01 / ORIGINS & PEOPLE

Wild Turkey

A river, a family and a taste for continuity.

Wild Turkey brings several histories together: Kentucky distilling, a New York merchant and the Russell family. Its familiar name is younger than its distilling roots. Its continuity lives as much in people and barrel selection as in buildings.



At a glance
Lawrenceburg, Kentucky
Brand name: 1940
Distilling roots: Ripy family, 1869
Owner: Campari, since 2009

Before the bird

Austin Nichols began as a nineteenth-century wholesaler. The Ripy family's Kentucky distilling story began separately. According to the brand's account, executive Thomas McCarthy shared whiskey on a 1940 turkey hunt; friends later asked for the "wild turkey" whiskey. The nickname became the brand. [1, 5, 32]

Three generations, distinct voices

Jimmy Russell joined in 1954. His long career connects the everyday flagship with innovations such as Rare Breed and Kentucky Spirit. **Eddie Russell** began in 1981, learning through production jobs before developing a voice in Russell's Reserve and Master's Keep. **Bruce Russell**, Associate Master Blender, leads the Austin Nichols Archives series introduced in 2026. A family inheritance becomes a starting point for new choices. [2, 3, 13–15]

Illustrations are original symbolic interpretations, not historical photographs or exact architectural reconstructions.

02 / HISTORY & PLACES

Time changes the setting.



1869 · 1893 The Ripy roots begin in Kentucky; the brand’s history later places Ripy whiskey at Chicago’s World’s Fair. [1]

1954 · 1981 Jimmy joins the distillery, followed by Eddie a generation later. [2, 3]

1991 · 1995 Wild Turkey’s official history dates Rare Breed to 1991 and Kentucky Spirit to 1995: barrel-proof blending and single-barrel selection. [1]

2009 · 2011 · 2013 Campari acquires Wild Turkey. A major distillery expansion follows in 2011; bottling returns to Lawrenceburg in 2013. [5, 16, 17]

2015 · 2021 · 2022 Master’s Keep begins. Russell’s Reserve 13 Year and Single Rickhouse later deepen the focus on age and maturation place. [1, 12, 29]

2023–2026 Generations unites three Russell palates. Beacon closes Master’s Keep in 2025. Gold Foil and Camp Nelson D open further chapters in 2026. [11, 13, 18, 20]

Production, maturation, hospitality

Lawrenceburg anchors production and the visitor experience. Camp Nelson is a separate maturation campus. Historic warehouses and modern equipment play different roles; a brand’s founding date does not date every building. [6, 9, 11, 30]

03 / WHISKEY & STORIES

A shared foundation. Many choices.

Grain becomes mash, yeast ferments its sugars, and distillation concentrates the spirit. New charred oak then shapes the whiskey through seasons of maturation. Warehouse position and barrel selection help explain why age alone is not the whole story. [7, 8, 12]



Wild Turkey 101 is the familiar anchor. Rare Breed emphasizes barrel-proof blending; Kentucky Spirit, an individual barrel. Russell’s Reserve foregrounds the family’s selection choices. Master’s Keep explored older whiskey and finishing: Voyage paired bourbon with Jamaican rum casks. Its 2025 finale, Beacon, blended ten- and sixteen-year bourbon. [1, 18, 22, 27, 28]

The hunting-trip name is producer lore, not an independently documented transcript. Official histories also disagree on some release dates. The complete profile preserves those qualifications and the reasoning behind its chronology.

Linked research sources

All links checked October 13, 2026. Numbers match citations above.

1. WT history and heritage
2. Jimmy Russell biography
3. Eddie Russell biography
4. RR history
5. Campari acquisitions and disposals
6. Kentucky Heritage Council architectural survey
7. WT craft
8. WT Kentucky bourbon guide
9. WT visitor information
10. Jimmy Russell’s seventy years
11. 2026 Camp Nelson D release
12. RR Single Rickhouse
13. Austin Nichols Archives Gold Foil
14. Gold Foil launch release
15. Eddie Russell’s forty-five-year anniversary
16. 2011 distillery expansion
17. 2013 bottling facility
18. Master’s Keep Beacon
19. Beacon 2025 release
20. WT Generations
21. Generations release
22. Master’s Keep Voyage
23. Voyage release
24. Rare Breed Rye introduction
25. Master’s Keep Cornerstone Rye
26. Campari June 2018 investor presentation
27. WT 101
28. Rare Breed specifications
29. RR 13 Year
30. 2024 visitor experience opening
31. Pernod Ricard 2025 anniversary history
32. Campari 2019 brand background
33. Lawrenceburg distilling history
34. Master’s Keep Unforgotten release
35. Single Rickhouse inaugural release