

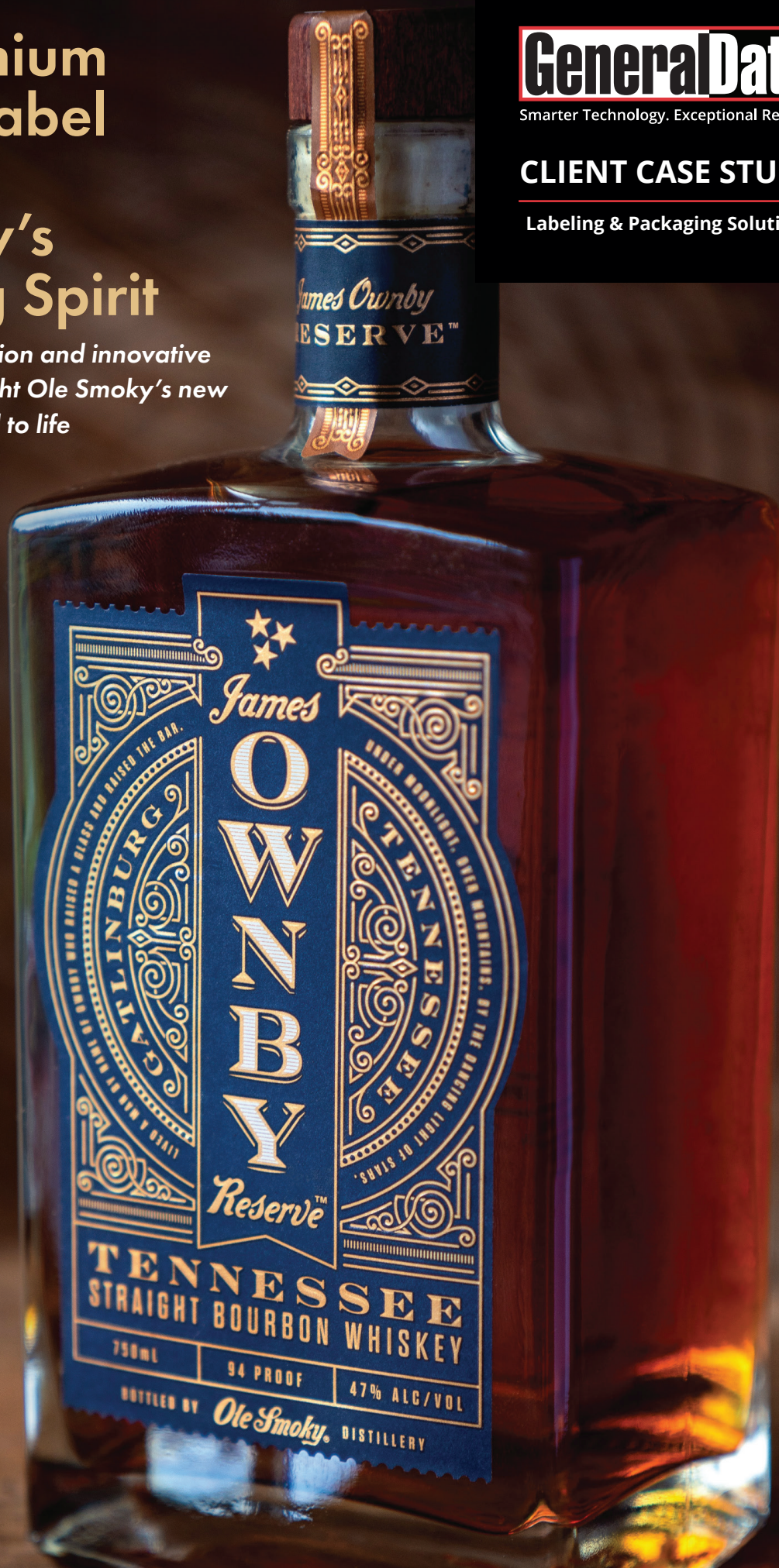
New Premium Whiskey Label Captures Ole Smoky's Pioneering Spirit

