

We Go Rose Rustling

-- Jeri Jennings

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To travel North or South through California, you will use one of three main routes.

Folks in a hurry take Interstate 5, the “Get-There-Quick” route. Running straight up the middle of the state in no-nonsense fashion, “I-5” is the main route for commercial traffic, and for those with no time to spare for dawdling along the way. It zooms North through California and rushes on, bisecting Oregon, and then Washington State.

California State Highway 99 skims the Western foothills of the Sierras. An aging highway now, it connects the small farming towns of the Central Valley, and remains intimately attached to them. Old 99’s roadbed is cracked and worn, pounded by decades of heavy commercial truck traffic.

California State Highway 101 is the “scenic route.” From Ventura County, it winds Northward, skimming along the seashore, and affording breathtaking views of the Gaviota Coast, and California’s rich farmland.

Highway 101 is our route of choice, as we head North in company with Kay and Bud Jones. We’re not just sightseeing, this trip. This is a “rose rustling” safari.

Yes, we’re off to “steal roses.” We do so, however, with discretion. We’ve waited until mid November, to increase our chance of success. (PLEASE don’t take cuttings when your chance of succeeding is poor.) If we see roses that we recognize, and which we know to be in commerce, we don’t take cuttings at all, preferring to support the folks who grow and sell them commercially (and who do a better job than we do). There are, however, many unknown roses in California. Those we covet, and from them we will occasionally take cuttings.

We’ve set out on a crisp morning. Grey clumps of fog drape the hillsides along the Gaviota Coast, while the sea and the highway lie in sunlight. Black Angus cattle graze on endangered ranchlands, and the hills stand out in sharp relief against the fog. At Point Arguello, a huge rip in the coastal range formed the Gaviota Pass. Here, the highway swerves inland.

Exposed rock in the pass offers a textbook view of what earthquakes do— a geologists’ dream, or a seismologist’s nightmare. Against the black rock, sycamore trees blaze yellow as the road roars through tiny Buellton, and plunges into the vineyards of the Santa Ynez Valley.

San Juan Bautista



*'Perle d'Or,' – San Juan Bautista
Cemetery*

San Juan Bautista is our first stop – North of Salinas, South of San Jose, and just a couple of miles off Highway 101. This small town was born when the Mission Church was founded, in 1797. The whole City is worth a visit, but today we're going only to the Cemetery.

This small cemetery, sited on a windswept hilltop, has been in use since the mid-1800's, and continues in active use today. There is no grass to be mowed, no "perpetual care," and no irrigation, but there are many roses. They bloom in the spring, survive grimly through the hot summer, and get a new lease on life with the first fall rains. Most of the plants are old, and most appear to be growing on their own roots. Some are familiar, but many defy identification.

An 8-foot-tall *'Perle d'Or'* is one of the cemetery's great treasures, and it is rich on this fall day with bud and bloom. Taller still, a tree-like white rose shades the grave of Jesse Hildreth, dead in 1867 at age 21. This, most likely, is *'Devoniensis,'* and it is

probably the 1858 Climbing form of that 1838 Tea Rose. Sadly, this old "tree" is beginning to show the weight of its years. I wouldn't be surprised to return in a year, and find part, or all of it, fallen.

The oldest grave in the Barbee Family Plot is that of Victorice Barbee, a Frenchwoman, who died in San Juan Bautista in 1915. Perhaps her American husband planted the low-growing pink rose that grows there – a vigorous, plant with still generous repeat bloom. I guess this to be a Hybrid Perpetual, though I couldn't guess which Hybrid Perpetual it might be. Real name aside, its value, health, and beauty are unquestionable. "Barbee Pink" should be a good addition to any garden [1].

