



TO ALL STITZEL-WELLER SALESMEN
SUBJECT: NEW DISTILLERY SLIDE SHOW

1972 slide presentation

ORGANIZED BY LAURA FIELDS

DRAMDEVOTEES.COM & @AMERICANWHISKEYHISTORY

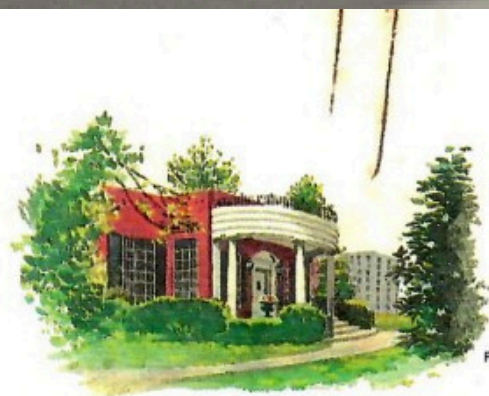
SLIDES PROVIDED BY ALEXANDER SCHMIDT / @BOURBONADVERTISING

COVER LETTER

This letter describes a carousel of slides distributed to Stitzel-Weller's salesmen in 1972.

R.O. Parrish, the vice president of advertising for Stitzel-Weller, compiled a series of 72 slides, each showcasing the distillery property in Shively, its production methods, and its exceptional whiskeys.

Each slide image was paired with a script meant to be memorized and used by salesmen in their pitches and/or presentations for their customers.



America's oldest family distillery



Est. 1849

FITZGERALD ROAD, STATION D, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Makers of:

OLD FITZGERALD
CABIN STILL
and
H. L. Weller

April 24, 1972

TO ALL STITZEL-WELLER SALESMEN

SUBJECT: NEW DISTILLERY SLIDE SHOW

Enclosed is your copy of our new, updated Distillery Slide Show. Nearly all of the photographs are new, and the script has been revised to add a little of the color and romance of the distillery.

A taped version of the script will soon be sent to you that will include many of the familiar background sounds from the distillery.

You should familiarize yourself with this new presentation as quickly as possible and utilize it with your distributors immediately, as well as local civic groups, men's clubs, et cetera.

A revised version of the distillery brochure is being prepared and will be available for your use shortly. Meanwhile, the regular brand brochures, as attached, make excellent hand-out pieces.

Best regards,

R. O. Parrish
Vice President - Advertising

ROP/b

attachment

1972— The Transition

These slides from 1972 represent an important transitional year for Stitzel-Weller's distilling company. "America's Oldest Family Owned Distillery" yielded its title when the company was sold to Somerset Importers, Ltd., a subsidiary of Norton Simon, Inc. Norton Simon had been in negotiations to buy Stitzel-Weller for over a year, but officially acquired the distillery in June 1972. The distillery's new owners changed its name to the "Old Fitzgerald Distillery."

Julian Van Winkle, Jr., who had been president of the company since his father (Julian "Pappy" Van Winkle, Sr.) retired in 1964, surrendered his presidency to Michael J. Sotak and left the company.

Roy Hawes, master distiller at Stitzel Weller since 1958, retired in 1971, leaving Woodrow "Woody" Wilson to assume the role. Wilson had been assistant distiller to Hawes for 11 years.

These slides serve as a kind a time capsule, capturing the final year of Stitzel-Weller Distillery functioning as an independent, family-owned distillery.



The Slides

The following 72 slides were intended to be loaded into a Kodak Carousel and projected onto a white screen.

The slides were digitized from their original form and arranged in order as described in the accompanying script provided by R.O. Parrish.

Each slide is accompanied by its description, recorded verbatim from the script. Additional comments (newspaper clippings, historic references, descriptions, explanations, etc.) have been written to accompany each slide. These additional comments can be read at dramdevotees.com/stitzel-weller-in-1972-notes-on-a-slide-show/ or by scanning the following QR code.



SLIDE A

What does the word “Kentucky” mean to you? There are many images it might bring to mind. Like thoroughbreds grazing quietly on rolling hillsides of pure bluegrass...





SLIDE B

Or gracious ante-bellum architecture
with ancient stately trees leading up
to the ornamental iron so dearly loved
in the olden days...

SLIDE C

And, of course, the riverboats with their gay parties of travelers who sip mint juleps, because bourbon is sort of the foreign ambassador of Kentucky - - It is the state's most distinctive contribution to social events around the world.



SLIDE #1:
Bronze Plaque at
the Gate

“WE MAKE FINE BOURBON. AT A PROFIT IF WE
CAN. AT A LOSS IF WE MUST. BUT ALWAYS
FINE BOURBON!”



SLIDE #2:

Sign at Distillery entrance

Welcome to the Old Fitzgerald Distillery in Kentucky, America's Oldest Family Distillery. Our tour will be a little different from many.



SLIDE #3:

Portico

You see, it's mostly what we don't do that makes our handmade bourbon distinctive. We're deep in tradition here and we hold to it. Back at the end of Prohibition when folks couldn't get good liquor soon enough, many distilleries went into mass production and short cuts using modern techniques, proper for canning corn but not, to our way of thinking, proper for making bourbon.



SLIDE #4:

Bourbon beauty shot on
silver tray

Truly fine bourbon, and ours is truly fine
bourbon, ought to make itself, with a little
help along the way from experienced
distillers like Mother Nature and Father
Time.



SLIDE #5:

A picture looking down
Limestone Lane

As you enter the distillery off Fitzgerald Road, you walk along between the old oaks along Limestone Lane. It's named for the pure limestone that is vital to producing bourbon whiskey.



SLIDE #6:

Well out front of the
distillery
New 2-1/4 square

Wells, like this one at Stitzel-Weller, mark the beginning of Kentucky distilleries because distilling requires a great supply of fine water. If there is iron in the water, the result is a disaster, not a bourbon. So you see, Kentucky with its vast underground lakes of iron-free limestone water is nature's natural place to make the nation's official whiskey.



