

Rosalie Duthé

Born: Catherine-Rosalie Gerard Duthé
The world's first official dumb blonde. Duh!
 1748 (Unknown) – Sept 25, 1830 (Paris, France)

A BRUNETTE GOES to the doctor complaining that her body hurts whenever she touches it. “Hmmm,” says the doctor, “show me what you mean.” The brunette presses her finger against her hip and screams. Then she pushes her finger against her knee and tears of pain run down her cheeks. Finally, she pokes her finger deep into her tummy and crumples like a rag doll to the floor. The doctor, having seen enough, tells her to sit, relax, and take a deep breath. Then, in his best doctor-patient manner, he asks, “Are you a true brunette?” “No,” the teary-eyed woman confesses, “I’m actually a blonde, but I dyed my hair last week.” The doctor nods and says, “Just as I thought, you have a broken finger.”

Now, if you happen to be blonde and female you’ve been the target of too many blonde jokes. *So*, you may have wondered during a time of personal reflection: *Where did it all begin?*

Never have you been so fortunate, as you are holding in your hand the best book available to enlighten yourself regarding facts that have long been relegated to the dust bin of history, such as who was the dumb blonde that started the whole dumb blonde thing.

Catherine-Rosalie Gerard Duthé, born in 1748, is the world’s first officially recorded dumb blonde.

Life for Rosalie started out wholesome enough, entering a French convent in her youth. What is not clear is why she left. Was it of her own accord or was she shown the door for breaking one or more of the convent’s rules?

What is clear is that soon after the doors of the convent slammed shut behind her, she entered the world of a wealthy English banker named George Wyndham, the 3rd Earl of Egremont. Without specifics, it’s said she ruined the Earl, but in what manner, financially, socially, or both, is not known.

Vivacious and light on her feet, she became a dancer at the Paris Opera Ballet where she met numerous French noblemen, most notably, a young Comte d’Artois who in 1824 would

become King Charles X of France. Heady company for a youthful ingénue, especially one with few, if any qualms about pushing the limits of 19th century moral decorum.

Indeed, one incident is indicative of Mlle. Duthé's relaxed approach to proper Parisian protocol. In 1788, Louis Philippe II, the Duke of Orléans, introduced his 15-year-old son, also named Louis Philippe to Duthé with instructions that she educate young Philippe in the social arts.

Then, at some point during the educational process, Rosalie was seen in the company of the young Louis Philippe as they rode around the Champs-Élysées in a royal carriage. It was an event that ruffled some royal feathers as French culture dictated only royalty ride in royal coaches! And to the best of anyone's knowledge, the alluring and flirtatious Mlle. Duthé had nary a drop of royal blood in her standard-issue veins.

To disparage Duthé and to embarrass the family of the Duke of Orléans, someone with a wicked sense of humor and a wickeder way with words, gave new meaning to a popular French song.

The song's once family-friendly lyrics were replaced with lyrics of such lecherous meaning they will not be presented here. But know that the new lyrics, sung lustfully in the taverns and streets of Paris, ridiculed the real or imagined nature of the relationship between young Philippe and his social arts teacher.

The song, however, failed to change the course of history and Louis Philippe, the son of the Duke of Orléans would in 1830 become King Louis Philippe I, and from the bawdy side of French life, he would forever be remembered as a notch on the handle of Mademoiselle Duthé's parasol.

Besides her dalliances with the prominent men of her era, Duthé is best known these days for the many portraits she sat, stood, and reclined for, many of which still exist in private collections and museums.

She was an unapologetic artist's model, painted by some of France's most notable artists, attired in everything from full neck-to-ankle period dresses to her birthday suit.

Among those who captured her in oils were François-Hubert Drouais, whose portrait of Rosalie is owned by the Rothschild family of England; Lié Louis Périn-Salbreux who painted a nude

of Rosalie at her bath for Comte d'Artois, the suitor who later became King Charles X; and Henri-Pierre Danloux who painted a portrait of Rosalie for the noted French banker, Frédéric Perregaux.

By the way, when he was near death, Perregaux had the painting brought to his bedside so the last image he would gaze upon before death would be that of Mlle. Duthé's beauty.

And now, duh! for the cherry on top of Rosalie's story.

Rosalie was known for something else, a personality trait that solidifies her reputation as a dumb blonde. It's not known if the trait was a genuine facet of her personality, or if it was an exaggerated acquired trait. But, she had this habit of coyly pausing for extended periods of time before speaking, almost as if she were "dumb" in the literal "deaf-and-dumb" sense.

Her real (or feigned) dumbness was such an expected part of her personality that in 1775 it inspired a one-act theatrical satire, *Les Curiosités de la Foire* (The Curiosities of the Fair) that reportedly kept Paris laughing for weeks.

A few dumb blondes assuredly duhded their way through history before Rosalie, but with no name and no certifiable evidence of ditziness available, cultural historian Joanna Pitman is comfortable in stating that, "Rosalie Duthé has acquired the dubious honor of being the first officially recorded dumb blonde."¹

Duthé died in 1830 at the age of eighty-two and is buried at Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, the most visited cemetery in the world, with 3.5 million annual visitors.

¹ Joanna Pitman: *On Blondes*, (Bloomsbury USA, March 3, 2003).

*Why does it say "TGIF" inside blondes' shoes?
"Toes Go in First"*

From the warped mind of a brunette or redhead.