

Big notes of pepper, chocolate, and oak. This big, chewy, artisanal craft rye is not for the faint of heart.

Corsair remains at the forefront of craft distilling and in a single visit, you'll have the chance to taste a whole world of amazing and experimental whiskeys that continue to push boundaries.





CUMBERLAND CASK

TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Manuel Eskind was an important individual in Tennessee whiskey, though few know his name today. He was instrumental in helping to reopen the shuttered George Dickel Distillery in 1933. With Eskind in mind, his descendants established Capital Distilling Company in 2012, and announced their Cumberland Cask Tennessee Straight Whiskey in 2013.

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While it says “Tennessee Straight Whiskey” on the bottle, this is a whiskey made in Tennessee and not a Tennessee whiskey, as it is not made using the famed Lincoln County Process. The bottle statement has caused some confusion, but the company has been clear in its messaging otherwise. All Cumberland Cask whiskeys have been distilled and aged in Tennessee and bottled in Nashville. The folks at SPEAKeasy Spirits crafted this whiskey and it’s gotten some nice attention.

Cumberland Tennessee Straight Whiskey First Expression: Modern Expression (92 proof) is a boutique, small batch blend of six-and-a-half-year-old and eight-and-a-half-year-old whiskeys with a mash bill of 70% corn, 25% rye, and 5% malted barley. A big corn whiskey, it notches nice notes of caramel and sweet white cake with honey, vanilla, and a lovely smokiness.

Cumberland Cask Second Expression: Barrel Cut (118 proof) uses the same mash bill as the First Expression, but is bottled at barrel strength, providing a bigger shot of flavor, smoke, and alcohol. “Barrel Cut is a cask strength, uncut,

unfiltered, hand crafted whiskey, just like Manuel used to sell,” the distillery states.

Cumberland Cask Third Expression: Ruby Cut (90 proof) is the first and only port wine-finished whiskey made in Tennessee. The distillery aged their classic six-year-old whiskey in four California ruby port-styled dessert wine barrels “for a full Nashville winter to allow the whiskey to contract and squeeze all the port wine in the wood out into the whiskey.” The whiskey aged a full six months in barrels resulting in a deep amber color and a unique sweetness. The whiskey was then dumped and stored in stainless steel. The same four port barrels were then refilled immediately with a new batch of six-year-old whiskey and rested for six months, this time through a Nashville summer. Once the second batch had aged for six months, it was dumped and blended with the stored winter whiskey. All reports claim that the Ruby Cut was fantastic, but it was difficult to get a hold of. If you’re struggling to do so, the Barrel Cut is a nice consolation prize. It’s a very tasty whiskey that benefits from just a splash of water.

The company went through a period when product was scare, but a new reorganization and a repackaging of the company will lead to a relaunch.





DOC COLLIER MOONSHINE

In April 2014, Doc Collier Moonshine opened their doors in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Each bottle of moonshine is made

from four classic elements—sugar, corn, yeast, and fresh English Mountain Spring Water—and features a family recipe that is more than 100 years old.

“According to local legend, the owner’s great-great grandfather, William ‘Doc’ Collier, once traveled through the Smoky Mountains on horseback delivering his moonshine ‘before moonshine was even a word,’ ” journalist Jessica Bookstaff Doppelt wrote. The distillery receives as much as 300 to 600 gallons at a time from the English Mountain Spring Water Company for fermenting and distilling.

The Doc Collier Moonshine Original Recipe (125 proof) is their “straight off the still,” high-proof, unfiltered moonshine. The Doc Collier Unaged Corn Whiskey (80 proof), a straight “Corn Liquor” made solely from corn, water, and yeast. There’s the classic Doc Collier Heritage Shine (80 proof), which, according to the distiller, is as close as you can get to traditional, old-fashioned ‘shine. It is “like something you would get from a truck or trunk here in the Smokies” according to the distillery. Doc Collier also features a number of flavored shines, including ‘Shined Cherries,

Peach, Blackberry, Sweet Tea, Greenbrier Apple, Root Beer Float, Smoky Mountain Sunrise, Firecracker, and Buckeye, as well as seasonal offerings.

For whiskey enthusiasts, the Doc Collier Unaged Corn Whiskey is one that's worth trying.

EAST TENNESSEE DISTILLERY

East Tennessee Distillery, the home of Roberson's Tennessee Mellomoon moonshine, is situated in the hills of Piney Flats. Master distiller Neil, "Tiny" Roberson, is a former Navy chemist who was trained with the difficult task of turning seawater into drinking water. After his service, he worked for more than 12 years as a lab technician and analyst for two very large companies.

As a hobbyist, Tiny made small batches of craft "liquid sunshine" in his garage. His homemade 'shine became a fast favorite with friends and family. Around that same time, Tennessee began licensing small craft distilleries and Tiny

gained legitimacy in August 2011, and the distillery opened its doors in 2012.

"It really took an act of faith because the way the laws and everything are set up, we had to have all the equipment in place and ready to go before we could apply for the permit at the federal level," Tiny told the *Johnson City Press*. "If anyone thinks they can take on this kind of business on a shoestring budget, they might want to rethink it."

Roberson's Tennessee Mellomoon Fine Tennessee Sippin' Shine (100 proof) is clean and easy to sip, both straight or on ice. It's also great for a cocktail or punch. Roberson's Tennessee Mellomoon 150 Proof is a 'shine that is as close as commercial moonshine can get to those that came off the old stills. The high alcohol content is great for those who like their moonshine hot. The East Tennessee Distillery also features 'shines with flavors like Apply Pies, Banana, Butterscotch, Coconut, Caramel, Grape, Peach, Honey Ginseng, and Strawberry. Tiny's award-winning 'shines are available in Tennessee, South Carolina, Florida, and Ohio, so keep an eye out whenever you're in those parts.



is no cure for.”

—Proverb



“What whiskey
will not cure, there



H CLARK DISTILLERY

In 2014, Heath Clark told *The Tennessean*, “Five or six years ago, I made a list of things I needed to do to make whiskey. And Roman numeral No. 1 was to get permission.” However, the paperwork and filings alone took far longer than Clark thought. Once completed, Clark stated, “Now that the time is here, the distillery looks like I hoped it would. It’s in an old grain barn, a pretty rural structure, with all the necessary infrastructure. It looks exactly like a place whiskey should be made.”

H Clark Distillery, established on August 1, 2014, was the first legal distillery in Williamson County in more than 100 years. A micro-distillery, they currently produce the company’s handcrafted Tennessee Bourbon, Gin, New Whiskey, and Black & Tan Whiskey. Clark, his wife Becky, and a handful of friends and employees craft these incredible whiskeys one small batch at a time. The beautiful

400-liter Hoga still is an alembic-styled copper pot still that sits comfortably on a brick pedestal with its long, elegant neck curving into a copper rectifier. It’s as pretty as it is practical and says a lot about the man who is trying to make quality spirits in this neck of the woods.





STEP INTO MY LAW OFFICE



Heath Clark is a master distiller forty hours a week, but he has another full-time job: he's a lawyer—and a fairly popular one, too. Clark has a unique and specific distinction—he is the only practicing attorney-for-hire to have his law offices located in a distillery!

Clark worked as operations counsel for one of the nation's leading privately held owners of community-focused hospitals. He consulted on legal issues and operations in Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Nevada, Tennessee, and Utah. He now provides advice and counsel for hospitals, physicians, imaging centers, and other forms of health care.

In 2009, Clark was also instrumental in passing some of the laws that allowed small craft distilleries to mushroom in Tennessee. On the wall of his office, Clark displays a photo of numerous distillers and himself with the governor of Tennessee as the new laws were signed.

If there's one thing you can be sure of—Clark's spirits come from a man with impeccable judgment!



We started off our tasting with H Clark Tennessee Dry Gin (88 proof). Clark and company tried 26 different botanicals including sassafras and honeysuckle. The resulting gin packs a big wallop of juniper upfront, a punch followed by big shots of evergreen and black pepper. This nicely balanced gin is aromatic and delicate without any wilting.

H Clark New Whiskey (80 proof) is a white whiskey made from 40% malted barley, 11% chocolate malt, and 49% malted oats. The result is reminiscent of a distilled oatmeal stout. While corn whiskeys often have notes of corn bread and popcorn, this one is a big oatmeal cookie. It is very well-balanced and a real standout in the growing field of oatmeal-influenced whiskey.

H Clark Black & Tan (80 proof) is a blend of new and one-year malt whiskeys. It's a lighter styled whiskey, with oak and caramel giving way to a nice, spicy ending. It's as smooth as the aged whiskies from Scotland, but with more toffee flavor.

H Clark Tennessee Bourbon (90–100 proof) is a four-grain bourbon made from 70% corn, 15% malted barley, 7.5%

wheat, and 7.5% rye. It's aged in newly charred, 25-gallon American white oak barrels for two years. First released in December 2016, the very first bottle of this lovely bourbon was auctioned off to raise money for those impacted by the fires that devastated East Tennessee in 2016.

This is a big, big chocolaty malt with notes of dark caramel, burnt sugar, toffee, and salted caramel. It's big and robust, with hints of vanilla, cocoa, and sweet, dark bread.

I loved this whiskey which fares well with a splash of water. In my opinion, it's the best bourbon in Tennessee and one of my favorite craft bourbons anywhere.

H Clark Tennessee Rye is made from 100% rye and aged for two years in charred new American white oak. The mash bill is 80% unmalted rye, and 20% malted rye, so you're sure to get plenty of spice in this one.





