

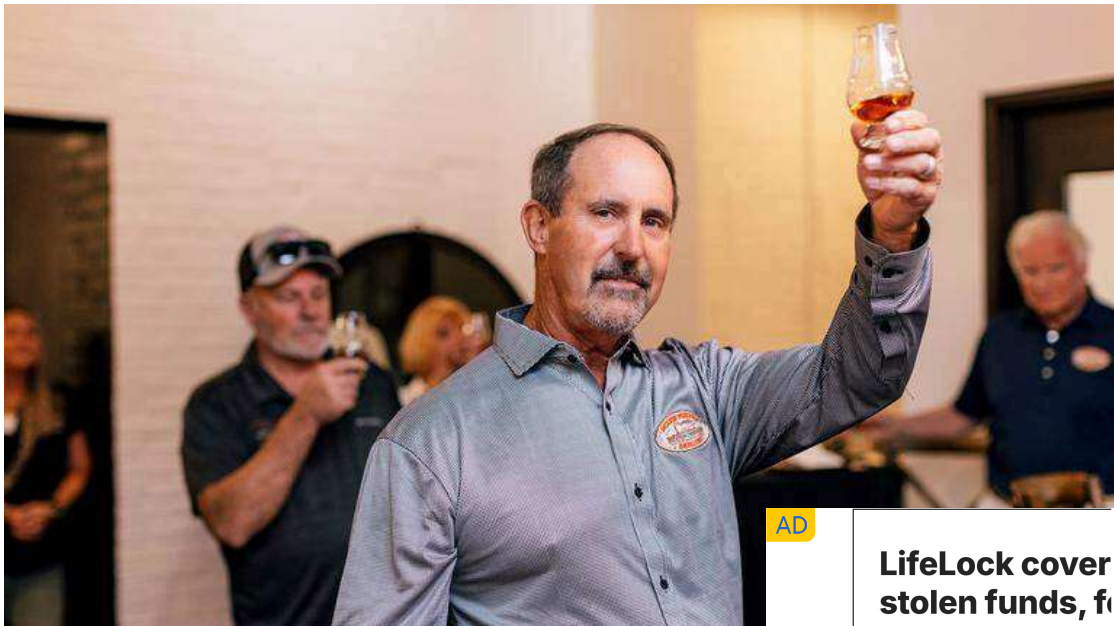
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BOURBON & BARS

New whiskey comes from an old name in Kentucky bourbon: 'It's his vision'

By **Janet Patton**

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Jackson Purchase master distiller Craig Beam does a toast at a recent tasting event to lau from the Fulton County distillery. Beam was the former master distiller at Heaven Hill bei his ailing father, the late master distiller emeritus Parker Beam, who dies in 2017 of ALS. *Purchase Distillery*



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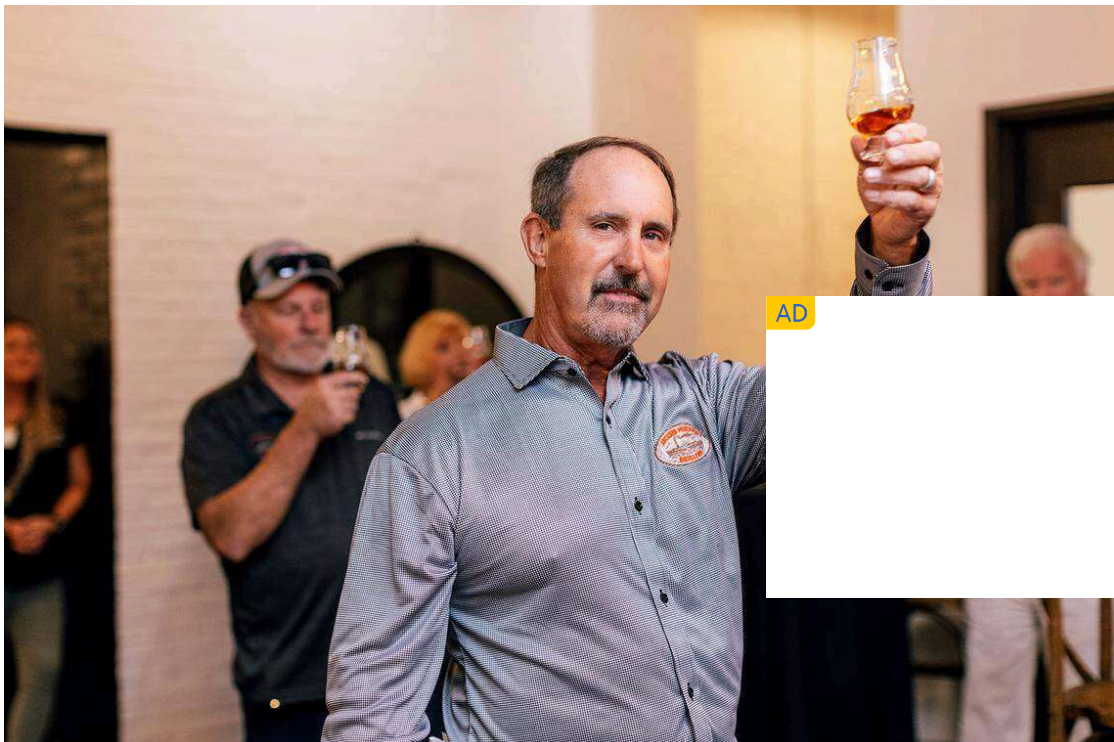
✦ Key Takeaways

