



What is the meaning of the three roses?

GardnerH asks:

When Julia Morgan designed The Heritage she added roses on the outside and inside of the building. We wonder why she did this. Did she have a hidden meaning that is lost to us. Or was the rose motif used to convey her feelings about the people who lived here? Might roses have been a theme for benefactors whose finances helped build this fascinating building? First we will describe where the roses are located and then, we hope in this and future articles, to try to explain why Julia placed so many roses in the Heritage.

Theo replies:

On the front elevation of the Heritage, above both the first floor bay windows to left and right, between the two sets of windows there are inset panels of *terra cotta* tiles. Both panels display the same *bas-reliefs*: three roses surrounded by garlands or vines with four raspberries.

Music to serenade you while reading this paper

Proposed by MargaretJ

Stephen Foster - Ah! May the Red Rose Live Alway

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau; "Heidenröslein"; Franz Schubert

The Rose - by Bette Midler

Felicity Lott - Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal

Serenade Op. 31: 3. Elegy: O Rose, thou art sick (William Blake)

Also

Robert Burns - My Love Is Like A Red Red Rose

Ring Around the Rosie

"I call architecture frozen music." -: Attributed to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller

"Anon, out of the earth a fabric huge rose, like an exhalation." -: John Milton, Paradise Lost (1667; 1674), Book I, line 710.

"As designed" and "As built"

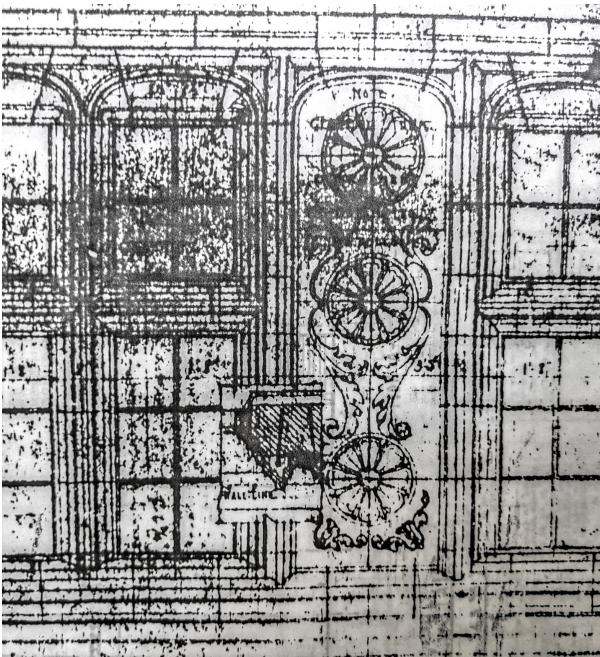
What did the architect dream of and what did the contractor actually get built? This is a metaphysical dialectic of sorts that is not a rare event in architecture. Here we live in a good example.



In the photo of the Heritage "as built":

- Each rose is composite of three nested roses
- There are eight petals with gaps between petals at the quadrants
- Surrounding the roses there is a garland oor vine composed with berries and leaves of a type not yet identified (perhaps a shamrock?)
- The panel is composed of four unique components

The photo above shows the terracotta tiles as visible in a recent photo.



The image of the drawing above shows the "as designed" drawing from Julia Morgan's drawings drafted in 1925.

In the drawing:

- Each rose is a single rose
- There are eight petals with petals at the quadrants split in two
- Between the roses there are sprays of acanthus leaves
- At the bottom of the panel there are garlands of simple leaves
- The panel is composed of 12 components with a number of similarities

Craftsmanship

Is the building the result of what the builder found at the lumber yard? Or do we have architecture a reminder of Vitruvius's dictum that architecture should be "firm, commodious and delightful"? We can decide where to place a structure by looking at the craftsmanship in the project.

