

# THE Bourbon

REVIEW



## UNCLE NEAREST

*RESURRECTING  
TENNESSEE HISTORY WITH  
FAWN WEAVER, HISTORIAN &  
BEST-SELLING AUTHOR*

## EXIT INTERVIEW

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DRINK BOURBON  
INTERNATIONALLY*

## WHISKEY IN WINE COUNTRY

*UNEXPECTED WHISKEY  
DESTINATION*

## QUALITY DECLINE

*BOURBON USED  
TO BE "BETTER"?*

A woman with dark hair, wearing a bright red, off-the-shoulder top, is seated at a bar. She is holding a glass of whiskey in her left hand, which is resting on the bar. A bottle of Uncle Nearest 1856 Premium Whiskey is prominently displayed on the bar behind her. The background is filled with various bottles of liquor on shelves, creating a classic bar atmosphere. The lighting is warm and focused on the woman and the whiskey bottle.

*"... THEY UNCOVERED  
A LOST HISTORY  
WITH A FULL CAST  
OF CHARACTERS...  
COMING TOGETHER  
TO CREATE THE  
TENNESSEE WHISKEY  
OF TODAY..."*

FAWN WEAVER, HISTORIAN & BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

# UNCLE NEAREST

## *THE BRAND HELPING TO RESURRECT TENNESSEE HISTORY*

STORY: KATIE DINGWALL

In 2017, Fawn Weaver, a historian, best-selling author, and an African-American woman, decided to spend her 40th birthday in Lynchburg, Tennessee. If this seems like an odd choice of locale - perhaps Paris or New York to celebrate such a landmark? - you're completely correct.

A piece published in *The New York Times* revealed a slave played a considerable role in the creation of the Tennessee whiskey industry. In the mid-1800s, a young Jack Daniel - a name familiar to both whiskey lovers and green imbibers - learned to distill under the wing of a Nathan "Nearest" Green. It was Green who taught Daniel the method of charcoal filtration now known as the Lincoln County Process. But today, Green's name has all but disappeared from the current narrative.

To Lynchburg went Weaver, on a fascination expedition. She quickly found herself falling down a rabbit hole, one that would alter her life's path - A few days after arriving, she purchased

the Dan Call farm, former home of Green and Daniel. She pored through the Lynchburg library; Reached out to over 100 family members of Daniel and Green, and assembled a squadron of 20 archivists, archeologists, genealogists, and conservators, who turned the farmhouse into their command center. She placed an ad in the paper, beckoning anyone with artifacts related to the story to bring them to the Dan Call farmhouse. The community turned up in droves.

What they uncovered was not just the story of Daniel and Weaver, but a lost history with a full cast of characters, white and black, coming together to create the Tennessee Whiskey of today.

In 2019, Nearest Green is no longer a forgotten name. He has become a catalyst for creating something far beyond a smooth Tennessee Whiskey. Uncle Nearest Whiskey has done the latter, yes, but the Nearest Green Foundation has put in motion a plan



THE DAN CALL FARM



for a 360-degree legacy for Green. The initiatives range from brand-centric (an immersive distillery experience dubbed “The Disneyland of distilleries”) to community-driven (a generous scholarship fund for those in Green’s bloodline).

At the heart of it all is the whiskey. It launched in 2017 with a sky-high trajectory; it’s now one of the fastest growing spirit brands in the nation. Uncle Nearest is the first known spirit brand in history to honor an African-American, and the liquid is the closest possible iteration of what Nearest Green distilled over 160 years ago. Thanks to double distillation, it’s a deliciously smooth sip.

Another and more poignant initiative: the revitalization of the Highview Cemetery, historically Lynchburg’s ‘black’ cemetery. “When I first arrived in Lynchburg, I was very quickly faced with the reality of our country’s past,” describes Weaver, “On one side of the street was a wonderfully maintained cemetery. Jack Daniel and his family were laid to rest there. But across the street, in a field behind the local African Methodist Church, is where all the African-Americans who helped to build the town of Lynchburg were laid to rest”.

