of this rose as they moved to Modesto, Tarzana, Palm Springs, and Oxnard. Although the name of the rose was a mystery to the family, it has since been identified as ‘Paul Neyron’, an 1869 Hybrid Perpetual with large, pink, fragrant blooms bred in France by Antoine Levet (pere). It is not known if the rose came with the Herrrens from Missouri or was acquired in California.

“The Tringali Roses” (2): The Tringali roses included an original rose and a rooted cutting of the roses planted in Yonkers, New York, after Dominick and Mammie Tringali immigrated from Sicily in 1917. The family moved to Thousand Oaks after Dominick and his son Hugo returned from World War II in 1947. After Dominick built their home in Thousand Oaks, Mammie and her three children drove from New York with all of their belongings. Included among their possessions were their rose plants wrapped in burlap. The Tringali’s roses were a common sight on the altar during Sunday Mass as well as at other churches and gatherings. Two roses were donated to the Stagecoach Inn in 1997, ten years after the Tringalis passed away; one was overtaken by rootstock and was replaced by a cutting of the second rose grown by Hetty Shurtleff of the VCRS. The identity of the Tringali Rose remains a mystery today, but its pink double, many petaled, somewhat flat bloom shape on a floribunda-type bush suggest to Jim Delahanty that it might be a hybrid Polyantha.

“Sarah Moon”: This rose is a recent introduction to the Stagecoach Inn garden by the VCRS and is named after Sarah (Byrd) Moon, who was born in 1867 to a pioneering family in Porterville, CA. She and her husband Alfonso Moon settled in Ventura, California, in 1897, where they leased 100 acres of farmland in Oxnard and grew lima beans, sugar beets, and corn. Their son Alfonso died in 1897 and was buried in the Ventura City Cemetery, long since turned into a City park. Sarah Moon apparently took home a cutting of a rose from the cemetery and grew it into a lovely rose bush. Over the years, the family moved to Fillmore, and then to Santa Paula, and the rose accompanied them each time. Sarah Moon’s home in Santa Paula was subsequently sold and the land cleared. Fortunately, Walt Klement (Sarah Moon’s Great Grandson) and his wife Judy, took cuttings of the rose and now grow it in their garden. Walt is a fourth generation Californian, and the family has lived in Ventura County for over 100 years. The “Sarah Moon” rose is also over 100 years old. Although the exact identity of the rose is not known, it is a Tea rose and is believed by Jeri Jennings to be a “sport” of ‘Maman Cochet’.

“Atmore Lamarque”:

Alan Atmore’s Great Grandfather and brothers moved from Michigan during the Gold Rush in approximately 1849 and started a trucking company which supplied tools to miners. They later ran a stagecoach line and a hotel in El Dorado. Somewhere during that time, Alan’s great grandfather and great grandmother acquired a ‘Lamarque’ rose, which they dug up and brought with them when they moved to Santa Paula in 1872, where they started a lemon ranch. Alan’s father took cuttings of the original bush to his own lemon ranch in Santa Paula, which he bought in 1938. Sixty years later, in 1998, Alan’s mother passed away, and Alan and his wife Jyl took many cuttings from the Lamarque rose on his father’s property. Of the five plants that lived, one is with their son in Los Angeles, three are growing in the Atmore garden in Santa Paula, and one succumbed to Oak Root Fungus.

New roses were very popular during the Gold Rush, as new-found wealth translated into disposable income for non-essentials, such as imported roses from France. Lamarque, a Noisette of climbing habit with beautiful white blossoms with yellow centers and a lemon tea fragrance, was bred in 1830 by the French breeder Marechal. It was apparently a very popular hardy rose in Northern California as it is still found growing in old cemeteries in the region.

Rancho Camulos, Piru, California

The existing 1,800 acre Camulos Ranch was established by Ygnacio del Valle in 1853 from a portion of the 48,612 acre Rancho San Francisco granted to Ygnacio’s father Antonio del Valle in 1839. The ranch grew a variety of citrus, fruits, nuts, and grains as well as raising cattle on the ranch over the years. The grapes cultivated for the production of wine and brandy brought the del Valle family their first real commercial success in the 19th century. The property stayed in the del Valle family until the sale of the ranch in 1924 to the August Rubel family. There are many unidentified roses on the

VenturaCtyRosesFeb2008Article

property. Anything that might have been planted before 1924 is likely to have been planted by the del Valles; after that, possibly by Mary Rubel (1925-1954), and by her daughter, Shirley, after 1994. Of those, 'R. eglanteria' (species) has been confirmed, and 'Ramona' (1913), its sport parent 'Anemone' (1896), 'Red Radiance' (1916), and 'Talisman' (1929) are very likely identities of four others on the ranch. Mary Rubel appeared to be fond of Hybrid Teas, particularly the Pernetianas which were so popular at the time, but the names of these roses are still a mystery. It is hoped that these roses will remain at Rancho Camulos as part of its heritage and will eventually be identified.

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