HEAVEN'S DOOR DISTILLERY

Heaven's Door Distillery was planned to operate as a distillery and art center in a former church building in downtown Nashville. Heaven's Door teams Marc Bushala (CEO of Heaven's Door Spirits) and other unnamed investors

with Bob Dylan. Bushala said he and Dylan had raised \$35 million from investors for the project. Bushala's HDS Distilling Co. owns the property where the distillery will be built. Bushala is known as the CEO of Spirits Investment Partners (SIP), the company that is partnered with Dylan on this project. HDS investors include Nashville-based entrepreneur and distiller Darek Bell of the iconic Corsair Artisan Distillery. It was suggested that Corsair and Heaven's Door would likely have a symbiotic relationship on the project.

Bushala said they were "focused on creating something unique and enduring. We also have around six years-worth of amazing aged whiskey, so we have plenty of runway." The facility will include a distilling operation, a concert venue, a restaurant, and whiskey library, as well as an art center, featuring paintings and metalwork sculptures created by Dylan. The distillery will operate within the church which was built in 1860 and will now also be a boutique hotel. Burshla said, "Our most likely course of action is to renovate the church proper as the art center and open it first."

Four whiskey expressions were released in April 2018, all from sourced whiskey. “I’ve been traveling for decades and I’ve been able to try some of the best spirits that the world of whiskey has to offer. This is great whiskey.” Dylan said.

The design on the bottles from Heaven’s Door mimic one of Dylan’s sculptures. Heaven’s Door Tennessee Bourbon (90 proof) has a mash bill of 70% corn, 25% rye and 5% malted barley and aged for 8 years in new charred American oak. Tasting notes include strawberry, vanilla, baking spice, caramel, cereal, cocoa and spice. A real keeper!

Heaven’s Door Double Barrel Whiskey (100 proof) is finished in cigar barrels from Vosges, France. Heaven’s Door Tennessee Bourbon 10 Year Old (100 proof) is a low-rye whiskey that has gone through the Lincoln County Process. Notes of strong dark cherry, maple, caramel, cereal, biscuit, and pineapple.

Heaven’s Door Straight Rye (92 proof) is more of a Baltimore rye. It’s very smooth with notes of gingerbread at the end and soft hints of anise, clove, caramel, and pecans.





HOOK & LADDER DISTILLERY

Located in downtown Kingsport, Tennessee, Hook & Ladder Distillery was founded by Drew Draper who claims that he has been distilling moonshine since he was 17. After teaming with his father Keneth, a fire captain with 26 years of service, the Hook & Ladder finally gained legitimacy. The tributes to firefighters don't stop with the name—Hook &

Ladder's very cool tasting room is festooned with all kinds of awesome firefighting paraphernalia.

Drew and Kenneth use an old, thumper-style still to make high-proof 'shine. Their smooth and simple Hook & Ladder Original Recipe has since been accompanied by a number of different flavors, as well as a high-octane 140-proof version.



“Too much of anything
is bad, but too much
good whiskey is
barely enough.”

—Mark Twain

JACK DANIEL'S DISTILLERY



Jack Daniel's is the best-selling whiskey in the world with more exported product than Johnnie Walker. It is also the best-selling Tennessee whiskey in the world—and it's located in the dry county of Lynchburg!

Jack Daniel's has grown every year over the last 25 years. Its sales grew exponentially through the whole vodka, gin, and tequila, "we-want-it-clear" craze. This is not true of any other Tennessee or Kentucky distillers and in 2013, the distillery went through extensive improvements with a \$100 million expansion, designed to keep up with the world's demands.

Total sales top more than \$4 billion with sixty-five percent of all Jack Daniel's exported to more than 160 countries around the world. Jack Daniel's sports five main distilling lines and three smaller ones. They run 13 different bottles 24/7 at the distillery and produce more than 200,000,000 bottles a year. They have one day off from cooking each week. Jack Daniel's uses US No. 1 Corn-grade sweet corn with zero tolerance for foreign material, discoloration, damage, worms, disease, smut, decay, or any

other defects. Only whole-kernel corn is used, most of which comes from western Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois.



They also use lactic acid to clear the mash and make it sterile. The yeast is grown at the distillery in a 1,700-gallon fermenter. Jack Daniel's has 64 40,000-gallon fermenters where they make their distiller's beer. That's 2.56 million gallons of beer a week! Each fermentation takes six to seven days with the majority cooking for six days.

Jack Daniel's has six constantly working stills, four column stills, and two pot stills. Everything is 100% copper, true to the Jack Daniel's tradition because copper produces a cleaner spirit. It comes out of the doubler as bourbon and comes out of the charcoal tanks as Tennessee whiskey. They fill approximately 2,000 barrels a day which amounts to nearly 100,000 to 150,000 gallons of spirits. The distillery

uses a proprietary toasting process on their new American white oak barrels. One-third of all Scotch is aged in former Jack Daniel's barrels.



Jack Daniel's has 89 rickhouses throughout Lynchburg and with an operation this huge, it's no surprise that the distillery has its own burn station where charcoal is made for the "Mellowing Process." During the process, it takes one gallon three days to trickle through 10-foot-high, slow-flowing tanks. Approximately \$1 million of maple trees are burned each year in order to make enough charcoal for their whiskey production. Four firemen are assigned to do the work and operate in a very carefully controlled setting.

Fine dust is always a danger as it is as flammable as the alcohol vapors, but the distillery has an onsite fire team with plenty of equipment and around six million gallons of water.

Their water source is a huge cave spring. The discharge is filtered and returned to the creek once it is safe; 70% of their silage is sold wet to local farmers (master distiller Jeff Arnett recommends mixing in a little hay with it).

Jasper Newton "Jack" Daniel, born in 1850, was of Scots-Irish, Scottish, and Welsh descent. The youngest of 10 children, he learned how to make whiskey in the 1850s from a preacher/grocer named Dan Call and Call's slave, Nearest

Green. In 1875, Daniel and Call established a distillery and by 1884, Daniel owned the company outright and purchased the land where it now resides. He began using Daniel's iconic square bottle in 1897.

Daniel died in Lynchburg on October 10, 1911. He passed away due to blood poisoning, although there was an apocryphal tale that his death resulted from an infection that sprouted after he kicked the safe in his office. His nephew, Lemuel "Lem" Motlow, ran Jack Daniel's for the next 36 years and built it into one of the biggest brands in the country.

The company was sold to the Brown-Forman Corporation in 1956 and in 1972 Jack Daniel's Distillery was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



CHRIS FLETCHER

THE MAN IN WAITING ASSUMES THE THROWN

Chris Fletcher was assistant master distiller under master distiller Jim Arnett for the final six of Arnett's twenty-year tenure at Jack Daniel's. Arnett relied heavily on Fletcher and had immense confidence in the young man. Fletcher, the grandson of legendary Jack Daniel's master distiller Frank Bobo (1968–1988), loved the job and found his footing quickly. He'd already earned the respect of famed whiskey expert Chuck Cowdery, which was not an easy thing to do. Cowdery wrote, "Fletcher is an ideal fit for Jack Daniel's. He has the heritage and authenticity of Jack as his birthright, but also brings a fresh approach to product innovation."



Fletcher had an easy style to him. He was confident, smart, and most of all, he loved whiskey. Even spending a short amount of time with him told you a lot about how things were.

And thus it came to pass in 2020, at the age of 39, Fletcher became the master distiller at Jack Daniel's when Arnett retired. Fletcher was only the 8th person ever to assume the role.

"It's an honor to be named master distiller here at Jack Daniel's and join a line of folks who've made the best whiskey in the world," said Fletcher.

"Over the last 17 years, I've been able to learn and work alongside so many talented whiskey makers and I am very grateful for the mentors I've had; including Jeff Arnett who taught me so much. Our distillery and team here in Lynchburg are the best in the business, and I cannot wait to continue working with them crafting the world's favorite Tennessee whiskey."

Fletcher graduated from Tennessee Technical University in 2003 with a BS in chemistry. He worked for eight years at Brown-Forman as a chemist in research and development.

"Our distillery operates in the most traditional method I've seen," he said. "The possibilities are almost endless, we don't have to rely on outsourcing to create new-to-world offerings."

The changing of the guard was obvious. "Our newest Single Barrel Special Release is a barrel proof rye whiskey – I think that says it all." Fletcher said. That release signals a shock wave through the industry. Jack Daniel's was all-in on the super-premium market and now a new voice is at the helm of the largest whiskey brand in the world. Raise a glass, this is going to be fun.

ACKNOWLEDGING A DEBT: NATHAN “NEAREST” GREEN

While visiting with Jeff Arnett and Chris Fletcher, we were told the story of Nearest Green.

In Mr. Jack Daniel’s old office, there is a picture of the great founder himself taken with the distillery crew. “What makes the portrait so intriguing is the gentleman sitting immediately to Jack’s right, an African-American worker. Given the time period when this photograph was taken—around the 1900s—and the racial divide that permeated the American South, it’s intriguing to see an African-American man seated beside the proprietor of a business. Their proximity to one another in this photo underscores the remarkable relationship that is at the heart of how Jack came to make whiskey,” states the company. “The man in the photograph, we have reason to believe, is George Green. Along with being Jack’s friend, George was also the son of Nathan ‘Nearest’ Green. And it’s Nearest Green, along with

the Reverend Dan Call, who taught Jack Daniel about making whiskey at a still owned by the Lutheran minister.”

