

BATEMAN, SKINNER, AND THE KIDDIES

CAROL SIEGEL

TRADER JOE'S SELLS ORCHIDS for \$9.99. With a ceramic pot. And decorative moss. Sometimes with two spikes. Wrapped in cellophane. With a bow. You can put them in your shopping cart right next to your toilet paper and pork chops. They are pretty, meant to be disposable, and, to most shoppers, no big deal. It was not always that way.

There was a time when orchids were stunning and glamorous and thrilling, when men risked everything to have the exotic, the mysterious, the rare new orchids. There was a time when Victoria was Queen, but orchids were King, and England was seized with orchid mania. By 1837, the rich were exchanging fortunes for just one rare orchid, and fearless collectors were braving terrifying dangers to bring them back.

This is the story of one such rich man, James Bateman, and one such fearless collector, George Ure Skinner, who for thirty years formed a partnership that changed the orchid world. Together, they introduced at least 100 new orchid species to cultivation and taught the world how to grow them. Theirs was a friendship devoted to the "kiddies," as painter Edward Cooke called them, the orchids that set the Victorian world on fire.

James Bateman Catches Orchid Mania

As orchid historian Luigi Berliocchi says, "One of the orchid's most colorful chroniclers was James Bateman (1811-1897) whose personality and range of interests exemplifies the vein of eccentricity that ran through many of the gentleman-amateur biologists of the nineteenth century." Bateman had money to hire orchid explorers and the time and ability to communicate with the botanical personalities of his time. He had money and talent to establish facilities to grow and flower orchid plants and the contacts to have them identified by top London botanists like John Lindley. He not only grew orchids, but he wrote about them and hired top-rate artists to draw them. He published books that were an international sensation and built gardens that were the wonder of his time. He was the ultimate Victorian gentleman.

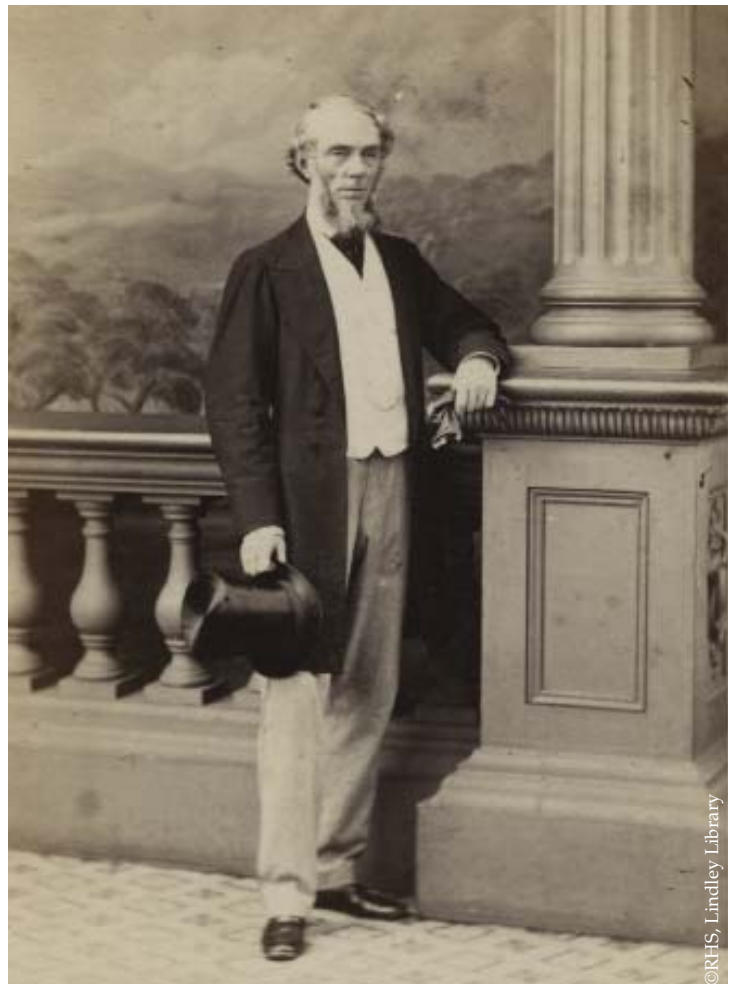
Obviously, Bateman was brilliant as well as rich. His fortune was a fortune made from the Industrial Revolution, a fortune inherited from his grandfather's coal mines and iron foundries, cotton mills and steam engines. It was a recent fortune, but a vast one nonetheless, and it gave him the means to pursue a life of luxury in the company of noblemen and intellectuals. He was not interested in commerce or industry, but, luckily for the orchid world, he was passionate about orchids and devoted much of his brilliance to them. He called orchids "the master passion of his life." They were to

bring him international fame and acclaim and distinguish him when he was just a young man.