The San Jose Heritage Rose Garden

The San Jose Heritage Rose Garden is only one portion of a much larger garden project. Whole neighborhoods were cleared in the 1980's in the name of Airport Safety. Now, this land is being "reclaimed" in the form of parks and public gardens. Initial planning for the Heritage Rose Garden took place in 1995, with roses selected on the basis of rarity or endangered status. No

chemical sprays are used in this garden, which is maintained under the auspices of Tom Liggett and Mel Hulse by what must be a veritable army of dedicated volunteers. Today, this 5-acre garden, truly a “Living Encyclopedia of Roses,” is worth the visitor’s time at almost any season. We’ve seen its spectacular spring bloom. It is no less worth a visit in the fall.

In mid-November, the garden still blooms generously, but with the addition of a smorgasbord of hips adding extra color and texture. Big hips and small ones, round, elongated, or pear-shaped, orange, red, and rich purple hips delight the eye and offer food for birds and squirrels.

The garden is divided into sections by rose “families.” “Found” roses are placed with their probable correct family group. The Polyantha beds were a riot of color, ‘Cecile Brunner’ rubbing shoulders with *‘La Marne’* and *‘Perle d’Or.’* Deep pink *‘Lady Ann Kidwell’* competed for attention with lipstick-red *‘Lady Reading’* and *‘Mothersday,’* while *‘Leonie Lamesch’* added an oddly modern splash of buff and carmine. *“Altaville Saffron-Colored Noisette”* wraps a telephone pole, and defies the calendar with a huge flush of egg-yolk-yellow blooms. This found rose looks very much like photos I’ve seen of ‘William Allen Richardson,’ (an 1878 sport of ‘Reve d’Or.’)[2]

A splash of bright yellow couldn’t be missed among the more modern roses. This is a good example of the way roses, and rose names, can drive you nuts. A tag reading *‘Dahlia Rose’* marked this low-growing Floribunda. The blooms looked like big, shaggy Chrysanthemums; the color was striking, the growth habit compact, upright, and neat, and the unsprayed foliage was clean and glossy. The name *“Dahlia Rose”* was not listed in any book or compendium of roses. I learned later that the proper name for this rose is *‘Sunny Today,’* that it was by D. Whisler, and that it was introduced in 1970. To add to the confusion, there IS an unregistered *‘Dahlia Rose,’* but it is pink. *Do we wonder why so many Old Roses remain unidentified?*

A note to the prudent traveler: If you visit the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden on a weekday, **GET OUT OF TOWN EARLY!** Plan your garden visit to avoid the truly awesome rush-hour traffic of both the morning and evening commutes, or doom yourself to a long and frustrating drive as the sun sets.

**The San Jose Heritage Rose Garden is located on Taylor Street, in San Jose’s
Guadalupe River Park and Gardens**

Visit the SJHRG Site at www.heritageroses.us/

The Sacramento City Cemetery

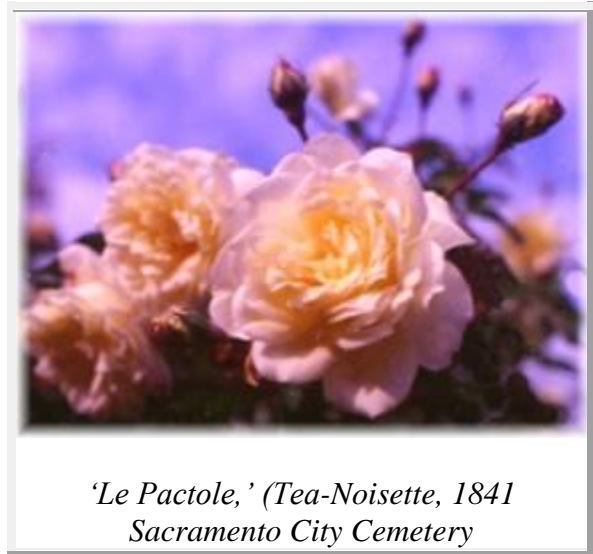
The Gold Rush country of the Sierras is California’s “Mother Lode” of Old Roses – and a tour of the Gold Rush towns along California Highway 49 is equally a tour of Old Roses. Entering this area through Sacramento puts the Rosarian “in the mood” with a very special stop.

