



BOOKER'S

Booker's, named after famed master distiller Booker Noe, is a barrel-strength bourbon. It was said that Booker originally bottled his own personal whiskeys at cask strength, and gave these small bottlings to friends and family. The first release to the public was 1,000 cases in 1988. Booker personally selected every barrel. According to Noe, the sweet spot for this favorite cut was the center of the rickhouse. It was his feeling that the temperature and humidity at this location are perfect for exceptional bourbons. It looks like he was onto something, because the company still does it this way. Booker's is matured in a cask for six to eight years. The final aged spirit is bottled un-cut and features no chill filtering, and the average proof is somewhere between 121 and 130.6 (60.5% and 65.3% ABV). While many cask-strength drinkers like their whiskey neat, Noe himself preferred a splash of distilled water to release the whiskey's various flavors.





KNOB CREEK

Like several of its small-batch brethren, Knob Creek was first released in the 1990s—1992 to be precise. The bourbon

is distilled at the Jim Beam Distillery in Clermont, and is “named for the creek that ran behind Abraham Lincoln’s childhood Kentucky home. The late Booker Noe, Jim Beam’s sixth-generation master distiller, chose the name because he thought it reflected his values in making whiskey,” wrote journalist Claire McCafferty in *Mental Floss*. While there are several different expressions of Knob Creek, but a few of them deserve special attention:

The original Knob Creek released in 1992 was aged nine years and bottled at 100 proof (50% ABV). It was a big, rich, robust bourbon.

Knob Creek Single Barrel Reserve was first offered in 2010. This whiskey is aged nine years, and the barrels are hand-selected. It is bottled at 120 proof.

Released in 2012, Knob Creek Rye is a big rye with hints of sweetness. Bottled at 100 proof, this mature whiskey features a mash bill of 55% rye, 35% corn, and 10% malt. This combination produces a rye that is very popular among both mixologists and collectors.



LEGENT

Legent (94 proof) is a collaboration between two whiskey legends, Fred Noe, Jim Beams seventh-generation master distiller, and Shinji Fukuyo, Suntory's fifth-ever chief blender. The whiskey begins its journey as a Kentucky Straight Bourbon created by Noe. Noe in turn worked with Fukuyo to create the final blend of casks that would become Legent. Some of these casks were bourbons finished in used wine and sherry casks. The mash bill is 75% corn, 13% rye, and 12% malted barley.



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“Legent is really something special. As a bourbon distiller, I enjoy breaking rules and creating new traditions. It was a real honor collaborating with Shinji Fukuyo on what I think is different from anything out there in the bourbon world,” said Noe. “Blended whiskey was kind of a dreaded term when we were growing up, but Shinji’s style is completely different.”

“I’m not familiar with the bourbon climate,” says Fukuyo. “Bourbon whiskey reaches my nose much quicker than Japanese whisky. We don’t have the mash bills concept, and bourbon is made in a continuous still, so it’s totally different. I was surprised by the great flavor from the bourbon casks with sherry,” said Fukuyo. “But too much sherry masks the wine. We had a lot of discussion on the sherry finish.

“For me it was baby steps with this. There was a whole lot of levers to be pulled that I’ve never pulled before, and it goes places that normal bourbon made in Kentucky doesn’t go. This was all new territory for us.”

The final result is a blend of three bourbons that issues a big, luxurious statement. Big notes of stone fruit, cocoa,

caramel, honey, and baking spices. Lovely!

LINEAGE

In the fall of 2020, Jim Beam Bourbon released a special premium version that only overseas travelers can buy. Called Lineage, it is the first bourbon collaboration between master distiller Fred Noe and his son, Freddie.

“Lineage represents a significant moment in the history of Jim Beam. Not only is it a collaboration between the seventh and eighth generation of distillers in our family, but it’s a blend of the past, the present and the future,” said Fred.



“Having spent a lot of time exploring travel retail outlets in my time, it was important to me to offer something special to travelers – especially during these trying times. Launching a product exclusively to travel retail is not something we often do, so we are excited to bring such a unique expression to our friends in airports across the world.”

This is the first bourbon in the Beam portfolio with Freddie’s name on it, and comes at a time when Beam is trying to insert itself in the race toward more elegant whiskey expressions to compete in the world market at the super premium level.

OLD TUB

The Old Tub brand was released in 1880. Back in the day, before the introduction of uniformed, corked bottles, and fancy packaging, customers simply came to the distillery and submerged their jugs in a tub full of whiskey to fill them. By the late 1800s bottled Old Tub was a popular brand. This is how the Beam family sold their whiskey until 1943,

when they changed the name to Jim Beam. Old Tub was re-introduced in 2020.

Old Tub Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (100 proof) is a 4-year-old bottled in bond, non-filtered bourbon. Notes include warm cereal, caramel, golden citrus, honey, fried fruit, and vanilla, Very pretty.

KENTUCKY ARTISAN DISTILLERY

The Kentucky Artisan Distillery (KAD) is a unique place in the craft distilling world. Managing director Steve Thompson says that KAD produces its own brands and also offers contract production, bottling, barrel storage, and more. “Opening a distillery is a lengthy and expensive process,” said Thompson, a former Brown-Forman executive. “We can help prospective distillers get started and get their products on the shelves, while they’re concentrating on set-up, sales, and marketing.”

Established in 2012, KAD renovated and retrofitted a

15,000-square-foot former ice cream plant into a distillery featuring four stills capable of producing vodka, gin, brandy, rum, and whiskey, as well as an automated bottling line and test laboratory.

“Our dream is to create opportunities,” Thompson said. “We’re truly offering everything for people to distill their own unique spirit without great expense. We’re thankful to the KAD and their members for all their support and all they do for our signature industry.”

KAD’s house brand is Whiskey Row Bourbon, a pre-Prohibition styled bourbon that is only for sale in Kentucky. It also contract-makes Highspire Whiskey, a 100% rye aged for Hope Family Wines in Napa. But its best-known product is Jefferson’s Reserve Bourbon.

Jefferson’s was established in 1997 by Trey Zoeller and his father Chet, a famed bourbon historian. The Zoellers used Thomas Jefferson as an inspiration for their brand because he was known for “his curiosity and experimental spirit.” All the bourbon is sourced for these whiskeys. “Jefferson’s claims

its competitive edge as a blender, not a distiller,” wrote whiskey expert Clay Risen. “Every bottle is a winner.”

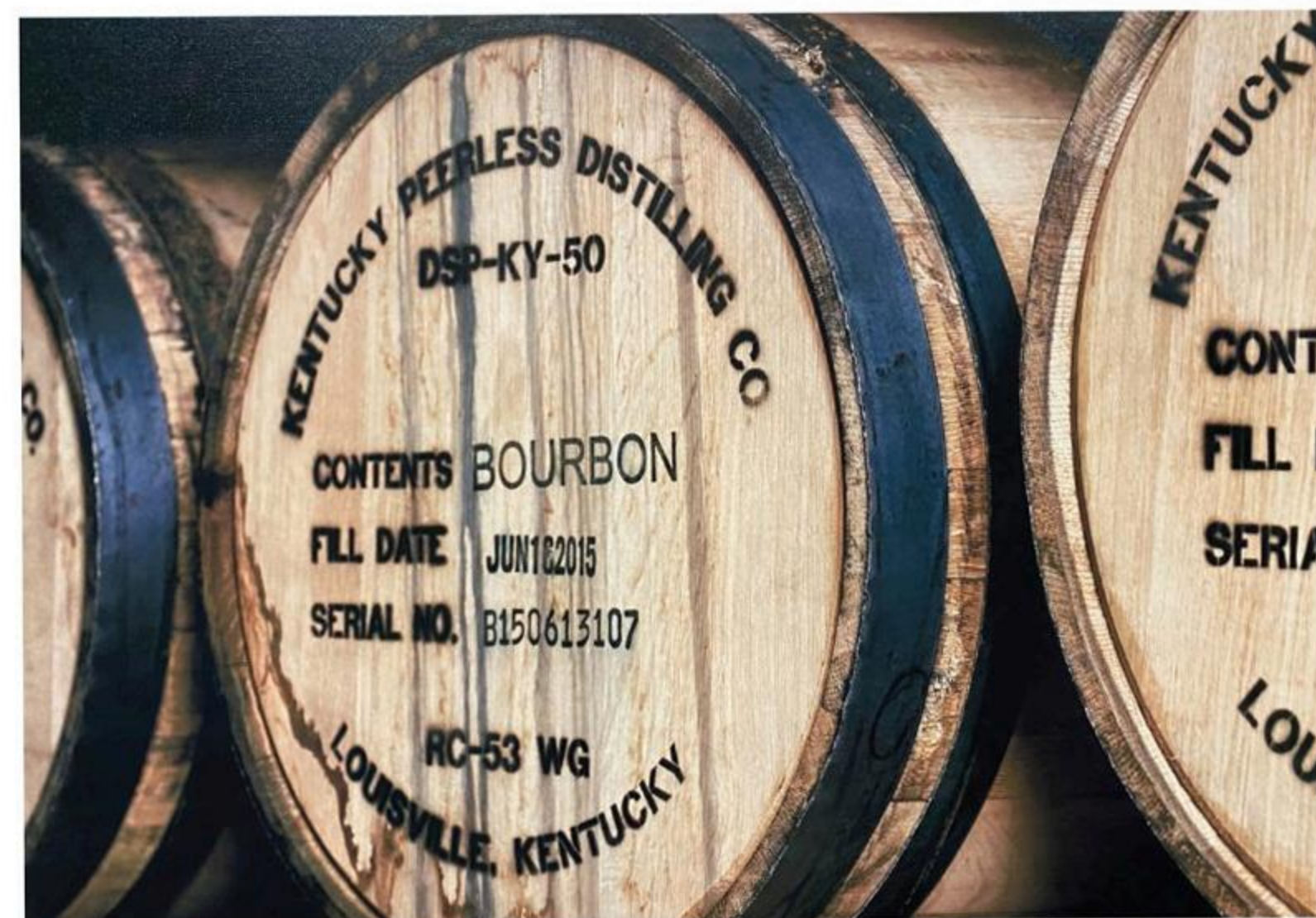
In June 2015, Jefferson’s acquired KAD. Slowly but surely, KAD is producing more of the bourbon for Jefferson’s. Some 25% percent of the barrels warehoused for aging in 2017 was made at KAD. The other 75% was sourced from other Kentucky distilleries.