When Jack Daniel was a child in the 1850s, he went to work for Dan Call, a local preacher and grocer. Legend has it that the doting Call taught Daniel how to work a still and make whiskey, but Daniel’s real teacher was Nathan “Nearest” (sometimes incorrectly referred to as “Nearis”) Green, one of Call’s slaves.

Green stayed on with Call even after he had been freed in post-Civil War Tennessee. Allegedly, Call told Daniel, “Uncle Nearest is the best whiskey maker that I know of.” He then told Green, “I want [Jack] to become the world’s best whiskey distiller—if he wants to be. You help me teach him.”

“Uncle Nearest” had at least three sons who eventually worked at the Jack Daniel’s Distillery—George Green, Edde Green, and Eli Green all worked there. Four of Green’s grandchildren also worked at the distillery—Ott, Charlie, Otis, and Jesse. Seven generations of Green’s descendants have worked at the distillery with three members employed by the company today.

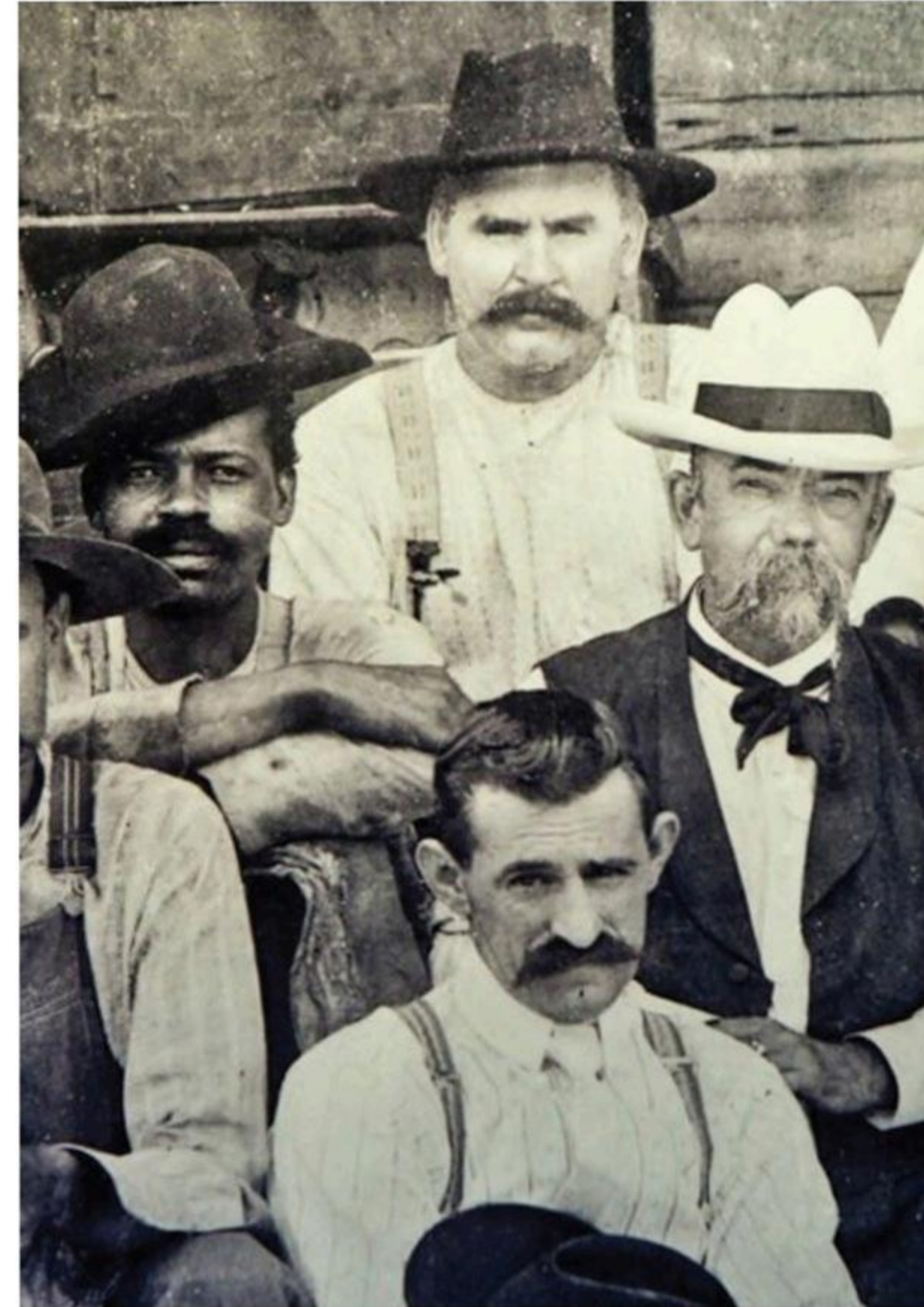
This story underscores a very important point. Not just about Jack Daniel's and not just about whiskey. This story shines a spotlight on the incredible contributions African-Americans have made to the distilling industry over the last three centuries.

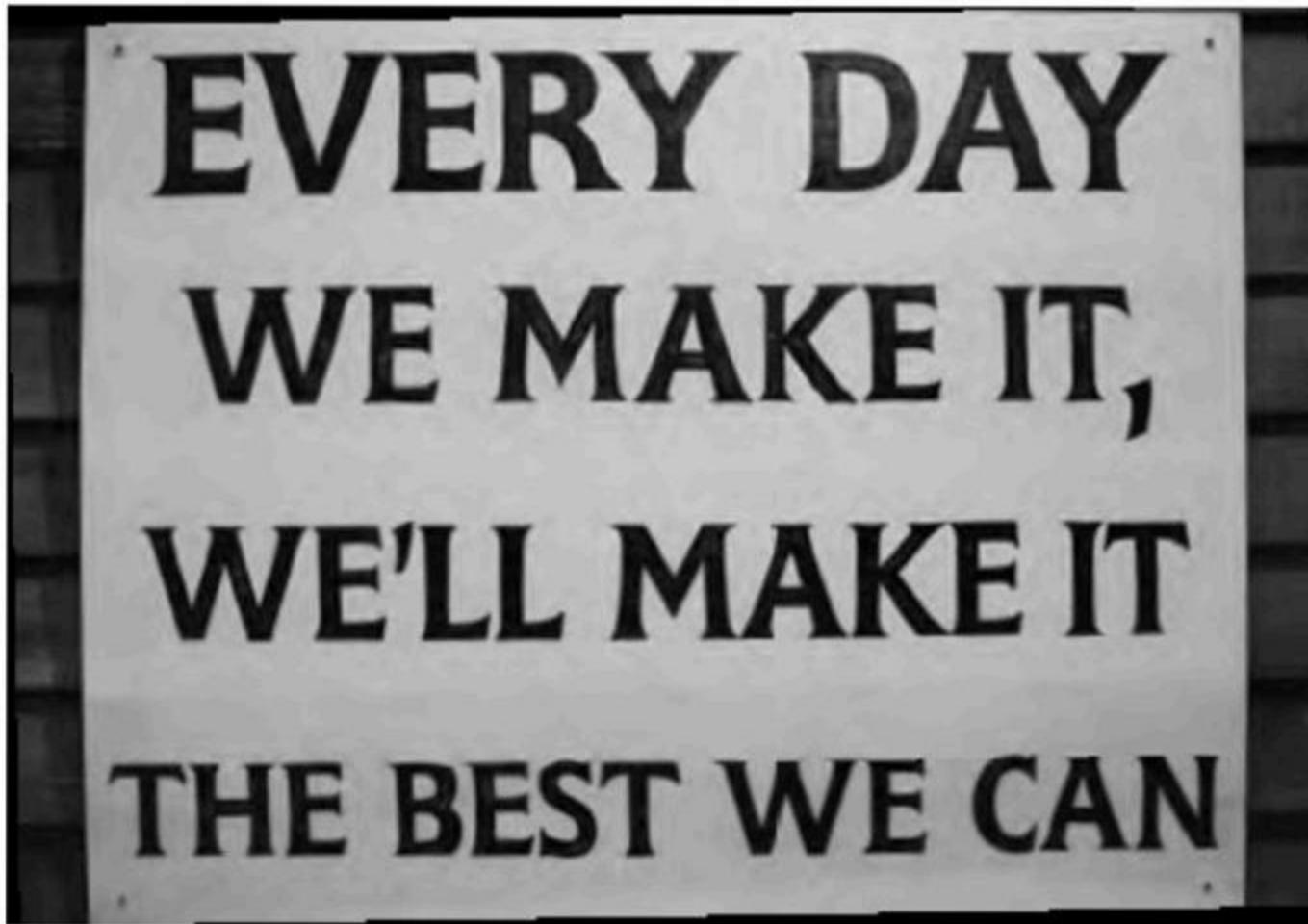
In *The New York Times*, Clay Risen wrote, "Slavery and whiskey, far from being two separate strands of Southern history, were inextricably entwined. Enslaved men not only made up the bulk of the distilling labor force, but they often played crucial skilled roles in the whiskey-making process."

George Washington was once America's biggest distiller with six slaves that ran the distillery. The rumored inventor of bourbon, Elijah Craig, owned 32 slaves. The Pepper family owned 25 slaves. In fact, a slave is thought to have recorded the first whiskey recipe in America.