Sacramento's "Old City Cemetery" is located at Broadway and 10th streets, close to the State Capitol Building, off Hwy. 80. It's easy to find, and worth the visitor's time for its history, its art, and – DEFINITELY –its roses.

Land for the City Cemetery was donated by John Augustus Sutter, Jr. Regarded as the "founder" of present-day Sacramento, he's said to have been responsible for making the city the State Capitol. Sutter lies here today in his "Public Grave Yard," in company with others of the Early California "movers and shakers." (Perhaps Sutter had a specific interest in cemeteries.) He was also the donor of the land for "New Helvetia Cemetery," also located in Sacramento, and once the resting place of 1,000 Chinese immigrants. [3]

The City Cemetery was in operation as early as 1849. A cholera epidemic in 1850 quickly added 500 new "residents," and by 1858, the Cemetery had its own well, 300 trees, 3,000 graves, and a growing collection of roses. More than 20,000 California pioneers rest here – people from every part of the globe –rich and poor, famous, infamous, and obscure.

Plots in the cemetery are individually owned, but after 150 years, many of the dead have no living relatives to tend their graves. The Old City Cemetery Committee, a non-profit support group, was formed to restore and protect this beautiful place. Lovers of Heritage Roses have done fine work here.



All of the cemetery roses that CAN be identified, ARE identified, and clearly tagged. "Found" roses have been added to the cemetery collection. They, too, are tagged with information on their place of discovery, and possible identities. Even in mid-November, the place is extraordinary. The ROSES are extraordinary. It must be breathtaking in springtime, and we will return to see it at its best.

Strolling the Cemetery pathways, you are surrounded by roses. The 1878 pink-blend Tea, '**Mme. Lombard**' (or '**Mme. Lambard**') competes for attention with neighboring '**Louis Philippe**' (China, 1834) Both plants are 6 feet tall, and perhaps 6 feet across. 'Mme. Lombard' is a common find throughout California, and she's a prominent part of our own local Stagecoach Inn Heritage Rose Garden, in Newbury Park.

There are roses here we've never heard of. WONDERFUL roses!

'Le Pactole' is an 1841 Tea Rose, with Noisette family ties. The plant here is a 6-foot-tall mass of glossy leaves, studded liberally with full, creamy-white blooms. These are less formal than the similarly-colored '**Devoniensis**,' but on a plant of demonstrably greater vigor. '**Le Pactole**' is a

seedling of *'Lamarque,'* and it was once thought to be extinct. (It was not in Modern Roses 10, but has been included in Modern Roses 11.) Another “found” rose, *“Gilliam Cemetery Pink Noisette,”* is in generous bloom. It boasts glossy, disease—free foliage, long stems, and sprays of small, lovely, VERY fragrant blooms. *'Mme. Breon'* an unfamiliar Bourbon may have been named for the wife of Mons. Breon, discoverer of the first Bourbon rose. Her cool, blush blooms are of moderate size, held in pretty sprays on long stems. The foliage is dark, glossy, and clean.

WHY ARE THESE ROSES NOT IN COMMERCE? Roses such as *'Mme. Breon,' 'Le Pactole,'* and *“Gilliam Cemetery Noisette”* offer an opportunity SOMEONE should grasp. Surely, everyone would benefit from widespread propagation of such roses. [4]

Every old cemetery has its share of *'Cecile Brunners.'* Here, she is put to shame by numerous *'La Marnes'* and *'Perle d'Ors.'* Any of us could grow these Polyanthas up to eight feet in height. Sure we could – providing we have a hundred years or so to spare! Don't worry! They'll be just as lovely, floriferous, and disease-free in your garden at a more modest (and more customary) three-and-a-half to four feet. These wonderful Polyanthas are still in commerce. Try 'em! You'll like 'em! (Betcha can't grow just one.)