KAD also produces 10 to 12 small, limited bottlings per year. Each small batch release is only 8 to 12 barrels per batch. This is craft distilling at its finest. The Jefferson’s Reserve and Jefferson’s Very Small Batch include four different recipes that are aged up to 18 and 12 years, respectively.

Most notable among these offerings are Jefferson’s Ocean and Jefferson’s Ocean Cask Strength, which are both aged at sea. The bourbon spends the last six months in barrel aboard a ship that travels to five continents and crosses the equator multiple times. The belief is that the rocking motion and change in temperatures agitate the whiskey and push the liquid in and out of the wood.



KENTUCKY PEERLESS DISTILLING



In the 1880s, Peerless whiskey was a powerful brand and a regional powerhouse. In 1917, Peerless was knocking out 200 barrels of whiskey a day and approximately 23,000 barrels annually. The label was laid low via Prohibition and

stayed there until just recently. But in 2009, after 98 years, Corky Taylor, a veteran of the financial services industry, insisted on reestablishing this forgotten brand that his great-grandfather owned from 1896 to 1917. Carson Taylor, Corky's son, has overseen the construction of the buildings, the installation of the stills, and the production of the whiskey. The head distiller is Caleb Kilburn, who is backed by a sizable team of professionals bent on returning Peerless to prominence.

They have a very particular view on their production. They get their grains from Consolidated Grain and Barge in downtown Louisville. They use Kelvin Cooperage. And they barrel their whiskey at the same proof they bottle it. "If you barrel at 125 proof and then dilute to 80-proof bourbon, 36% of your final bottle is going to be water," Kilburn said. "Choosing to go in at lower proof costs us 17% more in barrels, which is one of the most expensive links in the chain of making whiskey. So we're not going to be the most financially efficient, we're not going to be the biggest." As they see it, you get the whiskey at barrel proof and at its

maximum flavor, with grain and wood. Their goal isn't to make the most, but to make the best and most unique. The label says: "Non-chill filtered. Strictly sweet mash. Barrel proof. No water added." That said, currently the distiller's rye is in 42 states and their bourbon can be found in 18 states.





Kentucky Peerless Small Batch Bourbon (approximately 108 proof) has a mash bill that is a majority corn, approximately 65%, with 10 to 20% rye (still a sizable rye content), and 9 to 15% malted barley. Their goal is a rich,

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earthy, and textured whiskey. And boy are they successful! It's a big caramel bomb that starts off with notes of citrus, cherry, cocoa, and brown sugar, but it's got a healthy dose of rye to make it a clean ending. Rich and flavor forward.

Kentucky Peerless Single Barrel Bourbon (approximately 112 proof) is a single barrel selection that carries additional labeling, like "Farmer's Market – with notes of Spicy Florals, Honeysuckle & Leather," or "Havana Nights with Notes of Citrus, Humidor, Cocoa." This bourbon is aromatic, with more intense highlights. Chocolate, cherry, wintergreen, with the same hit of gingerbread at the end. Exceptional.



While their bourbon is delicious and well worth searching out, their rye is spectacular. Kentucky Peerless Small Batch Rye (approximately 108 proof) is a high-rye spirit (approximately 61% or more corn and about 8%

malted barley). It's a 3-year old whiskey. Maple, brown sugar, cranberry, cherry, orange zest, vanilla, and pine. Spicy and impressive. One of the best ryes on the market.

Kentucky Peerless Single Barrel Rye (approximately 108 proof) is a barrel that most appeals to Kilburn. Single barrel bottles usually have specific tasting notes, like "Toasted Cedar – Molasses and Warm Cider," or "Charred Citrus – with notes of Orange Zest and Burnt Sugar." Kilburn likes to accentuate the most outrageous flavors, with notes of big citrus, spice, pine, and cherry. Super expressive.

Kentucky Peerless Double Barrel Rye (approximately 108 proof) is not whiskey that has been re-barreled, it is instead two barrels wherein Kilburn feels the whiskeys most match one another expressively, so that a unique whiskey is bottled. The big boys can't even think like that. Amazing.



Easily, the most impressive Peerless was the Small Batch Rye Aged in Copper & Kings Alembic Absinthe Barrels (approximately 110 proof). "Early on, we took the stance that Peerless would never say never in regard to doing barrel finishes, but we also recognized that it would require time and the perfect partner to [pique] our interests," said Kilburn. "We knew that as a young company we had to grow and walk before we could run. We took our time, established

our bourbon and rye as respected top-shelf products, and finally reached a point where we could discuss different product innovations. This is when the opportunity to work with Copper and Kings presented itself and we couldn't have found a better fit." It's a match made in heaven. The nose is a giant pop of anise and licorice. Lots of botanicals, spices, honey, dried apricot, pine, and citrus. Something so unique, so different, that it still sits with me. Absolutely loved it. One of the most unique bottles in all of Kentucky or Tennessee. Amazing. It blew me away.



CALEB KILBURN

WHISKEY PRODIGY

After tasting Kentucky Peerless, meeting its maker, master distiller Caleb Kliburn, is a bit of a shock. You're not exactly sure if you're being punked. He is incredibly young. He is clean cut and impressively respectful. He's unapologetically enthusiastic. And he is incredibly humble, though confident about what he is saying. But the more time you spend with him, the more you understand what the word "prodigy" means.

Kilburn was raised in Salt Lick, Kentucky, on his family's dairy farm. He's not a stranger to hard work, and he knows his way around stainless-steel fittings, hoses, clamps, tanks, and pumps. "Dairy farming isn't a 40-hour a week job. It is a

way of life and you had better love it. There are no sick days, no vacations or days off," said Kilburn. "It is a full day of work every day of the year, and that really defined work ethic for me."

He graduated valedictorian of his high school, and then attended Morehead State University, where he excelled at biology, chemistry, physics, engineering, and math. While there he became fascinated by distillation, which was a confluence of his interests.

Kilburn attended courses at the Distilled Spirits Epicenter. There he befriended instructors who would later become his mentors: Rob Sherman, vice president of Vendome Copper and Brass Works in Louisville; Pete Kamer, the retired head engineer of Barton Brands in Bardstown; and Randy Allender, distillery consultant.

"I met Caleb on the first day of the Epicenter six-day class. Before the class even started, he was already asking questions about the equipment and how it worked," recalled Kamer. "On the still there was a mistake in how it was piped. About the second day of class, Caleb found the mistake and

asked why it was piped the way it was. I could tell that he would make a great distiller someday soon.”

“When the Taylors asked me if I knew anyone they could hire to help oversee the distillery construction, and possibly be their distiller, Caleb was the first person who came to mind,” said Sherman.

Kilburn took to the distillery like a fish to water. He started out as a grunt, moving construction debris and carting building materials. But it soon became apparent that his backlog on practical knowledge, and his experience at the Epicenter, made him an incredible candidate for bigger and better opportunities at Kentucky Peerless. He knew how to assemble the equipment, where to place it and why, how to work the pumps and machinery. Many times, people stood back, and let the enthusiastic youngster work his magic. “It was sort of fortuitous how all that tinkering as a kid turned into a career,” said Kilburn.



Before long, as construction continued, Kilburn was taking his finals. “But I made sure to let my professors know, distilling was my only priority.” He soon found himself fielding contractors’ questions in the middle of his finals. He was 22 years old.

It was clear to the Taylors that they would let Kilburn craft the inaugural rye whiskey for Peerless. By the end of that summer, Kilburn was promoted to head distiller. On March 4, 2015, he distilled Peerless’s first barrel of whiskey in

98 years. In Fall 2017, Peerless Straight Rye was named one of the top 15 in the world by Whisky Advocate.

When chatting with Kilburn it's easy to understand his appeal. His incredible humility, his neat appearance, his gracious and enthusiastic demeanor – they all make him undeniably likable. But he can talk whiskey. His has views on sweet vs sour mash, and he's as happy to get into the weeds of it. He is a staunch believer in sweet mash. He has his ideas on barrel selection, and likes picking barrels that taste alike, so that he can offer two expressions that are completely different. Some might be smooth and caramel dominant, other might be more spice oriented. Why blend them, he might ask. He doesn't want to blend away their high points, he wants to accentuate them. It's all done by hand, and by the distiller's whim. He is as much chef and artist as he is distiller. He is out to make stand-out artisanal spirits. And he believes in his cause. Politely.

“Caleb Kilburn is on his way to be one of the great master distillers in Kentucky,” said Bill Thomas, of the famed whiskey mecca, Jack Rose, in Washington, DC. “His

understanding of, and reverence for, the distilling history of Kentucky and his technical skills ensure Kentucky traditions and innovations will be carried on into a new generation.”

Sherman added, “He's got an incredible career ahead of him.” With great praise, comes great expectations. So far, Caleb Kilburn has exceeded them all.





LIMESTONE BRANCH DISTILLERY

Limestone Branch Distilling is owned by brothers Steve and Paul Beam. Yes, they are members of that great distilling family. In 1871, M.C. Beam began his distilling career under the supervision of his Uncle Jack Beam. By 1883, he was a partner at his own operation, where he brought his son Guy (Steve and Paul Beam's grandfather) into the business.

"I always felt like it was an unfinished chapter for my family," said Steve, regarding the 200 years of family history. "In 2010, I made the commitment to do it, put my side of the family back in the distilling business. It was something I always wanted to do. I began researching and apprenticing, and formed Limestone Branch Distillers, Inc. in October 2010."

According to the company's website: "Using recipes—some of them plucked from their grandfather Guy's notebook—and family knowledge gleaned from the previous

generations of master distillers that came before them," they began making new products. Jimmy Beam, with Steve and Paul standing alongside, cut the ceremonial ribbon on February 12, 2012.

A fascinating new addition to the Limestone Branch family is the Bowling & Burch New World Gin (96 proof). This elegant botanical gin is a combination of distilling know-how and local agriculture. This small-batch gin is crafted with 17 botanicals, some of which are grown right there on the property. It is infused with flavors such as honeysuckle and lemon verbena. Super floral and aromatic. Rosemary, thyme, and citrus on the nose. Orange tangerine, honeysuckle, lemon, and spice across the palate, and ending with a lovely spice note. Elegant. A gin hunter's dream.

"In 1910 my father's grandfather, Minor Case Beam, sold his Old Trump Distillery to Joseph Bernard Dant, pioneer distiller and relative to my mother, and began producing Yellowstone at the distillery. I am proud to welcome the Yellowstone brand back to our family 105 years later," said Steve.

Yellowstone Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (93 proof), which is made with sourced whiskey, is a small-batch blend of handpicked 4- and 7-year old whiskeys. Leather, cherries, honey, smoked caramel, and lingering brown sugar. An excellent, incredibly well-branded, and well-presented whiskey. Wonderful!

Each year, Limestone Branch releases their Yellowstone Limited Edition. So far, the annual bottlings have included as many as three bourbons used in a blend and bourbon aged in wine casks, in re-charred wine casks, and even wine casks charred three different times. The 2020 edition of Yellowstone Limited Edition Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (101 proof) is a blend of 7-year-old bourbon finished in Armagnac barrels. It came packaged in a stunning new bottle. Leather, honey, caramel, vanilla, burnt orange and dried plum. Super impressive.

A longtime favorite is the Limestone Branch Minor Case Straight Rye Whiskey Sherry Cask Finished, which is bottled at 90 proof. Inspired by Minor Case Beam, Steve and Paul's great-grandfather, this is an incredible spicy and smooth 2-

year-old rye whiskey that is then sherry cask finished at Limestone Branch. Notes of sherry, butterscotch, and dried fruits. This finishing touch makes it one of the best ryes on the market, bar none. Love this whiskey.



LUX ROW DISTILLERY



Lux Row Distillery in Bardstown, Kentucky, broke ground on May 2, 2016, with Luxco's chairman and CEO, Donn Lux, and president and COO, David Bratcher, joined by Governor Matt Bevin and other local elected officials.

The 90-acre site includes an 18th-century stone house (a registered National Historic Place) that is part of the 18,000-square-foot distillery, which features six barrel warehouses, a visitor center, and a tasting room and event space.

Speaking to Modern Thirst website about his new distillery, Lux said, "This has really been transformational for Luxco. Because we're going from just another bottler or processor who owns some valuable brands to someone who is actually distilling. It's very important to today's consumer. We think it's part of the authentic story. While it's more money than we've ever spent on any capital project, it feels really cool and really authentic, and we're super excited."

The distillery is one of the jewels of the region. The front of the house, the grand tasting room, was designed and styled by Michelle Lux, who is also the distillery's creative director. Her efforts were spectacular. Most impressive was a

visit to the barrel house No. 1, which is a photo op dream of a barrel warehouse. Stunning. Six stories of nothing by barrels as high up as the eye can see. A terrific experience.

Luxco currently makes Rebel Yell, Ezra Brooks, Blood Oath, Daviess County, and David Nicholson. And they released their Lux Row Limited Edition.

In January 2021, Lux Row Distillery was bought by MPG Ingredients of Indiana, giving the Midwest spirits giant a foothold in Kentucky proper. It is a purchase of historic import.

“Luxco presents a unique opportunity to take a material step toward realizing our long-term strategy. It significantly expands our product line in the higher-value branded-spirits sector and increases our sales and distribution capabilities across all 50 states,” said David Colo, president and CEO of MGP Ingredients, Inc. “We have enormous respect for the platform Luxco has built.”

“There is a clear strategic fit between Luxco and MGP and I believe this transaction represents a great outcome for Luxco employees and customers,” said Donn Lux, chairman

and CEO of Luxco. “I’m excited to continue my involvement with this blend of two well-positioned companies whose strong records of performance and commitment to excellence provide an attractive platform for continued growth.

BLOOD OATH

John E. Rempe is the man behind Blood Oath. He travels around Kentucky sampling barrels of bourbon to select for this small-batch offering. According to the distillery, “Rempe, a Certified Food Scientist, received his bachelor’s degree in biology from Saint Louis University. He then spent some time developing carbonated soft drinks and fruit drinks and creating new beverages before moving on to Luxco.” He has been at Luxco for more than 17 years, and Blood Oath’s small-batch bourbons are of the highest caliber. Some bottlings are as small as three barrels. Each one is labeled by number Pact 1, Pact 2, Pact 3, etc. “As long as there’s still that demand for Blood Oath, we’ll keep going. I won’t repeat anything, and that’s going to be the challenge.

Rempe makes sure that all of the blending notes are included in the very luscious and deluxe package. As all three of Blood Oath's whiskeys have been extremely well received, this imprint is a must-have for collectors!

"That's my signature. That's my baby. I come out with a new one every year. I kinda do something different with it every year. We always release it in April." Rempe has experimented with all kinds of finishes. He's already hard at work on the releases scheduled years out. "Always trying to find the next Pact," he said. "I love being creative and thinking of new expressions and innovative ideas we can develop."



REBEL YELL

Charles R. Farnsley, a former mayor of Louisville, was said to have created the brand "Rebel Yell" for Stitzel-Weller in the mid-1900s. Originally produced in small quantities, it was only distributed in the southern United States. The brand was later purchased by David Sherman after the breakup of Stitzel-Weller.

Rebel Yell, after its current rebirth, offers a number of different bottlings, including the classic Rebel Yell Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Rebel Yell American Whiskey,

Rebel Yell, Rebel Yell Small Batch Rye, and Rebel Yell Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, as well as ginger and root beer-infused editions.

The classic Rebel Yell Kentucky Straight Bourbon was distributed around the country starting in 1984. Rebel Yell is sourced from Heaven Hill and features a mash bill of 68% corn, 20% wheat, and 12% barley, allowing it to fit in with the earlier Weller portfolio. It is a well-rounded bourbon with a hint of spice and a nice easy finish.

Lux Row has also produced two new releases of Rebel Yell Bourbon: Rebel Yell 100 Proof and the Rebel Yell Single Barrel, along with newly updated packaging for the whole line. The 100 is something special for those who like high-proof whiskeys.

There are innovations taking place with Rebel Yell. John Rempe explained that they started to experiment with French oak Bordeaux barrels. A special version of Rebel Yell aged in these was released in the UK. Going forward Rempe will be looking at different char levels and different barrel entry proofs.





EZRA BROOKS

The Ezra Brooks Bourbon Whiskey Kentucky Sour Mash is primarily bottled at 80 proof. Ezra Brooks is distilled, aged, and bottled in Kentucky by Heaven Hill Distilleries using a mash bill of 78% corn, 10% rye, and 12% barley. Starting out like any other bourbon, Ezra Brooks undergoes one more step: a charcoal mellowing process like a Tennessee whiskey. Another whiskey from Ezra Brooks, Old Ezra Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey 7-Year-Old, is bottled at 101 proof and is absolutely worth trying. It was recently named Best American Whiskey by *Forbes* magazine!





LUX ROW LIMITED EDITION WHISKEY

Lux Row Limited Edition Whiskey is a limited-release rye bourbon. “Even the proof, 118.4, commemorates the distillery’s grand opening in April 2018,” said John Rempe, head distiller and master blender for Lux Row Distillers.

Lux Row Distillers Limited Edition is a straight bourbon

whiskey and is a double barrel release, having been aged in two different barrels — for 12 years each. The goal was an extra-aged expression.

“Normally it’s taken out of the primary barrel and then finished in something else. With this one, I tasted through a bunch of different 12-year-old barrels, made real meticulous tasting notes on it, and then paired two barrels, and two barrels, etc. So it’s basically the smallest small batch you can have,” said Rempe. “I paired barrels that complemented each other.” One might be stronger on the nose, where another might have a longer finish. “And I mingled them for an exceptional offering.”

He thinks the bourbon “is best neat, or maybe with just a drop or two of water.” This is a big, rich bourbon with caramel, vanilla, oak, and tobacco, with hints of cherry and honey. Impressive.



DAVIESS COUNTY BOURBON

Daviess County Distilling Company dates back to 1874, and was one of the first great bourbon distilleries of Kentucky. Daviess (it's pronounced "Davis") County Distilling also paved the way for more than a dozen other distilleries that

opened in Daviess County before Prohibition. It was acquired by the Medley Distilling Company in 1901 and survived through Prohibition. The label was eventually let go by its eventual parent Diageo back in 1992. Lux Row acquired the name in 1993.

Lux Row has released three labels: Daviess County Kentucky Straight Bourbon (96 proof), Daviess County Kentucky Straight Bourbon – Cabernet Sauvignon Finish (96 proof), and Daviess County Kentucky Straight Bourbon – French Oak Finish (96 proof).

The Cabernet Finish is rested for six months in cabernet sauvignon barrels from California's Napa region. The French Oak Finish is rested in French oak barrels for six months.

"The combination of mash bills really sets this bourbon apart – the smooth wheated mash bill and the traditional spicy rye mash bill come together for a balanced taste profile," said Rempe. "The secondary aging in the cabernet sauvignon and French oak barrels adds a nice extra layer of flavor with a slight sweet fruitiness and oaky caramel undertones."



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JOHN REMPE

“Usually, the first thing I do in the morning is check with the distillery operators at the cookers and fermenters and see how the still is running before heading to my office to check emails,” said John Rempe, head distiller at Lux Row.

Rempe also spends time in the lab. Quality control is an important part of his job. “What’s great about our lab techs

is that they are University of Louisville chemical engineering students working here for college credit and they are eager to learn,” he explained. Rempe is constantly checking the mash from the cookers, the grains, the yeast, the distillate, and many other components.

Rempe is St. Louis born and bred. He graduated from St. Louis University and is a certified food scientist. His first job was in quality control at Cott Corporation, a major beverage manufacturer of sodas and seltzers, as well as coffees, teas, and bottled water. He then became a production manager, R&D manager, and quality control manager at Citrus Springs, a producer of juices, cocktail mixers, and other beverages.

In 1998 Rempe joined Lux Row. He was director of R&D, and eventually worked his way to master blender. Lux Row was known for sourced blends. But Lux Row doubled down on the bourbon trend, and today, 22 years after joining, Rempe is head distiller at a new, state-of-the-art distillery that has become one of the major attractions in Bardstown, Kentucky.

And, he has, with the marketing and sales groups, created whole new lines of bourbons and whiskeys, as well as revived old labels such as Rebel Yell and Daviess County.

Rempe had an industry reputation for having an incredibly deft blending palate. He worked closely with a number of Lux Row partners, always involved in the process, the mash bills, the aging. He was living with the creation of the distillery. Construction started in 2016. He distilled the first barrels in January 2018. The distillery can currently produce 22-25,000 barrels per year. And they have no plans to do anything other than whiskey. Everything they make there is for them. And they are up to five warehouses.

One of the biggest changes for Rempe was the move from St. Louis to Kentucky. In fact, he lives in a small house on the distillery grounds (the distillery is set on a 90-acre farm), where he keeps chickens and peacocks. “We inherited them when we bought the property. It’s one of the things we had to agree on when we took it over,” he said with a laugh. He’s even grown his own non-GMO corn for some experimental batches.

“I’m actually just now starting to be able to experiment and use my creativity. Now I’m getting to use some different barrels, and different mash bills.” For example, he’s been experimenting with high-wheat mash bills and heirloom corn to create a Lux Row “estate” wheated bourbon. He’s also looking at growing a different grain every year to create variety for limited-edition whiskeys.

“I’ve always loved what I do,” said Rempe. “It’s nice to wake up every morning and smell that mash cooking. I always joke about my commute to work. It’s a 200-yard walk. My traffic jams are my peacocks. I just have to wait for them to cross. They’re up in my trees. During mating season, they’re very vocal.”



MAKER'S MARK



Where does one begin with Maker's Mark? To visit this distillery is like visiting Anheuser-Busch in St. Louis. It is a blend of old and new, of high-tech and incredibly antique means. And it is beautifully and lovingly maintained, like a cherished vintage car. The copper at Maker's Mark always glistens as if it was just polished yesterday (and it probably was). There is fresh paint everywhere. The place sparkles and shines, and is neat as a pin. It is hard to believe that anything gets made here. But it does—does it ever.



The grounds are also beautifully manicured, like a country club. There are few places like it in the industry. But there is a different feeling here. The campus is dotted with black, brown, and red buildings. There is attention to every detail.

On December 31, 1974, the distillery was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1980 was designated as a National Historic Landmark. Maker's was the first distillery in the United States to achieve this status while the buildings themselves were still in active production.

Master distiller Greg Davis is the brand's best ambassador. A big man with a laugh to match, he preaches the gospel of Maker's Mark with a smile on his face. Davis is someone who seems to work well with everyone, from lab technicians to the maintenance crew.

The Maker's Mark brand was born in 1958. T. William "Bill" Samuels Sr. bought Burks' Distillery, which was built in 1889, five years earlier. The whiskey was sold in a squarish-bottle. And the unique, trademarked red wax seal was the

idea of Marjorie "Margie" Samuels, Bill Sr.'s wife, who also named the whiskey.

Another thing that made Maker's unique is that it is among only a handful of American producers that use the traditional English spelling "whisky" on its labels. And it letterpresses every label in-house, on an antique press. And yes, each one of those bottles is hand-dipped on the bottling line by a quartet of women.

Another unique thing about Maker's Mark is that it uses no rye in its mash bill. Maker's Mark uses winter red wheat instead. The blend is 70% corn, 14% malted barley, and 16% soft red winter wheat. Legend has it that Samuels judged the final grain bill by baking bread composed of the candidates for the final recipe. But Samuels was also a friend and acolyte of Pappy Van Winkle, who made famous wheated bourbons such as Pappy Van Winkle, Old Forrester, and W. L. Weller & Sons.





Maker's Mark stays in the barrel six years. It uses a #3 char, and the whiskey goes into the barrels at 110 proof. The barrels in the rickhouses get rotated. They stay in the first spot for three years. Then those stored on the seventh floor (the hottest) are moved to the first floor (the coolest). Those on the sixth floor are moved to the second floor. Those on the fifth floor move to the third. Those on the fourth floor stay put.

Maker's Mark positions itself as a small batch bourbon, claiming, "A bourbon that is produced/distilled in small quantities of approximately 1,000 gallons or less (20 barrels) from a mash bill of around 200 bushels of grain."

There is no question that the level of detail put into the whiskey is nothing shy of intense. There are four major labels for Maker's Mark: The Red Top; the Mint Julep with green wax, which is released seasonally in limited amounts around Kentucky Derby time; 46, which is bourbon aged for an extended amount of time and finished with French oak; and Maker's Mark Cask Strength Bourbon, which was

released in limited quantities in 2014, and has since been released globally.



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GREG DAVIS THE HEAD COACH OF MAKER'S MARK

If Chris Morris of Woodford Reserve seems the embodiment of an older Southern gentleman, Greg Davis is almost his exact opposite. A big, virile man with broad shoulders, giant hands, and a booming voice, Davis is an explosion of enthusiasm and determination. In his red-and-white shirt, he shakes your hand with a bear-paw grip and flashes a smile as wide as a billboard. One gets the impression that if Davis wasn't the master distiller at Maker's Mark, he would be the head football coach of the Louisville Cardinals or Tennessee Volunteers. It's easy to

see him barking orders at linebackers and schmoozing with boosters.

But behind the big smile and the booming laugh is a man with a serious passion for bourbon. Davis has been in the wine and spirits business in one form or another since 1990. He had studied brewing science, and worked in the research and development department at Brown-Forman. Once a master brewer at Bohanan Brewery, he later moved to Tom Moore Distillery, where he created new best practices and pushed the envelope of innovation.

Davis loves to recall how Maker's Mark had tried to woo him, and he resisted. But the Maker's Mark executives were determined to get their man. After a year, they did. And there were big shoes to fill, both literally and figuratively. Dave Pickerell, a former offensive tackle for West Point, had been the master distiller at Maker's from 1994 to 2008. In those early days, Davis's mantra was "don't screw it up," a story he related with a big belly laugh.

Davis did nothing of the sort. Enough of an individualist to cast his own large shadow, Davis and his team have taken Maker's Mark to a whole new level.

Davis recalled the day Bill Samuels Jr. walked into a meeting, wrote the word "Yummy" in big letters, and then exited the room. Davis knew what Samuels wanted. He asked each member of his group what they could do as a team to make this new whiskey. "Bourbon is traditionally bitter," Davis told the *Houston Press*. "What yummy meant for us was to move toward something a little softer but still just as pronounced. We had to add a new element to the bourbon that was missing. Samuels Jr. wanted us to go further with it. He wrote that word down and left. We realized it was up to us to figure out what we could do to produce that. We had to figure it out from just that simple word. That's how it all started."



Davis called Brad Baswell, a fourth- or fifth-generation barrel maker, in to help push the project forward. The company tried more than 100 barrels before it hit upon the right one. Baswell brought in staves featuring differing toasts of French oak. These new woods brought out more of the stone fruit and vanilla notes in the bourbon. "When

you smell the 46 you can smell the complex oak notes and the vanilla much more,” said Davis. “We take 18-month-old French oak lined up using the radiant heat to penetrate all throughout the wood to caramelize all those wood chips. What you are trying to achieve is as you age it to take the bitterness out of it.”

To further that, Maker’s Mark has created a whole new business—the custom bourbon business. It has one new rickhouse built into the side of a hill. Inside it’s all wood and glass and steel, and looks like something out of a James Bond film. Restaurants and stores can come in, buy a barrel’s worth of bourbon, or more, and either re-oak it or direct the whiskey to a custom finish utilizing a combination of six French oaks of differing toasts. In beautiful, well-lit classrooms, customers sit with one of the team’s distillers for a day, and blend and taste until they have their preferred flavor notes. The corresponding woods are placed in colder barrels (where the whiskey won’t be pushed into the wood, but will instead rest on the char) and aged for another period of time (usually six months). This is cutting-edge

stuff in bourbon country, and the results have been fantastic. Maker’s 46 is suddenly the hottest part of its program.

Today, Davis sweats the small stuff, even down to admonishing guests to be careful not to step on newly painted places. He notices smudges and things left out. He handles everything with humor. And he is well-known for barbecuing on the distillery grounds. The smell of his grill wafts around the large campus like a giant reminder of who is in residence. And everyone wants a piece.





MB ROLAND DISTILLERY

Located in the Christian County town of Pembroke, MB Roland Distillery was founded by Paul and Merry Beth (“MB”) Tomaszewski in 2009 as Kentucky’s first completely grain-to-glass craft distillery. Paul hails from southeastern Louisiana, and MB is a local native. They bought an old Amish dairy farm that came up for sale.

Paul named the distillery for his wife, MB Roland is her maiden name. She was at first incredibly pleased by what she saw as a romantic gesture. Paul told her no one would ever be able to pronounce Tomaszewski (he should have quit while he was ahead). The distillery quickly garnered a reputation as a cutting-edge craft distillery who produced quality spirits. That’s something in the state of Kentucky. This stuff is good!

Originally Paul was the one and only full-time employee and distiller in 2009. They now have over a dozen employees. Even MB is a full-time distillery employee. The distillery is close to their local grain supplier, Christian County Grain.



They use local white corn to hand make each of their products, ranging from their very unique “distillation & barrel proof” Kentucky Bourbon to their naturally-flavored moonshines made with corn and cane.

MB Roland Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (105-115 proof) is made using local, food-grade white corn, and bottled at barrel proof in the style of a pre-Prohibition bourbon. Each batch is a blend of 5 to 10 barrels. Bottles are hand labeled, numbered, and individually proofed. The whiskey is sold at the distillery, and is available in limited amounts through various distributors.

Each bottling of MB Roland Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Single Barrel (105-115 proof) is unique, uncut, and unfiltered. Rich and bold.

MB Roland Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey (105-115 proof) is from a mash bill that blends a heaping of rye with the addition of local Christian County white corn. Sweet up front, but a backend of gingersnap and black pepper.

MB Roland Kentucky Straight Malt Whiskey (105-115 proof) is a hybrid whiskey made in a kind of single malt style,

but they include white corn and rye to provide spicier, fuller flavors.

MB Roland Kentucky Dark Fired Whiskey (110-120 proof) is aged in used bourbon barrels. A little lighter than bourbon, but with all of the campfire notes for fans of smoky whiskey.

MB Roland Kentucky Straight Corn Whiskey (105-115 proof) is a corn whiskey mash aged in bourbon barrels.

The cane and corn line of moonshines is labeled MBR. MBR True Kentucky Shine (100 proof) is made using a recipe of white corn and sugar. Floral notes, citrus flavors, and a hint of apple peel. A quality cane and corn 'shine. MBR Kentucky Black Dog (90 proof) is a “dark fired” smoky, sweet 'shine made using “dark fired” corn, rye, and malted barley. They offer a whole line of naturally-flavored MBR 'shines.



MICHTER'S

By Richard Thomas

It's useful to think of Michter's in terms of "Old Michter's" and "New Michter's." The old company is the one that traces its semi-legendary roots back to Mennonite farmers in the 1750s and came to a final end when the Bomberger's Distillery closed in 1989.

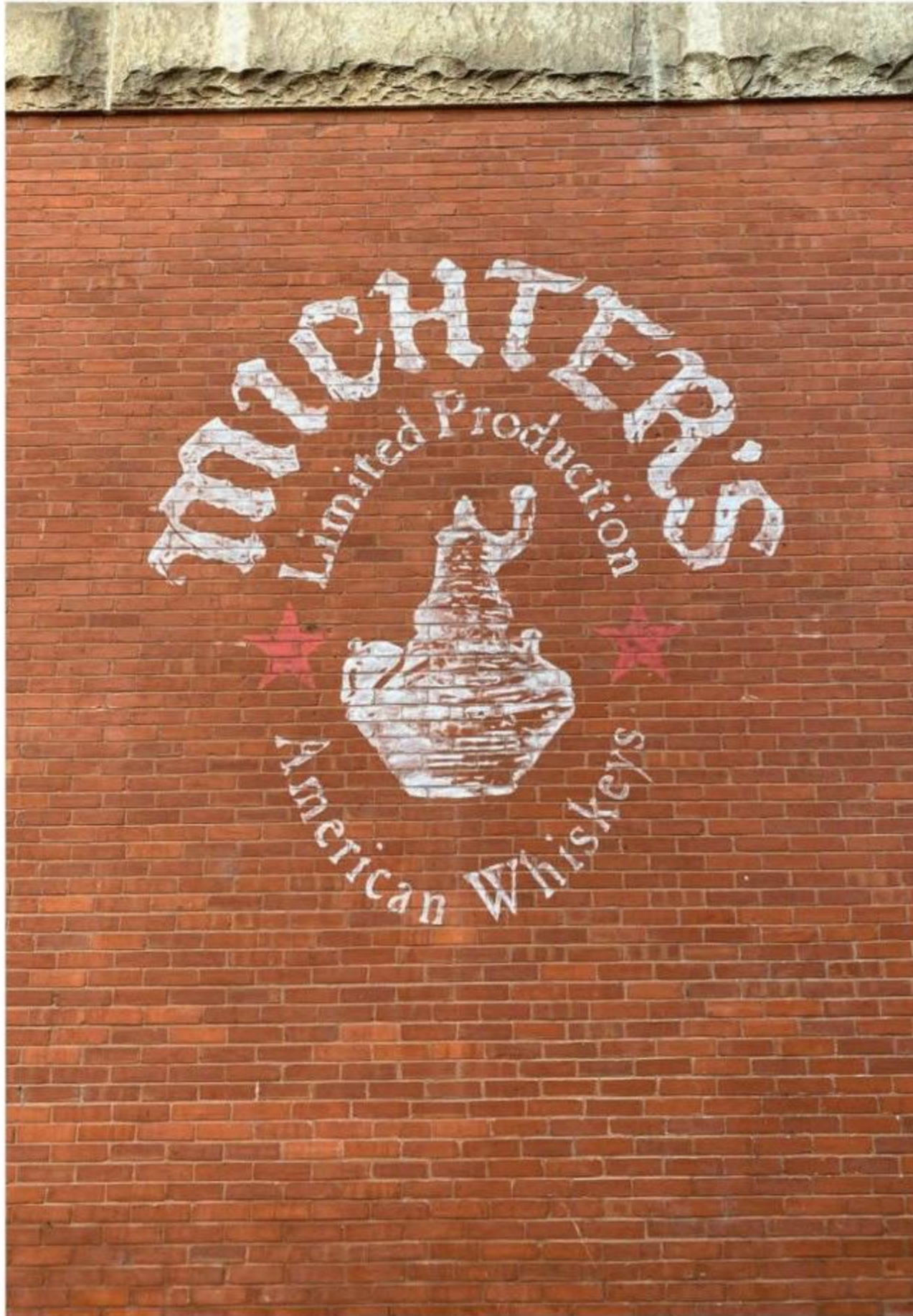
The new company began when Joe Magliocco, founder of Chatham Imports, teamed up with former Wild Turkey president Richard Newman in the 1990s to resurrect the brand. Magliocco located his new company in Louisville, rather than the old Michter's home base of southeastern Pennsylvania. Although the choice upset some purists, as Magliocco often puts it, "Kentucky is where the whiskey business and its expertise are."

With help from Brown-Forman veteran Willie Pratt, the company acquired some excellent Kentucky whiskey stock, and began bottling and releasing whiskeys in 2000. They also began contract distilling under Pratt's supervision in 2003, "cooking in someone else's kitchen," as Magliocco described it, at which point Pratt became Michter's first master distiller. For a time, their bottling was handled by Kentucky Bourbon Distillers, now known as Willett.

Michter's kept growing, and produced some landmark whiskeys along the way. Citing just one example, according to [Wine-Searcher.com](https://www.wine-searcher.com/), the esteemed Michter's Celebration Sour Mash Whiskey is America's third-most expensive

whiskey (after Old Rip Van Winkle 25-Year-Old and A.H. Hirsch 20-Year-Old) and the most expensive in current, if irregular, production.

They opened their distillery in Shively in 2015, and in so doing became a middleweight fixture among the big Kentucky distillers. With the opening of their own distillery, Michter's began a period of transition from sourced and contract-produced whiskey to whiskey made in their own house. The journey to the day when every drop of whiskey in Michter's bottles will come out their own equipment and under their own roof will be largely overseen by Pam Heilmann, who succeeded Willie Pratt as master distiller in 2016.



Before coming to Michter's, Heilmann had put in 15 years at Jim Beam, including a stint as the distillery manager at the Booker Noe Distillery, Beam's less famous and much bigger plant. While there she worked under master distiller Jerry Dalton, a peculiar figure in Beam lore in that he was the only non-Beam to serve in that role at the company.

Because Michter's is arguably the largest and most important of the newcomers to Kentucky's whiskey industry, Heilmann's rise to the top distiller slot is quite emblematic of three whiskey workplace trends. First, by replacing Willie Pratt, she completed a changing of the guard in Kentucky bourbon that has been going on this past decade. It used to be typical to speak of master distillers as serving 20 or 30 years on the job, but now the longest-serving major distiller in Kentucky is Chris Morris at Brown-Forman, whose tenure began in 2003.

The most commented-upon trend, however, is how more women are coming to the forefront of the whiskey industry worldwide, as Heilmann joins Marianne Barnes in Kentucky and Maureen Robinson, Rachel Barrie, and



Kirsteen Campbell in Scotland, among others. Less spoken of is how the boom-time expansion of the industry has created so many advancement opportunities in the first place. Becoming a master distiller in Kentucky used to require decades of patient work and was often a matter of family connections or dynasties, but the rapid expansion of the industry has created room for many bright talents to move over and up. Heilmann is an outstanding example of that. In 2019 Heilman became Master Distiller Emerita and her protégé Dan McKee was made master distiller. But there can be no denying Heilman's influence and importance.

NEELEY FAMILY DISTILLERY



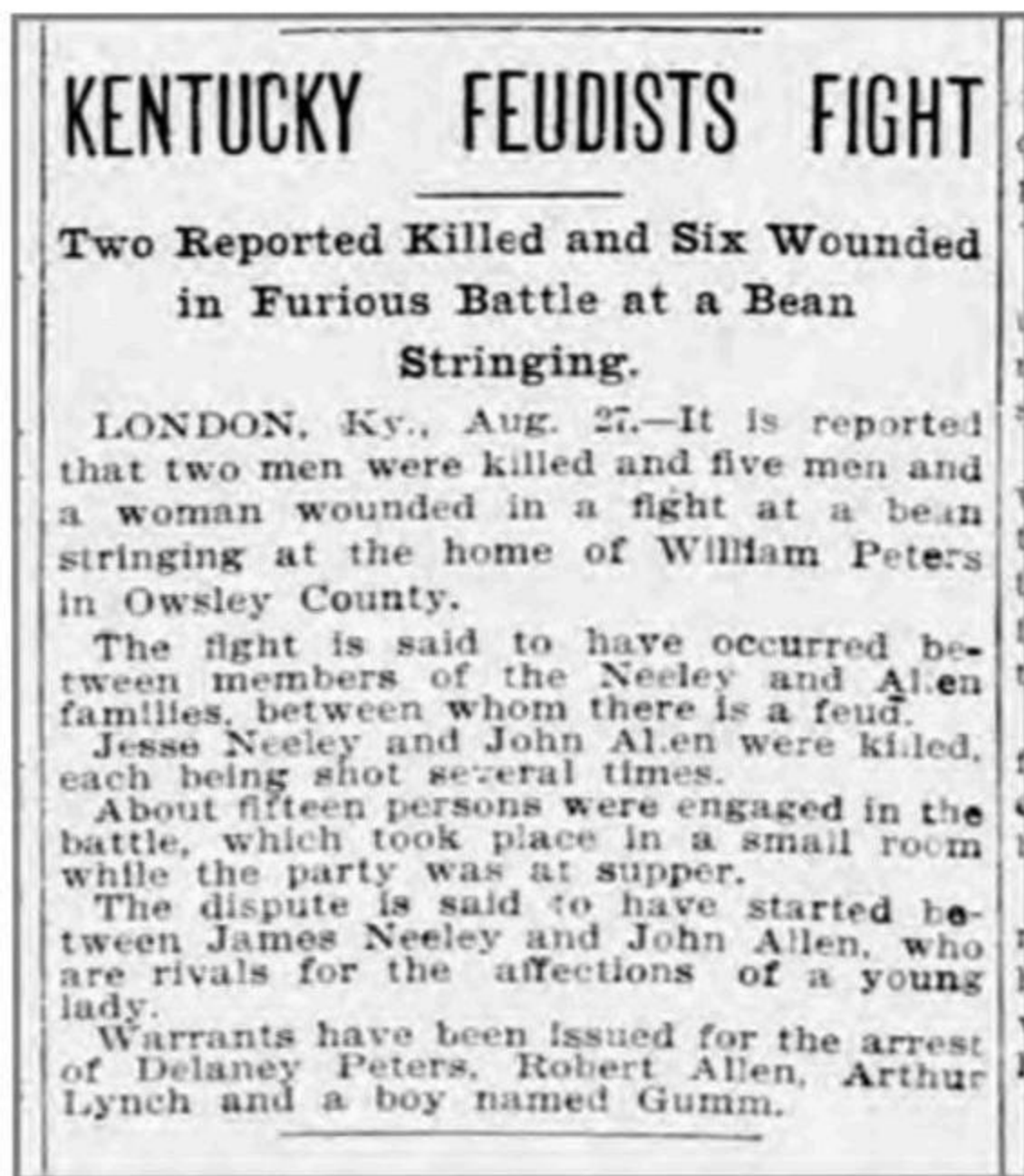


Royce Neeley grew up in Owen County and graduated from Transylvania University, in Lexington in 2013. He then attended Midway University, in Midway, where he earned an MBA in 2017 in Bourbon Tourism and Event Management.

This descendent of a long line of moonshiners (11 generations to be exact) from Owsley County, Kentucky, he is now president, CEO, and head distiller of Neeley Family Distillery. According to local lore, the Neeley and Allen families share a long history of notorious feuds and shootouts. "One wall inside the visitors' center and tasting room features old newspaper accounts, family photos, and even an actual rifle and pistol used by his ancestors to shoot and kill their enemies back in Owsley County. There's also one of his great-grandfather's makeshift stills on display in the corner of the room," wrote local journalist Don Ward.

Royce's mother got suspicious when her son was at college and stopped asking for money. What college student doesn't need money? In a surprise visit, she found her son had erected a mini-distillery in his dorm room. She

dismantled the still and made him swear he would not make another drop.



After graduating, Royce was unimpressed with the job market. He kicked around selling insurance, worked for his

father's construction company, and took a turn as a factory supervisor. Ultimately, his parents agreed to assist him in making the family business legal. The Neeleys bought a 10-acre plot near the Kentucky Speedway, and planning began.

The new Neeley Family Distillery was established in Sparta, in Gallatin County, in 2016, and the doors opened in 2017. And when they say family, they meant it. Roy and Michele Neeley help run the place both by book keeping and tasting room sales. Roy (a reformed former moonshiner) is now a successful general contractor, and built the rugged facilities. Royce's grandfather on his mother's side, Earl Sizemore, serves as assistant distiller.

"We think this location will be ideal for attracting race fans and to capitalize on auto racing's long history with moonshine runners down in eastern Kentucky. That's how NASCAR got started," Royce said. Neeley Family Distillery is now a member of and stop on the prestigious Kentucky Bourbon Trail Craft Tour and B-Line passport program.

Neeley Family Distillery has grown immensely in the last few years.

They do things the right way. They have grown, but with real forethought. Their fermentation room is outfitted with five, large old-fashion styled Cyprus fermenters, and fermentation is open top. In January 2020 they received four new Donna tubs for their new yeast room. Neeley Family is one of the few distilleries in the country that still “work” all of their own yeast on site. Royce is a sworn advocate of sweet mash (versus sour mash). And insists on using a pot still. Royce has come into his own as a distiller. The distillery now has a new rickhouse full of bourbon whiskey in its stores, and is ready to make the next big jump. They have a new 500-gallon copper pot still from Vendome, more employees, and are ready to up their production. Their products are now in select stores, and they’ve even shipped internationally (Ireland).



Everything at Neeley is done by hand, so that means more work, more effort. But the results certainly seem worth it.

Neeley started out offering moonshine, while squirreling away as much in barrels as they could. All that said, their moonshine is good! Which of course is a portent of good things to come. Neeley offers two excellent unaged spirits.

NFD Authentic Kentucky Moonshine (120.2 proof) has been the family’s bread and butter for over 100 years. This is Royce’s great grandfather’s original 1913 shine recipe, which he altered with the addition of sugar. A corn and

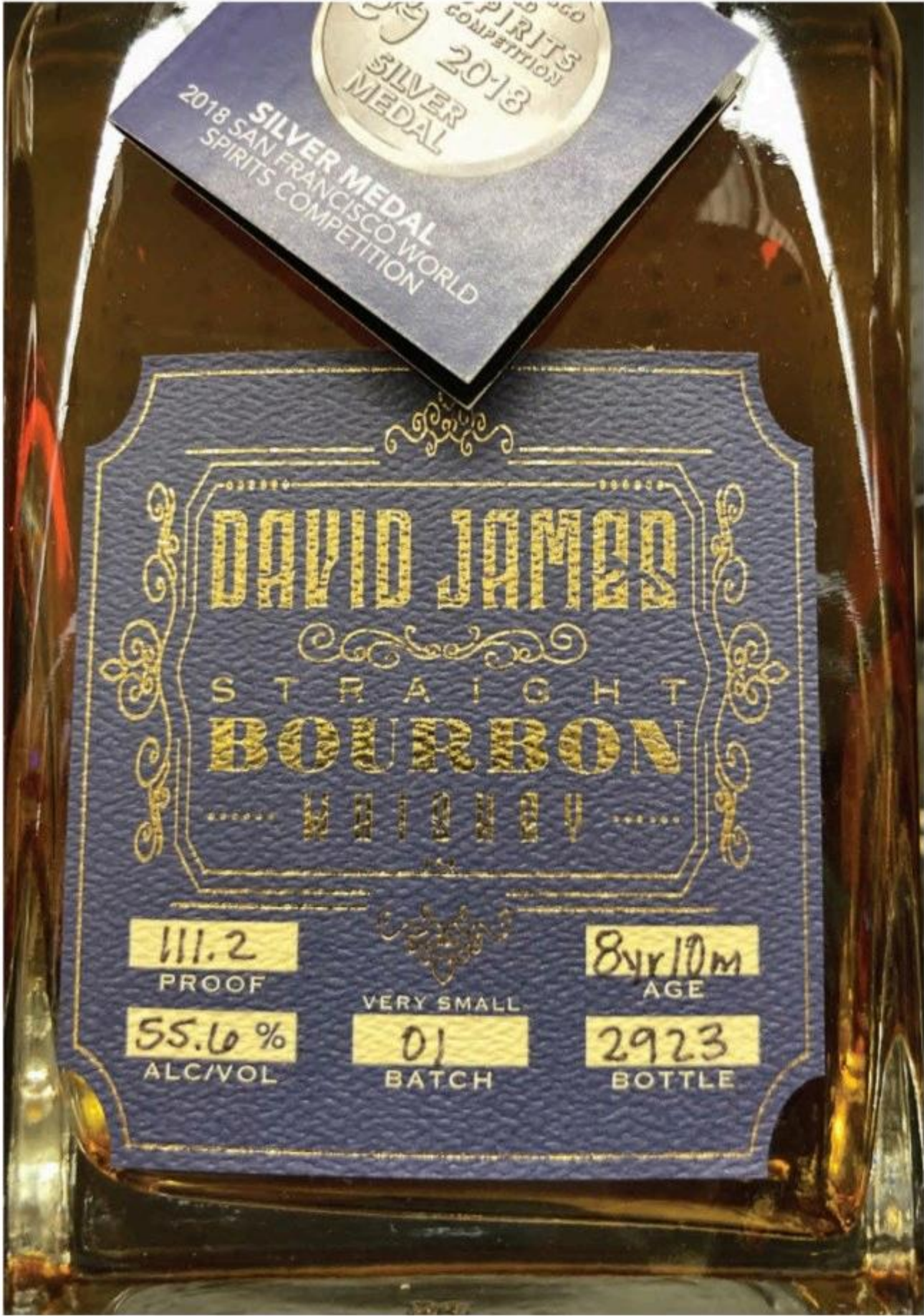
cane product. Leonard Neeley, had a specific way he made his liquor back in the day. Royce's ancestor ran it through his still three times with a thump keg attached. Neeley Family uses the same method today on copper pot stills they custom built allowing them to operate like Royce's great grandpa's still. Their moonshine contains all local grains, fresh Kentucky limestone water, and a unique yeast strand the family has been using for 150 years. Each label is hand written by a Neeley, where bottles and batches are individually numbered. Crystal clear moonshine so pure it attracts the eye. A nose of buttered popcorn, cotton candy, and Granny Smith apples. Super smooth!

Pawpaw Sizemore's Kentucky Bourbon White Dog (110 proof), the flagship Neeley bourbon recipe, is bottled unaged. Crystal clear. Sweet grain, cereal, and a little Kentucky hug. Corn lingers. Very nice. You might be lucky enough to spot a bottle in select liquor stores. Scoop them up if you like fine, unaged whiskey.

They also make two lovely bourbon cream liqueurs named Southern Dew. Southern Dew Chocolate Moonshine

Truffle is a blend of Irish cream base with chocolate fudge, vanilla, and walnut flavors. Southern Dew Orange Moonshine Creamsicle blends Irish cream with orange cream flavors and their moonshine.

Neeley Family Kentucky Single Barrel Bourbon (approx. 100-105 proof) is based on the same recipe that James Neeley made back in 1740. It's made using sweet mash made from fresh non-GMO local grains and pure Gallatin County limestone water. It is then fermented in open-top cypress at cool temperatures, allowing the yeast ample time to produce their great flavors. The whiskey is triple pot-distilled. Non-chill filtered, aged 18 months, and bottled at barrel proof right out of the barrel. Neely's Single Barrel comes with several flavor profiles, including Peppercorn Punch, Electric Yellow Rose, Maple Mocha, or Marshmallow Black Belt. Barrel Select won a gold medal in the San Francisco World Spirits Competition.



Neeley Family Kentucky Single Barrel Straight Bourbon Whiskey (approx. 100-105 proof) is made the same way as the whiskey, but it is aged for a minimum of 25 months in order to meet the “Straight Bourbon” labeling laws. It is differentiated by a black label.

DAVID-JAMES WHISKEY

Neeley Family Distillery is also the home of David-James Whiskeys. The idea for this whiskey was born in hilltops and hollers of 18th century Georgetown, Kentucky, and it is made from carefully selected sourced bourbon and whiskey. There are four partners. Richard “Doug” Linger, a pharmacist by trade, started Old George Town Spirits in 2017. Phillip A. Johnson, a fellow pharmacist, is also a partner. Mike “Gee” Gee is a longtime construction expert, and James R “Bo” Kelly is the man who brought Old George Town Spirits’ partners together

Royce is the master distiller of this line. According to him, “Housing this brand allows us to have some of the best aged whiskey in the world on our shelf, while our bourbon and

moonshine sleeps in their barrels for the next few years or so, until we deem our bourbon is ready for market.”

The David-James products are sold at the Neeley Family Distillery, but the blends are also available elsewhere. This high-proof, high intensity brand was created for distribution to Southern and Midwestern states.

David James Straight American Whiskey (119.6 proof) is distilled in Indiana and aged 10 years in Indiana and Kentucky. Lightly filtered. Mingled at Neeley Family in a small batch of 21 barrels. Caramel, cherry, honey, vanilla, and oak. This is their best-selling whiskey and has won numerous awards.

David James Straight American Whiskey Platinum (111.2 proof) is distilled in Indiana, aged in Indiana and Kentucky. Aged 9 years and 7 months in American white oak barrels. Lightly filtered. Hand bottled at Neeley Family with handwritten labels. Creamy sweet vanilla with spice, hints of pepper and caramel.

David James Straight Bourbon Whiskey Gold (111.2 proof) is distilled in Tennessee and aged in both Tennessee

and Kentucky. Aged 8 years and 10 months in American white oak barrels. Lightly filtered. Blended at Neeley in a small batch of 25 barrels. Hand bottled. Cherry, tobacco, chocolate notes.

David James Straight Bourbon Whiskey Platinum (93.66 proof) is distilled in Tennessee, aged in Tennessee and Kentucky. Aged 9 years and 5 months in American white oak barrels. Lightly filtered. Blended at Neeley and hand bottled. Dark caramel, cocoa, and peppercorn.

Neeley Family Distillery is every bit as good as some of the more chic, artisanal craft producers in Louisville and Lexington. They must be tried. Royce Neeley is one to be watched.

NEW RIFF DISTILLING

New Riff Distilling is an independent, family-owned, distillery. According to the company, it takes pride in its “freedom to innovate and collaborate, riff on the old and

redefine the new.” Ken Lewis is president and owner of this urban distillery that has caught the eye of industry insiders and aficionados with its a very serious, quality-driven focus.

Brian Sprance is the head distiller (who originally came by way of Boston Beer Company), and there are a whole host of employees pushing this place to a new level. It opened in 2014 in a state-of-the-art facility in Newport, right across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, Ohio.

Two large grain silos feed New Riff’s two hungry stills. Its 500-gallon pot still offers an immense range of artisanal possibilities, from un-aged spirits to barrel-aged bourbon, whiskey, and rye. New Riff has collaborated with Bellevue’s Ei8ht Ball Brewing to lay down a burgeoning single malt whiskey, as well. Rising almost 60 feet in the air, and with a 24-inch diameter, New Riff’s column still can produce almost 700 gallons of spirits per day. Do the math, and the sky is virtually the limit for this new startup.

The shop downstairs is ample and cleverly outfitted. But the building goes on forever. In the upper floors there are super modern balconies for outdoor entertaining. And the

top floor has a cool event space, with large bar, and more outdoor seating on both sides. New Riff is one of the hippest new distilleries to visit.

New Riff Kentucky Wild Gin is a fascinating blend of classic old world London Dry botanicals (coriander, orris root, angelica root, cinnamon, lemon, bitter orange, and, of course, juniper berries) with locally sourced botanicals that are native to the area (goldenrod, Kentucky's cheerful state flower; and a local native American juniper, the spice bush). This blend makes for an incredibly smooth gin, with zip, zest, and a flavor profile that isn't just different—it's spicy, it's local. New Riff Barreled Kentucky Wild Gin is aged in Kentucky bourbon barrels, and is equally impressive.

New Riff originally sold sourced whiskey under their OKI label. That has been retired. Now, all New Riff products are made from their own distillate. New Riff's Straight Bourbon and Straight Rye can be found in a wide range of stores, and distribution is growing.

New Riff Kentucky Straight Bourbon (100 proof) has a mash bill of 65% corn, 30% rye, and 5% malted barley, all

non-GMO. Aged at least four years. Each bottle states date of distilling and date of bottling. The is a high-rye bourbon, complete with the big gingersnap finish. Lots of caramel, honey, oats, cereal, and butterscotch, but with a black pepper ending that leaves the mouth dry, with a pop. This is a rye-drinkers bourbon. This is the work horse of the line. Very, very drinkable. Stands up to ice.

New Riff Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey (100 proof) has a mash bill of 95% rye and 5% malted rye. Aged four years in charred American oak. Non chill-filtered. Bottled in bond. This is a rye-lovers whiskey. Burnt orange peel. Caramel, molasses, tobacco, black pepper, hint of spices. A big bite at the end flavor wise. The alcohol doesn't make it hot. The flavor does. A big rye for those who want bold whiskeys. Another workhorse in the New Riff stable.

Available at the distillery is a series of truly exceptional single barrel expressions. New Riff Single Barrel Bourbon 16-11658 chosen by Jay Erisman, co-founder (quick on spice, polished, hints of smoke, dark fruit, and clove); New Riff Single Barrel Bourbon 16-11637 chosen by Grover

Arnold, brand ambassador (buttery caramel, brown sugar, honey pepper, lingering rye spice); New Riff Single Barrel 15-5258 chosen by David Miller, distiller (baking spices, caramel, apple, black cherry, tobacco); New Riff Single Barrel Rye 16-6588 chosen by David Sprance, distiller (raspberry, vanilla bean, black pepper, clove, dry citrus zest); and New Riff Single Barrel Rye 16-1151 chosen by Stephanie Batty, distiller (geranium, tangerine, sandalwood, vanilla, fruit). And the prices of these, comparable to their quality, are relatively inexpensive. Fantastic bottlings. More to come.



High quality and flavor from New Riff, a place to keep on your radar.



OLD POGUE

By Richard Thomas

Old Pogue is best known for its nine-year-old bourbon,

which is such a hot ticket item that the most reliable way to acquire a bottle these days is to make the trip to the distillery. Those making that journey, far off the Bourbon Trail's beaten track to Maysville, are in for a treat beyond that prized bottle. Old Pogue is a delightfully picturesque, craft-scale distillery, located next to the historic family home and overlooking the banks of the Ohio River. What is more, its hometown has a good claim to being the founding location of the bourbon industry, as the earliest business-related reference to "Bourbon Whiskey" was in a Maysville newspaper, circa 1821.

So, if you want to do some bourbon tourism where bourbon began, don't go to Scott County looking for the stomping grounds of the semi-mythical Reverend Elijah Craig. Go to Maysville and Old Pogue.

Old Pogue entered the scene when master distiller H.E. Pogue bought the distillery that employed him in 1876. The distillery was shuttered during Prohibition, and H.E. Pogue III got out of whiskey trade altogether afterward. This had as much to do with his family's tragic legacy in the business

as with the difficulties facing many distillers in restarting production after the forced 14-year stoppage: Pogue lost both his father and his grandfather in workplace accidents.

After discovering some antique bottles of vintage Pogue whiskey in the 1990s, H.E. Pogue's descendants decided to re-enter the whiskey business. Using a contract-produced bourbon based on a family recipe, Old Pogue was relaunched in 2004. The brand soon developed a cult following, and with annual production runs still limited to dumps of just 20 to 30 barrels at a time, Old Pogue bourbon has become almost unavailable outside of the distillery gift shop.

Foreseeing where the bourbon industry was headed, the Pogues opened their distillery in 2012, taking charge of their own production. The distillery reintroduced the Old Maysville Club brand as a 100% malted rye bottled-in-bond whiskey, giving fans of rye a mature version of an all-malted whiskey. Just recently they also released their first bourbon of their own make. Old Pogue's Master Select (91 proof) Old Pogue was the flagship product of the original H.E. Pogue Distillery in 1876 and is also the first product released by the

modern Pogue Distillery. Straight Kentucky bourbon, limited availability.



OLD SALEM SPIRITS

It all began in 1917 when a Kentucky coal miner asked a Chattanooga Bakery traveling salesman for a snack “as big as the moon.” Earl Mitchell reported back and the bakery obliged with a tasty treat aptly named MoonPie. It was

filling, fit in the lunch pail, and the coal miners loved it. The rest, as they say, is history. A tradition was born, and a national treasure established.

According to Old Salem Spirits president Keith Spears, he and a friend first came up with the idea a few years ago. But they didn't have the cash to fund the whole idea. So they participated in an historic partnership. The Campbell family is fifth generation bakers of the iconic Chattanooga Bakery MoonPie. Paul and Stephen Beam are seventh-generation distillers from one of bourbon's most iconic families. Together the two families created MoonPie Moonshine. Eventually the Beams wanted to focus on their homegrown bourbons and ryes. The brand was eventually taken over by Keith Spears and Old Salem Spirits in 2018. This special collection of MoonPie Spirits is the ultimate "workingman's reward" that represents the marriage of two great Southern traditions. The moonshine, made in Frankfort, has the same flavor profile as the 100-year-old secret recipe of The Original MoonPie.

Old Salem Spirits is an alcohol branding company that

offers exclusive and unique adult beverages centered around the entertaining and colorful history of spirit-making. They build brands through television and on-site promotions. Old Salem Spirits has no tasting room, but makes its current MoonPie Moonshine available to other tasting rooms, which serve as satellite shops. The moonshine is available in numerous tasting rooms as well as a large swath of retail liquor outlets. It is among the top ten most distributed moonshines throughout the country. "The tastings are a very important part of marketing our brand," says Spears. They are currently in more than a dozen states.

MoonPie Moonshine Vanilla is perfect for a mixer or to enjoy straight out of the bottle! Simple, sweet, vanilla, and smooth.

Chocolate was the original MoonPie flavor and MoonPie Chocolate Moonshine honors that tradition. This amber moonshine is decadent and sweet, and surprisingly chocolatey.

One of Chattanooga Bakery MoonPies most popular flavors is banana. MoonPie Moonshine Banana is a blending

of banana and vanilla, almost like a banana cream pie. Get a box of Nilla Wafer, start sipping, and enjoy!

The bakery reintroduced coconut as a new variety in their line of baked goods in time for Mardi Gras. Moonpies are a big hit at the Mobile Mardi Gras in Alabama. The folks at Old Salem joined in on the fun with MoonPie Moonshine Mardi Gras Coconut.



JAMES E. PEPPER DISTILLERY





The Pepper family brand of whiskey dates back to the American Revolution and was produced through 1967. The family built and operated two main distilleries: the original distillery is now home to Woodford Reserve Distillery; the James E. Pepper Distillery in Lexington was built later. In the late 1960s the bourbon industry hit hard times, and both the

brand and distillery in Lexington were abandoned.

In 2008, the brand was acquired by whiskey entrepreneur Amir Peay. Peay sought out relationships with the Lawrenceburg Distillery in Indiana and the Bardstown Bourbon Co. in Kentucky. The reclaimed brand used sourced whiskeys from these distilleries while Peay rebuilt the old distillery. Today some of the James E. Pepper whiskeys contain whiskeys distilled at those distilleries.

“I’m a history and whiskey nerd, and that led me to discover the whiskey brand started by Col. James E. Pepper,” said Peay. “We re-dug the limestone well and were able to study old drawings from 1934 to rebuild our still system. And we are going to build a small craft distillery here. The scale and the size of production would not allow us to make whiskey here and sell it for the same price as our current product line. So what we are going to do is we will probably start blending in some of the whiskey that’s distilled here into the existing line. We will always continue to work with third parties for the existing line, but we will of course have

new whiskeys, new product lines just from whiskey distilled here.”

The distillery is named for Colonel James E Pepper (1850-1906), master distiller, who was a larger-than-life bourbon industrialist and flamboyant promoter of his family brand. He was actually the third generation to produce Old Pepper Whiskey, “The Oldest and Best Brand of Whisky made in Kentucky,” which was founded in 1780 during the American Revolution. Back in the day, Pepper was among the largest distilleries in America.

Pepper was an avid horseman, and operated one of the finest stables in Kentucky. His thoroughbreds competed in the Kentucky Derby and in races across America and Europe. He traveled in an ornate private rail car named “The Old Pepper,” which sported the famed whiskey label on the outside.

Pepper was even involved in the invention of the Old Fashioned cocktail. A bartender at the Pendennis Club, a gentlemen’s club founded in 1881 in Louisville, claims the cocktail was invented there by a bartender looking to honor

Pepper. Pepper spent much time promoting his whiskey in New York, and stayed at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, where he introduced the cocktail’s recipe.

James E. Pepper 1776 Straight Bourbon Whiskey “1776” Straight Bourbon (100 Proof) is a non-chill-filtered whiskey with more than 38% rye in the mash bill. Lovely caramel and brown sugar up front, with honey and chocolate, and a lovely gingersnap finish.

James E. Pepper “1776” Straight Rye (100 proof) is a non-chill-filtered high-rye rye, with a mash bill with 90% rye. This is the workhorse of the Pepper line. A favorite among bartenders across the country. Notes of dark cherry, cocoa, cloves, eucalyptus, and honey. A big gingersnap finish. Stands up to ice, and mixes exceptionally well in cocktails. Great for Old Fashions and Manhattans.

James E. Pepper “1776” Straight Rye Barrel Proof (114.6 proof) has the same attributes of its workhorse brother, but packs a much bigger alcohol wallop and more intense notes of anise, spice, cloves, eucalyptus, chocolate, and honey.

James E Pepper Old Pepper Rye is their single barrel selection of this whiskey.

Henry Clay Straight Rye Whiskey (86 proof) is named for gifted politician Henry Clay (1777-1852) who famously shipped barrels of whiskey from the Oscar Pepper Distillery to the Willard Hotel in Washington DC. Clay was an important national figure from 1811 until his death. Clay's tomb and estate, maintained and operated as a museum today, are located in Lexington. After Clay's death, the Henry Clay Distillery was built in Lexington in 1869, only to be destroyed by fire a few years later. It was Colonel Pepper who bought the destroyed distillery, rebuilding it on the grounds where it stands today. This whiskey is named in his honor. This is a Pennsylvania rye, meaning it is a high-rye content (more than 90% rye in the mash bill). Softer than its "1776" brethren. Affordable cocktail rye.





AARON SCHORSCH

It's hard not to like Aaron Schorsch. He's a hard-working guy who made it. After graduating from Indiana University Bloomington, he started off as a production operator at Seagram in the plant that is now known as MGP (one of the largest distilleries in North America), and eventually went



along to join the Pernod Ricard merger. He was there for more than 10 years. He started out rolling barrels and then operating equipment. It was a huge place, but a great one to learn about distilling. According to him, he had every job you could have. He then put in a year-and-a-half at the Boston Beer Company, the maker of Samuel Adams, in their Cincinnati plant, where he was a brewing supervisor.

After that, Schorsch joined Jim Beam, where he was a distillery and warehouse supervisor for almost four years. He then made the jump to Archer Daniels Midland where he was the warehouse manager for more than three years. In October 2016 he landed at James E. Pepper where he became distillery manager and head distiller.

If all of that sounds exhausting, it should. But it completely prepared him for his role now. At Pepper he is a man on the move. The distillery mornings start early, and usually not without him. From emptying trucks filled with new barrels, moving equipment, to bottling and overseeing the mash and operating the still, Schorsch and his small band are the hardest working group in the distillery

business, and Pepper has begun to make more and more whiskey. It's very exciting to watch.

"This place was left for dead," Schorsch recalled. "It was abandoned, used for storage and Lord knows what. The cops said at one point this was a bad place to come." He pointed out that the giant and impressive tasting room is where the old grain bins used to be. Their still room was the old mash room. The fermentor room is the old doubler and still room. And what is their storage and bottling room today was the old dry house.

"When I arrived, it was a construction site still. I ended up being a kind of general contractor, kinda distiller guy, I guess," he said with a smile. "I'm glad I got to do it, because there were a lot of things that I got to have a kind of say in."

Schorsch said new whiskeys will start releasing in 2020 that are made on site. They will be available in the tasting room only. Can't wait. The group they have running James E. Pepper are good, competent folks. Looking forward to some exciting bottles in the future.