He was only a precocious boy of eight when orchids touched his heart. His mother and father were lovers of plants and gardens and gave that love to their son. As he said:

I was devoted to orchids long before I knew what an orchid was, indeed the word itself was strange to me when I heard my mother apply it to a beautiful plant with spotted leaves and speckled flowers which I had gathered in a country lane and regarded with great admiration. "That," she said, "is an Orchid."

It is legendary that ten years later while a student at Magdalen College, Oxford, he became totally enamored of orchids during a visit to Thomas Fairburn's nursery at Oxford. He said, "This sealed my fate." When he should have been at class, he spent a morning at the nursery. Fairburn, who had been a gardener to Sir Joseph Banks and Prince Leopold, entranced Bateman with a curious orchid plant with leathery leaves



James Bateman

and stout roots. It was *Renanthera coccinea*, and Fairburn showed him the colored drawing of the Chinese air plant in the pages of the *Botanical Magazine* as it had flowered in Prince Leopold's garden. Bateman later recalled:

Of course, I fell in love at first sight, and as Mr. Fairburn asked only a guinea for his plant (high prices not yet in vogue), it soon changed hands and travelled with me to Knypersley, when the Christmas holidays began. I had caught my first orchid....

Bateman's botanical hooky-playing incurred the wrath of the vice-president of the college, Dr. Daubeny, who famously required Bateman to write out half the Book of Psalms as punishment for his absence.

He was punished but most certainly not dissuaded. He had caught "orchidmania" after "catching" his first orchid, and he was driven to collect ever more orchids at his estate, Knypersley Hall. Bateman was a frequent visitor and buyer at the famous nursery of George Loddiges in Hackney. He had immense admiration for Loddiges as an orchid grower and said of him, "I doubt whether any man ever loved the plants as much as he." Bateman was bitten by the orchid bug and would never recover.



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Trichocentrum lanceanum (*Oncidium lanceatum*) named for Bateman's friend, John Henry Lance.

Bateman Organizes an Orchid Hunting Expedition

Bateman described himself as being "impatient at the tardy rate at which new species crossed the seas" and organized an expedition to search for new orchids in Demerara and Berbice, British Guiana. He was still only a college student at the time, but with his father's encouragement, he sent Thomas Colley, Fairburn's foreman, to collect orchids in 1833. Colley sent back 60 different orchid species, one third of them new to cultivation. In those days, it was the mark of a gentleman to be able to sponsor such a difficult and exciting expedition, much like sponsoring a trip to the moon to bring back moon rocks would be today. The species *Batemannia colleyi* commemorates the relationship between the two men.

However, in Bateman's obituary in *Gardeners' Chronicle*, it says that, unfortunately, "To one of them, the ugliest as it happens, Dr. Lindley affixed the names of *Batemannia colleyi*, thus associating the names of the employer and collector." An account of the expedition, one of the first of Mr. Bateman's contributions to botanical literature, was published in *Loudon's Gardeners' Magazine*. It was the start of Bateman's brilliant writing career.

In 1834, the *Botanical Register* published several new species from Colley's expedition. One of them was *Oncidium lanceatum* (*Trichocentrum lanceanum*) named for Bateman's friend John Henry Lance. Bateman related proudly that Colley had found a tree covered with this species and, knowing that Francis Henchman, another "traveler" working for Low's nursery was not far behind, stripped the tree of all the orchids. Bateman later said, without regret, that the species was not found before or since. He says rather boastfully, "Everyone was prepared to go down on their knees...offering their greatest treasures in exchange." This sad commentary reveals the unsustainable way that orchids were collected in Victorian times, even by those who were supposedly educated.

In subsequent decades, this stripping of the jungle by collectors only increased. The hauls just kept getting bigger and bigger; by 1878, William Bull boasted that he had gotten a consignment of two million orchids while Bernard Roezl once sent eight tons of orchids in a single shipment. Herr Orgies, Director of the Botanical Gardens of Zurich complained in 1877:

Not satisfied with taking 300 or 500 specimens of a fine orchid, they must scour the whole country and leave nothing for many miles around... no collector henceforth will find any... there. These modern collectors spare nothing. This is no longer collecting; it is wanton robbery...



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Barkeria skinneri, which Lindley named for the explorer, George Ure Skinner.



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Oncidium leucochilum was in the first box of orchids from Skinner.