AI-generated summary reviewed by our newsroom.

When Craig Beam left Heaven Hill in 2014, he hung up his master distiller's hat for good.

But when the right opportunity came calling, he was persuaded to come out of retirement and has now released a new whiskey, Jackson Purchase Bourbon. It's coming to shelves in Kentucky and, although it's only four years old, the barrel-proof bourbon has the characteristics of a much older whiskey, with depth and complexity.

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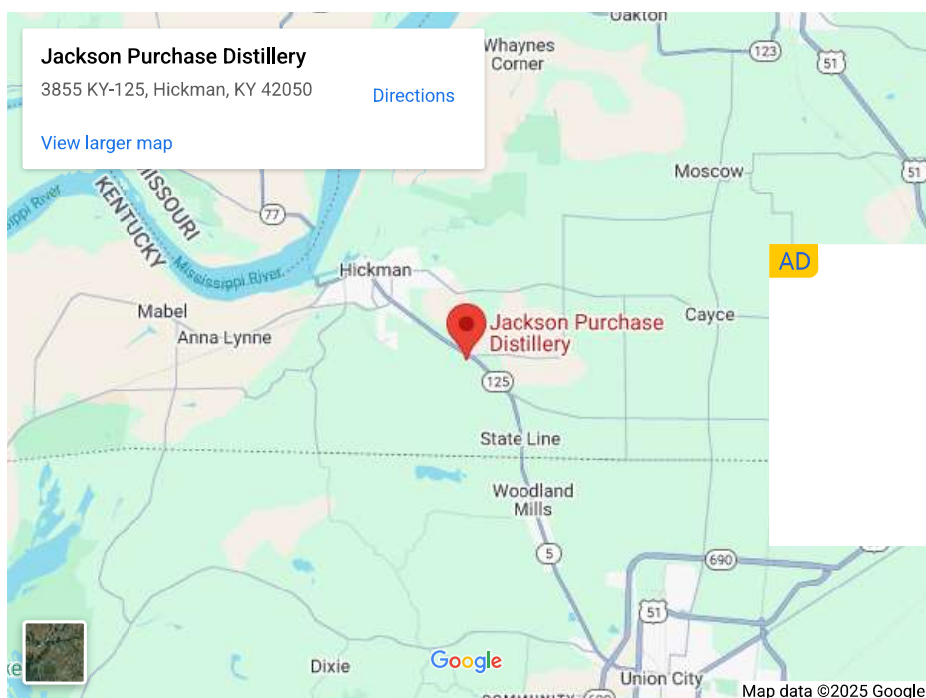
Jackson Purchase master distiller Craig Beam does a toast at a recent tasting event to launch his new bourbon, the first release from the Fulton County distillery. Beam was the former master distiller at Heaven Hill before he retired in 2014 to help care for his ailing father, the late master distiller emeritus Parker Beam, who dies in 2017 of ALS. Kriech-Higdon Photography *Jackson Purchase Distillery*



Jackson Purchase Bourbon will be available at select Kentucky retailers beginning in Sept AD
Jackson Purchase Bourbon