Whiskey historian and authority Fred Minnick echoed, "We may never know the full contribution of slaves in American whiskey. But with each passing year, I and other researchers find more about their contributions. Let's hope these men and women get the credit they rightfully

deserve."





Jack Daniel's Unaged Tennessee Rye Whiskey (80 proof) is an un-aged Tennessee rye whiskey made with a mash bill of at least 70% rye. This is a rich, rich whiskey and easily one of the best un-aged whiskeys made in America. There are big hints of spice right up front that are evened out by hints of vanilla and corn bread. This whiskey is good neat, but with one cube of ice it becomes a stunner. Big and bold, this white whiskey is made for serious whiskey drinkers and an



Jack Daniel's Tennessee Straight Rye Whiskey (90 proof) has a high-rye mash bill with 70% rye in it. It possesses all the earmarks of a fine rye with nice copper/ amber color, caramel and burnt sugar upfront, and a spicy finish. There's also that Jack Daniel's touch of smoothness at the end. This isn't a bracing rye, but if you like the flavor without all that bite, this is a wonderful option.

Jack Daniel's Old No. 7 Tennessee Sour Mash Whiskey (80 proof) is the classic Tennessee whiskey with a mash bill of 80% corn, 12% barley, and 8% rye. Caramel, honey, vanilla, and spice make up this very smooth and sexy dram. It's the world's most popular whiskey for a reason. This stone-col classic is great neat or with ice.

Gentleman Jack Double Mellowed Tennessee Whiskey (80 proof) was a gift from former legendary Brown-Forman master distiller Lincoln Henderson. Gentleman Jack is run through the classic Lincoln County Process before it goes into the barrels and is then run through one more time before being bottled for an extra smooth taste. An immediate hit upon its release, this whiskey has gone on to become a

massive success.

JACK DANIEL'S SINGLE BARREL COLLECTION

In 2020, Jack Daniel's repackaged and debuted their Single Barrel Collection. It was acknowledged as the distillery's official foray into the quality whiskey market and was met with much fanfare and approval. First introduced was the Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Select (94 proof) which they pronounced as their "signature single barrel offering" of their classic Tennessee whiskey.

Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Rye (94 proof) was the first new grain bill the distillery had introduced since Prohibition. With a 70% rye, 18% corn, and 18% barley mash bill, this was a big step for the distiller. A smooth deep rye with dark fruit, caramel, and black pepper.

Jack Daniel's Single Barrel, Barrel Proof (125-140 proof) was the first cask strength whiskey introduced by the distiller. Notes of vanilla, caramel, toasted oak. Robust, but not overpowering.

There is also Jack Daniel's Single Barrel 100 Proof (100 proof) Tennessee Whiskey Bottled-in-Bond. Available Duty Free Only. This is the quality Tennessee whiskey only Jack Daniel's could make



JUNCTION 35

In early 2020, Trey and Summer Saylor opened Junction 35. Trey is the master distiller while Summer handles marketing and sales. The young couple founded the new distillery and restaurant in the Smoky Mountains of Sevier, Tennessee. At Junction 35 Spirits, they hope to create unique spirits and delicious signature dishes.

“We are very excited for what’s in store for Junction 35. Distilleries are a popular business in our area and we hope to bring a new approach to the industry with our project,” says Trey, an as effusive and bubbling a distiller as I have ever met. He loves what he is doing. The Saylor’s are good people.

The large spacious bar, retail location, and restaurant are dominated by the brand’s railroad theme. Their beautiful design pays homage to the hard-working men of the railroad as well as some of the most famous train stations in America, like Grand Central Terminal.

Make no mistake, you can come for a great meal, but there are plenty of very good spirits to stay for and all are small batch and hand-crafted.

Junction 35 Moonshine Original (100 proof), their “white dog whiskey,” hits with the base notes of vanilla and some heat that has hints of cinnamon. It is very smooth, and very good. Their moonshine comes in a number of other flavors including Peach, Apple Pie, Blackberry, Strawberry, Margarita, and Sweet Tea, and are all available at 70 proof.



Junction 35 Rum (80 proof) is a small batch Puerto Rican-style rum with hints of citrus, vanilla, and sugar cream.

Junction 35 Gin (80 proof) is a lovely, light-styled floral gin, with notes of orange peels and botanicals. Definitely a quality craft gin, but not overpowering. Flavorful. Junction 35 Gin Barrel-Aged (80 proof) is barrel rested in used charred oak barrels for six months. Not overpowering on the oak, this whiskey has a nice flavor profile that's perfect for cocktails.

Junction 35 Vodka (80 proof) is a non-GMO corn, wheat, and barley product. The spirit is distilled five times and then filtered twelve times. This all-grain spirit is one of their best sellers. Their Junction 35 Vodka Jalapeno (80 proof) is a smooth, well-balanced vodka, perfect for cocktails and with just a touch of flavor and kick at the end. Their Junction 35 Citrus Vodka (80 proof) offers lovely hints of lemon, lime, and orange.

Junction 35 makes a series of whiskeys. Their most popular is the Junction 35 Honey Flavored Whiskey (70 proof) which is a nice whiskey with a slightly sweet tint. Other flavors include Cinnamon Whiskey and Caramel

Apple Whiskey.

Junction 35 Straight Bourbon Whiskey (90 proof) is a wheated whiskey that is aged for more than 2 years in American oak. It's a dark gold/copper color with hints of cereal, vanilla, and white pepper on the end. It has a lovely smooth and slightly sweet lingering finish.

Junction 35 Straight Rye Whiskey (90 proof) is barrel-aged 3 years. It has notes of dark fruit, a hint of cereal, and a gingersnap finish.

Junction 35 is solid stuff that guarantees a great time.

KING'S FAMILY DISTILLERY

Justin and Cara King are the owners of King's Family Distillery in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. They founded the distillery in 2018. Though Justin started in the whiskey business in less-than-legal ways, he eventually became a master distiller at Ole Smokey Moonshine Distillery. He traveled extensively as the face of

the brand, propelling the moonshine into all 50 states (and eventually to 60 countries).

Cara began her career in the whiskey industry in 2008, starting out in the grain business. Her family's grain farm, including rye, has been a part of the whiskey industry for more than 60 years. She worked in Louisville, Kentucky, for almost a decade. Cara knows the lands and the families that lovingly produce each and every barrel of grain.

These are two industry professionals who know what they are doing. They know grain and they know distillation. It's a great pairing for people who like whiskey.

The pair make the super smooth King's Family Vodka (80 proof) that is six times distilled corn-based vodka. They also produce King's Family Ginger Vodka (80 proof) which is super clean, with a lively gingersnap finish.

King's Family American Blended Whiskey (80 proof) is a blend of bourbon and light whiskey, each aged at least two years. This is a light, sweet whiskey with notes of honey, caramel, and vanilla. It's balanced with spice, pear, and oak. This is a lovely light whiskey that goes down super smooth

and is a little too easy to drink.

King Family Bourbon Kentucky Straight Whiskey (87 proof) is a 99% corn bourbon, aged in new bourbon barrels about 4 years. They only bottle one barrel at a time which makes it a true small-batch whiskey. In Justin's point of view, it's a sweet and smooth whiskey that appeals to the folks who come to this part of the country. Notes of corn, vanilla, fig, and date all come through. It's a fantastic and unique sipping whiskey, as well as the flagship and the workhorse of the King's Family line.



King's Family Wheated Bourbon (100 proof) is a wheat-forward mash bill. It's a sourced whiskey, about 4 to 5 years



old with a lot of complexity to it. This lovely soft whiskey offers notes of chocolate, toffee, and apple on the nose. On the palate there's toffee, orange, and spice.

The King's Family Rye (90 proof) mash bill is 51% rye, 45% corn, and 4% malted barley. It's a super smooth rye with a soft beginning and hints of sweet nuttiness, cherry, and orange zest. This is Cara's favorite, especially when you consider her family's ties to the grain.

King's Family Distillery is a lovely place that's putting out quality whiskey. With a very talented husband and wife team, you'll want to be a part of this family.





KNOX WHISKEY WORKS

By Emily West

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Inside Knoxville's first distillery since Prohibition, Miranda White is leading the charge to create corn whiskey and bourbon. Nestled in an older part of town inside a 100-year-old warehouse, Knox Whiskey Works opened its doors back in 2015. Crafting small-batch liquor, the group creates whiskey, gin, vodka, and a coffee liqueur. Out of that lineup, it offers nine different products.

"We knew that it would be an interesting business undertaking," she said, noting their first 300-gallon still came from a Craigslist purchase. "So far it's been fantastic. We have the support of the community for sure."

White first started making larger batches of whiskey in larger barrels, ones that were not quite ready to pull for bottling. Today, she makes much smaller batches in -5 to

-10 gallon increments which ages faster for consumption. It takes 12 hours for their product to go through distillation and it ultimately goes through three distillations before it's even inside a barrel.

Farm to bottle, Knox Whiskey Works products are made from ingredients sourced about 30 miles away. Its corn comes from an heirloom variety in Jefferson County.

"The farmer grows this type of corn just for us," White said. "The mantra we are trying to keep here is locally sourced and organic if we can get it. We use a pure corn mash bill. The fact is that it's a true mash and we went the extra miles to make it that way."



