

GOVERNOR VISITS FOR HEAVEN HILL RICKHOUSE DEDICATION

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By Stephanie Hornback

Gov. Steve Beshear got some hands-on experience in the bourbon industry Wednesday as Heaven Hill Distilleries Inc. dedicated its newest rickhouse. At the end of the ceremony, he and Heaven Hill President Max Shapira rolled the first barrel of bourbon into the whiskey-aging warehouse.

Named Rickhouse J, the new structure is part of a nearly \$5 million expansion to the company's bourbon barrel storage capacity, already the second-largest in the world at 900,000 barrels.



Gov. Steve Beshear and Heaven Hill Distilleries Inc. President Max Shapira roll the first barrel of bourbon into Heaven Hill's newest rickhouse Wednesday as guests look on.

“We’re here not just to celebrate the opening of our newest warehouse,” Shapira said, but also to recognize the growth of an industry that is still strong despite the economic slowdown.

Shapira’s father and uncles started Heaven Hill in 1934.

“We think there is an outstanding future,” he said.

Beshear agreed. In his remarks to the crowd, which was shuttled from Heaven Hill’s Bourbon Heritage Center to see the ribbon-cutting and tour the new rickhouse, he congratulated Heaven Hill on its success and praised local officials for their role in supporting the company’s growth.

“These things don’t just happen by themselves,” he said.

The Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority also supported Heaven Hill, according to a state press release. The distillery received tax benefits up to \$88,200 through the Kentucky Enterprise Initiative Act.

Bourbon is Kentucky, Beshear said.

“Ninety-five percent of bourbon is made in Kentucky. The other 5 percent is counterfeit,” he said, drawing a laugh from the crowd.

Beshear said the bourbon industry employs 10,000 Kentuckians and has a yearly payroll of \$442 million. He also mentioned the Kentucky Bourbon Trail, which has grown exponentially in popularity. In 2010, for the second year in a row, the number of visitors who toured all six distilleries on the trail increased by 300 percent.

“Bourbon is something that is uniquely ours, and it attracts visitors from all over the globe to the commonwealth of Kentucky,” Beshear said.

He presented Shapira with a gift, saying he wanted him to know the confidence his office has in Heaven Hill. The ribbon-cutting followed, and Beshear and Shapira then donned gloves to roll in the first barrel of bourbon, weighing 500 pounds and holding 53 gallons. Once inside, Beshear said the rickhouse reminded him of a tobacco barn in the way the ricks, like tobacco tiers, go all the way to the top. He and Shapira signed the head of the barrel before Heaven Hill warehouseman Jodie Filiatreau rolled it into a rick.

Rickhouse J, along with recently completed Rickhouse I, joins 18 other Heaven Hill rickhouses in Bardstown and another 29 throughout Nelson and Jefferson counties.

Heaven Hill Distilleries Inc. cut the ribbon Wednesday on its newest rickhouse. From left to right are Craig Beam, Heaven Hill master distiller; Andy Shapira, director of corporate analysis; Kate Latts, director of marketing; Allan Latts, chief operating officer; Harry Shapira, executive vice president; Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear; and Max Shapira, Heaven Hill president.