Today, from Nearest Green Foundation’s investment, a beautiful stone entryway welcomes visitors, and a towering 10-foot memorial honors Green. The monument stands in sight of Jack Daniel’s similarly towering statue in the white cemetery so, in death, their connection rings clear. The matriarchs of Nearest Green’s family cut the ribbon.

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The Nearest Green Legacy Scholarship was put in place to put each descendant of Nearest through college, underwriting both undergraduate or graduate degree tuitions. There are conditions: Each student must be a proven descendant of Nearest. Once in their chosen program, they must keep a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Later in life when they've reached their dreams, they must fund a less fortunate student's academic journey.

On the brand-building front, the Nearest Green Distillery will open its doors later this year. Over 270-acres, the distillery will be home to a bottling house, corporate offices, and an experiential visitor's center schemed up by Peggy Noe Stevens. In a nod to the state's history, it will be home to 100 Tennessee Walking Horses. "Tennessee is known for three things," explains Weaver, "Tennessee whiskey, country music, and Tennessee Walking Horses. This is the first time all three are brought together."

An Uncle Nearest biography is well on its way to completion, bar for a few facts the foundation is still searching for. The brand's first short film, narrated by actor Jeffrey Wright and highlighting Nearest Green's life, aired at the Tribeca Film Center earlier this year and a feature-length film is on the horizon. Weaver is cautious about the film - a series of production houses are in the vetting process to find the best home for the layered narrative.

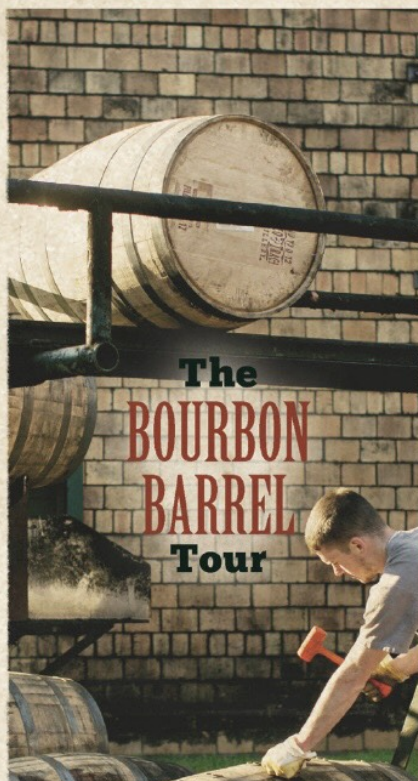
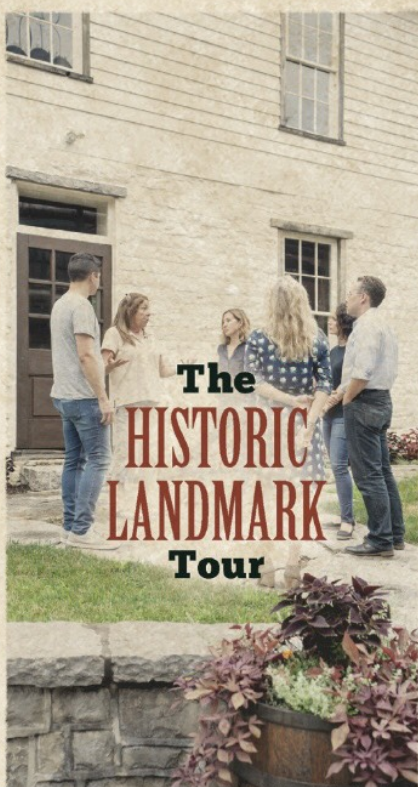
The restoration of Green to his rightful place in history has been a focal point for the Nearest Green Foundation, but efforts extend



FARMHOUSE AT THE DAN CALL FARM

to supporting the history of the category as a whole. Fitting, perhaps, as Nearest Green could be considered the Godfather of Tennessee Whiskey.

The Nearest Green Foundation worked with descendants of Daniel to republish his biography. A soon-to-be gleaming beacon of tourism and heritage, Uncle Nearest has funded the construction of a Tennessee Whiskey museum. It will be the home of all things Tennessee Whiskey, and, while the history will be the focal point, a spotlight will shine on seldom-mentioned figures of the category, namely women and minorities. †



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