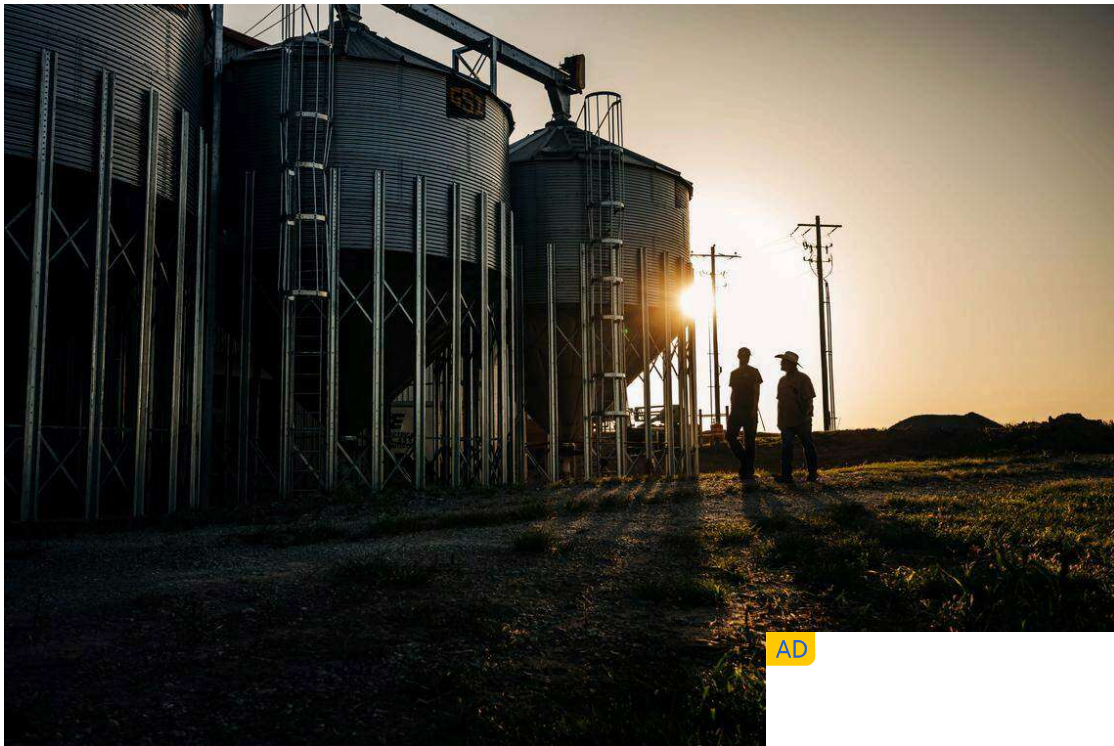
After 32 years with Heaven Hill in Bardstown and Louisville, Beam turned his attention to his family farms and businesses, including sheep farming. When [Jackson Purchase](#) came calling.

The distillery in Fulton County — just about as far west as you can go in Kentucky and still be *in* Kentucky — was looking for someone with the know-how to get it running.



Why a distillery in Western Kentucky

Built almost as a hobby by a Memphis attorney, the distillery had been sitting idle for more than a decade when a couple of duck hunters who were interested in getting into the bourbon business decided to take a chance.



Jackson Purchase Distillery opened in Fulton County in 2021 and is now releasing its first master distiller Craig Beam with assistant master distiller Terry Ballard. Kriech-Higdon PH



Jackson Purchase Distillery has already more than doubled its capacity since it filled its first
Photography *Jackson Purchase Distillery*

Fulton County businessman Lloyd Jones and bourbon industry veteran David Salmon, together with Van Carlisle and Jim Gladden, partnered to buy the facility in



February 2020. After the COVID shutdown froze the capital markets, they finally closed on the deal in April 2021 and went looking for a distiller.

“We called up for a load of grain and ended up with Craig,” Carlisle said. “Which was a much better deal ... he’s like the treat in a Cracker Jack box.”

Bringing the distillery to life

At first, Beam wasn’t all that interested. He had his own businesses to run five hours away. He recommended they call Terry Ballard, another esteemed distiller, who had just left Willett Distillery, and Ballard came aboard. Eventually, Beam signed on as well on a part-time basis.

“Craig probably works the longest 20 hours in the history of the planet right now,” Carlisle said.

When Beam and Ballard started looking at what they’d be working with, they quickly realized that the original 24-inch copper Vendome column still had never been used. It had been put together wrong. “No way in the world you can make a drop of whiskey in this,” Beam said. Vendome had delivered it, then it sat in a neighbor’s barn for years before the previous owner “assembled” it.

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Jackson Purchase master distiller Craig Beam and assistant master distiller Terry Ballard are releasing their first new bourbon together at the Kentucky Bourbon Festival in Bardstown. Kriech-Higdon Photography *Jackson Purchase Distillery*

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Jackson Purchase Distillery has been filling barrels since Aug. 1, 2021. Kriech-Higdon Phot

Once they put things right, Beam and Ballard made their first barrel of whiskey Aug. 1, 2021. The still was capable of making 25 barrels a day at first, then they added eight fermenters and doubled the capacity to 50 barrels. And it wasn't enough.





“Now, we didn’t go out and knock on doors and advertise but word of mouth got around and when, I guess, people found that Terry and I were running the distillery, people started knocking on our doors,” Beam said. “Customers started coming to us. ... We realized that we still didn’t have enough capacity.”

By 2023, they’d added a second, larger column still, put in more boilers, mash cookers and fermenters. Along the way, they bought an old jeans plant in Hickman and turned it into a barrel warehouse, and now they have added two 24,700-barrel rickhouses in Lebanon as well.

They filled their 100,000th barrel in June and are not slowing down.

“We can do about 230 barrels a day,” Beam said. “And we did that for seven days a week. Actually, that first year we never shut down at all.”

How did Jackson Purchase escape broader industry issues?

While the bourbon industry might be seeing hiccups in other places, Jackson Purchase is chugging right along, Carlisle said.

What has made the difference? Lower start-up costs, in part. They bought the facility and warehouse for about \$13 million and now have put another \$20 million or so into expansion.

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“From the beginning we set out to be a distiller,” Carlisle said. “No tasting room, no gift shop. ... Our mission is to be a distillery.”

Most of their bourbon has been made under contract, meaning it was sold before it was ever distilled. In fact, when they got ready to bottle some under the Jackson Purchase label, they actually had to buy some barrels back.



Jackson Purchase Distillery in Fulton County filled its 100,000th barrel in June. Kriech-High Distillery



Jackson Purchase Distillery opened in Fulton County in 2021 and is now releasing its first bourbon. Kriech-Higdon Photography
Jackson Purchase Distillery

“We went back to some of our original customers and bought some back or, in some cases, actually traded it for new fill, two or 2 1/2 barrels of new to get some of the old stuff so that we were able to barrel our first,” Carlisle said.



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He said they will put away more each year for their own use and sell newly filled barrels and now some of their 2- and 3-year-old barrels.

Timing also had a lot to do with their success.

“I don’t think I’d do what we did today. We got into it at the right time,” Carlisle said. “We did it with an existing facility. In our fifth month we were barreling bourbon. You cannot do that.”

Key to success: Craig Beam

And then there's the fact that they got Craig Beam.

How much of their success do they attribute to that?

"Somewhere between 100 and 110%," Carlisle said. "It's Craig's vision in terms of ... coming up with a recipe. They're a pretty collaborative team but it's Craig's vision. ... We have chefs, not cooks."

Beam's a seventh generation distiller, following in the footsteps of his father, the late Parker Beam, who died in 2017 of ALS, and grandfather Earl, both of whom are in the Kentucky Bourbon Hall of Fame. At Heaven Hill, Craig Beam did everything from sweep the floors to working in the rickhouses, and ran stills by hand before automated systems.



In sampling with Ballard, Beam noticed that the barrels seemed to be aging faster than expected, something Beam attributes to the Western Kentucky micro-climate that gets hotter earlier and stays hotter longer than in Central Kentucky.

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Assistant master distiller Terry Ballard, embracing a newly filled barrel, joined Jackson Purchase Distillery



Jackson Purchase Bourbon is 117.8 proof, with a deep color and complex flavor even though it is only four years old. "I would put it up against a much older whiskey," master distillery Craig Beam said. Kriech-Higdon Photography *Jackson Purchase Distillery*

"Early on, we decided that if we were going to have a brand, we would from day one make sure our brand contained our bourbon," Carlisle said. "It's not just our name on the bottle, but it's our bourbon in the bottle. ... We are awfully proud of what they are doing."

The first bottles will be launched at the [Kentucky Bourbon Festival](#), with a signing, for \$75. Then it will be available in Kentucky stores with a suggested price of \$59.95. Locations will be available on their web site, jacksonpurchasebourbon.com. By October, you'll be able to buy a bottle there as well.

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Janet Patton covers restaurants, bars, food and bourbon for the Herald-Leader. She is an award-winning business reporter who also has covered agriculture, gambling, horses and hemp. Support my work with a digital subscription

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