WHISKEYS TO TRY:

Old City Heirloom Corn Whiskey—bottled at
43.25% ABV, 86.5 proof by volume

Jackson Ave Gin—bottled at 45.5% ABV, 91 proof by volume

Tennessee Valley Vodka—bottled at 43.25%
ABV, 86.5 proof by volume

Cold City Old Brew Coffee Liqueur—bottled at
20% to 25% ABV, 40 to 50 proof by volume

Marble City Pink Gin—bottled at 43.25%
ABV, 86.5 proof by volume

Fleur de Vie Liqueur—bottled at 20% to 25%
ABV, 40 to 50 proof by volume

Tennessee Tailgate Orange Flavored Vodka—bottled
at 33% to 36% ABV, 66 to 72 proof by volume

Silver Release Bourbon—bottled at 45%
ABV, 90 proof by volume

Deals Gap Dragontail Habanero Flavored Whiskey
—bottled at 35% ABV, 70 proof by volume

Rye 95 Whiskey Distiller's Select - Limited Reserve
Single Barrel Rye 95% Rye mash bill, aged in American
Oak bottled at 47.5% ABV, 95 proof by volume





LEATHERWOOD DISTILLERY

Leatherwood Distillery is a small operation in Pleasant View, Tennessee. It's owned and run by retired Master Sargent Andrew Lang, a veteran with 24 years of active-duty service in the United States Army; 16 of which came in the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne). Leatherwood Distillery is Lang's spirited tribute to the 5th Special Forces Group, nicknamed "THE LEGION."

Lang's partners include Ashland City's Johnny Lindahl who acts as the business and marketing advisor, as well as Chicagoans Mike Collins and Bill Havle. During Lang's tour of Afghanistan in 2011 he met Masoud Rezai, who was working as a local interpreter for the US Armed Forces. They formed a fast friendship and reunited again during Lang's final tour of duty in 2014. Rezai "was given the opportunity to come to the United States with a special immigration visa, due to his work with the U.S. government. Once here, he received his

green card," wrote Amy K. Nixon of *The Tennessean*. Rezai, who works at the distillery full time also owns a percentage of the business. Today, the two work hand-in-hand making incredible 'shine.

The distillery opened in 2017. Lang makes an old-fashioned sugar moonshine which is all sugar with no grain to add flavor. Each label at Leatherwood features a different story from Lang's career in the military. The classic 'shine, Leatherwood Midnight Extraction (80 proof), is a classic white sugar 'shine. Other flavors in the line include Georgia Peach, Apple Pie, Mango Tango, and R&R Red. Lang is also working on a classic Tennessee straight whiskey.

Leatherwood Snake Eater Bourbon Whiskey (85 proof), a smooth, small batch bourbon has grain, oak, dried fruit, vanilla, caramel, and allspice on the nose. On the palate, fruity grains and savory spice come through.

Leatherwood Check Point Rye Whiskey (80 proof) has notes of freshly baked rye bread, vanilla, and caramel on the nose. Sweet and spicy grains on the palate with honey,

vanilla and a hint of dried fruit. Nice touch of spice and black pepper at the finish.



LEIPER'S FORK DISTILLERY



“Leiper’s Fork Distillery is recapturing the lost art of small batch production, using local ingredients and pouring our heart and soul into every drop we produce to bring a premium Tennessee spirit from grain to glass,” says Leiper’s Fork Distillery owner and master distiller, Lee Kennedy.

Upon meeting Lee and his wife, Lynlee Kennedy, it’s very clear very quickly that the two intend to make quality whiskeys. Lee, who grew up in Tennessee said, “Everyone knew who made the best moonshine and where to quietly get it. It was not a mass-marketed fad, but just a part of everyday life. Most of our fathers drank bourbon, not because it was trendy, but because they wouldn’t contemplate drinking anything else.”

At Leiper’s Fork Lee and Lynlee are focused on two things: Tennessee whiskey and bourbon. They use locally grown grain, limestone-filtered water, and classic, traditional techniques when making their small-batch whiskeys. They also age them in traditional, 53-gallon charred white oak barrels for five to seven years.

The distillery's tasting room is in a 200-year-old cabin that once served as a refurbished dogtrot. Their stillhouse is a 5,000-square-foot timber-frame building with a 500-gallon swan neck whiskey still and old-fashioned cypress fermentation tanks.

Leiper's Fork lies along the historic Natchez Trace, a forest trail that runs from Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee, (approximately 440 miles) and connects the Cumberland, Tennessee, and Mississippi Rivers. Meriwether Lewis, of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, died while traveling along the Trace.



Lee and Lynlee established their distillery on 30 acres and started distilling in April 2016. All the grains they use are either sourced locally from the county or within the state. They believe that whiskey has terroir and based on what they've produced, it's hard to argue with them.

Matt “Pops” Mayo is hailed as one of the best front of house men in Tennessee whiskey.

Experienced master blender Ashley Barnes (formerly of Four Roses and Buffalo Trace) was brought in to help with the blending of their burgeoning warehouse in order to create a consistent blend for the distillery’s bottlings. Her deft hand is exactly what this small artisanal house needed and the spirits are high-quality.

Old Natchez Trace Tennessee White Whiskey (90 proof) is made from a classic bourbon mash bill of 70% corn, 22% rye, and 8% malted barley. This is easily one of the best white whiskeys produced in the region with corn, honeysuckle, and other sweetness upfront, as well as a hint of butter and popcorn.

Old Natchez Trace Rye White Whiskey (90 proof) is made from the same mash bill and is similarly impressive. It has notes of white pepper, spice, a hint of nuttiness, a touch of anise, and a slap of gingersnap. Add a touch of water and a hint of petrol enters the picture as the other flavors intensify. It’s super smooth and incredibly exciting.

Colonel Hunter’s Select Barrel Tennessee Bourbon Whiskey (95 proof) is a 9-year-old bourbon bottled from 20 barrels and made from a sourced bourbon in Tennessee. The mash bill is 72% corn, 20% rye, and 8% malted barley. This lovely, light, and complex dram features buttery caramel, brown sugar, and a chewy nuttiness that gives way to a bit of ginger.

Colonel Hunter’s Select Barrel Tennessee Bourbon Whiskey (100 proof) has a mash bill of 84% corn, 8% rye, and 8% malted barley. This bourbon is a 9 years, 5 months, and 11 days old. It has lovely complexity and balance, with lush vanilla and caramel notes and a soft finish.

Colonel Hunter’s Single Barrel Tennessee Bourbon (95 proof) has the same mash bill as the other two Colonel Hunter whiskeys, but occasionally the distillery chooses special barrels for bottling.

Leiper’s Fork Straight Rye Whiskey (95 proof) is also available (green and gold labels). The first barrels of rye were made using seven different grain bills from a Baltimore/Maryland-styled rye (55% rye) to more of a Pennsylvania

high-rye (85% rye). This is a blend of the original 13 barrels of rye the distillery made.

Leiper's Fork also releases limited single barrel, cask strength bottlings with no chill filtration. The whiskey is robust, full bodied, and flavorful.

Leiper's Fork Tennessee Whiskey (100 proof) is 70% corn, 15% rye, and 15% malted barley. It's a small-batch bottling that was aged for four years in new American oak charred barrels.

Leiper's Fork has fulfilled its promises, passing the eye test, the nose test, and the taste test.







LOST STATE DISTILLING

Joe Bianchi and his son Nick, founded Lost State Distilling in July 2019. In 2020, the distillery was named Best New Craft Distillery by a panel of experts in *USA Today*.

“Especially being in small town,” said Joe. “It goes to show we have a little bit of people everywhere voting for us, so it’s very good. Especially since we beat out distilleries in Denver, California, so being in Bristol, that’s a big thing.”

The State of Franklin was an unrecognized and autonomous territory in eastern Tennessee from approximately 1784 to 1788. The distillery is named for that lost state. The Bianchis bought the abandoned Bristol Supply and Equipment Co. building, across from the Bristol Train Station, for \$375,000 in April 2018.

Their goal was not to compete with other moonshiners in that region (of which there are many), the goal was to make a 4-year-old Tennessee whiskey using local corn. “There’s a lot

of spirits other distilleries have not heavily touched,” Nick said. “We hope to get in and experiment.”

Nolichucky Jack Silver Rum (80 proof) is a crystal-clear rum with notes of vanilla and light hints of butterscotch. The rum is very smooth and made with panela, an unrefined whole cane sugar.

Franklin Four is the largest label thus far and their Franklin Four Single Barrel Straight Bourbon Whiskey is a hand-selected barrel with a limited release of no more than 350 bottles.

Franklin Four Whiskey is a blend of two wheated bourbons. It’s smooth with big caramel on the nose. In very small limited releases, there’s the Franklin Four Cask Strength Single Barrel Bourbon and the flavored Franklin Four Cinnamon and Maple (60 proof).

There are two Shelby’s Reserve whiskeys. Shelby’s Reserve Whiskey (101 proof) is a wheated whiskey with a mash bill of 64% corn, 22% wheat, and 12% barley. The whiskey is aged at least 2 years in new American oak charred barrels.



There's also the Shelby's Reserve Straight Bourbon Whiskey (90 proof), a wheated-bourbon with a mash bill of 60% corn, 30% wheat, and 10% barley. This whiskey was aged at least two years in new American oak charred barrels.

All in all, Lost State Distillery shows barrels of promise.



NASHVILLE CRAFT DISTILLERS

Bruce Boeko began building Nashville Craft Distillery in the Westwood-Houston (WeHo) section of Nashville in October 2014. His first distillations occurred in March 2016 and the distillery opened two months later. There are currently two brands being sold by the distillery—Nashville Craft and Fugitives.

