



Old Garden Rose and Shrub Journal



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Maureen Reed Detweiler, Editor

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EVERBLOOMING ROSES

Who was Georgia Torrey Drennan?

by Maureen Reed Detweiler

Once upon a time, almost a hundred years ago, Georgia Torrey Drennan wrote a wonderful book entitled *Everblooming Roses*. The book conveys her preference for roses that re-bloom all year, in no uncertain terms. She writes, "I hasten to say and emphasize that no rose, however queenly and however lovely, that blooms but once or twice a year is worthy of cultivation in gardens where everblooming kinds can be induced to grow." On occasion she resorts to military terms: "The ranks must be zealously guarded that none but true everblooming roses are admitted."

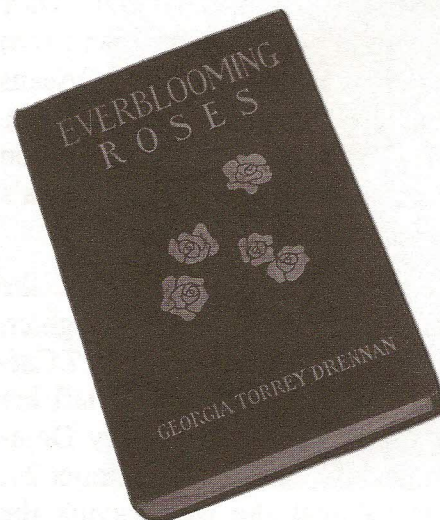
However, Georgia strongly encourages those in cold climates to grow the everblooming tea-type roses by engaging in what we now call "zone pushing," and she offers testimony in support of her case. She reminds us that in *An Island Garden*, Celia Thaxter states that she "accidentally left 'Anne-Marie de Montraville', the double white polyantha rose, out in the garden, and it came through the cold Isle of Shoals winter chipper and cheery."

Then Georgia quotes from the book *Elizabeth and Her German Garden*, "There is not a German gardening book that does not relegate all teas to the hothouse. I rushed in where Teutonic angels fear to tread, and made my teas face a northern winter. I am beginning to think the tenderness of the teas much exaggerated. I am certainly glad I had the courage to try them in this northern garden (located within 15 miles of the borders of the Baltic Sea)."

And it seems that in the 1860s the tea 'Niphetos' was thought to be entirely lost to culture. Then in a garden in the Blue Ridge mountains, a 'Niphetos' was discovered full of the unmistakable, elongated, oval, snow-white blooms. Georgia states, "The prize was secured and taken to Philadelphia. ... This instance of a pure tea enduring the cold of the mountain top is encouraging."

Everblooming Roses was the best known, and most cherished, book written about rose cultivation in the Gulf South until the publication of *Antique Roses for the South* in 1989 by Dr. William C. Welch. In his book, Dr. Welch states, "In the United States, Georgia Torrey Drennan, a southern woman about whom very little is known, wrote a wonderful book about rose culture in the Gulf South. Published in 1912, and no longer in print, the text reveals a wealth of firsthand experience and the skill of a knowledgeable horticulturist."

(continued on page 2)



I was introduced to Georgia and her book about 20 years ago. I was visiting the late Cleo Barnwell, a Grand Dame of roses, at her home in Shreveport, LA. She showed me the book and told me that Georgia had lived in New Orleans, and she asked if I knew any of Georgia's descendants. I have had a longtime friend by the name of Torrey Drennan and so I promised Cleo that I would investigate.

I discovered that Torrey Drennan is Georgia's great-grandson. His father was Wallace Campbell Drennan and his grandfather was Albert Wallace Drennan, one of Georgia's children. I was able to get some information from Torrey's wife, Jane Hainkel Drennan.

Georgia was born on December 9, 1843, at her parents' plantation, Round Hill, in Holmes County, Mississippi. Her father was Col. James Torrey. Her mother was Cynthia Boyd. Georgia was their seventh child, sixth daughter. Some records show Georgia's name as Georgiana.

Col. James Torrey was descended from one of the four Torrey brothers who came to America from Scotland in the 1750s. Three of them fought in the American Revolution. Round Hill Plantation was burned during the Civil War. The land where the home and garden were has been subdivided and several residences have been built there.

