



Representation Matters.

Nathan 'Nearest' Green, the world's first known African American master, was known for his specialized filtering technique, now known as the Lincoln Country Process. This process slowly and methodically filters whiskey through sugar maple charcoal before going into casks for aging. This step is the defining distinction between Tennessee Whiskey and Kentucky Bourbon. Historians believe the process was passed down to Nearest through a tradition rooted in West Africa, where they perfected the craft of purifying water through charcoal.



Nearest was born into slavery circa 1820 and emancipated after the Civil War. In the 1850s, he was working for a preacher and distiller named Dan Call in the hills above Lynchburg, Tennessee. Call asked Green to teach a young boy, named Jack Daniel, the craft he'd perfected. Nearest would soon become the boy's mentor and teacher. After the Civil War ended, and Green was granted his freedom, Daniel started his own distillery and hired Green as his master distiller.

When Daniel decided to relocate and build a new distillery, Green did not follow, as he would have been of retirement age. However, his three sons, George, Lewis and Eli, joined Daniel and continued the two families tradition of working together to create the best whiskey in the state. Many of Green's grandchildren and great-grandchildren continued to work in the whiskey industry.

The story of the mentorship and teaching was known by Lynchburg locals and historians for decades, and was documented in the 1967 biography, Jack Daniel's Legacy. However, the story remained relatively unknown outside of the small town until a 2016 New York Times article gave it national when it revealed Green's identity and named him as Daniel's teacher.

This story has been confirmed by thousands of documents and original artifacts and the history is showcased at both the Nearest Green Distillery in Shelbyville, Tenn. and the Jack Daniel Distillery in Lynchburg, Tenn.