01 / ORIGINS & PEOPLE

Hillrock Estate Distillery

A whiskey story rooted in the field.

Grain fields, a malt house and copper distilling equipment make Hillrock a working Hudson Valley estate. Its identity includes both estate production and the continuing barrel history of Solera Bourbon. The two strands deserve to be understood together. [1, 10, 18]



At a glance
Home: Ancram, New York
First distillation: October 2011
Public introduction: 2012
Founders: Jeffrey Baker and Cathy Franklin
[2-4, 6]

A farming perspective

Baker approached whiskey with the sensibility of an estate wine grower. Keeping grain and production close together offered a way to explore place. The Georgian house dates to 1806, but the distillery is modern: the property purchase is dated 1999 and restoration 2006. Architecture is the backdrop, not evidence of continuous nineteenth-century distilling. [1-3]

People, in their documented periods

Dave Pickerell helped shape the whiskey program. Tim Welly joined in 2011 after winery cellar work; later reporting also identifies Dylan Strang. Current founder tours name Baker and Franklin. Historical staff credits, including Pickerell, must not be mistaken for a current personnel list. [2, 5, 6]

Original watercolor interpretations are symbolic, not exact architectural reconstructions or historical photographs.

02 / HISTORY & PLACES

The estate takes shape.



1806 / 1999 / 2006 The house is built; Baker later acquires the Ancram land and restores the house. These are estate milestones, before whiskey production. [1, 2]

2011 Welly joins the operation. First distillation is dated October in contemporary reporting. [2]

2012 On-site malting is central to the launch. September is the announced opening and bourbon introduction; November brings a documented open house. Retrospective October dates remain qualified. [3, 4, 18]

2018 A Vendome still investment is reported. Pickerell dies in November, leaving recipes, procedures and a trained team. [5]

2024 / 2025 Hillrock becomes a founding Alliance member and joins the first wave of certified estate products. Membership and certification are different milestones. [7, 8]

One landscape, several jobs

At 408 Pooles Hill Road, the visitor route links distillery, malt house and rickhouse. The certified register goes further, identifying named lots for bourbon, rye and malt. Place can be traced at product level, beyond the broader Hudson Valley setting. [6, 9]

03 / WHISKEY & STORIES

Estate grain. A living Solera.

Solera Bourbon is listed at 92.6 proof with Oloroso finishing. Historical reporting describes sourced and estate-distilled bourbon in its development. A sherry cask age or average component age is not the whiskey's age statement. [10, 18, 19]



Double Cask Bourbon is a separate, 100-proof bonded release. Standard Double Cask Rye is 90 proof, with sequential #3 and #4 char new oak. Sheffield Hill OPX malt has its own grain, smoke and age details. The 2025 estate certification belongs to qualifying lots, not every historical bottle. [9, 11-13]

Linked research sources

Checked October 20, 2026. Full qualifications accompany the website.

1. Hillrock / Our story
2. Chatham Press / September 2012
3. Hillrock opening announcement / August 27, 2012
4. Beverage Media / January 3, 2013
5. Tapping into Terroir / February 18, 2020
6. Hillrock / Founders tours
7. UK / EWA founding members, August 23, 2024
8. UK / First certified products, June 10, 2025
9. EWA / Certified product register
10. Hillrock / Solera Bourbon 92.6 proof
11. Hillrock / Double Cask Rye 90 proof
12. Hillrock / Double Cask Bourbon 100 proof
13. Hillrock / Sheffield Hill OPX malt
14. Hillrock / Solera range
15. Hillrock / Rye range
16. Hillrock / Malt range
17. Hillrock / Selected awards
18. Breaking Bourbon / Solera Bourbon review
19. Edible Manhattan / January 2013 archive
20. Hillrock / archived site age gate