On April 6, 1861, Georgia married William A. Drennan (born in 1834), a lawyer from Lexington, MS, in Holmes county. They made their home in Lexington and had seven children. In 1895 they moved to New Orleans and settled in the Carrollton section of the city where St. Charles Avenue and Carrollton Avenues meet, and where many of Georgia's descendants still reside.

In 1897 Georgia's husband died, but she remained in New Orleans. Her daughter, Georgia Bertha Drennan, resided at 917 Carrollton Avenue until her death. She left her copy of her mother's book to Torrey Drennan, with an inscription dated September 25, 1954. She stated that she was leaving the book to him because she knew that his older

brother would inherit his father's copy. She also gave some information about Georgia and the gardens described in the book. She mentions the garden at Round Hill Plantation, which she stated "was burned during the troubled years of the 1860s," the garden at their home in Lexington, and the one at their home in New Orleans. Torrey Drennan also inherited portraits of Georgia and her husband William.

Georgia wrote many articles which were published in various garden publications over the years, and in 1912, at age 69, she wrote *Everblooming Roses* which was published by Duffield & Company in New York. The book is filled with history, science, 16 full-page photographs, and folklore. The final chapter provides a gift to researchers of old roses. It is a listing of 572 everblooming roses with descriptions and Georgia's own assessments. The lists are arranged according to class and color.

The book also contains her memories of olden days, such as the ones about Uncle Solomon, the head gardener at Round Hill Plantation. He could predict the weather, and "never did anything in his long life but tend the flower garden, which developed into one of the famous gardens of the Old South - the like of which will probably never be seen again," she immodestly states. She tells the story of the naming of the rose 'Marechal Niel' in 1863, and the origin of the Manheim, Pennsylvania "Feast of Roses" in 1752. And please, don't ever call a prickle a thorn. She was concerned about the improper use of the word thorn and devoted an entire chapter to correcting this error. She states: "Albeit commonly referred to, in prose and verse, as thorns, the armament of a rose consists only of prickles."

Georgia's partiality to roses grown in New Orleans is also clearly expressed in the book, "Roses bloom in perfection ten months of the year in New Orleans; obviously, it is not expedient to construct roses houses to force blooms for about eight weeks of winter." And

(continued on page 3)

"If a rose itself, or an induced form of any rose, appears well in New Orleans, its claims to beauty are fully established. The abounding contrast of a flora unsurpassed in the world, consigns all ordinary roses or commonplace flowers to the realm of the rejected in the Crescent City."

In April, 2004, I was contacted by George Drennan, Georgia's great-great-grandson, who is a young lawyer here in New Orleans. His interest in family genealogy led him to a notice on the Internet advertising for sale a copy of Georgia's book on CD-Rom. When he mentioned it to his mother Jane, she advised him to call me to inquire about it. I told him all I knew about it. He is very interested in republishing the book with additional information, family photographs, and more rose photographs.

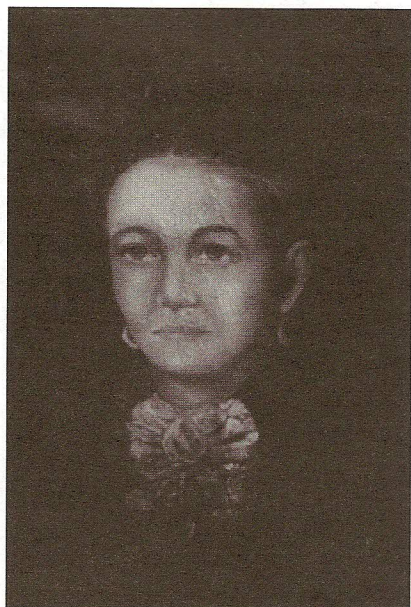
On November 13, 2004, I received a telephone call from Matt Atkinson, a National Park Ranger from Vicksburg Military Park at the Vicksburg Civil War Battlefield. He explained that he was preparing a book or booklet on William A. Drennan, Georgia's husband.

