

R.M. Rose Distillery and the Atlanta Antique Bottle Show

History and tradition join together

By Andy Sudderth

The R.M. Rose Distillery of Atlanta encompasses a rich and storied history. Rufus Mathewson Rose was born May 17, 1836 in Williamantic, Conn., of an old and influential New England family. Receiving an academic education in his native city, he later went to New York City, entered the drug business, and filled an important appointment at the Sailors' hospital on Long Island. Later he studied medicine, attending lectures at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and received his diploma.

While still a young man, he came to Hawkinsville, Ga., and entered the drug business with his uncle, Darius Randolph Mathewson, a prominent Georgian.

When the War between the States came on, Dr. Rose was among the first to volunteer, joining the cause of the South and enlisting in the Tenth Georgia Regiment of the Confederate Army. Although at first engaged in the field, he was soon transferred to the medical department, serving in the old converted hospital of William and Mary College, and later in the laboratory at Macon.

Returning south at the close of the war, he came to Atlanta and from the very first was prominently identified with the prog-

ress, enterprise and push of this struggling city. In 1867, he organized the R.M. Rose & Co., shortly afterwards changed to R.M. Rose Co., and continued as the head of the firm until he retired in 1905. He was succeeded by his son, Randolph Rose. Such was the reputation of this house that the label on any goods was the same as his bond, and it received the highest recommendation ever given by the government and was one of only two houses in the country to receive such a distinction. Since his retirement, Dr. Rose had been a familiar figure on Atlanta streets, as he attended to his large real estate interests to the very last.

He was a Prominent Mason

One of the most prominent Masons in the state, he was the oldest living charter member of Georgia Lodge, of which he was the chairman of the finance committee at the time of his death. He was also a past worshipful master of this lodge, having been presented with what has been acknowledged to be the handsomest Masonic jewel ever presented in the south. He was also honored many times by the grand lodge of the state and was a past grand junior warden of the Grand Commandery of Georgia.

FINDS MODEL STILL IN FORMER MANSION

Atlanta Deputy Picks Up Pot in One-Time Palatial Home of Randolph Rose.

Chattanooga Times Special.

ATLANTA, Ga., Jan. 26.—A residence that was once the palatial home of Randolph M. Rose, and which a quarter of a century ago was in the most fashionable section of Atlanta, this afternoon yielded a model 1933 distillery and a quantity of rye liquor bottled and labeled "Tennessee corn."

For a long time Deputy Sheriff S. G. Davies has been passing the old Rose home, now surrounded by business houses. Until recently, however, the name Rose meant little to him. He had not been told that "Black Label," "Lewis 86" and "Grandfather Corn"—to say nothing of Rose's special Manhattan and Martini cocktails—were bywords throughout the nation before prohibition.

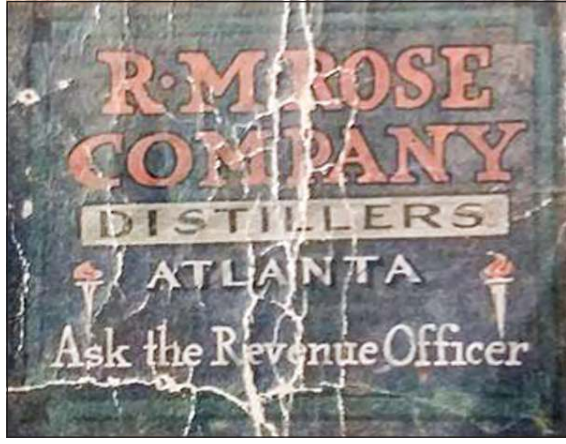
Today he acted on a hunch that led him to inquire what kind of people were living in the home of the one-time famous distiller. Posing as a prospective buyer of the property, he called today and asked to look the place over. The familiar odor of cooking mash greeted his well-trained nostrils.

When he asked to go upstairs, a pleasant little lady protested that it wasn't tidied up today. He came back to the courthouse and obtained a search warrant. On his second trip he found a 100-gallon capacity copper still and 800 gallons of mash. About thirty gallons of home-made rye was ready for a trade made brisk by lobbyists sponsoring and opposing legislation pending in the Georgia assembly. The little woman was gone.

Randolph Rose, whose former home in Atlanta yesterday was raided and found to contain a distillery, was for many years a colorful resident of Chattanooga, operating a distillery on Chestnut street, near Ninth. Rose manufactured corn whisky and is said to have lost a fortune in trying to educate the people of the east to use his product. He opened a branch in New York City and operated it until he learned that "corn" was not popular in the metropolis.

While here Mr. Rose was active in sports and civic affairs.

An article about a raid on the former home of Randolph Rose from the *Chattanooga Daily Times* of Friday, January 27, 1933.



PHOTOS (from top left):
 R.M. Rose jug from the 'Atlanta era' which started in 1867
 Rose Company 'Ask the Revenue Officer' sign.
 R.M. Rose Company trade card.
 Rose Distiller Chattanooga jug, circa 1910.
 Early labeled R.M. Rose Company bottles.



