

City Beat

There are eight million stories in my albums. This is one of them...

The three **Roos Brothers** were born in Wissembourg, France: **Adolphe** in 1837, **Hyppolite** in 1844, and **Achille** in 1852.

Adolphe and his brother Hyppolite arrived in San Francisco, in 1864. The first Roos clothing store was located on Leidsdorf Street in San Francisco in 1865, when Adolphe Roos bought out his employer. Roos Bros. on Leidesdorff Street in San Francisco was so successful that, in 1866, it moved to a larger location at Kearny and Post streets.

Younger brother Achille Roos joined Adolphe in San Francisco. Adolphe married Ernestine and lived with his family at 826 Geary, in the 1870's. Adolphe Roos was recognized as an integral part of San Francisco's social elite when son, Robert A. Roos, was born in 1883.

After graduation from college, Robert Roos joined the firm and began to emerge as a civic leader. Roos Bros. of San Francisco was destroyed in the 1906 Earthquake-Fire. Adolphe Roos died in 1908, the same year as the re-opening. Robert A. Roos gradually donned the mantle of perhaps the city's best-known merchant.

During the 1860's and 1870's, Virginia City, Nevada was booming from the silver strike called the Comstock Lode. Roos Bros., a firm that catered to the tastes of "particular gentlemen," was established in Virginia City in the early 1870's, on South C Street. Hyppolite Roos was the Manager of the Virginia City Roos Bros. store, which lasted until the late 1880's, when the silver mines began to wane. Hyppolite later became estranged from his family.

The Panama Canal was soon to be completed and the idea of a Panama-Pacific International Exposition was a topic of discussion everywhere. Robert Roos believed that the projected Exposition should actually have little to do with the canal. Instead, it could be a grand coming out party for the rebuilt City of San Francisco. With this goal in mind, Robert headed East to lobby for congressional designation of San Francisco as the Exposition City. He then embarked on a round-the-world trip, inviting foreign participation in the proposed fair.

San Francisco was triumphant in its efforts, and in 1911 President William Howard Taft came West to break ground for the Exposition. Taft's only ceremonial visit to a private home during his three-day San Francisco stay was to that of Ernestine Roos, Robert Roos' mother.

Roos Bros. Inc. expanded to a chain of nine stores, with two in San Francisco, two in Berkeley, and one each in Oakland, Palo Alto, San Jose, and Fresno. Roos Bros. was touted as an "ornament of the city," and regarded as one of the world's most beautiful and unique stores. Roos Bros. stores were sold in 1958 to the Robert S. Atkins Clothing Co. and continued to operate as Roos Atkins.