There are a number of quite visible differences between drawing and photo

The photo depicts a final effort that is far more detailed and more complex than the drawing. The photo depicts a work with a more complex crafting effort. This was often the case, the architect and the artist who won the contract would discuss and agree details as the project was being built. The two parties would agree the best effort that could be made given the time, budget and skills of the artist.

Given the undercuts on the petals, it appears that the panels were cast using a lost wax process. Alternatively the panels might have been pulled from a mold and the undercuts hand carved after. In any case, the work we see has been made by a highly skilled and informed craftsman with much hand work.

What firm or craftsmen supplied the terra cotta panels here and elsewhere is a topic to be investigated.

Symbology in buildings

We have all - one way or another - been informed by dictums of modern architecture such as "form follows function" and "less is more". We moderns have lost much understanding of the pre-modern eras of architecture where there was much decoration that was figurative or symbolic or both.

For example, if you saw a sculpture of a man in a toga carrying a sword and a book you know you are looking at a depiction of Saint Paul. If there's a man with a foot resting on a dragon, you are looking at Saint George. If the man is tied up and shot with arrows, you are looking at Saint Sebastian.

In traditional building, everything means something. Things are added to buildings because they means something for the inhabitants or whoever builds the building.

Therefore when we look at the panels we musk ask a series of questions:

- What symbols are repeated through the project?
- What flowers are they?
- Why roses?
- Why three roses?
- Why two or three embedded roses?
- Why fruits or berries?
- Why raspberries?
- Why vines?
- Why thorns?
- Why single leaves and trefoils?
- What plant do the trefoils represent

A further item of investigation will be to ascertain whether the use of this symbol commenced with the construction of the Morgan building or whether is was also used in other locations prior.

Repeated use of symbols at the Heritage

What symbols are repeated through the project?

A certain flower-like element is used repeatedly in multiple locations at the Heritage



Flowers in *terracotta* panels between the windows above two ground floor bays



Flower at center of the *terracotta* panel at top of the second floor bay



Flowers in the multiple corbels under the eaves



Flowers in the elliptical window architraves



Flowers in abutments to front door arches



Flowers in column capitals



Flowers to sides of front bay corbels



Flowers at the front of the chapel alter table



Flowers in parlor mantelpiece



Flowers in brass ornaments above mantelpiece on front fireplace

Flower looks like the traditional heraldic rose

What flowers are they?



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_\(heraldry\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_(heraldry))

The rose is a common device in heraldry. It is often used both as a charge on a coat of arms and by itself as an heraldic badge. The heraldic rose has a stylized form consisting of five symmetrical

lobes, five barbs, and a circular seed. The rose is one of the most common plant symbols in heraldry, together with the lily, which also has a stylistic representation in the fleur-de-lis.[1]

The rose was the symbol of the English Tudor dynasty, and the ten-petaled Tudor rose is associated with England. Roses also feature prominently in the arms of the princely House of Lippe and on the seal of Martin Luther.

The significant difference is that the heraldic rose has five petals whereas in the Heritage roses there are 4, 12 and 8 petals.

A simple explanation might be that it is much easier to craft a four side object than a five side object because the symmetry. Another explanation might be that four-sided might be a "modern" American way of doing things as opposed to the old European five-sided ways (as in "gray" versus "grey").

The difference needs further research.

See also: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quatrefoil>

Roses as symbols of love

What is the meaning or significance of the rose?

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_\(symbolism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_(symbolism))

common meanings of different coloured roses are: True love (red), mystery (blue), innocence or purity (white), death (black), friendship (yellow), and passion (orange).

Following the Christianization of the Roman Empire, the rose became identified with the Virgin Mary.

The rose symbol eventually led to the creation of the rosary and other devotional prayers in Christianity.

Since the 1880s, the red rose has been a symbol of socialism

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_of_flowers
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plant_symbolism

The mission of the Ladies Protection and Relief Society was to provide care and sustenance for women and children in dire straits.

It's natural that the founders would select a symbol of love as a primary element of the symbolism to be attached to the building.