*For more information regarding the Sacramento City Cemetery
Contact the Old City Cemetery Committee
P.O. Box 255345, Sacramento, CA 95865-5345
Or telephone 916-448-0811*

Placerville



*'De Bernardi Red HT'
Placerville Cemetery*

We spent a beautiful, sunlit morning in Sacramento. A few miles East, and a few hours later, in Placerville, a storm is clearly imminent. The sky is dark, and cold, and the wind smells of rain and wet leaves. Here, in the Sierra foothills, trees are turning yellow, orange, and flame red. Placerville's historic Main Street is dressed for the impending Holiday season, and brightly-lighted on this dark afternoon. Stone and brick buildings that once dispense liquor and overalls to miners now house tempting antique shops, trendy gifts and crafts, and stylish camping supplies.

We first visited Placerville's Union Cemetery on a warm day in mid-May, with every rose in bloom. The change from Spring to Fall is enormous, and it is at first difficult to find the two un-named roses I am looking for: A very dark red Hybrid Tea, and an old Pink rose with a Damask look.

I found the Red Hybrid Tea, at last, by the tombstone it shades –the resting place of one John S. DeBernardi, who died in 1940. “*De Bernardi Red*” is my direction-finder to “*Placerville Pink*,” and with this possible “*Autumn Damask*,” I have collected both of the two roses I came for.

In the end, we took cuttings of four roses away from Placerville this day. (Only the desired red Hybrid Tea failed to strike. I’ll try again.) A deep purple-toned pink rose may have been a Hybrid Perpetual or Portland. Bud and Kay Jones found this rose on a spring visit. On this dark November day, it was blooming still – though someone had lopped off the top half of the plant with a chain saw.

A nearby ‘*Archduke Charles*’ had received the same rude treatment, but both seemed to have taken it in stride. Not far from “Bud Jones Placerville Portland,” we found the final prize of the day. Sprays of pretty, white “pom-pom” blooms decorate a low-growing rose with dark green, glossy foliage. Much later, I learned that Phillip Robinson of Vintage Gardens has also collected this rose, and it is available through Vintage as “Placerville White Noisette.” It marks the grave of Jacob Zeiss, who died in 1890, at age 25. Jacob’s friends paid for his marker, and perhaps planted his white rose. Whatever it may be, roses that bloom generously and are impervious to disease are “must-haves,” so Jacob’s rose came home with us.



“*Placerville Pink*,” (‘*Autumn Damask*’)

The rain held off ‘til we left the cemetery, but before nightfall, it was raining hard. The downpour continued through the night, accompanied by impressive thunder, wind, and lightning. Morning brought sunshine, and a blue sky decorated by big, white clouds. The storm was over, but the warning was clear: The Sierra winter was upon us, and our visit had been made in the nick of time. Future visits must wait until spring comes ‘round again, but we will go back. We always go back, and there is always a discovery to be made.

Michael’s Premiere Roses

The traveler leaving Placerville will find Michael’s Premiere Roses an easy stop to make, as it is located more or less at the mid-point between Placerville and Sacramento.

Michael’s is known principally for Miniature roses and selected Hybrid Teas. To our surprise, we also found a nice selection of Old Roses, Polyanthas, and Shrub Roses, along with a good choice of Minis.

I'd planned to get *'Dazzler.'* Michaels is the only source for this striking yellow Miniature, with red-tipped petals. We also wanted *'Steppin'Out,'* a bubble-gum-pink Exhibition Form Hybrid Tea. We did buy *'Steppin'Out,'* but exhibited some restraint by passing on *'Dazzler,'* because – you can't buy EVERYTHING, (can you?) and we also got . . .

'Echo' – This 1914 sport of *'Tausendschoen'* looks like a baby copy of its parent, and she is sometimes called “Baby Tausendschoen.” Her habit says “Polyantha,” but she's classed with her parent as a Hybrid Multiflora, making her officially an Old Garden Rose. Her cupped blooms vary from dark pink, to light pink, to almost white, and despite her Rambler heritage, *'Echo'* is a terrific repeat bloomer. (If you've an eye to rose shows, enter her in the Victorian class.)

