

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 364

By Camper

A RESOLUTION to honor the life and legacy of Nathan "Nearest" Green, the Godfather of Tennessee Whiskey.

WHEREAS, it is the pleasure of this General Assembly to pay tribute to those legendary Tennesseans whose noteworthy contributions are a source of great pride for this State; and

WHEREAS, one such individual is Nathan "Nearest" Green, known as the Godfather of Tennessee Whiskey; his remarkable journey from slavery to one of the wealthiest and best-known African Americans in his community continues to be an inspiration, and his gift of a whiskey particular to this State is a source of pride for Tennesseans and a source of delight for imbibers the world over; and

WHEREAS, known as Uncle Nearest in his hometown of Lynchburg, Nearest Green was the first master distiller for Jack Daniel Distillery and, consequently, the first African-American master distiller on record in the United States; he is the man who taught Jack Daniel how to make whiskey, and he is also thought to have helped perfect the Lincoln County Process, a special sugar maple charcoal filtering method required for whiskey to be considered Tennessee Whiskey; and

WHEREAS, before the Civil War, enslaved persons plucked and shucked grains, milled them, and helped distill whiskey across the United States; these men, women, and, sometimes, children were listed as property in the official accounting records, but their contributions were never fully known; and

WHEREAS, Nearest Green's instrumental role in creating Tennessee Whiskey was first revealed in the 1967 biography *Jack Daniel's Legacy*, which mentions Mr. Green and his descendants some fifty times, but Jack Daniel has only recently begun to embrace Mr. Green's legacy through its social media platforms, marketing campaigns, and tours; and

WHEREAS, after the Civil War, Nearest Green was one of the wealthiest men in the area of any race and the wealthiest African American; surviving photographs reveal a prosperous Green family who had survived the horrors of slavery to enjoy the bounty secured by their whiskey-making patriarch; and

WHEREAS, uncovering the truth of Mr. Green's life concurrently dismantled the narrative of slavery in that particular place and time; to ensure that his story is never again lost, the Nearest Green Memorial Park on the grounds of the future Tennessee Whiskey Museum in Lynchburg will permanently memorialize the life and times of this gifted artisan; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Green's name and legacy also live on through the Nearest Green Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and honoring the first African-American master distiller in the nation; the organization was founded by Fawn Weaver, a *New York Times* bestselling author who is currently at work on a book about Mr. Green's life that will further illuminate his important story; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Weaver is also the CEO, Co-Founder, and Chief Historian of Uncle Nearest Premium Whiskey, which is wholly and independently owned by the Nearest Green Foundation; one of the fastest growing American whiskeys in the country, the award-winning brand features Premium Aged and Tennessee Silver products that are distilled, aged, bottled, and hand-labeled in Tennessee using locally sourced grains; and

WHEREAS, Nearest Green brought pride and a rich heritage to the people of Tennessee, and it is most fitting that we honor his memory at this time; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the life and legacy of Nathan "Nearest" Green, reflecting on his contributions to the culture and economy of this State and extending our best wishes for the continuance of his incredible legacy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.