Three Roses

Why the three roses in the primary decorative elements of the building?

- <https://www.popsugar.com/love/Meaning-Roses-What-Number-Roses-Means-14080476>

Three roses: The traditional three-month anniversary gift also simply means "I love you."

- <https://www.serenataflowers.com/pollennation/meaning-roses-1-to-100-roses/>

3 Roses – 'I love you'.

The women in need were often in San Francisco with no family and no friends. The "I love you" message of the three roses may well indicate that the care is

directed to "you" as an individual. You are given personal attention. You will be loved.

Double rose

Why are there two or three embedded roses?



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_rose

This is a difficult question to answer. No easy answer comes to mind.

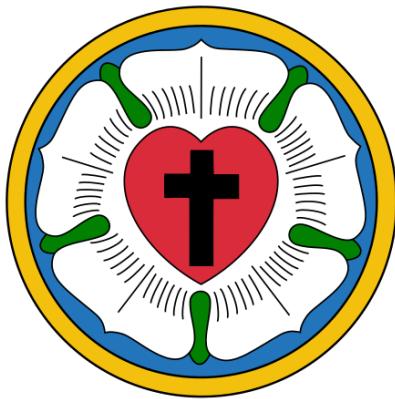
It is certainly more difficult to craft a double or triple rose than to craft a single rose.

Double Roses as symbols of Protestantism

In both cases - the "as-designed" and the "as-built" - the roses have a close resemblance to a **tudor rose**. The image given above is a Tudor Rose

The Tudor rose (sometimes called the Union rose) is the traditional floral heraldic emblem of England and takes its name and origins from the House of Tudor, which united the House of Lancaster and the House of York. The Tudor rose consists of five white inner petals, representing the House of York, and five red outer petals to represent the House of Lancaster. Henry VIII created the Protestant Church in England in 1534

There is also a resemblance to Martin Luther's coat of arms.



- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luther_rose

The Luther seal or Luther rose is a widely recognized symbol for Lutheranism.

It may well be the case that the use of the double rose on the outside of the building might have been used to indicate that the property belonged to a Protestant organization. To be further investigated

See also: * https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_Cross

Raspberries as symbols of kindness

Why fruits or berries?

Why Raspberries?

Berries appear in the two terracotta panels at the front of the building and also on the mantelpiece of the fireplace in the parlor.

- [Berries as Symbols and in Folklore](#)

Raspberries are seen as a symbol of kindness in Christian art. The red juice is thought of as blood which runs through the heart, which is also believed to be the place where kindness originates.

Their delicate state in transport has led them to symbolize fragility as well.

- <https://www.buildingbeautifulsouls.com/symbols-meanings/flower-meanings-symbolism/raspberry-meaning-symbolism/>

Trefoils

Trefoils appear in the two terracotta panels at the front of the building, on the main staircase and on the doors to two storage areas.

Could they be shamrocks?

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shamrock>

Traditionally, shamrock is said to have been used by Saint Patrick to illustrate the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity when Christianising Ireland in the 5th century.

- <https://www.tenontours.com/shamrocks-and-four-leaf-clovers-whats-the-difference/>

The three leaves of a shamrock are also said to stand for faith, hope and love.

Terra Cotta

Terracotta of high quality is used extensively to provide architectural details and decorations to the building

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terracotta>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architectural_terracotta
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tile_Heritage_Foundation
 - <https://www.tileheritage.org/>

At the time, Mercer's work set off a flurry of tile craftsmanship across the country and particularly in California, where the equally influential Ernest Batchelder, an Arts and Crafts proponent, set up a kiln in his Pasadena backyard in 1909. His Batchelder Tile Co.

prospered in the region's construction boom, and his earthy-looking tiles were perfect for the dark interiors of bungalows and Spanish Colonial homes going up at the time.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost-wax_casting
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_A._Batchelder
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