Graton and Gray’s Town

Two places on one label: Indiana distillation and Sonoma blending and bottling.



A Gray’s Town label names two places with two different jobs. Indiana is where the whiskey was distilled. Graton, in Sonoma County, is where Graton Distilling Co. says it blended and bottled it. The Port wine barrel finish gives this release a third point of interest: what happened to the whiskey after it left the still. The label identifies the state of distillation but leaves the plant unnamed.

In March 2015, Derek Benham announced Purple Wine + Spirits, grouping wine businesses with Graton Spirits, its craft spirits division. Graton’s March 2016 company release identifies D. George Benham’s Sonoma Dry Gin as its first craft spirit. Redwood Empire’s own history names Jeff Duckhorn as the master distiller who led its early barrel work. That account explains the related operation; it does not credit Duckhorn with making the Gray’s Town batch.

Five moments, three places

Graton’s origins, the Gray’s Town label and the related Redwood Empire timeline.



2015 · Graton takes shape.

Purple announces its spirits division, and Redwood Empire dates the start of its Graton distillery work to the same year.



March 2016 · First craft spirit.

Graton announces its Sonoma Dry Gin.



September 2017 · Redwood Empire debuts.

Purple’s announcement identifies Graton as its distilling company and introduces Redwood Empire American Whiskey.



Undated · Gray’s Town Batch 001.

The label identifies Indiana distillation and California blending and bottling.



2025 · Related operation moves.

Redwood Empire describes its transition from Sonoma County to Mare Island.

Graton: blending and bottling. Indiana: stated distillation origin. Mare Island: related Redwood Empire site.

What the label tells us

Batch 001 · 90 proof · Port wine barrel finish. Exact plant and age unverified.

Distillation, blending, finishing, and bottling are separate steps. For Batch 001, the label supplies the state of distillation and names the California blender and bottler. The release name identifies a Port wine barrel finish. It does not establish the first barrel’s specifications, the finishing duration, the source distillery, the mash bill, or an exact age.



A producer can distill some spirits and blend sourced whiskey for others. Graton’s early gin announcement and Redwood Empire’s account of combining house distillate with sourced whiskey illustrate the difference. The Indiana statement on Gray’s Town is the stronger evidence for this specific release; a source named for a different release cannot be carried over to it.

Purple’s 2017 announcement links Graton and Redwood Empire. Purple Brands’ terms name Graton Spirits Company, LLC, doing business as Purple Spirits. Those records describe the business relationship without identifying Gray’s Town’s distilling plant.

SOURCE NOTES

1. Purple Wine + Spirits announcement, 2015
2. Graton first craft spirit, 2016
3. Purple launches Redwood Empire, 2017
4. Redwood Empire history
5. Redwood Empire FAQ
6. Purple Brands terms
7. Gray’s Town Batch 001 label; exact Indiana facility not identified.