01 / ORIGINS & PEOPLE

Early Times

Kentucky / A name carried through changing seasons

Early Times rewards a second look at a familiar name. Its long history connects country distilling, postwar cocktail culture and a modern bonded revival. [S24] Following those changes reveals a whiskey family whose labels preserve several chapters at once: the everyday pour, the commemorative release and the patient return to an older idea. Each chapter asks how much can change while a name remains recognizable across generations.



Beginnings: The official brand chronology credits John Henry “Jack” Beam with founding Early Times in 1860. [S01]

Beyond the farm gate

A later plant stood beside the L&N railroad at Early Times Station. Warehouses and transport connections turned a rural enterprise toward a wider market. [S03]

Keeping the name alive

Owsley Brown secured a medicinal bottling license during Prohibition. Brown-Forman later received permission to replenish medicinal stocks. [S05] Survival depended on more than making spirit: storing it, navigating restrictions and reaching customers mattered too.

Watercolors are symbolic interpretations, not exact buildings or documentary portraits.

02 / HISTORY & PLACES

The name moves; the whiskey waits



1923 / Stocks survive Brown-Forman acquired mature Early Times stocks. Medicinal bottling gave the stored whiskey another route to customers. [S04]

1983 / A different category The domestic expression became Kentucky Whisky, using seasoned cooperage. A familiar name now described a different relationship with wood. [S02]

July 2017 / Bonded returns The revived Bottled-in-Bond Bourbon launched toward six state markets, restoring a historical expression to the contemporary family. [S08]

July 2020 / A new owner The sale to Sazerac closed July 31; Brown-Forman announced completion August 3. Ownership changed on a clear date. [S10]

2022 / Two chapters overlap Sazerac confirmed Barton was distilling and aging Early Times while acquired mature whiskey remained on shelves. [S12]

Bardstown enters the next chapter

The 2021 plan placed future distillation, aging and bottling at Barton 1792. [S11] An established distillery became the next production home; it was not a newly built Early Times plant.

The website presents the complete illustrated chronology and its qualifications.

03 / WHISKEY, STORIES & SOURCES

Grain, wood and a promise



Virginia ABC describes a recipe of 79 percent corn, eleven percent rye and ten percent malted barley for the bonded bourbon, with at least four years in new charred oak. [S15] Grain gives the spirit its starting point. The barrel then becomes both vessel and ingredient, shaping the whiskey through years of contact. These are complementary processes: the recipe begins the conversation, and maturation gives it time to develop.

Bottled in bond requires one distiller, one distillery and one distilling season, at least four years in wood, and bottling at 100 proof. [S14] Those constraints make the label a useful reading tool. During a production transition, its distillation and bottling identifiers carry more meaning than assumptions based on packaging alone. It invites attention to the actual production record behind a seemingly simple and familiar bottle.

The annual Mint Julep bottle brought another kind of craft into the story. Ashley Cecil’s 2014 artwork drew inspiration from the winner’s rose garland; the bottle contained a prepared cocktail. [S17] Whiskey history also lives in hospitality, celebration and the work of artists. A label can hold a memory of the occasion as well as the liquid served there. That broader view makes room for the people who design, serve and share the drink.

Research notes & linked sources

Researched October 19, 2026. The website carries the full chronology, conflicting historical dates and release-specific qualifications. Specifications describe named expressions. Illustrations are symbolic interpretations, not documentary buildings or equipment.

[S01] Official introduction
[S02] 354 & category change
[S03] Historical distillery
[S04] 160-year retrospective
[S05] Company chronology
[S06] Veach brand history
[S07] 150th anniversary
[S08] Bonded revival
[S09] Sale agreement
[S10] Sale completion
[S11] Barton production plan
[S12] Production clarification
[S13] Whisky standards
[S14] Bond requirements
[S15] Bonded recipe
[S16] 2013 Derby edition
[S17] 2014 Derby artwork
[S18] Hunter’s Edition
[S19] Cooperage anniversary
[S20] 2025 Masters results
[S21] 2024 award entries
[S22] IWSC straight bourbon
[S23] State market listing
[S24] 160-year history