Smooth Ambler



In West Virginia’s Greenbrier Valley, Smooth Ambler built a whiskey business around three practices: distilling its own spirit, selecting mature barrels from other distillers, and blending the two. Its bottles give readers a way to follow those different paths. A West Virginia address may describe where a whiskey was distilled, where it was bottled, or both. The expression and its label tell you which.

Greenbrier Valley residents TAG Galyean and John Little founded Smooth Ambler in 2009. In the company’s telling, a 2008 magazine story about the return of American craft distilling prompted Galyean to suggest they try their hand at it. That account comes from Smooth Ambler’s own brand history. The company set up in Maxwelton, West Virginia, and its early spirits included gin, vodka and young wheated bourbon. Little remained in a leadership role when the majority investment was announced.

From Maxwelton outward



2008

Galyean and Little begin discussing a distilling venture, according to the producer’s account.



2009

The two establish Smooth Ambler in the Greenbrier Valley.



2011

Smooth Ambler dates the start of its whiskey sourcing to this year. The Old Scout line grows out of that program.



Mid-2010s

Contradiction brings house-made wheated bourbon and sourced high-rye bourbon together. Contemporary trade coverage puts the commercial launch around 2015.



December 2016

Pernod Ricard’s North American affiliate announces a majority investment agreement.



January 2017

NBV Investments announces completion of the majority acquisition.



May 2018

Smooth Ambler announces Big Level Wheated Bourbon, made in Maxwelton from mash through bottling.



2019

The 99-proof Old Scout is back in retail after a gap in supply.

Maxwelton, West Virginia, is the production location named for Big Level. Smooth Ambler identifies Indiana as the distillation origin for 99-proof Old Scout Straight Bourbon and describes blending and bottling in West Virginia.

Four whiskeys to compare



Old Scout Straight Bourbon. A 99-proof Indiana-distilled high-rye bourbon. Smooth Ambler lists cherry pipe tobacco, butterscotch and leather.

Big Level Wheated Bourbon. A 100-proof bourbon made in Maxwelton, according to the 2018 release announcement. Compare its wheat-led recipe against Old Scout’s high-rye recipe.

Contradiction Bourbon. A blend of straight bourbons that brings house wheated whiskey together with sourced rye-recipe bourbon. Current portfolio materials identify a 92-proof bottling. Historical listings show why proof should be checked by release.

Old Scout 7 Bourbon. A separately identified seven-year, 99-proof high-rye bourbon. Smooth Ambler describes limited small-batch blending and bottling without chill filtration.

Sources

Smooth Ambler brand history

Pernod Ricard investment announcement

Pernod Ricard acquisition completion

Smooth Ambler Old Scout 7

Smooth Ambler Contradiction

Smooth Ambler’s Big Level launch announcement

Smooth Ambler Old Scout Straight Bourbon

West Virginia FY2025 manufacturers report

C-Suite Quarterly on Old Scout’s return

Shanken News Daily’s June 2017 profile

Smooth Ambler whiskey portfolio

Pernod Ricard brand profile

New York State Liquor Authority December 2018 registered brands