

**Father George Schoener's 150th Birthday
Celebration
Brooks, Oregon, Monument Dedication**

Laura King & Michael Dalton

Friday, March 21, 2014 was a perfect spring day for the celebration of Rev. Fr. George Schoener's 150th birthday and the dedication of a monument engraved with his name and that of Brooks Catholic Church of Assumption on the site where that church stood from 1875 to 1915. The event was held at the Brooks Regional Training Center of Chemeketa Community College and organized with the combined efforts of Brooks Historical Society and Northwest Rose Historians.

The program of four featured speakers began with a welcoming by Louis Sowa, the president of Brooks Historical Society. Laura King of Northwest Rose Historians led off with the story of Fr. Schoener and what brought him to Brooks in 1911 and his rise to prominence in the world of rose growing and breeding.

Laura then read a note from Deborah Wasserbach of Maryland, whose great-great-Aunt Anna C. Schmitt was Fr. Schoener's first cousin, his housekeeper and able assistant in his rose hybridizing research: "On behalf of the descendents of the Schoener and Schmitt families, we are gratified to see the Padre recognized and celebrated on his 150th birthday...It was at Brooks where his love of roses first led to personal celebrity and serious admiration for his work. On October 9, 1915, a devastating fire burned the church, the rectory and the Padres roses to the ground. ...He and Anna continued in Santa Barbara where they are now buried side by side. This monument appropriately reflects the Padre's lifelong love of learning, matched only by his drive to promote the rose wherever he went. His visions were spectacular; his hopes persevered, despite adversity or opposition. ...Thank you

for recognizing the uniqueness of the Padre's character and spirit, and his special fondness for Brooks. Our family is deeply grateful to the many individuals who worked together to recognize the Padre and his contribution to Oregon history."

Next on the program was Rob McCorkle, the Dean of Life Safety Sciences of Chemeketa Community College. Training courses on the former church site are conducted for Police, Fire and Medical Emergency personnel. Rob said that for first responders it is all about community service and added, "Had we been here in 1915, the church would not have burned down."

Dorene Standish of Brooks Historical Society then outlined the history of the Town of Brooks and its railway station. She mentioned that 100 years ago "the scent of roses" brought passengers two blocks away from the railway station to admire the Padre's roses filling the garden and covering the walls of the church and rectory.

Fr. Jeff Eirvin of the nearby Parish of Sacred Heart-St. Louis in Gervais said that Fr. Schoener was a great man whose "gentle care and touch brought people and roses closer to God." The program continued with a gathering outside at the monument with a formal dedication and blessing conducted by Fr. Jeff Eirvin. He concluded by placing a bouquet of red roses at the base of the monument.

The Rose on our Cover

Rosa fedtschenkoana was discovered in Turkestan in 1875 by botanist Olga Fedtschenko and taken to the Botanical Garden of St. Petersburg. It grows at least seven feet high. The white flowers with pale yellow stamens generally open as singles, occasionally as small clusters, emitting a scent many people find unpleasant. Its seven—but sometimes five or nine—leaflets are deeply serrate and carry a grey cast. It is a rarity among wild roses in that it blooms recurrently in summer and fall. In the year 2000, DNA revealed it to be part of a *ménage à trois*, (*R. gallica* x *R. moschata*) x *R. fedtschenkoana* as parents of 'Autumn Damask.'