The numerous spirits Nashville Craft develops are all incredible concoctions created by Bruce himself. Fugitives is a co-branded, cooperative label with an outside brand team. The tasting room and distillery are urban chic and industrial, reminiscent of a mad scientist's laboratory. All that comes together to assure visitors that they are about to be rewarded with great whiskey and exciting innovations. Boeko is one of the most passionate and talented people in Tennessee whiskey and he's someone to watch in the future.

NASHVILLE CRAFT DISTILLERY



DISTILLING GEEK

Here's why I liked Nashville Craft Distillery's owner and master distiller Bruce Boeko: Right off the bat, he is so passionate about distilling that when the Tennessee Whiskey Trail was initially opened, he was the first person to visit every distillery on the trail. I love that kind of whiskey geek!

Boeko is big on science as he was previously a DNA laboratory director. He insists on making his craft spirits using almost solely local and regional ingredients and resources. A homebrewer and biology major in college, Boeko was inspired by Louis Pasteur to become a research scientist and eventually found work at a DNA testing lab in North Carolina. He started his own lab in Nashville in 1996.

Boeko's love of craft beverage making got the better of him and in 2013 he attended Moonshine University where



BRUCE BOEKO SCIENTIST AND



he was hooked. He then took more in-depth classes at Kothe Distilling Technologies in Chicago and decided distilling was for him.

Boeko embraces both tradition and the new age, forward-thinking outlook of the craft distilling movement. In essence, he's a mix of Darek Bell of Corsair and Woodford Reserve's Chris Morris. He makes a classic bourbon-styled mash bill for his Tennessee whiskey, but the grains are local. He makes a rum, but it's with locally-grown, Mennonite sorghum. Despite these innovations, Boeko follows the old-line processes and traditions by rote. He's a distiller's distiller and he's got the passion of a street corner preacher, plus all the talent and discipline of a portrait artist.





Nashville Craft Distillers are Boeko's singular creations. Nashville Craft Distillers Naked Biscuit (90 proof) is a rum made with sorghum. The first batches were made using 100% pure sorghum syrup from Muddy Pond Sorghum Mill, located in the Tennessee hills midway between Nashville and Knoxville. According to the distillery, "Sweet sorghum cane has been grown in Tennessee for generations. Unlike sugar cane, it is well adapted to our state's climate." Sorghum has

been a traditional substitute for sugar in tough economies throughout history and continues to be an ingredient in many locally baked goods. It's also a wonderful rum for cocktails.



There's also Golden Biscuit Sorghum Spirits (90 proof) which is bourbon barrel-aged.

Nashville Craft Spirits Crane City Gin (80 proof) is a fabulous, aromatic wheat and malted barley gin mixed with some lovely botanicals. The name is a nod to the city's recent building boom. This is a wonderful gin with notes of wintergreen, pepper, and citrus.

Nashville Craft Traditional Bourbon Whisk(E)Y (93 proof) is a handmade spirit mashed, distilled, aged and bottled at 514 Hagan Street. It's made from a mash bill of 80% corn, 10% rye, and 10% malted barley. The first batch was bottled on December 7, 2019. The whiskey has a nose of caramel, cherry, and vanilla. Sweet dark fruit comes across the palate with hint of oak and spice.

Nashville Craft Original Bourbon Whisk(E)Y (93 proof) is a wheated bourbon made from a mash bill 60% corn, 30% wheat, and 10% barley. This is a made-from-scratch whiskey launched on May 11, 2019. The whiskey has a nose of caramel, vanilla, and. Fruit is followed by oak on the palate, finishing with warm spice.

FUGITIVES

Fugitives Tennessee Artisan Spirits is a brand owned by Jim Massey and Darren Briggs that celebrates Tennessee's local agricultural traditions, and craftsmanship. The idea is to make craft spirits in small batches, especially "artisan whiskey and spirit distillations featuring locally raised organic and heirloom grains. Farmed, fermented, distilled, and bottled locally, Fugitives Spirits offers a True Taste of Tennessee Terroir," according to the company. Each batch is copper pot-distilled at Nashville Craft Distillery.

Fugitive Spirits has grown since its beginning. Though they can be found in a half dozen states, including New York, it remains a quality whiskey which means it's usually found in the stores with better whiskey collections. Nashville Craft Distilleries' fan base of writers and industry influencers continues to grow. According to a local distributor, the New York connection grew out of a food and spirits writer who was effusive in his praise.

Massey especially wants to be known as a whiskey man,

but some of Fugitive's best customers prevailed upon him to make vodka. One of the highly-anticipated new releases of 2021 was the Briggs & Massey Vodka (80 proof) made from non-GMO corn. It's glutenfree, crystal clean, and super smooth with real flavor. The vodka bears his and his partner's names.



CORN BREEDS AND WHISKEY TERROIR

Jim Massey stresses that they are forced to do limited releases for the next few years because it's not always easy to find a farmer who will grow what he wants. The farming practices have to be sustainable, nearly organic, and the farmers need to raise the heirloom corn variety he prefers, which may not be as productive as more popular corns that are being grown.

Massey is clear: he doesn't just want non-GMO corn, he wants specific breeds. Most importantly, the corn must be from Tennessee, according to Fugitives Spirits. Even further, Massey is big on transparency about his corn and grains, such as growing traits and yields of Tennessee Red Cob versus Hickory Cane.

"Here in Tennessee, we have arguably the best-known agricultural product in the whole world—Tennessee

whiskey," he said. "Yet until recently, it hasn't been made with just Tennessee grain in decades. I'm glad to be a part of the first big step in revitalizing Tennessee agriculture in our small way." Fugitives Spirits is not the only small, craft distillery that uses local corn. There are a handful of artisan crafters who insist on it. He's a little more vocal about it, though.

Because Tennessee whiskey has to undergo the Lincoln County Process by law, the growth of the category has been slow, but steady. "The effect of these constraints has kept 'paper tiger' brands from hijacking and repackaging hundreds of variation brands on industrial bourbon and calling it 'Tennessee Whiskey'," said Massey. "While the marketplace is flooded with repackaged bourbon brands all carrying the same juice, Tennessee whiskey has held steadfast and true. There are only a handful on the market, so we've ended up being the true rare find."

Massey is quick to tell you that he knows and works with his farmers. He points to Alfred and Carney Farris (they grow rye

and the heirloom Jubilee corn) whom he has contracts with at their Windy Acres organic farm in Orlinda (about a half-hour from Nashville). His Hickory Cane corn comes from Jennifer and Frank Nicely's farm in Strawberry Plains, near Knoxville.

"In terms of flavor, the grain is affected by the soil it's grown in, arguably as much as by the type and variety. For instance, Hickory Cane grows well in rockier soil and has more intense flavor when it struggles a bit. When you do a double pot distillation like we do, we are able to bring out all the great nuances of that corn," he said. "What we put in the barrel has a more robust grain profile from the start and that begins with the dirt." Massey believes in whiskey terroir. It is a notion in the industry that is picking up steam. He's passionate about it.

"I pay my farmers a living wage to grow specialty grains and I like to say the best way to preserve green space is to make farming profitable," said Massey.

Finding farmers who would cooperate with the company's demands were hard to find, but slowly that is changing. "Farmers ask me, 'I heard you're paying for corn.' We're building this path a little at a time," Massey said.

Currently, Fugitives is laying down 100 to 200 barrels a year. Each bottle of Fugitives is made only with local corn. In the beginning, it limited what they could produce, but now things are starting to move forward. Currently, it's the grain that's been slowing them down. Their aim is 1,000 barrels a year, but the goal is not to be the biggest, most well distributed Tennessee whiskey, says Massey, it's to turn Fugitives into the best Tennessee whiskey, period. That starts with the corn and where it's grown. Grandgousier will always be a small batch, true Tennessee whiskey.



County Process, is an exceptional product that you should absolutely seek out. The Grandgousier is a lovely dram that begins with caramel and toffee, and has hints of rich vanilla cake, hot pancakes, syrup, black pepper, and exotic spices.

Fugitives also offers Grandgousier Tennessee Whiskey Single Barrel (94 proof) made with sustainably raised Tennessee heirloom corn and the finest Irish malted barley. This whiskey is a blend of two bourbon mash bills distilled in Tennessee, celebrating the local land, grain, and spirit. This small-batch whiskey is a limited release, providing hints of fig and chocolate with a big finish of warm sweet caramel.