Bateman Enlists Skinner to Hunt Orchids

Bateman became intrigued with George Ure Skinner (1804-1867) while Bateman was still a student. Skinner started a mercantile company in Guatemala. He had taken to collecting birds and insects which he sent to The Museum of Natural History in Manchester where Bateman was studying. Bateman became totally infected with orchid mania and thought there must be a rich harvest of orchids in raw and unexplored Guatemala. He excitedly wrote to Skinner describing orchids and making little sketches requesting that Skinner, a complete stranger, start sending him orchids he collected. As Bateman later remembered:

My letter, dated March 17, 1834, reached him in due course, and, as he never tired of telling me, the day of arrival was as it were a new birthday, for it gave a fresh interest to his life, which never left him even to its latest hour!

Shortly thereafter, the first box of orchids from Skinner arrived. Bateman remarked, "Never shall I forget my intense delight in the opening of that box." Although collected at random, every plant was new to cultivation in England. Among them were *Barkeria skinneri*, which Lindley named for the explorer. There were other diverse orchids such as *Encyclia incumbens* (*Epidendrum aromaticum*) and *Guarianthe aurantiaca* (*Epidendrum aurantiacum*) along with *Trichocentrum cavendishianum* (*Oncidium cavendishianum*) and *Oncidium leucochilum*.

The first *Odontoglossum* to arrive in England alive, now *Rhynchostele bictoniense*, was included which started the popularity of that cool-growing genus. It was an exciting beginning to a thirty-year friendship that turned strangers into dear old friends and associates and just kept the boxes of orchids coming.



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Guarianthe aurantiaca part of the first box to arrive in England from Skinner.



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Rhyncho스테le uro-skinneri 'Mike'.



©Ron Parsons, grown by Steve Beckendorf

Rhyncho스테le rossii was one of the 100 orchids the two men introduced to cultivation.

All in all, it is thought that Skinner, during his thirty-year friendship with Bateman, introduced approximately 100 new orchids to cultivation. Although Skinner was not a trained botanist, Bateman felt he had an "instinct" for instantly recognizing orchids. These included *Rossioglossum grande* (*Odontoglossum grande*)—



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Rhyncho스테le bickoniense (*Odm. bickoniense*) was the first *odontoglossum* Bateman received.

a favorite of Skinner's, *Rhyncho스테le uro-skinneri* (*Odm. uro-skinneri*), *Rhyncho스테le rossii* (*Odm. rubescens*), and *Cuitlauzina pulchella* (*Odm. pulchellum*). In the Gulf of Dolce in Guatemala, Skinner found *Myrmecophila tibicinis* (*Schomburgkia tibicinis*), *Epidendrum stamfordianum*, and *Encyclia elata* (*Epidendrum alatum*), not far from where the lovely *Guarianthe skinneri* (*Cattleya skinneri*) was discovered. *Guarianthe skinneri* was the second cattleya discovered, right after the discovery of *C. mossiae*. Fine clones of *Guarianthe skinneri* have received more than 40 awards from the AOS. Because it produces plants with so many leads and so many flowers, it has also won a host of Cultural Commendations. There were so many of this orchid imported that a specimen of *Guarianthe skinneri* could be found in every collector's greenhouse. Skinner discovered many stanhopeas including the gorgeous *Stanhopea saccata*. To the genus *Cycnoches*, he added *Cyc. ventricosum* and *Cyc. egertonianum*. From the higher elevations, he found *Laelia superbians* and the stately *Epidendrum cnemidophorum*, his last discovery. The bounty, which Skinner sent to England, was so immense that the commercial orchid company of Veitch and Sons dedicated a whole greenhouse to his orchids.

Skinner stunned the world in 1836 with his discovery of *Lycaste virginialis* (*Lycaste skinneri*), his favorite orchid, which was to become more popular at the time than any other orchid. So proud was Skinner of this beauty that the most famous portrait of him shows that orchid in the background. Painted by George Washing-



Cuitlauzine pulchella used to be known as *Odontoglossum pulchellum*.



Skinner found *Myrmecophila tibicinis* in the Gulf of Dolce in Guatemala.

ton Brownlow, it is a full-length portrait with six large flowers of *Lyc. virginialis* placed on a carved wooden shelf at shoulder height. Interestingly, the alba form, *Lycaste virginialis*, became the national flower of Skinner's beloved Guatemala which surely would have thrilled him. In addition, as a tribute to Skinner, the small blossoms which appear on the front-piece of Bateman's brilliant work, *The Orchidaceae of Mexico and Guatemala*, are also *Lycaste virginialis*.