He further explained that William A. Drennan was a principal figure in Civil War history; in particular, in the 46-day siege at Vicksburg. He is featured in the orientation

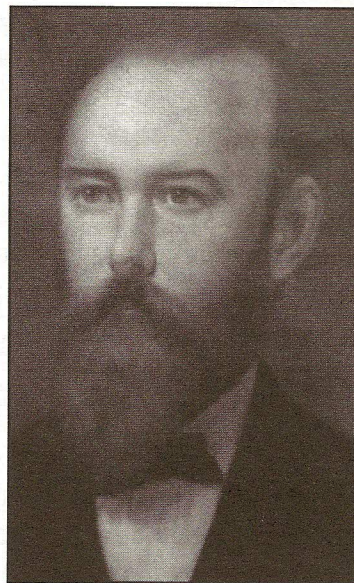
presentation at the visitors' center at the Vicksburg National Military Park. The proposed publication will contain information contained in letters and documents he wrote during and after the war, including letters he wrote to Georgia during the siege which contain descriptions of the battles. There are records of court cases he heard while serving as a judge after the war which will provide information on Mississippi during reconstruction.

However, Ranger Atkinson's research ended abruptly at the point when the Drennans left Holmes County. Then, finally, he found a clue. He discovered a letter that was written in the 1970s to a newspaper in Holmes County inquiring about Georgia and what had become of Round Hill Plantation. The letter was from Conrad Tipps of Houston, TX, who is an important figure in the old rose world. Ranger Atkinson contacted Conrad Tipps, who told him that the Drennans had moved to New Orleans in 1895, and referred him to me.

He was surprised to hear that they lived in New Orleans and overjoyed to learn that their descendants are still here. He has since been in contact with the Drennans and this year he came to New Orleans to meet with Jane and Torrey Drennan and their son George. He was warmly received and entertained by the



"Georgia Torrey Drennan"



"William A. Drennan"

Drennans, and allowed to photograph the portraits of Georgia and William to include in the publication he is preparing. I look forward to its publication.

In closing I quote the most touching words of Georgia's book, the dedication.

"My dear children and grandchildren:
The loveliest and sweetest of the ever-blooming roses that I am telling you about grow in a garden in the south.

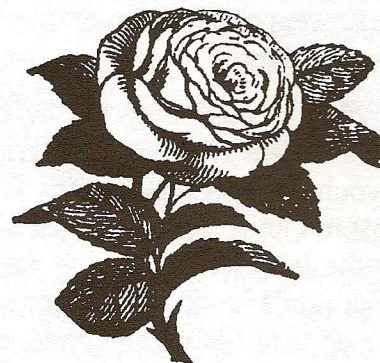
You will never see the roses nor tread the garden walks. It is a beautiful garden. The roses are always in bloom. The buds never blight and the roses never shatter or fade. The seasons never change. It is always summer. Daffodils, hyacinths, snowdrops, and tulips — flowers of spring; lilies and pansies, and sweet peas and honeysuckles of summer; chrysanthemums and asters of autumn, in one sweet day of summer are blooming with the roses.

There is a wealth and tangle of bloom. Weeds are crowded out by many kinds of flowers close beside the roses, blooming as flowers only bloom for those who love and tend them with patient care and thought.

From the nearby orchard, fruity odours blend with the perfume of the roses. Bees are droning over the old pond pasture, white with clover blossoms. There is a vinous tang in the air from the Concord grapes in the little vineyard across the road and the wind comes blowing over the few resinous pine trees beyond. The ambient air is sweet with the spicy breath of pinks and the fragrance of violets bordering the beds where the roses grow.

Children are there at play. The heart of the happy young mother responds to their flute-like voices mingling with the notes of songbirds flitting in and out of the roses climbing over the nursery window. — Tread softly. — Close the garden gate. — Dispel not the dream. G.T.D."

I believe that those who write and leave their writings behind for others to enjoy, achieve a form of immortality. In this case it is certainly true.



FROM THE EDITOR

The *Old Garden Rose and Shrub Journal* is a quarterly publication of the American Rose Society. The purpose of the publication is to provide original articles and information which are of special interest to those who love old roses.

Original articles and information relating to old roses and their patrons throughout history are welcome. Please submit the articles to the editor by electronic or regular mail.

All articles submitted will be subject to editing. Care will be taken to preserve the meaning of the writing. Information published will be true and accurate at the date of publication. The American Rose Society, the author and editor, acting in good faith, will not accept any legal responsibility for error, knowing or unknowing omissions or commissions.

