

DID YOU KNOW?

In Kentucky, where we live, bourbon and whiskey are a big deal. The history of distilling these spirits can be traced back over 1,000 years to monks traveling from the Middle East, bringing it to Scotland and Ireland. But, in America, distillation got its roots in the late 1700's, with Kentucky's first commercial distillery being founded in 1783 on the banks of the Ohio River in Louisville by Evan Williams. Through the years, whiskey developed into the complex, distinctively American bourbons, ryes, and Tennessee whiskeys that we know today.

America's most famous whiskey was born in Lynchburg, Tennessee around the time of the Civil War, in a still owned by the preacher Dan Call. Reverend Call's parishioners didn't much care for their preacher making whiskey, although everyone said it was the best tasting whiskey around. This was thanks to his distiller, Nathan "Nearest" Green or "Uncle Nearest," who had his own "recipe" and distilling technique. Green was an enslaved man, owned by the firm Landis & Green, who likely hired him out to Call for a fee. The reverend also hired a white boy named Jack Daniel and instructed Green to teach him how to make whiskey. After slaves were freed through the Emancipation Proclamation, Green continued to work at the distillery. In 1866, Jack Daniel opened the first registered distillery in the United States with Nearest Green as its Master Distiller. the first African-American master distiller on record in the United States.

Nearest's secret was that he'd perfected the "Lincoln County Process" of distilling, where whiskey is filtered through sugar maple charcoal prior to aging in oak barrels. He passed this knowledge on to his sons and nephews, who also joined the Jack Daniel's team. As did their sons and nephews. In all, seven straight generations of Nearest Green's descendants have worked for Jack Daniel's Distillery, with three direct descendants continuing to work there as of November 2017.

Learn more about Nearest Green here:

<https://gastropod.com/the-secret-history-of-the-slave-behind-jack-daniels-whiskey/#:~:text=Description-,Back%20in%201866%2C%20Jack%20Daniel's%20became%20the%20first%20registered%20distillery,a%20pastor%20named%20Dan%20Call.>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7309HUorDU>

<https://unclenearest.com/history/>