



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

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[[image - black and white photograph of three older men wearing business suits, with six young men and boys]]
 [[caption]] The Boys of Yesteryear, Inc., a group of former athletes who have dedicated themselves to promoting and fostering sportsmanship and high ideals among New York City youngsters, recently awarded trophies to five young men for outstanding achievements. Oliver Johnson, market manager for National Distillers Products Company, presented the awards to the following youths (seated, from left): Lige Davis, scholastic achievement award; Eugene Hawkins, most valuable player; Kenneth Medley, most outstanding player; Adolphus Hachett, sportsmanship; and Don Patterson, most improved player.

Standing (from left) are Jake F. Meyers, coach; Brian Johnson, son of Oliver Johnson; Oliver C. Johnson; Eric Illidge, athletic director; Edward Adams, president, Boys of Yesteryear; and Cassio Norwood, assistant treasurer, Boys of Yesteryear. [[/caption]]

[[image - black and white photograph of three men and a woman standing with a display of Old Taylor Ingenious Americans busts]]
 [[caption]] Shown receiving a set of the Old Taylor Ingenious Americans busts is Mr. Amos K. M. Otoo (2nd from left), commercial attache of the Ghana Consulate. Mr. Robert Furlotte (2nd from right), marketing director for Old Taylor, is making the presentation. At the extreme right is Clarence Holts, originator of the Ingenious Americans program. [[/caption]]

[[image - black and white photograph of three women and four men in formal dress]]
 [[caption]] Vassal Thomas' "Evening of Elegance" is one of New York's outstanding social events. Leading personalities in New York, involved in raising funds to send inner-city children to summer camp, regularly attend this function. At this year's Evening, held at the 79th Street Boat Basin Rotunda in New York, were (from left) Mrs. Vincent Cunningham, Joseph Tight, Mrs. Tight, the Honorable Percy Sutton, president of the Borough of Manhattan (who was honored at the event); Carlo Hines, restaurateur (The Jamaican in Greenwich Village); Ms. Carol Jenkins Hines, news commentator for NBC-TV station Channel 4. [[/caption]]

[[image - black and white photograph of three men; man on right is shaking hand of man in center]]
 [[caption]] Oliver Johnson (center) receives a 20-year service pin from Earl McMurray (right), vice president and Eastern Region manager of National Distillers. [[/caption]]

BOURBON WAS BORN

The history of the United States is entwined with the development and growth of the Bourbon industry. Indeed, Bourbon and other whiskeys made major contributions to the economic growth of the country. In fact, whiskey provided our nation with one of its earliest tax revenues!

In America's early years, distilled spirits provided the safest and the most economical means for storing surplus grains at a time when food supply was often a matter of touch and go. Dampness or mildew in a grain storage bin could spell disaster for an entire settlement. With roads so few and so bad, there wasn't much profit to be made through the arduous process of hauling bulky loads of grain to distant markets.



At one time Bourbon was a medium of exchange. Since each 5 gallons of whiskey requires the processing of a full bushel of grain, the whiskey was not only much easier to transport, but also far more valuable. Whiskey was more reliable and more acceptable than the unstable Continental currency of our early history. Laborers, artisans, lawyers, college professors and even clergymen received their pay in whiskey and were glad to get it in that form since it was readily exchangeable for anything needed.

When Abraham Lincoln's father, Thomas, sold his 30-acre farm at Knob Creek near Hodgenville, Larue County, Kentucky, in 1816 and moved to Indiana, he got \$20 in cash and 10 barrels containing 400 gallons of whiskey, which Carl Sandburg reports in "The Prairie Years." At that time, those 400 gallons of Bourbon were probably worth about \$640. Because of that, when the raft on which Tom Lincoln was transferring his possessions to his new home overturned in the Ohio River, he made a frantic effort to recover the barrels first, and did round up most of them, before recovering part of his household goods.

By the time of the American Revolution, almost every farmer in the country was a distiller - most of them dependent on distilled spirits for income.

In the year 1789, George Washington was chosen first President of the United States. That same year, the Reverend Elijah Craig, a pioneer Baptist preacher began distilling Bourbon in the area which later became Kentucky. That was the same year the U.S. Constitution went into effect and the first U.S. Congress convened in New York.

Gerald Carson's "The Social History of Bourbon" chronologically lists Staten Island, New York, under the Dutch as one of the earliest sites of whiskey distilling in 1640. Applejack was reported being distilled in Monmouth County, New Jersey, by 1698. The first distillery for the production from the grain "in the west" according to Carson was erected in Pittsburgh in 1770, and a man named Evan Williams was distilling corn whiskey at Louisville, Kentucky, in 1783.

It is generally conceded, however, that the Reverend Elijah Craig, the Baptist minister, was the country's first Bourbon distiller of any consequence. His plant was started at Georgetown, in what is now Scott County, Kentucky, in 1789. Another version says that Jacob Spears is credited with having established the first distillery in Bourbon County, Kentucky, in 1790.



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