'Leonie Lamesch' – An 1899 Polyantha, bred by Lambert from *'Aglaiia,'* race mother of all of his “Lambertianas.” He named it to honor his fiance, the daughter of a prominent nursery family. I fell in love with the curious carmine and buff blooms at the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden, and knew I had to have *'Leonie Lamesch.'*

'Candy Cane' – I've seen this pretty pink-and-white-striped single here and there, and wanted it for some time. It's a 1958 Miniature Climber. Exhibiting remarkable restraint, I agreed to take home the 4-Inch plant, rather than the 1-Gallon Plant.

'Gala' – This 1999 pink Mini was hybridized by Harm Saville, and was new to Michaels. I loved the vivid pink color, and I'm told it has real exhibition potential -- but I bought it to honor my own Gala –almost 15-year-old American/Mexican Champion NorthStar's Masquerade, C.D.,T.T. (Dalmatian) How, after all, could I NOT by “her” rose?

Bud and Kay Jones left us at Michaels. They travel faster than we do, and would sleep at home that night. Taking one more day on the road, however, allowed us to make one more stop – at Sequoia Nursery, in Visalia.

Rolling South on Highway 99, I took time for some research. I didn't bring many rose books on this trip, but I DID bring the CD version of Botanica's ROSES. This useful bonus was only offered with the first printing, and that's a pity. Anyone who travels with a laptop would find this CD to be as useful as the new CD version of Modern Roses 11, and these two CD's constitute a compact, travelling rose library for the computer user. Photos illustrate a large proportion of the roses covered in Botanica, and a mouse click enlarges them to impressive full-screen size. If you should come across a copy of this rare prize, snap it up.

Sequoia Nursery, Visalia, California

Any trip through Visalia is a good trip, because you can stop at Sequoia Nursery. A trip that takes us to Sequoia on my BIRTHDAY is even better, since it offers an excuse to buy EXTRA roses. Any stop at Sequoia is a stop worth making, whether you buy many roses or few.

For this visit, our minds are on Polyanthas. We pick out a well-grown *'Lady Ann Kidwell,'* (so beautiful at the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden) and an equally nice *'Pink Koster.'* One of the innumerable Koster sports, this one shows its relationship to *'Echo.'* We picked out a lovely *'Jean Mermoz,'* with irresistible sprays of small, ruffled, pink blooms, and found that we couldn't pass by the modern Shrub Rose, *'Champagne Cocktail,'* and – finally – Harkness's small Floribunda, *'International Herald Tribune.'* I have no resistance to purple roses.

We brought one more rose away with us from Sequoia. "Childhood Memories" is the study name Ralph Moore, now in his 90's, has given this rose. It grew in his grandmother's garden, and she called it *'Niphetos,'* There is a *'Niphetos'* – an 1843 Tea – but today's experts say this Moore family rose is "*Not-Niphetos.*" Here, then, we have another "mystery rose." No one, yet, has been able to put a name to this lovely "*Childhood Memories;*" perhaps no one ever will. It's like that sometimes with Old Roses. Many cannot be identified. More than a few may never have HAD a "real" name, and – this may be "Rosarian Heresy," but as time goes on, I begin to think that it doesn't much matter

If a "found" rose is a good one, it will find its place in the garden, whatever we may call it. "*Maggie,*" "*Huilito,*" "*Fiddletown Pink Noisette,*" and "*Portland From Glendora*" are just a few of the roses that have returned to commerce under study names, because the roses are more important than the names. Perhaps "*Childhood Memories*" [5] and "*Bud Jones Placerville Portland*" will join that group. After all, the rose doesn't care what you call it. In the long run, much to my surprise, neither do I.

[1] "*Barbee Pink*" has now been identified as *'La Reine,'* Hybrid Perpetual, introduced in 1842

[2] "*Altaville Saffron-Colored Noisette*" has now been identified as *'William Allen Richardson.'*

[3] The Chinese dead have all been taken back to their homeland, and the New Helvetia Cemetery no longer exists.

[4] *'Le Pactole'* may soon be available through Vintage Gardens, Sebastopol, CA

[5] A 1997 pink Climber, is registered as *'Childhood Memories.'* It is NOT the same rose.