Skinner and Bateman exchanged many letters during their relationship; almost all of them lost. Fortunately, he corresponded with many others including John Lindley, the Duke of Bedford, and William Hooker, then director of Kew Gardens. Hooker's pack-rat compulsion to save every scrap of paper sent to him led him to preserve all 64 of Skinner's letters to him.

The Dangerous World of the Orchid Hunter

Hunting orchids may have been extremely exciting, but it was not for the faint of heart. Bateman's love and admiration for his fearless friend can be seen in this excerpt from his address to the Royal Horticultural Society which he delivered after Skinner's death:

From the moment he received the letter he labored incessantly to drag from their hiding places the forest treasures of Guatemala and transfer them to the shore of his native land. In pursuit of this object there was scarcely a sacrifice he did not make, or a danger or hardship he did not brave. In sickness or in health, amid the calls of business or the perils of war, whether detained in quarantine on the shores of the Atlantic, or shipwrecked on the rocks of the Pacific, he never suffered an opportunity to escape him of adding to the long array of his botanical discoveries.

Indeed, even on the day of his death, Skinner thought of orchids, sending instructions to George Klee, his late partner's son, to carefully unpack the orchids which his collectors had brought in and to give them water.

It is difficult to exaggerate the dangers collectors faced. Many explorers tragically died on orchid expeditions before and after Skinner's time. Skinner himself tragically perished of yellow fever on his last trip to Guatemala right before he wanted to retire. If orchid explorers were not eaten by a tiger or speared by a native, they could be bitten by a mosquito or a poisonous snake. There were no inoculations against yellow fever, typhoid or cholera. Among the orchid hunters, Falkenberg perished at Panama, Klaboch was murdered in Mexico, Schroeder fell to his death in Sierra Leone, Arnold drowned on the Orinoco in Venezuela, Digance was gunned down by locals in Brazil, Brown was killed in Madagascar, Endres was shot dead at Rio Hacha, Wallis was murdered in Ecuador, Douglas was gored by a bull, and Osmers was killed in the Far East. Interestingly, the collector Bestwood disappeared mysteriously in Madagascar. Brown, a traveler sent by Sander, found the lost Bestwood in a native village married to the chief's daughter. "If I hadn't agreed to it," he said, "they'd have eaten me." The risks were many! Most unfortunate was one Madagascar collector of birds and butterflies who was shot by natives, soaked in oil by a native priest, and barbecued on an altar. Skinner's was a risky occupation.

Although Skinner did much of his collecting in Guatemala, he traveled all over Central America and Mexico as far south as Peru. His trip to Peru, which almost ended in a disaster, is a good example of the terrors he faced to gather orchids. First he was shipwrecked in Costa Rica where he lost most of his plants. The few that did not drown were inadvertently thrown out by a crew member cleaning the decks. Even shipments which managed to arrive safely in England in other times were often badly damaged by rats or cockroaches. Then he had to wait several months in Sonsonate, El Salvador because a revolution had broken out in Guatemala, and there were dangerous "banditos" on the roads. Stranded, he still found time to look for orchids, *Catasetum maculatum* among them, and sent them by way of Lima and around Cape Horn. Trying to return stealthily to Guatemala, he traveled through the forest

for eight days where he reported that he was eaten alive by mosquitoes. Still he managed to bring back 1000 orchids, 50 quite new. When the roads opened, he sent a dozen boxes.

When he could return to Guatemala, the home of Klee, his partner, where Skinner lived, was besieged by an angry mob, and he was saved only by the intervention of the American consul, Mr. Savage. In a letter to Bateman, which was fortunately preserved by the Public Records Office, Skinner reports that after cholera had decimated the peasants of Guatemala, revolutionaries told the "poor ignorant creatures" that the English had poisoned all the rivers to destroy the Indian inhabitants and take over the country. 1500 crazed Indians attacked the city, and priests ran through the city holding up the cross. The crowd attacked Skinner and Klee's house, where they thought there was ammunition, with knives and machetes. The American consul, Charles Savage, fearless amid the attack, ran through the streets with his white hair streaming, pouring out such a torrent of indignation and contempt that the Indians retreated, and Skinner could at last return home. Indeed, this work was not for the faint of heart.



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Gomea imperatoris-maximiliani was shown upside down in the newspaper in 1842.



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Epidendrum stamfordianum was named by Bateman for the Count of Stamford.



©Ron Parsons, grown by Greg Martin

Skinner found *Encyclia elata* in Guatemala.