SLIDE #7:

No chemists allowed sign

This is Julian Van Winkle, Jr., our distillery's proprietor, near one of the many unique signs that are located on our tiny distillery property. This sign tells the competition and the world how we all feel about those new-fangled improvements. "No Chemists Allowed." Nature and the old-time know-how of the master distiller get the job done here. "This is a distillery, not a whiskey factory." Now, don't misunderstand. We do believe in progress. But good bourbon only suffers when you speed things up. So, we take our time.



SLIDE #8:

Hand full of corn

This is where bourbon begins. With the flavor of rich, golden Indian corn from the nearby rolling plains of the Mid-West.



SLIDE #9:

Corn scales

Bourbon must be made with not less than 51% corn. And we make ours with a lot more, 70% to be exact. We use this little scale to carefully measure the moisture content of our corn, and at the same time, we check the corn quality to make sure it's worthy of use in our Old Fitzgerald bourbon.



SLIDE #10: Shoveling corn

First thing we don't do is buy new corn. We buy it a year old because then it's drier and only then is it graded #1. It costs more because of storage, but we're after prime #1 grade dry corn. Younger, faulty corn gives bourbon an off taste.



SLIDE #11: Master Distiller

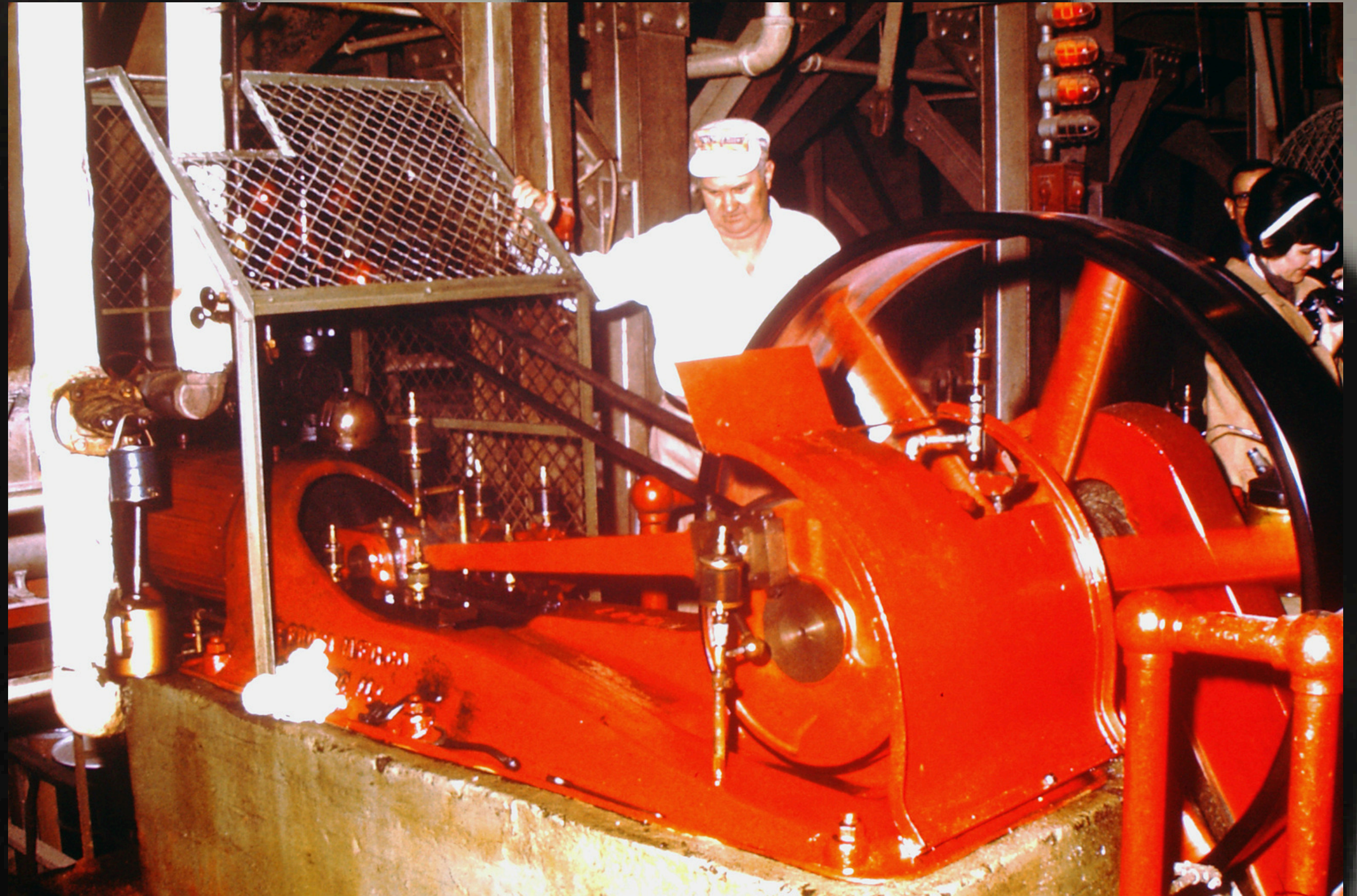
Woody Wilson, our master distiller, has a scientific way of making sure the corn is dry. He smells it and he feels it, and you can rest assured that that's the simplest and best way there is. Later on, our tasters check the new bourbon to make sure it meets Old Fitzgerald's high standards. If their taste buds disagree with Woody's sense of smell, there's a brisk discussion that follows.