How creative collaboration and innovative labeling solutions brought Ole Smoky's new premium whiskey brand to life

Ole Smoky Distillery, one of the nation's fastest-growing spirits companies, is well-known for its wide range of moonshines crafted from authentic family recipes and distilled in the mountains of East Tennessee. Building upon a proud tradition of quality and continuous innovation, Ole Smoky recently debuted the first expression of its small-batch premium whiskey brand, James Ownby Reserve Tennessee Straight Bourbon Whiskey.

Inspired by the life and legacy of James Ownby — a Revolutionary War hero and the 5th generation great-grandfather of Ole Smoky founder Joe Baker — the limited-release whiskey is the result of years of experimenting with small batches shared among family and friends.

Once the recipe was perfected, Ole Smoky set out to convey the remarkable history, heritage and passion behind the James Ownby Reserve brand with packaging just as distinctive as the whiskey inside.



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Bringing the James Ownby Reserve brand to life

When the time came to take the first James Ownby Reserve whiskey from concept to creation, Ole Smoky turned to longtime labeling partner, AmeriGraph Packaging (a division of General Data Company, Inc.), to develop custom prime labels that showcased the brand's premium qualities and created immediate shelf impact. The AmeriGraph team worked side-by-side with Ole Smoky's design agency, Baker Associates, to bring the legendary story of James Ownby to life with an elevated packaging experience.

A detailed design

The Baker team spared no detail when designing the label, featuring thoughtful imagery and elements inspired by Ownby's pioneering spirit and contributions during the American Revolution. The design also included special tributes to family ties and Ole Smoky's proud Tennessee roots, prominently displaying the three stars found on the Tennessee state flag and a personal message and signature of founder Joe Baker.

"Our strategy was to bring a number of historical nuances into the label, including a texture reminiscent of a vintage leather-bound book and elegant gold filigree against a rich blue background that harkens back to the color of the Patriot soldiers' uniforms," explained Judy Reishus, Executive Vice President of Strategy and Account Management at Baker Associates.

"As a design firm, we always want to stretch the capabilities of what's possible," added Reishus. "With so many intricate elements involved in this label, we relied on AmeriGraph's expertise to ensure that we could achieve our design intent from a production perspective."

Proving a concept

AmeriGraph's first task was to develop label samples based on Baker's design concept, which posed a few printing challenges from the start. As it turned out, the textured paper label stock material Baker initially selected

wasn't compatible with gold cold foil stamping as they had envisioned.

"Based on the original design request, producing the labels in a timely and cost-effective manner would have been difficult," said Matt Steinwedel, Vice President of Business Development at AmeriGraph. "We worked closely with the Baker design team to recommend the best printing methods, label materials and finishes that would not only fulfill their design intent but yield an even better result."

"Right away, we knew this label would need a creative approach to ensure the execution aligned with the concept," added Paul Thompson, Vice President of General Data and General Manager of the AmeriGraph division. "We start every project by understanding our customers' expectations, then develop custom solutions that meet those goals."

Leveraging their state-of-the-art technology and decades of printing knowledge and expertise, AmeriGraph employed a combination of innovative printing techniques to produce the labels efficiently without compromising the intended look and feel of the final product.

"We utilized General Data's recent investment in an HP Indigo 6900 digital press, which enabled us to provide superior quality samples to the Ole Smoky and Baker teams very quickly," explained Steinwedel. "Our team came up with a unique way of achieving the design intent using premium inks, materials and our custom varnishes. This allowed us to incorporate several different visual and tactile elements to create a multi-sensory packaging experience. The end result has the appealing contrast of the smooth metallic gold foil against the rugged, vintage paper texture that perfectly matched what the design team was looking for."