©Ron Parsons, grown by Gloria Bygdnes

Guarianthe skinneri has received more than 40 AOS awards.



©Ron Parsons, grown by Hanging Gardens

Stanhopea saccata was one of the many stanhopeas discovered by Skinner.

Skinner the Trader

George Skinner was an unlikely candidate for orchid hunting. Born to an ecclesiastical family, he seemed destined for the church. He was the second son of the Very Rev. John Skinner MA, Dean of Dunkeld and Dunblane, and his grandfather was Primus of Scotland in the Scotch Episcopal Church and Bishop of Aberdeen. Even his great-grandfather was a well-known ecclesiastical historian of Scotland and one of the best Hebrew and Latin scholars of his day. Fortunately for the orchid world, Skinner followed another path. He was uninterested in the church and wanted to enter the navy but was dissuaded by his father. After becoming a clerk in a banking house, he became a general merchant in Leeds. Fascinated by an exotic, undiscovered country, he moved in 1831 to Guatemala to found the highly successful mercantile house of Klee, Skinner, & Co. (Bateman called Skinner's partner Carl Klee by the surname "McKlee," perhaps to hide his Hanoverian origins since there was strong anti-German feeling at the time.) Although they would trade almost anything, for the most part Skinner and Klee established a trade in cochineal and indigo, red and blue dye, two commodities which were destined to become the staple industry of Guatemala.

Cochineal or "crimson scale" is valued as a red dye in textile manufacturing, cosmetic production, food processing, and even science and art. It is thought that Michelangelo used cochineal in his paint palette. The tiny female cochineal insect measures only 1/16 to 1/4 inch in length, has neither wings nor legs and is the shape of an engorged tick. The male is smaller, has wings and legs, and lives only a week. The insect produces carminic acid in its body that deters predators and contains the red pigment. Related to the aphid, it feeds almost solely on the pads of selected prickly pear cacti species. The female drives her proboscis into the cactus skin, where she remains for the rest of her life sucking out the juice. The cochineal insect, when crushed, yields a superb scarlet dye that was used by the Aztecs to produce colorful textiles. In Mexico, it

was second only to silver as a significant cash export. In Europe, it was highly desirable to produce scarlet for royal robes and military officer uniforms. It is thought to have produced the red cloth that Betsy Ross used in the first American flag, and today, microbiologists use it to stain slide specimens. Amazingly, 70,000 cochineal insects are required to produce a single pound of the dye. The trading firm owned plantations of prickly pear cactus so that they could collect the scale. Export of red cochineal dye and the blue plant-based (*Indigofera tinctoria*) indigo dye made Skinner and Klee rich.

Trading was Skinner's business, but orchids were his passion. Skinner was so taken with orchids that his early collections were made without payment or reimbursement despite the cost of his time and packing. At first he collected only for Bateman, but later Bateman gave him contacts with Hooker, the Duke of Bedford, Lord Derby, Lindley, George Wailes, Mrs. Martha Wray, Sir Charles Lemon, and other orchid notables. After his marriage in 1845 to Margaret Raymond, a vicar's daughter, he needed to raise cash for his family and began selling plants at Stevens' Auction House.

Skinner Crosses the Atlantic 39 Times

George Ure Skinner spent a good deal of his time in England after his marriage, relying on his partner Klee and native contacts to send orchids from Guatemala. Skinner was the originator of the orchid auctions at Stevens' Auction House, 38 King Street, Covent Garden and was always seen there when he was in England. He helped sort, arrange, and catalogue orchid shipments, not only for himself but for others. He was often found giving orchid advice and chatting with customers, the in-house orchid expert. Many of the 1000's of orchids he brought to England were sold there on a commission basis. He even bid on behalf of friends of clients at some sales. News of his sales appeared in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* of which Lindley was the horticultural editor.

In his life, he crossed the Atlantic back and forth from England to Guatemala 39 times, a fact of which he was immensely proud. In fact, it is the only deed of

merit proclaimed on his tombstone. It was an arduous journey which took almost two months to complete. From Guatemala City to the port city of Ysabal, called “the hottest town on earth,” through the mountains of Mico would take a week in good weather. From June to September, the mountains were impassable because of the heavy rains. If the mules were laden with cochineal or textiles or muskets, it could take 25-30 days. It took a week of cramped sailing to get to Belize where you could, with luck, get the next mail packet to Liverpool. It was a harrowing six week journey—and that was when there was not a hurricane! Skinner often accompanied his shipments of orchids or goods to England. In fact, it is thought that he spent a tenth of his 30-year career in intercontinental travel enduring the hazards of seafaring, shipwreck, and murderous thieves.

Skinner was a cheerful man and made light of the trip. John Bates, a collector for Lord Derby, complained that Skinner had made the trip seem so easy that he was surprised by how difficult it was. By all accounts, George Ure Skinner was the nicest of men. Bateman gave him high praise saying:

With a nature so gentle and so unselfish and so ready-as I myself have found- to assist in every pious or charitable work- go where he would he could not fail to make friends; that he ever made an enemy, I have yet to learn!... He was always ready to lend a helping hand to any naturalist or traveler who might come his way, rejoicing no less heartily at the success of others than if they had been his own.

High praise, indeed. His hand went out to help almost everyone. He assisted Mr. O. Salvin, an eminent ornithologist, in his early wandering. He also assisted in equipping the collector Arce for an expedition to Veragua. He introduced Captain Dow of the American Packet Service to the love of nature; *Cattleya dowiana* was named for him. Skinner even took Bateman’s oldest son to Guatemala in 1860 to allow him to learn about the New World. He brought the two sons, of the Guatemalan dictator Carrera, to England as a favor. At one of his sales at Stevens’ Auction House, he set aside the first five lots of one of his consignments to build a new church in Paddington in 1864. Moreover, he sent over at least 20 bird specimens for Gould, the eminent painter, who included orchids and birds together in 74 of his paintings. It is not known whether Skinner sent him any of the 74 orchid plants in the background, but it is certain Skinner had a considerable effect on Gould’s choice of orchids.

Bateman and His Elephant Folio

Within a few years, James Bateman had amassed the finest Guatemalan orchid collection in England, sent to him by his dear friend, George Skinner. He decided to produce a book about Skinner’s discoveries. This enormous book was called *Orchidaceae of Mexico and Guatemala*, and it had the largest pages a printer could pro-



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Cynoches egertonianum, one of the cynoches discovered by Skinner.

duce at that time. Bateman was only 26 when part one was published; shortly thereafter it was instrumental in his election as a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society. He became an international botanic sensation. In 1837, Sir William Hooker, editor of the *Botanical Magazine*, dedicated the yearly volume to Bateman. He said:

To James Bateman, Esq. of Knypersley Hall, Cheshire, author of the magnificent *Orchidaceae of Mexico and Guatemala*, a work of which it is hard to say whether the beauty of the subjects represented, the execution of the figures, or the taste displayed in the typographical department, is more to be admired, the present volume is dedicated.

Bateman’s acclaimed book immortalized the orchids discovered by Skinner in Guatemala and Mexico. It consisted of 40 elephant folio pages with descriptions and cultural hints with numerous humorous sketches



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Lycaste virginalis was Skinner's favorite orchid.

by Cruikshank which added zest to the book. There were also anecdotes and vignettes about the scenery in Guatemala and Mexico. The most amusing of these tells of the opening of a box of orchids from which two cockroaches, grown fat on those orchids, emerge and are chased by the gardener's family and assistant. The book was issued in parts between 1837 and 1843. The pages were two feet six inches long and one foot ten inches broad. It had the largest illustrations of orchids ever seen. It weighed 38 pounds and was so bulky and heavy that a person could not pick it up and read it. Special tables had to be constructed upon which to place the book.

He sent out a prospectus to friends, gentry, nobility and editors of the horticultural press. It was priced at 20 guineas or about \$2000 a book in today's money. It was to be published in ten parts, each part containing five beautifully-colored drawings of the most fascinating species, although only 40 drawings were finally included. They were drawn on stone with the same care and finish as an original drawing. Some of the drawings were done by Mrs. Withers, flower painter for Queen Adelaide, and the entire book was dedicated to Queen Adelaide. Other drawings were done by a Miss Drake,

about who little is known. Each orchid was described in Latin and English, with a description of its habitat, and an account of its discovery, and introduction into England. The publication was extremely costly because Bateman wanted perfection. Bateman said that when he had sold all the copies, it would not cover his expenses by £600 to £800 (\$60-80,000 in today's money).

In a time when there was no photography, orchid paintings introduced the world to this fascinating new group of flowers. Many editors and readers were ignorant of what orchids looked like, so it is not surprising that the first illustration of an "Orchis" in the pages of the *London Illustrated News* on December 10, 1842 was not an orchid at all but an annual vine, *Blumenbachia lateritia*. The newspaper apologized. A week later *Gomesa imperatoris-maximiliani* (*Oncidium crispum*) was featured in the newspaper, but it was shown upside down. There was a real need to educate the public.

However, this book was not published for the general public. His original work was limited to just 125 copies. He published his gargantuan book for a select group of 125 subscribers including the King of the Belgians, The Queen Dowager, The Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Dukes of Bedford, Devonshire, Marlborough,

Northumberland, and Sutherland, the Earls of Burlington, Derby and Powis, Earl Fitzwilliam and Earl Talbot. One copy reached St. Petersburg and is still the largest book in the Komarov Botanical Institute. The only nursery to subscribe was Loddiges whom Bateman honored as the first of those who “by their zeal and skill have brought orchid-growing to its present palmy state.”

One of the subscribers to his book was William Taylor Copeland, a railway tycoon, who with his associate Thomas Garrett took over the Spode business in 1833. Archival records at the Spode factory showed that the book was a design source for the firm’s ceramic artists who made a copper engraving design from the book presumably to make dishes of the pattern.

Many of the books have been dismantled and framed separately. In 1997, an original folio of the work sold for \$250,000. Copies of the book are thought to be held by Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, the American Orchid Society, Kew and Harvard. In 1905, an ad for a copy of Bateman’s second book, *A Second Century of Orchidaceous Plants* was selling for £3 15 shillings (about \$380) however, it did not sell at that price and later in the year sold for only 2 pounds 4 shillings at auction, about \$250 in today’s money. In 2009, a copy with hand-colored plates was for sale for an excess of £15, 600 or about \$25,000. One author estimated that his third book, a *Monograph of Odontoglossum*, is valued at \$20,000.

Orchids for the Million

It was in his first book on Guatemalan and Mexican orchids that Bateman made an elitist statement that was to ignite controversy and change orchid growing forever. He said:

It is probable that Orchidaceae culture will always continue in a comparatively few hands; and that it will, therefore, be pursued with the same ardor in the upper walks of life, that already in a humbler sphere attends the cultivation of the many beautiful varieties of the tulip, auricular, and carnation. **Few will value what all may possess.** Each class has its own enjoyment.

A few later, Benjamin S. Williams wrote a biting criticism which appeared in *Gardeners’ Chronicle* taking exception with the idea that only the rich could and should grow orchids.

Having an opportunity of seeing Mr. Bateman’s grand work on orchids, I was struck with some of his prefatory remarks... that the difficulty and expense of growing orchids will always keep them among the aristocracy of gardeners... I believe that we shall soon find keeping the more easily cultivated orchids reasonably damp and well-exposed to light and air whilst growing and giving them a good rest, will make this class as common as they are beautiful... We must have them for the million, and that perhaps he did not see.



George Ure Skinner

His criticism caught Dr. Lindley’s attention and Williams was asked to write a series of articles for the *Gardeners’ Chronicle*. The first appeared on May 18, 1850 and was called “Orchids for the Million.” These articles were the basis for his best-selling guide, *The Orchid Grower’s Manual*, which reached a seventh edition in 1894. Robert Hamilton, Bateman scholar, remarked that it is remarkable that orchids, considered so rare in 1830, could be thought of as for the million by 1850.

Bateman’s Other Writings

In 1860, Bateman moved to Kensington where he wrote extensively about orchids for *Paxton’s Botanical Magazine*. 146 hand-colored plates were lithographed and combined with text and compiled as a bound and boxed volume in 1867 as *A Second Century of Orchidaceous Plants*. Most plants were hand-painted, and the edition came out in a fold-open box. Many editions were dismantled, framed, and sold separately because the images were so beautiful. Before 2000, a few limited edition reprints were done in Holland, 18”x20” high. A thousand very high quality numbered copies of the Mexico book were also made. In 2002, the Mexico book

reprint sold for \$860 and in 2007 was \$1500. A search on Amazon today showed that a reprint sells for \$680. Ever frugal, I got a copy for my Kindle for \$12.

From 1864-1874, Bateman issued his *Monograph of Odontoglossums* with just 30 plates. He was a frequent contributor to the *Gardeners' Chronicle* and published *A Guide to Cool Orchid Growing* in 1864.

Bateman frequently visited London where he regularly attended meetings of the Royal Horticultural Society. He gave lectures there from time to time, and the *Gardeners' Chronicle* said that he "more nearly realized the ideal of the popular lecturer... than anyone else." Many of his lectures were about orchids, usually illustrated with plants from his Knypersley Hall. When his lecture topics were edible, he gave samples. For example, following a lecture on the dwarf banana, he passed around a large bunch of bananas. One time, after a lecture on orchids, orchid tea was available to taste. Another time, he passed around cigars made from orchid leaves cased in tobacco leaves from the museum at Kew.