SLIDE #12:

Close-up of mill room steam engine

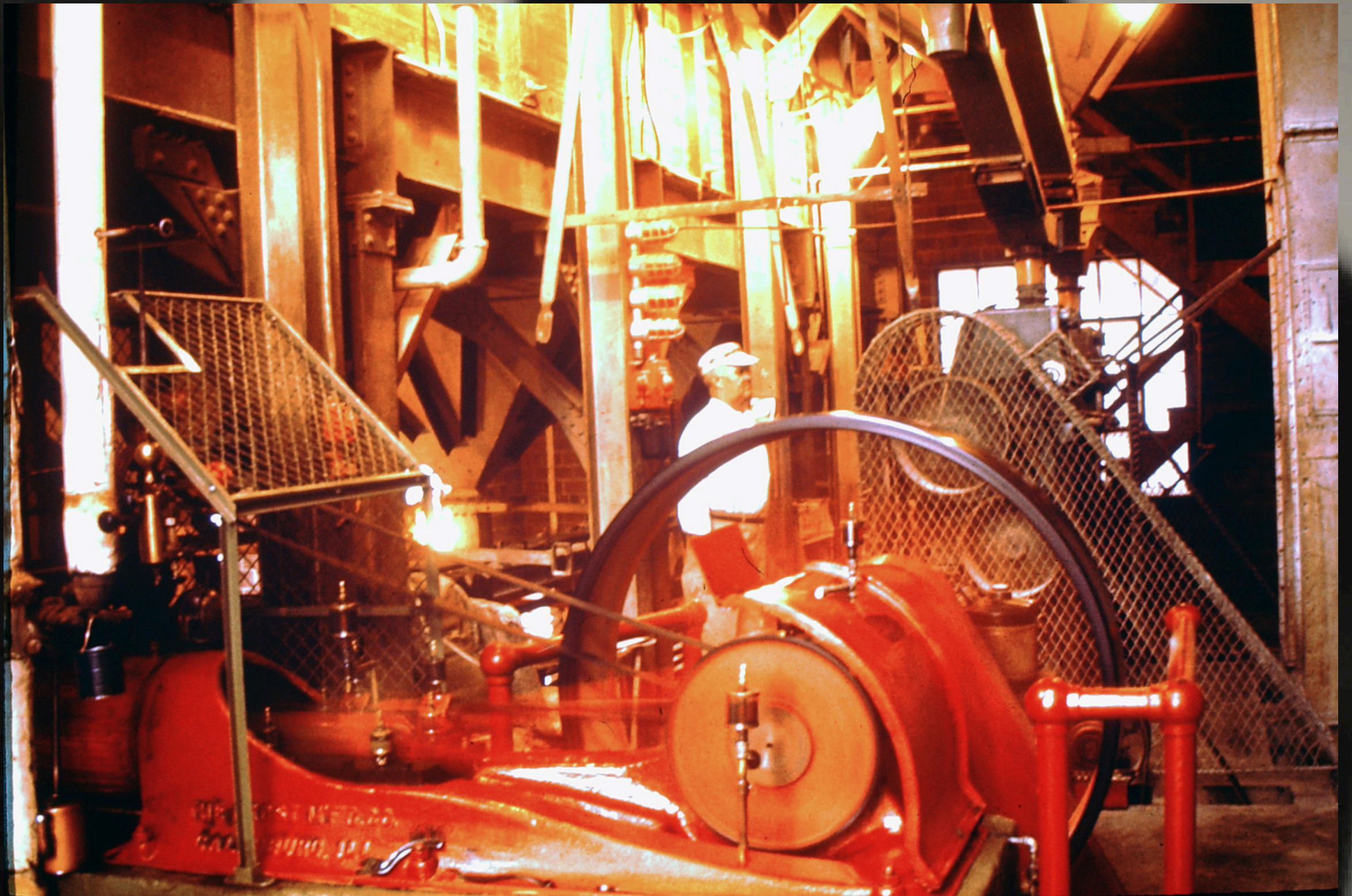
Over here in the milling room, we get a little more modern with a genuine steam engine. We admit it's a little old-timey, but it's quite a beauty and engineers come from miles around to admire it.



SLIDE #13:

A wide-angle view of
the mill room

One railroad fellow spent most of the day studying this unique machine. It's the last of its kind, and we have to hand make the parts to keep it going. When there's a power failure though, we can keep on running when all those electric motors can't.





SLIDE #14: Miller at work

That brings us to the next thing we don't do. We don't fine-grind our corn, and since we grind about 2,000 bushels every day, it would stretch a lot further if we did. A lot of time would be saved in mashing, too.



SLIDE #15:

Miller taking grain
from bottom of mill

We give up about a quart of bourbon per bushel of grain because we course grind. That's a lot of quarts. Our corn is ground just enough to expose the starch. We use these old roller mills instead of the newer type hammer mills. A little bit old fashioned maybe, but our roller mills do the job without a chance of scorching the grain. Scorched grain gives whiskey a scorched taste.

SLIDE #16:

A hand full of wheat

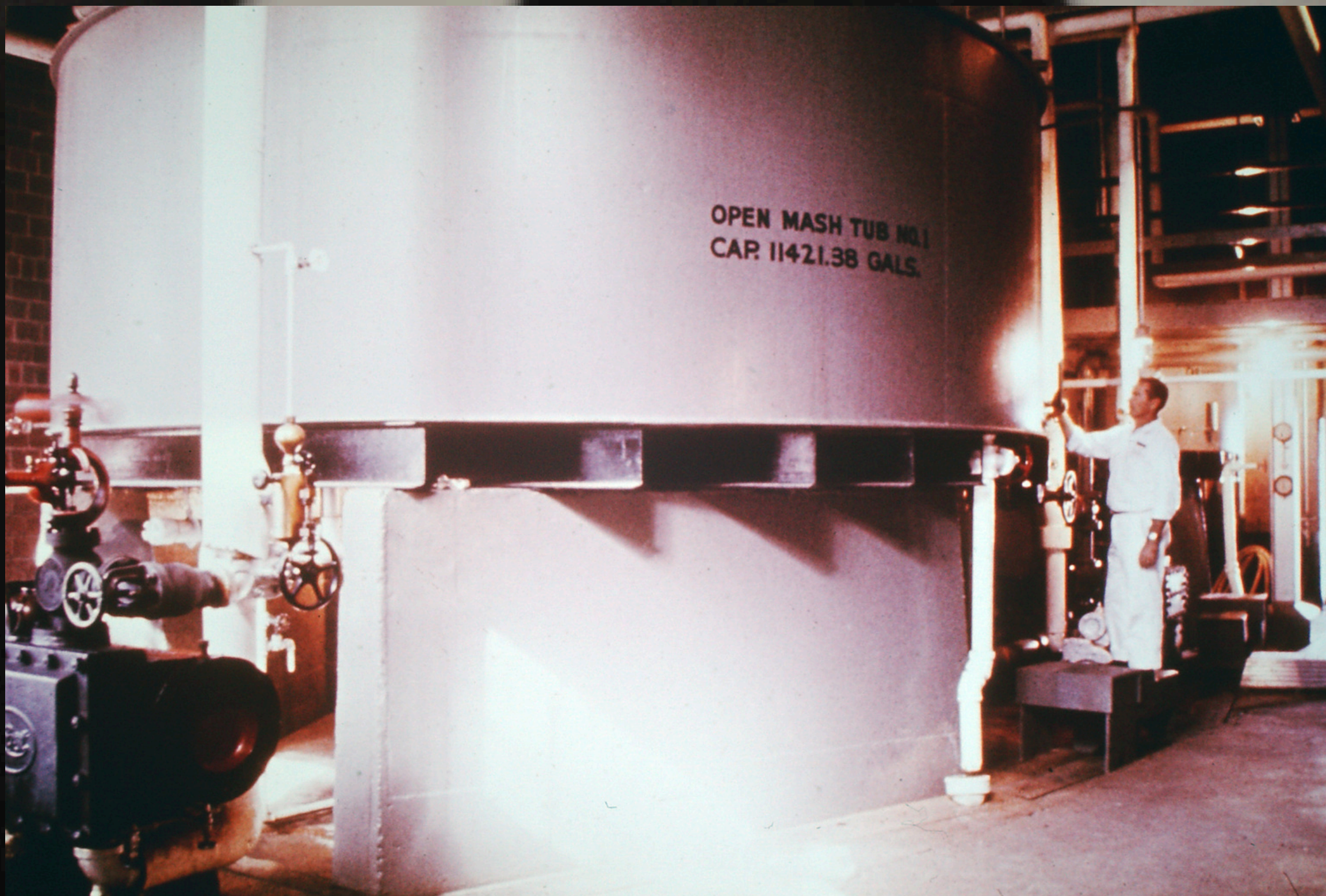
This is our wheat. We only use the softest winter wheat in making our bourbon, and we're proud to say that we are the only major bourbon distiller who uses wheat in making his whiskey. We could use rye, if we wanted to, but our century-old family recipe calls for using a whisper of wheat, and we continue to do just that. As a matter of fact, many of the folks who drink our bourbon tell us they feel it's "the whisper of wheat" that helps to contribute to the distinctive and consistent taste of Old Fitzgerald.



SLIDE #17:

Wide angle mash tub view

Here in the adjoining room we have our mashing operation. Mashing is simply a distiller's term for cooking. And it's in this room that we mash our grains in open tubs. They really have tops on them, but by open we mean that we never use pressure cooking or get in a hurry. This way we unlock the full, rich flavor of nature's wholesome grains. It's at this point that the golden Indian corn, soft winter wheat, malted barley, and pure Kentucky limestone water first meet. Each of these four ingredients are called for by exact proportions in our recipe. We bring them to the mash room to these tubs, and cook them for more than three hours. In a way, it's kind of like making a giant tub of bean soup, simmering on the back burner. It takes time to get it right!



SLIDE #18:

Close-up of the mash tub

We heat up the mash to 212° in an open tub and cook it naturally, some distillers use pressure cookers, but we don't. We treat the grains gently to get natural, unhurried flavor. The result of mashing our grains this way is better taste in our bourbon, We could use pressure to cook our grains, but we would lose a lot of flavor. We'd gain a lot of time by pressure cooking because we could get the job done in a matter of a few minutes, but we're satisfied to get flavor. Most folks say it shows up in our bourbon.



SLIDE #19:

Hand full of barley malt

We put barley malt in the mash and it helps convert the grain starches into sugars. It adds flavor too! Then, we cool our mash down with pure, cold limestone water from wells directly underneath the distillery property. We often use almost 1,000 gallons a minute. It's a constant, year-round 57°. Ideal for cooling these mashes. We wouldn't dare use city water.



SLIDE #20:

Jug yeast

If there is any secret beyond dedication to our bourbon, it must be our original strain of yeast. It is generations old and we grow a bit each day keeping the basic strains under refrigeration. Time was when the master distiller left his job, he took his starter yeast along with him in a jug. That's how important it is to distilling. Our yeast is just where we start, though. In order to have enough yeast to do the job that we have to do, our distiller must increase the yeast in volume.



SLIDE #21:

Dona tubs

So, to get more, he adds a precise amount of jug yeast to what we call our dona tubs. Then he brings in a goodly amount of barley malt. And that's where first fermentation begins. The yeast, helped along by the barley malt, begins to rapidly grow in volume until within just a few short hours we have 350 gallons of distiller's yeast. When preparing his yeast for use in our fermenters, the master distiller mostly uses his instincts and good judgment in getting the exact amount and quality yeast that we need. But we must admit that even though we have a sign on our distillery that says, "No Chemists Allowed", we do have a laboratory of sorts.



SLIDE #22:

The laboratory

Here it is. Our budget is about \$5.00 a year
– just enough for litmus paper to test for
acid.



SLIDE #23:

Men testing in laboratory

You'll occasionally find our men using a thermometer and a hydrometer . . .probably because these are about the only tools their laboratory affords. Not very scientific. Are we?



SLIDE #24: Fermenting room

Up here on the second floor is where the mash changes by fermentation into what we call distiller's beer. These fermentation tubs are solid cypress and they will last a life-time. Each fermenter holds about 12,000 gallons, but from all the distiller's beer in a tub, we only get about 1,400 gallons of bourbon. These fermenters have seen many a gallon of mash along toward its destination as fine bourbon.





SLIDE #25: White-washing

As a matter of practice, we don't use our tubs continuously. They have to stand empty to air at least a day between fillings to qualify as sour mash. Then before we fill the tub, we white-wash it to "sweeten the wood".

SLIDE #26:

Down view of the fermenter

As you can see, the tub is very simple. . . Just a drain plug at the bottom. Fermentation is natural and slow here at Old Fitzgerald. Four days, as a matter of fact, with no speed-up contraptions. Our fermenters don't need any agitation. . . the mash stirs itself as it ferments.