Fugitives Grandgousier Tennessee Whiskey (96 proof) is small batch whiskey that is made with local, sustainably grown heirloom "Hickory Cane" corn. The mash bill is 89% corn and 11% malted barley and also takes four days to ferment. This whiskey, which is subjected to the Lincoln



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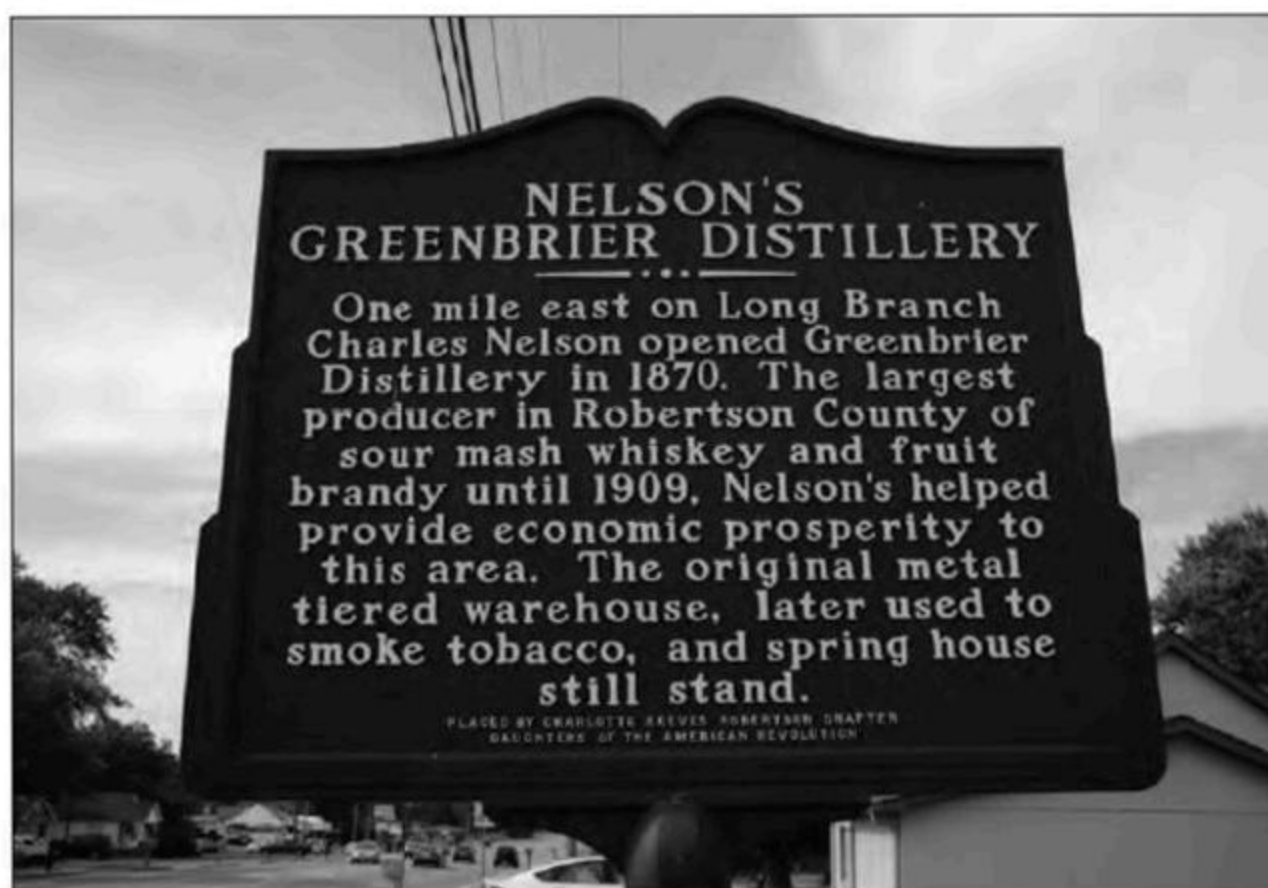
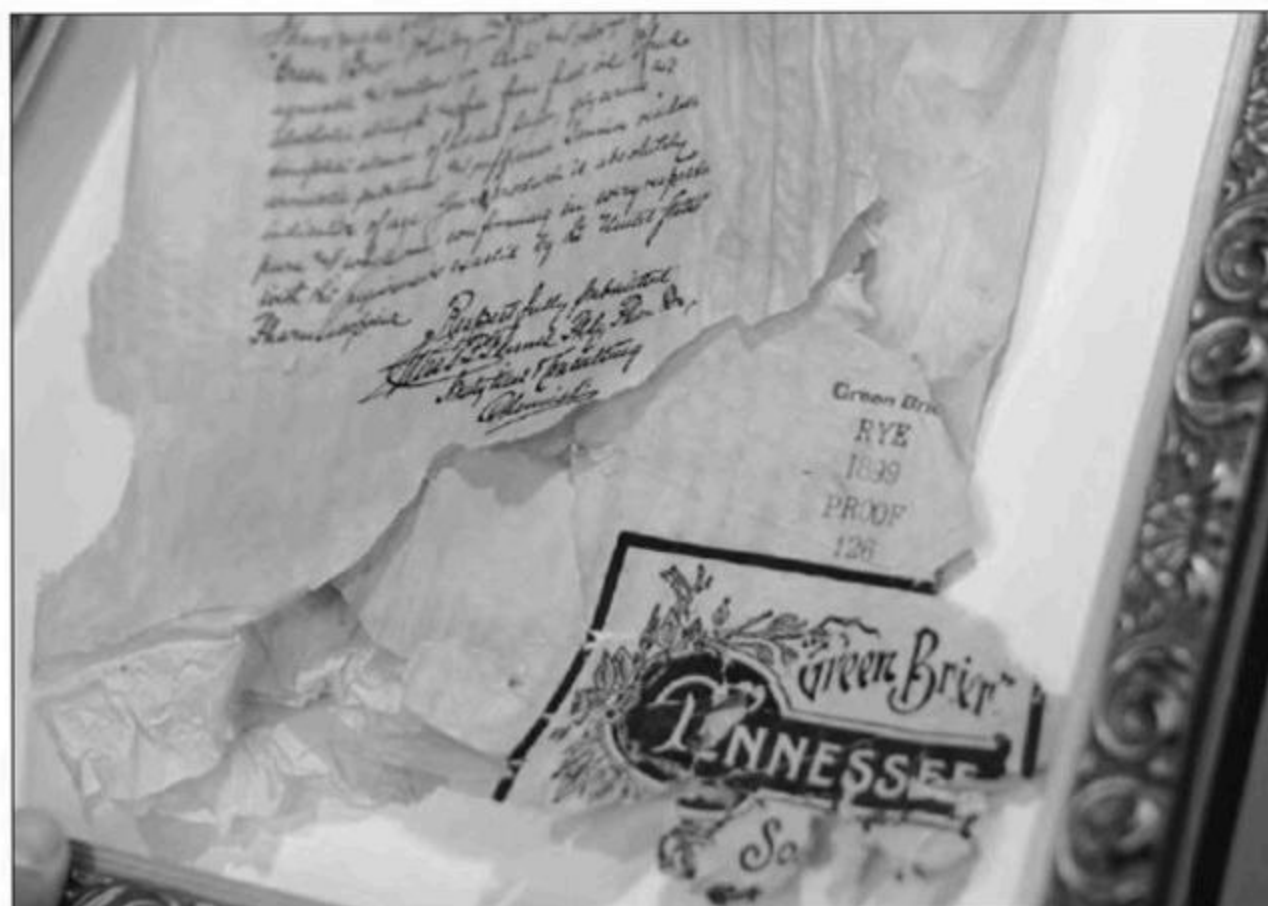
NELSON'S GREEN BRIER DISTILLERY

Nelson's Green Brier Distillery is located in downtown Nashville, in an old, turn-of-the-century industrial building. The second you enter the place, you know you are in a craft distillery that is catching on. It has the look of the already arrived—because it has!

Nelson's line of Belle Meade bourbons is available nationally today, thanks to the help of Constellation Brands. The conglomerate bought a small share in the distillery back in 2016, and in 2019, they bought a majority share. That is a success story for a young, craft distillery.

The two brothers who own and run this distillery, Andrew and Charles Nelson, are hell-bent on becoming the next big brand of Tennessee whiskey. Based on the quality of spirits, the branding, and the investment behind them, Nelson's Green Brier Distillery seems like they are poised to take this next step.

It's amazing that Nelson's Green Brier has been resurrected. One of the earliest distilleries in the state,



contemporaries of Jack Daniel's and George A. Dickel, it suffered one of the period's most horrific afflictions: Prohibition. Fortunately, its resuscitation by the Nelson brothers has brought back a huge chunk of Tennessee whiskey's history and heritage, as well as a whole new flock of fans. This is a serious whiskey company and they intend to return the brand to national prominence.

The brothers are both happy with codification of Tennessee whiskey and believe in it as a fledgling whiskey category. They believe in protecting the integrity of what Tennessee whiskey means and in the unique qualities the Lincoln County Process lends to their whiskey. Charles even testified during the statewide hearings on the subject.



HISTORY SET SAIL: CHARLES NELSON AND HIS GREEN BRIER DISTILLERY

According to the distillery, "Charles Nelson was born July 4, 1835 in Hagenow, a small town in the Mecklenburg-Schwerin state of northern Germany. He was the eldest of six children whose father, John Philip Nelson, owned a soap and candle factory. When Charles was 15, his father decided he

wanted to move his family to America for a better life. He sold his soap and candle factory, converted all of the family's earthly possessions to gold, and had special clothing made to hold all of that gold on his person during the journey. In late October of 1850, he gathered his family and boarded the Helena Sloman to set sail for America. On November 19 of that year, intense storms and gale force winds sent many of the nearly 180 passengers overboard. John Philip Nelson was one of those unfortunate souls and, weighed down by the family fortune, he sank directly to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Luckily, the rest of the family arrived safely in New York, but with only the clothes on their backs and a 15 year-old Charles found himself man of the house."

In need of money, Charles and his brother began making soap and candles. After saving enough, the Nelsons moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where a 17-year-old Charles opened a butcher shop. He was then introduced to spirits and learned how to distill and sell his concoctions. Just before the start of the Civil War, Charles moved to Nashville and opened a grocery store. He instantly became known for three things:

coffee, meat, and whiskey. The whiskey side of his business quickly exploded.