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EMPRESS JOSEPHINE AND OUR MALMAISON HERITAGE

by Maureen Reed Detweiler

The Empress Josephine enkindled the flame of love and changed the course of history. I do not refer to her love for Napoleon, but to her love for the rose.

Josephine was born in 1763 on the island of Martinique into a family of the ancient country gentry of the Loire Valley in France. She was christened, Marie-Joséphé-Rose Tascher de la Pagerie, and was called Marie-Rose. In 1779 she was married to Vicomte Alexandre de Beauharnais of Paris. They had a son, Eugene, born in 1781 and a daughter, Hortense, born in 1783.

During the French Revolution, she and Alexandre were both imprisoned. On July 25, 1794, her husband was executed at the guillotine. Three days later the Terror was ended and she was released.

In 1796 the Vicomtesse de Beauharnais met and married Napoleon who subsequently became Emperor of France. He preferred to call her Josephine. In 1799 she acquired her 650-acre country estate, La Malmaison, 7 miles west of Paris. She hired Louis Bertault, the most notable landscape architect in the empire, and set about the task of developing her famous garden.

Josephine was determined to collect specimens of every existing rose variety in the world. The fact that Napoleon was at war, intent on conquering the world, presented no obstacle to her plans. She was in contact with Sir Joseph Banks, Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, England, who agreed to assist her in this great project by sending plants to her across the lines of battle. And, Napoleon, who denied his beloved Josephine nothing, ordered his navy to search all captured ships and to seize any plants on board for the gardens at Malmaison. Josephine also enlisted the services of John Kennedy, the English nurseryman, to advise her. He was issued a special passport by Napoleon that allowed him to pass through the French lines



“Empress Josephine”

during the continental blockade and the Napoleonic wars.

During the five years of the first consulate, the *Rosarie* at Malmaison flourished. A collection of more than 250 different varieties of the rose were amassed. She commissioned Pierre Joseph Redoute, master of the golden age of botanical art, to paint portraits of the roses in her collection. She was the first to produce a written study and a history of the cultivation of the rose, and she commissioned the botanist Claude Antoine Thory to document and record descriptions, names, and parentage of the genus *Rosa*. This extensive work, entitled *Les Roses*, was not completed until after her death in 1814.

One of Josephine's ladies-in-waiting, Georgette du Crest, wrote in her memoirs in 1828, “When the weather was fine, the greenhouses were inspected: the same walk was taken every day. On the way to that spot, the same subjects were talked over. The conversation generally turned on botany, upon Her Majesty's taste for that ‘interesting’ science, her wonderful memory, which enabled her to name every plant — in short, the same

(continued on page 6)

phrases were generally repeated over and over again, and at the same time, circumstances well calculated to render the promenades exceedingly tedious and fatiguing. I no sooner stepped on to that delightful walk, which I had so admired when I first saw it, than I was seized with an immoderate fit of yawning." So one finds that Josephine, who at times appeared to be frivolous and self-indulgent, took a serious interest in botany.

Edwin Bechtel stated in 1949, in his work entitled, *Our Rose Varieties and Their Malmaison Heritage*, "The rosarie, however, was Josephine's absorbing interest and project. It was begun soon after the purchase of Malmaison in 1799. Memoirs of her contemporaries mention Josephine's love of her garden and her frequent visits to her roses to inspect and enjoy them. As she led her guests down the long paths of the roseraie, she astounded and exhausted them with her knowledge."

The Empress Josephine's torrid love affair with roses was contagious and soon spread around the western world. The dearly loved monarch was the leader of fashion in the garden as well as in the salon. She was imitated by her admirers and therefore, the popularity of the rose became established as never before.

However, the Empress Josephine's legacy to us is not limited to these amazing achievements. The era of hybridizing by artificial pollination began with Josephine's horticulturist, Andre Dupont, under her direction and patronage. He developed 25 new rose cultivars. His contemporaries lost no time in following his lead in this new science: Descemet developed 80 new cultivars; Prevost, 183; Laffay, 388; and Vibert, 600. Later came the Cochets, the Roberts, and the Verdiers; followed by the Guillots, the Pernet, and the Pernet-Duchers. In the 1930s, Dr. H.J. Nicolas estimated that 16,000 cultivars had been developed since Dupont began his work at Malmaison.