Twice married, his first wife, Miss Sue F. Bowen, of Wilcox County, Georgia lived but a short time. His second wife, formerly Miss Kate Fleming, of Pulaski County, and one of the oldest families in the state, was one of the best known and most widely loved gentlewoman in Atlanta.

Retiring and inconspicuous, none outside of those directly concerned knew of his very many charities. Dr. Rose was always among the very first and most generous in subscribing to any and every cause looking to the betterment and growth of Atlanta.

Eminently successful both in his professional and business life, Dr. Rose will be longest remembered for those traits of perfect loyalty, hatred of all deception and sterling integrity that made his friendship the highest-prized privilege of the thousands. They will ever cherish his memory, together with his unflinching helpfulness in every time of trouble.

The timeline of Rufus Mathewson Rose

In 1867 he organized the R.M. Rose & Co. as a wholesale dealer in Atlanta, at Granit Block and Broad St.

In 1873 Mr. Rose changed the name to R.M. Rose Company. At the time all of the whiskey coming into Atlanta was being made at the Cox & Hill Distillery in Stone Mountain, Georgia. In 1877, Mr. Rose worked for Cox & Hill as their salesman and also had his wholesale dealership on Granit and Broad St. in Atlanta.

Atlanta went dry around 1885/1886 forcing Mr. Rose to open wholesale operations in Chattanooga, Tennessee and Jacksonville, Florida. In 1887 Atlanta was losing revenue, so they voted to open liquor houses.

In 1887, Mr. Rose opened at 40 Decatur St, in Atlanta and let his brother, O.A.V. Rose, be a partner in the company. Things

didn't go well with his brother, as he was a heavy drinker, so they split in 1890.

Mr. Rose opened Mountain Spring Distillery in 1889 in Gilmore Georgia, Cobb County. The company was formed by Mr. Rose, G.B. Stewart, C.P. Johnson, and J.W. Birdsong.

Randolph Rose, the son of Mr. Rose, became secretary of the R.M. Rose Co. in 1890 and incorporated it in 1894. Randolph advertised the whiskey in all the surrounding states. By opening Chattanooga and Jacksonville back up, business was booming.

Mr. Rose and his son, Randolph, entered their famous corn whiskey in the 1904 St. Louis Exposition and won the Gold Medal for the finest Georgia Whiskey.

In 1905, Mr. Rose saw the temperance movement and Prohibition going strong. Mr. Rose retired and sold the R.M. Rose Co. to his son Randolph.

In 1908, Georgia was one of the first states to go dry. So Randolph loaded all of his Georgia Whiskey on eleven Western & Atlantic train cars and went to Chattanooga, Tennessee. Randolph purchased a half interest in the Wakeman Distillery in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Mr. Rufus M. Rose passed away July 21, 1910 at the age of 74 in Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia and was buried in the Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta.

Randolph later purchased a half interest in the Old 76 Distillery in Newport, Kentucky in 1912 and again moved operations. He also opened a wholesale store in Manhattan, New York. Randolph still had his wholesale stores in Jacksonville, Florida until it went dry in 1914.

R.M. Rose Co. closed in 1917.

Randolph Rose passed away July 2, 1933 at age 62 in Reno, Nevada. He was buried in Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia.

A new beginning

Andy Sudderth and partners re-opened the R.M. Rose Co. in 2010. Andy's dad, George Sudderth, made moonshine and that's how Andy learned the trade. In 2011, the equipment was built, which included the still, fermenters and tanks. In 2016, George Sudderth was inducted into the National Moonshiners Hall of Fame in Dawsonville, Georgia.

In the fall of 2016, The R.M. Rose Co. Distillery opened its doors to the public in Dillard, Georgia. This location was chosen based on the water being the best water in the state. When you have good water, a copper pot still and the finest corn, you can make some of the finest whiskey around.

R.M. Rose has some of the finest brands on the market. R.M. Rose Co. products include Old Georgia Corn Whiskey, George Sudderth Corn Whiskey, Bourbon Whiskey, Fire on the Mountain Cinnamon Whiskey, Apple Whiskey, Blackberry Whiskey, Peach & Lemon Whiskey, and Fire on the Mountain Cinnamon Cherries.

Come and visit the R.M. Rose Co. at 890 Franklin St, Dillard, Georgia 30537. Our phone number is 706.982.8115. We look forward to meeting you and serving you some fine whiskey!

Editor's note: This year, the R.M. Rose Distillery is a proud sponsor of the Atlanta Antique Bottle Show. Show chairs Jack Hewitt and Bill Johnson are both thrilled to have the Rose company as a sponsor.

The Rose Distillery currently has the largest collection of R.M. Rose bottles, stoneware, and ephemera ever assembled. Many of the items are currently on display at their tasting room. An impressive collection of their bottles and jugs will be on display at this year's 2020 Atlanta Antique Bottle Show, Friday and Saturday, September 11 and 12. Come and enjoy the show.



PHOTOS (from top left):
 Copper still at the distillery.
 Andy Sudderth hard at work.
 The door to the Rose Co. Distillers.
 Bourbon and go-withs from Rose.
 A line-up of all the Rose products.
 Barrels of bourbon ready to go.