SLIDE #27: Spent beer

Now here's something Kentuckians have been doing for decades and we're proud to point it out. We season our fermenters with a portion of the previous day's run to maintain an unbroken chain of uniformity and flavor. In other words, we simply put in a bit of the spent beer left over from yesterday's batch, and this is why it's called sour mash bourbon. That's just a name given it long ago. It's leftovers from an earlier run, but it assures the same uniform flavor, time after time, batch after batch, by making the old bourbon akin to the new bourbon. Of course, we also add our mash and our special yeast to each fermenter.



SLIDE #28:

New mash

The yeast feeds on the grain sugars in the mash and produces alcoholic content plus plenty of strong carbon dioxide. We could cover these tubs and either use the escaping gas to speed things up, or trap it for things like fire extinguishers or dry ice, but we avoid that temptation. We're content to let it slip away and let the mash ferment naturally. You see, we're in the whiskey business, not in the dry_ice business!



SLIDE #29:

Finished beer capped over

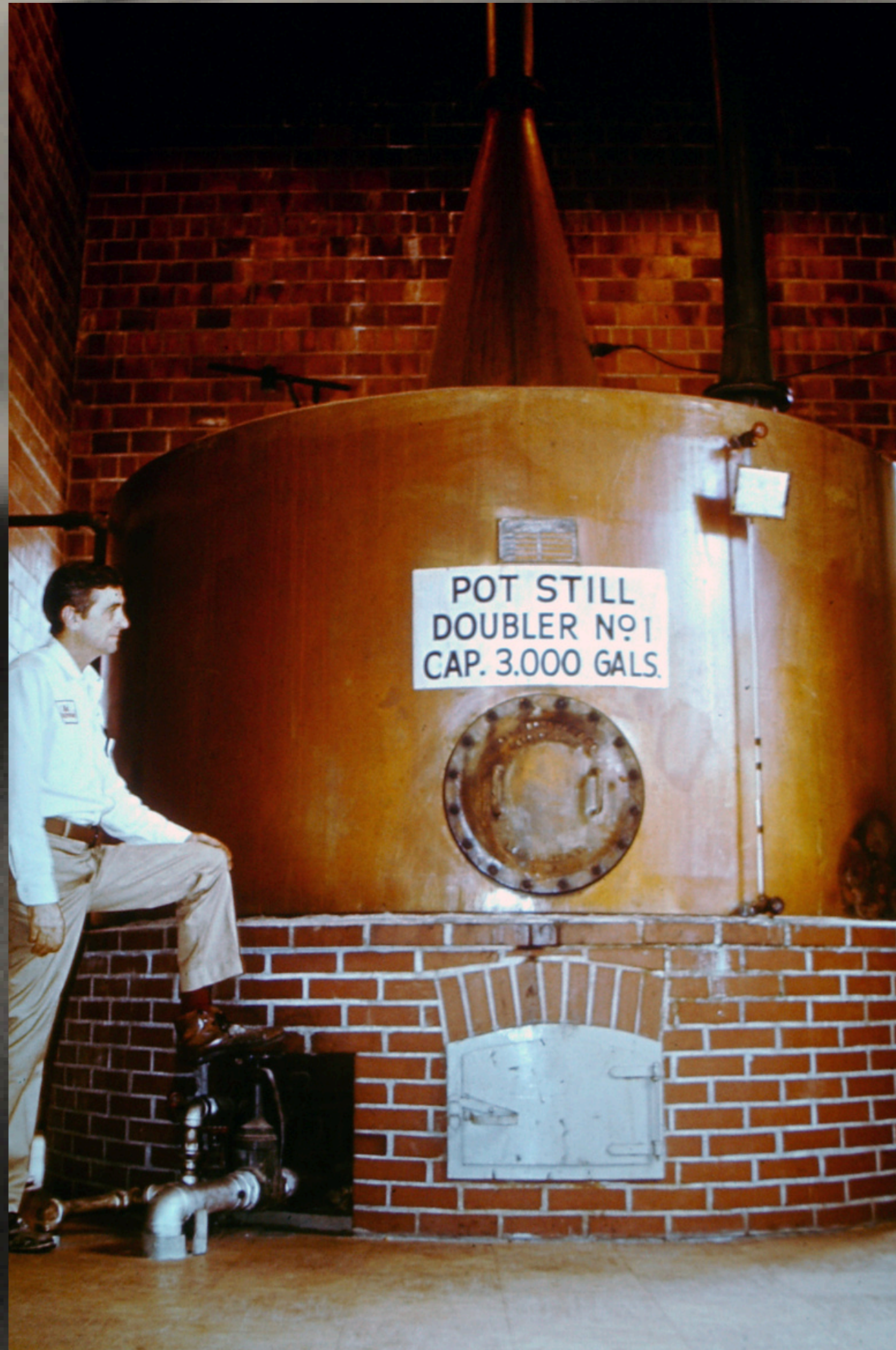
As the fermentation process is completed, a cake of grain forms on top of the distiller's beer and when it gets heavy enough, it breaks up and drops to the bottom of the tub. That means fermentation is over. That's how we know we're ready to distill.





SLIDE #30: The beer still

At Old Fitzgerald, we first distill to a low proof of 85° to 90° in this 65-foot tall beer still. That's for a good reason . . . We know we're going to age our bourbon longer than others and we want to keep more of the flavor elements in the whiskey rather than distill them off. During years of ageing, these flavor elements bring a character to the bourbon. We then double distill to reach the ideal final whiskey.



SLIDE #31: The pot still doubler

Our second still used to be fired by hand through the bottom door there, using wood or coal. But we felt an urge to modernize and went to steam in recent years. This old copper still is called our pot still doubler, and it's used to redistill the unfinished whiskey from the beer still. But it also serves another very important purpose. It's a filter. And we're about the only distiller that still uses a pot still doubler to filter the unfinished whiskey. By doing things this way, we give our bourbon a lot more purity and just the right amount of flavor. When the new bourbon comes from this pot still, it is 118° to 120°. Much lower than most distillers run their whiskey off. We are after taste and a lot of it!