Charles gave up on the store business and bought the distillery in Greenbrier that made his whiskey. He received a "patent for improved distillation and expanded the production capacity in order to keep up with demand."

By 1885, Charles was producing and selling 380,000 gallons of Nelson's Green Brier Tennessee Whiskey in markets ranging from Florida to California to France, making the brand No. 1 in Tennessee at that time. The company insists it was Charles who was among the first to sell his whiskey by the bottle rather than the jug. In the early days, the distillery was commonly known as "Old Number Five," since it was registered as distillery number five and was located in the fifth tax district.

Charles Nelson died on December 13, 1891. His wife Louisa ran the business until 1909, and was the only woman to run a distillery for a number of years. In 1908, Prohibition reared its ugly head in Tennessee and forced Louisa to close the distillery's doors which would not open again for

another 108 years. The new distillery is located elsewhere, but the property is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the ruins of the grain house and a barrel warehouse still stand.



LOUISA NELSON: WHISKEY PIONEER

Louisa Nelson's story had all but disappeared, until her great-great-grandsons revived her legacy. Louisa was Charles Nelson's second wife (the first passed away at a young age). He married Louisa Rohlfing on March 4, 1863. The two lived in Cincinnati briefly and then moved to Nashville. It is said that "All that cultivated taste could suggest or wealth provide were to be found in this beautiful home. In all family matters he would, with knightly grace, defer to his beloved wife whose word to him was law. Seldom do we find a happier more perfect home than this one,"

the *Daily American* newspaper reported of the Nelsons years later. “Mr. Nelson, accompanied by his wife and children, has several times visited Europe, and on each occasion, he paid his native town a visit.”

After Charles died in 1891, Louisa ran Nelson’s Green Brier Distillery, the largest in Tennessee at that time, from 1892 to 1909. “Miss Louisa,” as she was known on the distillery campus, is the first woman to run a large distillery of that kind and more than held her own against the biggest names in the business.

“In her honor, the Nelson brothers have actually named the beautiful copper still in their Clinton Street facility ‘Miss Louisa.’ Every barrel that comes off that still (about one per day) is produced in her memory,” wrote Chris Chamberlain in *Nashville Scene*. “Now the Nelsons have decided to go even further spreading Louisa Nelson’s story and recognizing her role in the business and in the entire industry. They have inaugurated the first annual Louisa Nelson Awards, an ‘accolade honoring women of achievement, inspiration and

vision in Nashville who show exemplary successes in their field and leadership in the community.’ ”





KINDRED SPIRITS THE NELSON BROTHERS

William Nelson invited his sons Andy and Charlie to Greenbrier, Tennessee, on a summer day in 2006. The trio met at a butcher shop and the boys began peppering their father with questions about the old Nelson distillery they had heard of. The butcher, Chuck, excitedly told his visitors,

“Look across the street over there. Your granddaddy built that warehouse. This street is Distillery Road, you know, and that spring, it’s never stopped running. It’s as pure as pure can be.”

Bill, Andy, and Charlie eagerly explored the ruins and met with the Greenbrier Historical Society whose curator showed them two original bottles of Nelson’s Green Brier Tennessee Whiskey.

Charlie and Andy stared at the perfectly preserved bottles and looked at each other: “This is our destiny.”

The brothers did three years of painstaking research and planning before reforming the old company.

Both brothers graduated from Loyola Marymount University with degrees in the humanities. They’re also both history buffs which proved useful as they researched, sought capital, and crafted brands from Charles Nelson’s original recipes. They went through state archives, old newspapers,

Robertson County records, and Greenbrier Historical Society materials. One of the brothers even wrote his senior college thesis on Prohibition saloons and distillers.

“Stuff pops up still,” according to the brothers. “People reach out all the time. A woman from Spokane, Washington, called us with stuff she found at an old estate sale.” Today, Andy is in charge of the distilling and Charles is the sales and marketing guru.





BELLE MEADE BOURBON

Belle Meade Bourbon is loosely named after the famous Belle Meade Plantation, located in Belle Meade, Tennessee. The house was built in the 1820s and remodeled in 1853 into the estate that stands today. In 1953, the state purchased the mansion and its 30 acres and it is now operated by the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities.

Among other things, Belle Meade produced many successful racehorses and studs, including Bonnie Scotland, Enquirer, and Iroquois.

Belle Meade Bourbon was one of the signature lines of the old Nelson Green Brier Distillery. Nelson had been engaged to create a line of bourbons named after the old, famous plantation and stud farm by Sperry, Wade & Company in 1879. They continued to sell the whiskey until the distillery closed in 1909.

One of the newest vintages of this bourbon is the Belle Meade Bourbon Sour Mash Straight Whiskey (90.4 proof). This is made from sourced whiskey that has been aged six

to eight years and blended with high-rye bourbons (30% rye). Referred to as the “classic,” this is a non-chill filtered, small-batch bourbon bottled from four-barrel batches. The whiskey is floral with notes of caramel and lots of spice, pepper, brown sugar, and ginger.

Belle Meade Single Barrel Cask Strength Bourbon (109.3 proof) is a bottling of 9-year-old, high-rye bourbon at barrel strength. The original fill date is handwritten on each bottle and the bottles are numbered. There are three barrel-finished expressions: Sherry Cask Finished, Cognac Cask Finished, and Madeira Cask Finished. The Belle Meade Sherry Cask and the Belle Meade Madeira Cask were among my absolute favorites, providing the softer, more complex bourbon I prefer.



NELSON'S GREEN BRIER TENNESSEE WHISKEY



Nelson's Green Brier Tennessee White Whiskey (91 proof) is made in the "Miss Louisa" copper pot still with a mash bill of 70% corn, 16% wheat, and 14% barley. The distiller's beer ferments for four days and is then run through a charcoal mellowing stage in line with the Lincoln County Process.

This is a lovely white whiskey with flavors of corn bread, buttered popcorn, and lots of vanilla.

Nelson's Green Brier Tennessee Sour Mash Whiskey (91 proof) originally released a mash bill of 70% corn, 16% wheat, and 14% malted barley when they poured their first experimental Nelson's 108 whiskey. Today, they remain more secretive about it and one can only assume the recipe is not far from that mark. They were, and remain, adamant that they were not following the wheat trend, but were attempting to stay true to the original family recipe. Aged in new American oak charred barrels, the whiskey is 3 years old in the bottle, and will most likely finalize at 4 years of age by 2022. This is one of the best Tennessee whiskeys out there and the 2019 bottling has been nothing short of fantastic. The outstanding whiskey has a big nose of caramel, ripe apples, cereal, and dried fruits, along with a creamy honey and vanilla finish.

TENNESSEE WHISKEY IS GOING NATIONAL!

Nelson's Green Brier has grown tremendously. By June 2020, they were in nearly a dozen states and by 2025 it's safe to say that their goal is to distribute their whiskey across 48 contiguous states. Their bottles were front and center in the burgeoning Tennessee whiskey category throughout Tennessee, Kentucky, and a number of other states. Their Belle Meade bourbons are already nationally distributed and growing in popularity as well.

I asked Andy Nelson if Nelson's Green Brier had any plans to add different finishes to their Tennessee Sour Mash. He replied, "We definitely want to do more interesting stuff, but at the same time we don't have any timeline for that. Building this brand the way we want to do it, we're trying to focus on what we need to do. And that's sticking with just Tennessee whiskey for now." Andy adds that he'd love to play with finishes, but that timeline has not been established

yet. What's happening at the Nelson's Green Brier Distillery is impressive. It is on schedule to experience double digit growth each year for the next few years and they are easily the fastest growing whiskey in the category.

That kind of growth has impacted the distillery in terms of how much grain the distillery is taking in, even compared to a couple of years ago. "The grain has gone particularly quite smooth fortunately. You get the right farmers, who you can work with, and they're the ones who make it easy for us."

Andy points out that the biggest issue is the difficulty maintaining their signature flavor profiles as demand evolves and increases. "It's the matter of the constant sort of inventory Tetris, so to speak, where you're looking and making sure you're getting a certain amount because you want to make sure your blend profile remains consistent in the bottle as the aged inventory continues to evolve and get older."

One of the benefits of aging stock is the amount of time the whiskey stays in the barrel. How does that affect the age of their Tennessee whiskey? Andy explains, “The first stuff we ever put in a bottle was two-year old and five-year old whiskey.” By 2021, he points out, “The youngest stuff will be three years old,” and by 2022 “it will be nothing before four-years old.”

That’s the inventory Tetris he refers to. “There’s so many moving pieces.”

The other problem is warehouse space. They’ve been renting warehouse space for a while now. Tennessee whiskey has to be aged in Tennessee, but the bourbons are scattered where they can rent space.

As for Belle Mead, the demands are huge. As Nelson’s Green Brier Tennessee Whiskey and Belle Mead Bourbon grow, the lines will remain focused. The numerous fancy (and delicious) finishes available in the Belle Mead line will no longer be available nationally. They will only be available

in their gift shop and the emphasis will remain on the core products, i.e., the classic and the reserve. In 2020, Bell Mead released a Single Barrel and a Mourvèdre Cask and both were only available within their tasting room. Andy excitedly mentioned that they have a good-sized number of exceptional finishes coming up in the future and he was emphatic that they were not stopping their experimentation anytime soon.

Currently, it seems like there’s no stopping Nelson’s Green Brier—and that’s great for Tennessee whiskey lovers.