01 / ORIGINS & PEOPLE

Old Forester

A sealed promise. A Louisville story.

Old Forester begins with a merchant’s promise: whiskey sealed in glass, with a name standing behind it. The brand’s long life connects selection, medicinal bottling, industrial production and a return to Whiskey Row. [1, 2, 4]

At a glance
Brand founded: 1870
Home city: Louisville, Kentucky
Downtown return: June 2018
Company: Brown-Forman [1-4]



A merchant before a distiller

George Garvin Brown originally batched whiskey from other distilleries. The sealed bottle made his guarantee travel with the liquid. Today’s 1870 Original Batch echoes that selection idea through three warehouses, rather than recreating the historic supplier network. [4, 11]

Knowledge passes between people

Owsley Brown helped preserve the company through medicinal whiskey. In the modern era, Chris Morris and Jackie Zykan shaped new expressions; Melissa Rift joined as master taster in 2022. Caleb Trigo’s 2024 appointment connected technical leadership with the next chapter. [2, 6, 7, 12]

Original illustrations are symbolic interpretations, not documentary portraits or exact buildings.

02 / HISTORY & PLACES

Continuity does not mean standing still.



1870-1902 The bottled brand begins, then gains owned distillation through Mattingly. Official histories disagree on the purchase year: 1901 or 1902. [1, 2]

1910-1933 The attributed bottling-line fire inspires a second-barrel story. Medicinal bottling, and later permitted distillation, sustain the business through Prohibition. [2, 9]

1940-1960s The larger distillery operation develops; wartime alcohol follows. Later, 86 proof and President’s Choice take the portfolio in different directions. [1-3, 14]

Early 2000s-2019 Birthday Bourbon becomes an annual tradition. Whiskey Row launches in 2014, the downtown distillery opens in 2018, and rye arrives in 2019. [1, 4, 12, 15, 16]

2021-2024 The 117 Series creates room for experiments. Rift joins; 1924 adds a new recipe, and Trigo takes a technical leadership role. [6, 7, 13, 17]

Two production settings, one city

Whiskey Row is the urban homeplace and working visitor distillery. The separate Brown-Forman Distillery is a larger production and warehousing operation. Do not assume every bottle was distilled in the building visitors tour. [3-5]

The website preserves conflicting dates for Mattingly, President’s Choice and Birthday Bourbon, with the complete illustrated chronology.

03 / WHISKEY, STORIES & SOURCES

Read the expression, then the label.

Different paths to flavor
1897 is bottled in bond at 100 proof. 1910 uses secondary barreling and is bottled at 93. 1920 is a modern 115-proof historical tribute. The ten-year 1924 introduces a different recipe at 100 proof. [8-10, 13]



Selection keeps the house curious
Warehouse releases explore maturation; the 117 Series also tests extended finishing. The rye follows its own grain recipe, while King Ranch adds a mesquite-charcoal filtration choice. [12, 18, 19, 21, 22]

The memorable detail: The 44-foot Vendome still arrived from elsewhere in Louisville and was lifted over the facade into its new home. The city helped build the homecoming as well as give it an address. [20]

Research notes & linked sources

Researched October 13, 2026. Heritage claims are attributed to the producer. Dates on Whiskey Row labels are historical references. Product specifications belong to named releases. Historic prices and availability are not current buying advice.

[1] Brand chronology
[2] Company chronology
[3] Production locations
[4] 2018 opening
[5] Current visitor FAQ
[6] Melissa Rift
[7] Caleb Trigo
[8] 1897 bonded
[9] 1910 double barrel
[10] 1920 tribute
[11] 1870 selection
[12] Rye launch
[13] 1924 launch
[14] President’s Choice
[15] Birthday 2018
[16] Birthday 2019
[17] 117 launch
[18] Warehouse K
[19] Warehouse H
[20] Copper still
[21] King Ranch
[22] 1910 Extra Old
[23] 2026 sweepstakes
[24] Property purchase