SLIDE #32:

Tail box

Now we see the new, clean bourbon. Some of our old-timers call it “white dog”. This is the result of our distilling and our redistilling at a flavor proof which permits the natural bourbon flavors to be carried over to the finished product. In other words, this is new, Old Fitzgerald, but it’ll be many, mellow Kentucky summers and cold, airy winters before we let you drink it.



SLIDE #33:

Pipe line

Now we have a product the tax men are interested in. It goes over to the barreling operation in this overhead pipe. The revenue agents like that pipe high and in plain sight. When you figure that we pay up to \$120,000 a day in taxes on the whiskey, it's understandable.



SLIDE #34:

Barrels on fire

Yes, these barrels are on fire! Bourbon must be stored in new charred barrels. All other distilled spirits are stored in previously used second-hand cooperage.



SLIDE #35:

New barrels

Now, these barrels must be brand new, made of pure, white oak. At \$33.00 a barrel, that's quite an investment, and they can never be used to age bourbon again. Used barrels can be used over and over again, and can be bought for \$3.00 each.





SLIDE #36:

Rusty Head and a thick stave

Our barrels cost more than others, because they're thicker. And they're thicker because we age longer and the bourbon soaks deeper into the wood.

SLIDE #37:

Man listening while filling barrels

We used to fill barrels by ear. Listening for the right level. Many a man got an ear full of new whiskey in those days, but now, we met(er?) it to make things easier for the tax men and to keep our men from getting doused with an occasional spray og white dog!





SLIDE #38:

Picture of a man
bunging

The law says bourbon must be two-years-old, but we always age five years or more and likely have 20 or 30 barrels of 12-year-old bourbon hidden around somewhere. We know that fine bourbon continues to improve with age.

SLIDE #39:

Slide deleted

(no content)





SLIDE #40: Slow sign

As we walk over to the warehouse, this sign sums up everything from now on. . . Ageing bourbon is as slow as the years gently going by.



SLIDE #41:

The “quiet, whiskey sleeping” sign

Quiet, whiskey sleeping. . . Well, not really asleep, but rather resting and growing in character, taste and distinction.



SLIDE #42:

Picture of ricks inside warehouse

All our bourbon is aged in open ricks like these. And, because each barrel has a recorded number, our proprietor knows as much about the whereabouts of his bourbons as he does about his employees. There are 25 barrels to a tier, and each must be rolled in so its bung is up for less strain. It's quite a show to see our men turn these barrels just right, so that 25 in a row, roll in and have the bungs upside.



SLIDE #43:

Men at windows

The windows on each warehouse are opened most every morning and closed most every night by hand.

SLIDE #44:
Warehouse window
picture

That's about 4,000 windows on all our ware-
houses. We open and close them every clear
day of the year. Mighty darn costly too!



SLIDE #45:

Twilight picture

An interesting thing happens in our warehouses, and it's the miracle that makes bourbon. The cool evenings of Kentucky. . .



SLIDE #46:
Dawn picture

... And the warm days. . . make the bourbon
literally breathe through the porous staves.



SLIDE #47:

Summer

And the seasons add a dimension as they pass, the sultry summer breezes that fan those magnolias and oaks also change the character of the ageing whiskey. . .





SLIDE #49:

Winter

... And the cold Kentucky winters are just mild enough to hold the bourbon in suspension.

SLIDE #50:

Spring

... To awaken with nature in the spring. And this goes on, year after year, until the bourbon reaches a maturity that only time and nature can produce. As a matter of fact, it's nature and time alone that mellow Old Fitzgerald to the oak-ripened excellence that you enjoy.



SLIDE #51:

Cooperage

Over here at the cooper shop you can sort of get an x-ray view of what happens during the natural aging.



SLIDE #52: Staves

See those reddish lines on the edge of these staves? That's how deeply the whiskey can soak into the wood as it breathes in the changing temperatures. Now, if you'll look closely, you'll see a thin, red line just behind the char on these staves. That's caramel, the sap that's native to white oak. By charring the inside of our barrels we crystalize a bit of caramel so that when our bourbon soaks in and out of the staves over the years, it gets the full benefit of the flavor and coloring that the caramel provides. We never use additives. Don't have to.





SLIDE #53: Cooper at work

With about 300,000 barrels of whiskey aged the slow, leisurely way in ricks, we naturally get a few leaks.



SLIDE #54: Cooper working

Our cooper used the same tools you might have seen on the Mayflower. He learned his trade from an old-time traveling cooper. It's almost a lost art these days. George our old cooper says they can put a man on the moon, but they haven't done a thing to make the cooper's job any easier.



SLIDE #55:

Cooper working with
cattails

He uses dried cattails from the swamps to caulk up the staves, because they don't impart a flavor to the bourbon. He's a man of patience, thoroughness, and pride. He takes care of our dogs, too.

SLIDE #56:
Durkalski with dog

Outside his cooper shop is the kennel, where
our owners have always kept their fine bird
dogs. It just wouldn't be a family distillery
(sic- description abruptly stops)





SLIDE #57:

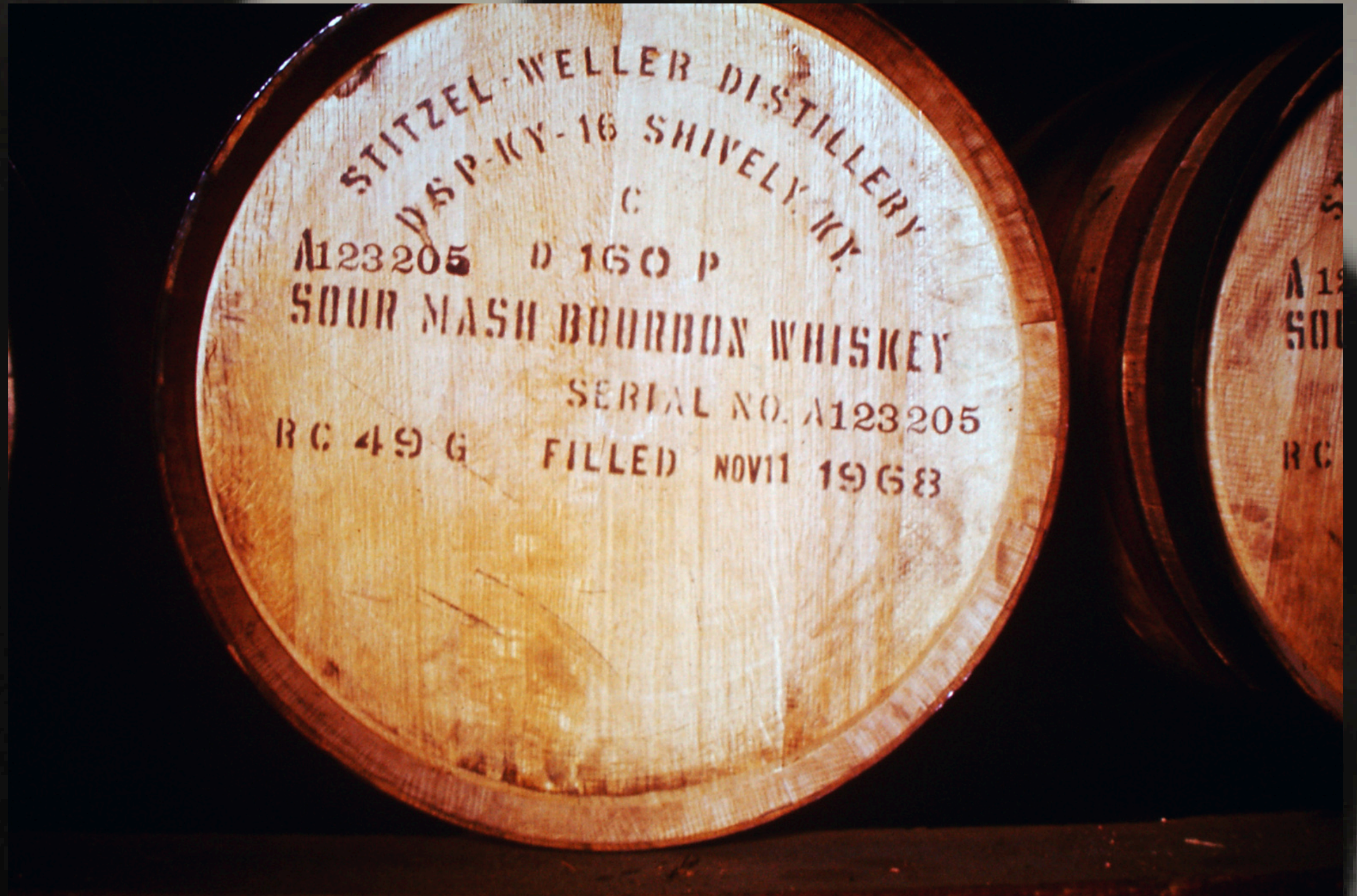
Bird dog in relaxed
position

This old fellow has aged in the shadows of the spring house like fine bourbon which ags in teh ricks of our warehouses. He's followed along watching a hand full of hard working men going about the business of keeping one thing in life pure, simple and honest. . . Old Fitzgerald.

SLIDE #58:

A head on picture of
barrels in a rick

We put more grain and pure limestone water
and special yeast into our products. . . and
we put in a full measure of pride. We might
make our bourbon cheaper and we probably
would make more money, but it wouldn't
profit our pride.



SLIDE #59:

Whiskey being dumped

We could sell it younger and that way make more by speeding things up. . . but the age of our whiskey is part of its personality.



SLIDE #60:

Tasting

So we don't do a lot of things. And by not doing them we find we are rewarded with a bourbon harder to make, longer to make, more expensive to make, but worth making. Old Fitz represents the finest of the hand made sour mash bourbons famous in America, and unique to Kentucky. It is the direct result of very personal attention from these men. . . . The master distiller, the distillery manager, and the proprietor of the Old Fitzgerald Distillery.



SLIDE #61:

Picture of 1849 Room with Mr. Van Winkle

The Stitzel-Weller tradition goes back over 100 years. During that time a sound reputation was made on fine bourbons. Today Julian Van Winkle and his assoiates at Stitzel-Weller take pride in preserving that tradition and in making truly fine bourbon.



SLIDE #62:

Old bottles

Mammoth Cave was an early best seller, hearty enough for pioneers but a bit too much for today's taste. Old Cabin and Old Still long ago evolved into . . .



SLIDE #63:

Old bottles with new
Cabin Still

... Old Cabin Still, not much of a change at
all.



SLIDE #64:

Old Fitzgerald beauty shot

Our original master distiller, John E. Fitzgerald, tipped a bit of his private stock and his reputation for selecting the best started what is now Old Fitzgerald.



SLIDE #65:

Bourbon family shot

Today, the Stitzel- Weller family name is on a few, select hand made bourbons. Each label represents a fine traditional recipe, strictly adhered to by respectful experts.



SLIDE #66:

Photograph of our
first distillery

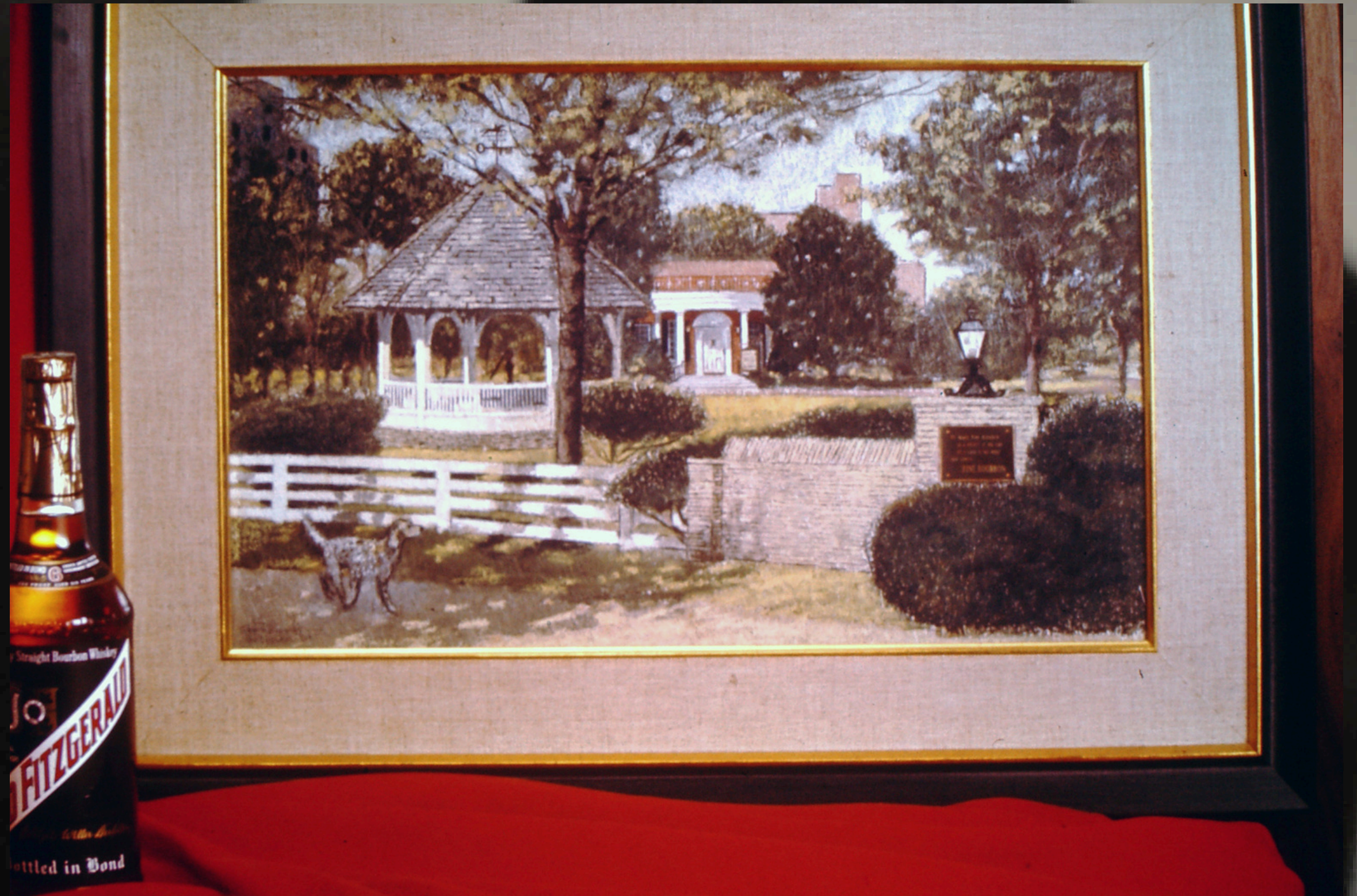
We've grown a bit from a small distillery doing 8
barrels a day...



SLIDE #67:

New distillery picture

... To a still not-to-big (sic) distillery doing well over 150 barrels a day, and not one radical change has been made in the way we do things. We still make and bottle all our bourbon right at our one tiny distillery.



SLIDE #68:

Warehouse evening shot

Nature and old-time know-how. The result of that combination is a rare thing of character and honesty. We think that's what people look for in their bourbons. We think they find it in ours.



SLIDE #69:

Bourbon and grain on
barrel top

We'd be pleased if you would try some and see
for yourself.



The End

FOR MORE INFORMATION, HISTORY &
NOTES ON INDIVIDUAL SLIDES - -



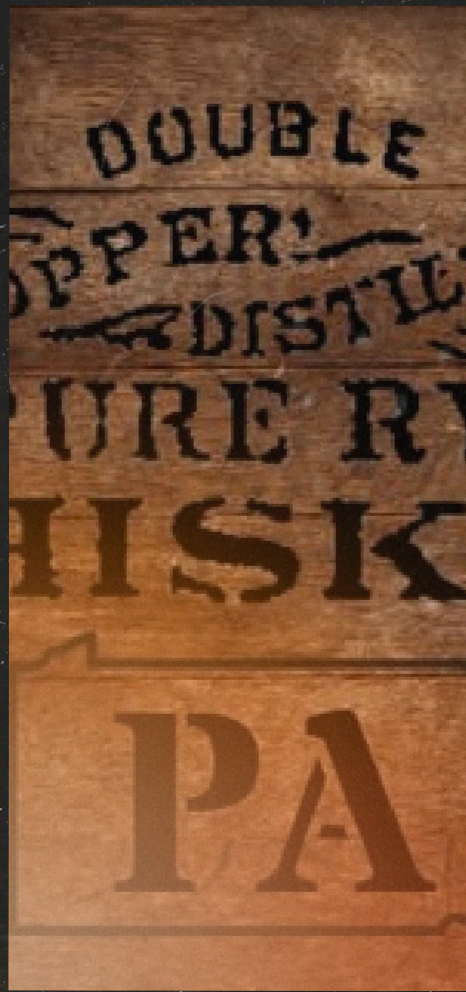
Laura Fields

Dramdevotees.com

I began writing in my blog in 2015 as the founder of a local group of whiskey enthusiasts called the Dram Devotees of Bucks County. At first, the blog was an outlet to record my experiences in and around whiskey, but developed into a site where I could record American whiskey history as I learned it. The blog grew with me- and continues to do so.

@AmericanWhiskeyHistory

This facebook page, launched in 2022, grew out of a need to write things down as I learned them. The amount of information I was reading and discovering was too much to process, so the page became an easy way to keep a written record for myself. Through social media, the information became accessible to others, much more so than my blog. Interacting with like-minded individuals and receiving their feedback has been an invaluable part of my ongoing education.



Thank You

The organization of this slide presentation would not have been possible without the contributions of **Alex Schmidt** who digitized each image from its original slide.

Additional thanks to **Curt Kolcun** for help with research into the content of each slide.
Read additional research here:
<https://www.dramdevotees.com/stitzel-weller-in-1972-notes-on-a-slide-show/>
Or scan the following QR code:



Made by people
not
machines.

OLD
CABIN STILL
True Handmade Bourbon



STITZEL-WELLER, America's Oldest Family Distillery, Louisville, KY
86 Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey