

Louisville, KY Reunion October 25-30, 2021

There are several things to remember about the Louisville reunion: Horse racetracks, bourbon, Muhammed Ali, and beautifully maintained green pastures on rolling hills with both fall and spring tree colors everywhere except in downtown Louisville. But we found more... the history of the area, and forces that give Louisville and the surrounding area its vitality.

Day 1 – Arrival Day.

The Sheraton Hotel in Jeffersonville, IN overlooked the Ohio River, its several bridges, and the downtown Louisville skyline with its varied geometrical shapes of the tall buildings. There was a bar and a Mexican restaurant in the Sheraton, and a seafood restaurant across the street facing the Ohio River. All were excellent restaurants and with easy access from the hotel for our unplanned dinning. Daily breakfast and the associated service was good and the staff was always ready for us. The warm greetings of long-time friends and new attendees completely outweighed the cloudy, and sometimes damp and chilly weather throughout the week. Pizza in the hospitality room was wonderful!

Day 2 – Keeneland Racetrack in Lexington.

After a beautiful drive on I-64, past many pastures of perfectly maintained green grass and homes, even a castle, we arrived at Keeneland. Live Thoroughbred horing occurs in April and October, but Thoroughbred auctions occur several times during the year in a theater-like setting where the stage is for the horses being traded. Keeneland is the largest horse-trading venue in the world! Most of Keeneland's revenue comes from this horse-trading activity.

Keeneland also hosts the \$500,000 Queen Elizabeth II Challenge Cup (Grade 1), an internationally renowned invitational for 3-year-old fillies on the turf. This event is so special that Queen Elizabeth II attended it, for which they built a special secured "Winners' Circle" where the Queen would be secure to present awards to the winners. Best of all, we were allowed to enter this special enclosed Winners' Circle.

Keeneland is a not-for-profit organization whose main activity beyond hosting the horse trading events, is training. That means training the

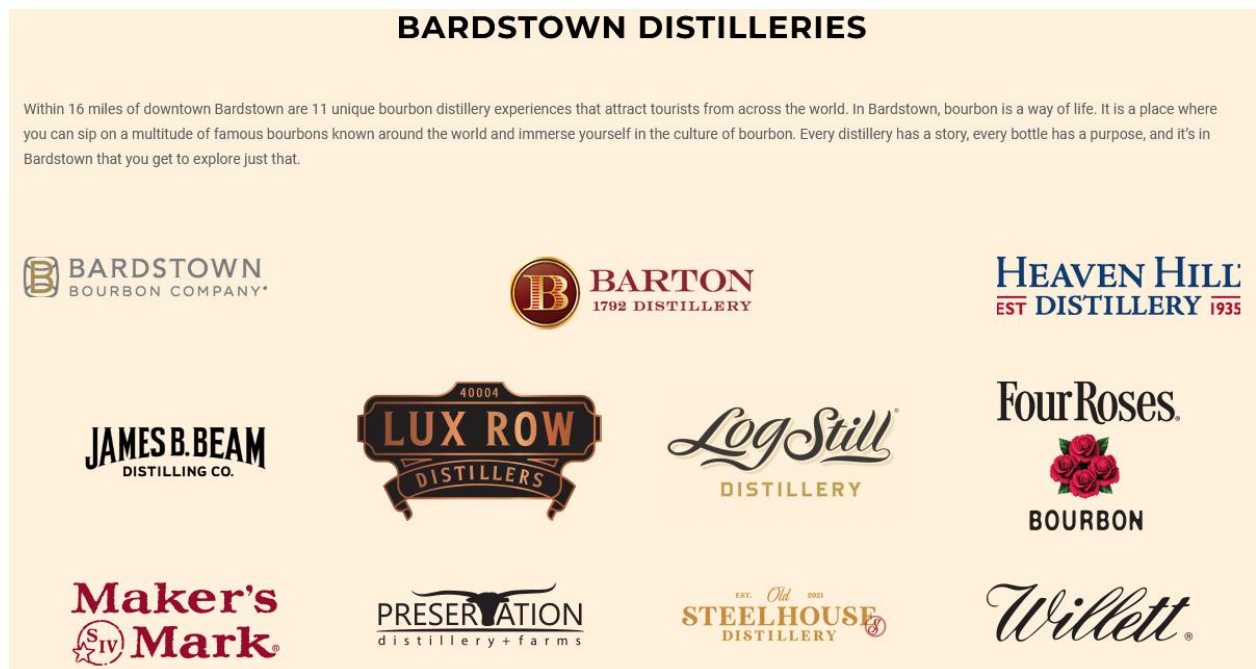
jockeys, training the Thoroughbreds to become race horses, and training the retiring race horses how to enjoy retirement. To be an employee at Keeneland requires a love for horses. Even our tour guide loved horses so much that he spent most of his non-working hours outside his finance job at the race track, with a goal of being a tour guide at Keeneland where he could enjoy spending more time with the horses! And, he knew his horses, their personalities, their capabilities, their jockeys, the races they had won or lost...the perfect host at a horse racing facility.

The Keeneland landscaping was unbelievably perfect and beautiful, from the tree-lined entry road with two types of deciduous trees, one side being trees that had already turned to a golden orange, the other side having trees that were still 100% green, to the sidewalks in the horse walking acclamation garden that had many mature well-cared for trees. The Winners' Circle inside the track was another beautiful scene.

The gift shop at Keeneland is where my husband purchased a little jar of honey stored in used bourbon barrels. He is hooked on it forever.

Day 3 – Bardstown and Maker's Mark Distillery.

Bardstown is the bourbon capital of the world having 11 unique distillery operations within 16 miles of downtown Bardstown.



But Bardstown has a historical and a small-town southern friendliness, too. Our bus driver dropped us at the Tourist Center in the downtown circle,

where they gladly provided maps and instructions on places to see. There are various American war museums within 6-10 blocks with sidewalks along tree lined streets, which we tried to visit. Enroute, here were souvenir gift shops on the main streets which many enjoyed.

Within a half block of the Circle, a drugstore with a fountain and sandwich bar is where many of us had lunch with ice cream treats. A “young” girl sat down at the sandwich bar next to me after getting her RX. One member of our group talked with her briefly and said we were headed for a tour of a distillery, Maker’s Mark. She was disappointed that it was not the James Beam Distillery, but was glad that it was a bourbon distillery we were going to visit. Later, I asked her about her affiliation with the James Beam Distillery, and the answer was “a great niece of the owner”. Small town friendliness at its best!

One place mentioned at the Historical Center was the Basilica of St. Joseph Proto-Cathedral. It is the first Catholic Church west of the Allegheny Mountains, built in 1816-1819. Without much remaining time for us, this was a “must see” site. This historic building contains fine paintings, gifts of Francis (King of the two Sicilies) and Pope Leo XII, some of which had been loaned to the Getty Museum who renovated the paintings before returning them because they had kept them for such a long time. The building itself has been renovated over the years. A Deacon of the church who was just passing through took a few moments to show us one of the huge wooden pillars that had been preserved (now hidden), as well as the sound system that had been installed to counteract the extremely active natural acoustics. I would have loved to have spent an hour exploring the pipe organ within that very live acoustical environment! This visit was well worth the speedy 4-block walk each direction.

The drive to the Maker’s Mark Distillery was interesting in that it showed buildings that had recently been built to age the bourbon to perfection. The Maker’s Mark Distillery facility is tucked away at the bottom of a winding narrow road lined with those beautiful homes, trees and manicured Kentucky Bluegrass pastures.

Maker’s Mark is a family-owned distillery, as are many of the distilleries. This particular facility was purchased because of the availability of a limestone lined well on the property. Water passing through/over limestone is perfectly purified for bourbon, the reason for Kentucky being the bourbon capital of the world. We learned of the ingredients, the aging process, the storage barrel makeup, the laws governing the ingredients and single-use

barrels. We were able to walk through the storage facility built into a natural limestone wall which maintains the correct temperature for aging bourbon without air conditioning. This building also contained the testing rooms where we learned about the different types (flavors) of bourbon they produce. At the end of the tour, our guide directed us to another building where a tasting room was set up, five shot glasses for each of us. Our guide explained each one of them before we tested it. By the time, we were finished, each of us had selected our favorite and headed for the gift shop. I normally don't drink any alcoholic beverages, but I bought two bottles of "46" for cooking and baking.

Day 4 – Churchill Downs, Bowling Green, KY

In spite of the dreary sky when we arrived at Churchill Downs, home of the Kentucky Derby, beautiful blooming roses at the Museum entrance brightened the day quickly. After a thundering surround sound movie in the round to assist in our experiencing the Kentucky Derby, our outside tour began. After being cut short by the rain, there was plenty of time for a "ride" on the "horses" inside the Museum, exploring other inside aspects of the Museum, and shopping in the Gift Shop.

The bus ride back to the hotel provided some beautiful view of bridges, clouds and the Louisville skyline without the sunlight blinding us. The Hospitality Room provided many more opportunities to reminisce, beverages, food and memorabilia to review. The weather tried but failed to dampen the participants' spirits!

Thursday evening's dinner at the Sheraton – plenty of food, beverages and space for socializing.

Day 5 – Louisville Slugger Factory & Museum & Downtown Louisville

Friday was a big day for all the baseball fans and for those attendees whose grandchildren are in Little League. I was looking forward to this day because of my experience in manufacturing on the accounting side and my having grown up going to sleep listening to the St. Louis Cardinals' games. Even the bus driver was all smiles as he dropped us off in front of the big baseball bat and our gang exited the bus. Most of us took a long look at the giant baseball bat, and many took pictures. We arrived shortly after 9 AM, and the place was already full.

While waiting in the Museum part for our tour, there were displays to educate us: pictures and statues of famous baseball players, a display of bats and their users, interactive batting exhibits, and information on the woods used to make the bats with the company's forest management practices, and ownership. Hillerich & Bradsby Co. was a family-owned company that makes these bats and registered the trademark "LOUISVILLE SLUGGER" in 1894, until March 23, 2015 when they sold the company to Wilson Sporting Goods Co. for \$70 million in cash. Not much appears to have changed at the Louisville Slugger plant since Wilson purchased it, as "Hillerich & Bradsby" signs remain on the walls throughout the facility.

All baseball bats created are not of equal quality; in fact, many are rejected when going through the screening processes, even though the trees grown and chosen for cutting down to make the bats are of the highest quality. Rejected bats may not be acceptable to the professional baseball players but they work quite well for the non-professionals. An inventory of bats is maintained for each professional player from whom the company receives an order to the player's specifications within the bat requirements of the appropriate association. A professional player typically orders about 100+ bats/season, but even some of those are rejected by the players.

We were able to see everything, from start to finish, billets to fully finished wood with appropriate insignia, including video presentations on the search for the right trees in the woods along the northern PA-NY border where the terrain, soil and climate provide the perfect growing conditions for the maple and ash trees that become Louisville Sluggers. Most professional bats are made of maple because of the superior hardness of the maple wood. Only about 5% of the initial "billets" (40" posts that look like small fence posts) make it into the professional leagues with the remaining 95% going to non-professional players

As we were leaving, each of us was given a "mini" bat, but many in our group purchased standard sized bats in the Slugger Gift Shop...all of us being of the "less qualified group", but very proud owners of a Louisville Slugger bat of any size. My souvenir from the Slugger Gift Shop was a pair of baseball koozies. I will never use them for their intended purpose; they were purchased as a "thank you" to Louisville Slugger company for opening their facility to the public for all of us to enjoy as much as we would enjoy a baseball game. They are reminders, not really needed, of the great reunion we had in Louisville...along with my two bottles of Maker's Mark #46 Bourbon.

As we were leaving, teenagers on a field trip and members of our reunion group were taking pictures next to the giant baseball bat, a sign that all of us will enjoy baseball games even more now that we know more about the bats used by the players.

After a drive through downtown Louisville, highlighting Muhammed Ali's participation and influence on Louisville and some of the unique architecture, we had lunch on our own, and eventually gathered outside a corner restaurant next to our pickup intersection that provided an outdoor fire for us (as well as any other passersby) to enjoy. We stopped at the Riverfront Park War Memorial and learned of the various floods endured by this area, as well as the renovations, including more views of the bridges over the Ohio River and one last passing of the KFC (Yum!) Center.

Day 5 – Closing Banquet

Plenty of food and space to visit, the empty table recognizing the fallen who were not with us, lots of prizes, speeches and thank-yous, visitor/new member comments, singing of “God Bless America, and the USS Hornet/USS Constellation combined reunion group picture.

Day 6 – Homeward Bound

We would never have planned a trip to Louisville, just to see the city; it was not on our “bucket list”. Louisville was a terrific selection for a reunion and we enjoyed it immensely. Ray knows the best places to visit and makes the arrangements so that we may enjoy them without the hassles of traffic and not knowing where we are going. We hope to see all of you at future reunions, to rekindle friendships, and to enjoy the excellent learning and dining experiences the areas have to offer us.