Teaching the World to Grow Orchids

When a shipment of orchids managed to survive shipwreck, thieves, rodents and roaches, noblemen would cook them to death in hot, stagnant "stoves" which were mistakenly thought to be just the thing to nurture orchids. Bateman and Skinner, both through their writings and their example, helped to change all that.

For his part, Skinner may have been the first orchid grower to grow orchids in his living room— as we do for enjoyment. He, along with Bateman, were among the first to point out that many orchids came from high elevations with cool temperatures and that the practice of growing everything in a hot stove was often deadly for these orchids. He promoted the sale of cool-growing orchids, and he wrote to Lindley that experiments with these plants often showed that they did better in the house than in the "stew pans" in which people were "cooking" them.

Benjamin Williams, the author of the popular orchid guide said this letter was instrumental in changing orchid growing practice. Skinner followed with five more letters on the same topic published in *Gardeners' Chronicle* in 1862 and lessened the reliance on the stove for cool-growing plants.

Bateman, too, was instrumental in teaching how to grow cool-growing orchids like odontoglossums. In 1864, he gave an influential lecture on the topic to the RHS. Bateman felt that the overheated greenhouses were a "cultural abomination."

In his first book, he has a section on orchid culture which sounds surprisingly modern. He added that, above all, "do not aim at having too large a collection, but rather strive to grow a few good kinds in the best style." This advice even resonates today. He stressed taking care of the roots of the orchids since "on the health of the roots everything depends." He suggested

putting broken potshards in the bottom of the pot with pierced sides to help drainage and suggested putting plants such as stanhopeas in baskets. Plants needed to have air movement in cooler greenhouses that had 60-65°F (16-18°C) temperatures in the winter and 70-75°F (21-25°C) in the summer. He advised keeping humidity high but not dripping on the plants and watering with rain water but not overwatering. He believed plants should be given a rest in winter by moving them to a cooler part of the house and advised attention to pests, giving several remedies for them. He suggested giving plenty of light to orchids but advised using shade cloth to protect from the sun when needed.

Bateman stressed that different orchids had different cultural needs and that they all should not be subjected to the same treatment. He admired the orchids at Chatsworth where the growing conditions mirrored the growing conditions in the area in which the orchids were found. He mentioned the difficulty of growing orchids out of their normal environment and the need to try to duplicate the plant's original habitat- the rainy or dry season, the air movement, the temperature, the humidity. For example, he pioneered cool orchid cultivation which enabled odontoglossums to be grown in England by replicating the cool arid climate of the cloud forests of Central America where the flowers grew.

The Gardens at Biddulph Grange are the Talk of the Nation

Although Skinner died suddenly in 1867, Bateman lived for another thirty years. His famous gardens at Biddulph Grange are still in existence and are restored to their original beauty by The National Trust in England. Bateman had moved two miles from the home of his parents to Biddulph Grange, part of his grandfather's estate. Bateman's wife Maria shared his passion for plants, and together they established gardens which were the sensation of his time.

The extensive gardens had different horticultural zones and featured gardens with themes and plants from around the world. For example, there was an Egyptian Garden with sphinxes, a pyramid, and an obelisk created out of yew topiary. There was a serene Chinese Garden, a realization in the garden of the Willow-pattern plate with a brightly painted temple and a humped-back bridge crossing a still pool with rushes and carp. In addition, there was an Italian Garden, a Dahlia Walk, a Fernery, a Rose Garden, the Pinetum, the Stumpery, the tree peonies, the orchids, a Wellingtonia Avenue, a Geological Gallery, and other formal gardens, as well as a natural glen connected by tunnels and paths.

Bateman designed the gardens with the help of the famous artist and plant-lover Edward Cooke, who improved the gardens by adding rocks and stumps to create texture and interest. The garden was designed to be beautiful in every season, and each plant was put in an environment where it would do best. The gardens were

featured in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* in 1856 and 1862. Mr. Bateman was well-respected for these gardens as well as for his work with orchids.

There can be no doubt that we owe a enormous debt to Bateman and Skinner for introducing 100 new orchids to England and for teaching the world how to grow them.*

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About the Author

Carol Siegel, a retired English teacher and medical office manager, has been president and newsletter editor of the Greater Las Vegas Orchid Society for several years. She has spoken on 'The Sex Life of Orchids' at societies, museums, and universities around the country and has written articles on Nevada's native orchids



in addition to many for the *Orchid Digest*. Carol leads groups of Clark County school children on tours of the Springs Preserve, a museum and nature center complex.

Carol Siegel
E-mail: growlove@cox.net