I had been fascinated with Josephine and the Malmaison garden ever since I began my study of rose history, and had hoped to visit



"Maureen Detweiler in the garden at Chateau de Malmaison"

the Chateau de Malmaison. In October 2002, while on an official tour of France in preparation for the Bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase, I had the opportunity. My husband and I broke away from the other members of the delegation for a day and went to Malmaison. The house is well preserved and furnished with many of Josephine's original possessions. We were the only visitors there at that time and so were allowed to wander freely through the rooms. The fine weather permitted us to spend a happy time walking over the grounds. It was a wonderful visit which I will always remember.

Today, I make "frequent visits to my roses to inspect and enjoy them." And when I gaze upon a rose which also grew in Josephine's garden 200 years ago I feel a connection to this remarkable woman. These roses are living antiques, precious heirlooms, and our Malmaison Heritage.

PREPARING FOR THE PAST

by Maureen Reed Detweiler

American Rose Center - Fall Activities and Fall Festival of Roses

Headquarters of the American Rose Society
8877 Jefferson Paige Road
Shreveport, LA 71119

Events included are as follows:

Thursday, October 19, 2006

* "Wine and Roses"- Cocktails, dinner, and the presentation of the annual Mary Johnston Award

Friday, October 20, 2006

* Formal dedication of the Dr. Hugh and Betty Pavey Garden in front of the Klima Rose Hall

* "Cleo Wardlow Barnwell 1905 - 2005, A Lifetime of Rescuing Roses"

by Maureen Reed Detweiler

* Formal dedication of the Cleo Barnwell Rose and Perennial Garden

* "Principles and Elements of Design, Using Containers"

by Dr. Gary Barlow

* "Advanced Oriental Design"

by Dr. Lou Shupe

Saturday, October 21, 2006

* Rose Show in the Klima Rose Hall

* Voting by the public on favorites in the annual Rose Trials

* "New Orleans Gardens, Past, Present, Future: An update in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina" by Maureen Reed Detweiler and Peggy Martin

* Walking Tour of the Gardens by Charlotte Haring, Curator of the American Rose Center

* Vendor booth sales and a potted rose sale

Additional information on all events is available:

Tel: 318-938-5402

Web site: www.ars.org

BOOK REVIEWS

Vintage Gardens Book of Roses by Gregg Lowery & Phillip Robinson

2006, Paper binding, 360 pages, \$15.00

An amazing resource of over 3600 "antique and extraordinary roses" including the authors' own assessments gleaned from 30 years of hands-on experience cultivating and preserving these roses. The roses are arranged according to class, and are alphabetized and indexed. Valuable information is presented regarding the mis-identification of roses over the years. The book is filled with beautiful color paintings by Winnifred P. Werner, pen and ink drawings by James Sagmiller, and color photographs by Ron Robertson.

Order from:

Vintage Gardens

4130 Gravenstein Highway North
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Tel: 707-829-2035 Fax: 707-829-9516

www.vintagegardens.com

(catalogues are also available)

The Antique Rose Emporium Guide to Antique Roses by G. Michael Shoup

2005, Paper binding, 100 pages, \$15.00

Beautifully illustrated with color photographs, this guide contains descriptions and historical information of over 300 old roses. The roses are arranged according to class and are alphabetized and indexed. Of interest to beginners is the detailed instructions on planting and caring for the roses. The Earth-Kind roses of Dr. Steve George of Texas A&M are prominently featured, as are The Pioneer Roses (Antique Rose Emporium's own creations).

Order from:

The Antique Rose Emporium

9300 Lueckemeyer Road

Brenham, Tx 77833

Tel: 979-836-9051 or 800-441-0002

Fax: 979-836-0928

www.weAREroses.com

(catalogues are also available)

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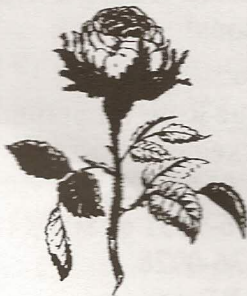
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Any comments or questions should be addressed to:

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FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

- Everblooming Roses:
Who was Georgia Torrey Drennan?
by Maureen Reed Detweiler..... 1
- Empress Josephine and Our Malmaison
Heritage by Maureen Reed Detweiler.....5
- Preparing for the Past
by Maureen Reed Detweiler.....7



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