

The AD Foote – Luther Burbank Connection
AD Foote – Burbank Info
Carole Miller 9/20/212

The Foote family has told us about AD Foote's interest in Burbank and his hybrids. His great grand children have reported that they were told that many of the fruits and flowers on the property were Burbank hybrids. We believe that Foote and Burbank had written correspondence in the early 1900s.

AD is listed as a Life Member of the Luther Burbank Society formed in 1912 to help publicize Burbank's research. This society of 6,400 members published the 12 volume book "Luther Burbank: his methods and discoveries and their practical application. Prepared from his original field notes covering more than 100,000 experiments made during forty years devoted to plant improvement, with the assistance of the Luther Burbank Society and its entire membership, under the editorial direction of John Whitson and Robert John and Henry Smith Williams, 1914." There were 6,400 members who were asked proof chapters of this work.

North Star Property 2012

The vegetable garden, the flower garden and most of the fruit trees have disappeared from the property. However, we still find Burbank's thornless blackberry vine growing at will on the grounds.

Visit to the Luther Burbank Exp Farm and House and Gardens.

Christopher Layton and I have both contacted Luther Burbank House and Garden board members. Christopher will meet with board member Carol Skold in the near future.

On September 19, 2012, I visited the Luther Burbank Gold Ridge Experimental Farm in Sebastopol where I viewed many of Burbank's plants/trees and spoke at length to two curators, Alex Stanley and Steve.

They knew that there was a connection between Burbank and the Nevada City hybridizer/nurseryman, Felix Gillet, but had no knowledge of AD Foote. They referred me to Amigo Bob, our local Felix Gillet expert. I have been working with Amigo Bob this past year to positively identify our 100 year old orchard fruit trees. We have 12 trees and/or shrubs on the property that are listed in the Barren Hill Nursery or the Felix Gillet Nursery catalogs.

These curators knew nothing about Burbank business records or the Luther Burbank Society. They told me that the Sebastopol Historical Museum and the Santa Rosa Library have many old Burbank records. The next day, when I visited the Luther Burbank House and Gardens in Santa Rosa I learned from board member Dee Blackman that Burbank's records/correspondence had been sent to the Library of Congress. These records have not been cataloged nor are they available online.

Luther Burbank did not sell retail but there may be records of plant specimens that he gave away. Both Alex and Steve are not surprised that we have no fruit tree specimens as most fruit trees except for some pear and apple have a short life span. They thought that use of Burbank vegetable seeds was not likely because of lack of commercial availability in the 1920s. They spoke of acclimatizing of seeds and plants.

Plant Information from "Luther Burbank's Plant Contributions", W. L. Howard, Bulletin 691, UC Agricultural Experimental Station, Berkeley, CA 1945

Thornless Blackberry.

The hybrid growing at Gold Ridge is the 1920 "Sebastopol" hybrid. It is a later, sweeter variety than the original 1920 "Santa Rosa". It would be impossible to distinguish between these two varieties.

Himalaya Blackberry

Burbank also hybridized the Himalaya blackberry in 1885 and an improved hybrid, "Superb" in 1916.

White Blackberry

I observed Burbank's white blackberry, "Snowbank. It is not thornless but is similar to the Himalaya with much smaller thorns/prickles. Elizabeth Haskell, Foote great granddaughter, told me that she remembers eating many raspberries and loved the white raspberries. There is no Burbank white raspberry, only the white blackberry. There are several blackberry-raspberry Burbank crosses. The "Phenomenal" was sold in 1905 by the California Carnation Company located in Loomis, CA.

Raspberry

There are many raspberry hybrids. Best known are the blackberry/raspberry hybrids, "Phenomenal" and the 1914 "Climax". All are dark red. It is hard to distinguish a blackberry from a raspberry plant.

Amaryllis

There are many Burbank Amaryllis hybrids, 1903-1913. One pops up at the Gardiner's cottage every once in a while.

Golden Bamboo

Grows at the Exp Farm. Burbank never did get around to creating a hybrid. There is a stand of bamboo at the site of the cottage. Need positive ID

Hague House Victorian Ornamental Plants

Mock orange and Bridal Wreath spirea found at the Hague House and also at LB House and Gardens. These popular Victorian garden plants are not Burbank hybrids. Caroline Singer said that our mock orange was an old fashion variety.

Burbank Hybrid Sweet Pea, Ornamental Quince, Sun Flowers, Gladiolus, Ornamental Grasses, Flowering Peach Tree

Sweet peas and quince still grow at NS – may or may not be Burbank hybrids. The others have been observed in old photos or were listed in Evelyn Gardiner's garden survey of 2003.

1. LBH&G archivist will continue to search records for a Foote/Burbank connection.
2. All Burbank correspondence/ business records were sent to the Library of Congress years ago. They have not been cataloged nor are they available on line.
3. Christopher Layton will meet with LBH&G board member, Carol Skold.
4. North Star definitely has the Burbank thornless blackberry hybrid.
5. We probably had the Burbank white blackberry/raspberry hybrid "Snowbank" (based on family reports of eating white berries). We may have had other Burbank blackberry/raspberry hybrids. "Phenomenal" hybrid was sold by the California Carnation Company, Loomis, CA in 1905.
6. The Himalayan blackberry that grows on the North Star property could be Burbank's hybrid version of the Himalayan blackberry, which was sold retail.
7. We could have Burbank's sweet pea and flowering quince hybrids.
8. The amaryllis that blooms occasionally at the Gardener's cottage could be a Burbank variety.
9. There were several orchard areas at North Star. If AD Foote had Burbank's plum, plumcot, peach, cherry, etc, they would no longer be alive. All remaining North Star fruit and nut trees have been identified as heritage varieties that we believe were purchased from Bald Mountain/Felix Gillet Nursery, Nevada City.
10. Curators thought that it was unlikely that North Star used Burbank vegetable seeds. They were not available at retail and would not be acclimatized to the foothill area.