Teamwork in a pandemic

Throughout every pivotal step of the process, effective teamwork, communication and collaboration among the AmeriGraph, Baker and Ole Smoky teams proved essential to the success of the finished label. This was especially true in the days of COVID-19 lockdowns when holding in-person meetings and on-site press checks wasn't feasible.

During the label development and testing phase, AmeriGraph had to think outside the box to deliver samples to the Baker and Ole Smoky teams and ensure the decision-making process was as easy as possible for everyone.

"The AmeriGraph team was extremely helpful in problem-solving, whether it was recommending and sourcing certain materials or advising on the best printing methods," recalled Reishus. "They would number the press proofs by hand and ship them overnight to the Baker and Ole Smoky teams so we could all review the same options at the same time over Zoom, which made it so that the barrier of COVID didn't hold us back."

Because Ole Smoky aimed to launch the James Ownby whiskey in a few short months, before Father's Day weekend, the ability to communicate virtually when providing feedback and choosing the final label was all the more critical.

"I was very impressed with everyone's flexibility and teamwork, especially on such a tight deadline," said Stephanie Moraine, Marketing Director at Ole Smoky. "We worked together seamlessly throughout the entire process to produce a label that we all could be proud of."

Adding the final touches

After a label version was selected, AmeriGraph delivered a smaller test run of samples to be used for a photoshoot ahead of the official James Ownby product launch.

"We really appreciated the test run because, as creatives, we're always pushing for perfection," said Reishus. "Seeing the mock-up on the product allowed us to adjust certain color nuances, and we even decided to add embossing before the final print run. Adding those last touches elevated the label and brought our design to life."

With top-of-the-line finishing capabilities in-house, AmeriGraph quickly incorporated custom embossing to give the final printed labels beautiful dimension and shelf appeal.

"The labels already looked fantastic, but we were thrilled to hear that the Ole Smoky team wanted to invest in embossing, which makes the labels truly unique and reflects the premium quality of the James Ownby brand," said Thompson. "As label producers, we enjoy rising to the challenge, experimenting with different materials and finishes, and applying our technology in new ways to reach the highest levels of brand standards and exceed the expectations of our customers."

After months of hard work and collaboration, seeing the finished labels come to fruition was a fulfilling moment for all the parties involved.

"This was an exciting project because we didn't have to trade down our design intent one bit, which isn't common in the design world," said Reishus. "Working together with the AmeriGraph team, we were able to achieve the end result we had envisioned without making any compromises along the way."

"The final labels turned out beautifully and were exactly on point with what we wanted to see for the James Ownby brand," added Moraine. "Not only is it a premium-looking product that stands out among the competition, but it also connects to the heart and heritage of Ole Smoky."

Unveiling the first James Ownby Reserve whiskey

With stunning labels affixed to every bottle, the first James Ownby Reserve whiskey was released in two of Ole Smoky's distilleries and several major markets on June 15, 2021, just in time for Father's Day weekend.

"Since launching the product, we've had enthusiastic support from our distributor partners, retailers and consumers," said Moraine. "We've received amazing feedback from our customers not only on the quality of the whiskey itself but also on the beautiful look and feel of the packaging and the story behind the brand."

Although less than 200 barrels of the 94-proof Tennessee straight bourbon whiskey were released as part of the initial launch, Ole Smoky is well-positioned to create future expressions under the James Ownby Reserve brand.

"Bringing the first James Ownby product to market was a large undertaking, and we put full confidence in the expertise of both the AmeriGraph and Baker teams," added Moraine. "It was a great feeling to trust them to collaborate and deliver on our vision, and we're all extremely happy with the end result."



About Ole Smoky® Distillery LLC

Ole Smoky is the leading distiller of premium moonshine in the world, the leading craft distiller in the US and the first federally licensed distillery in the history of East Tennessee. Founded in 2010, Ole Smoky's roots are traced to the Smoky Mountains' earliest settlers, families who produced moonshine with enduring pride and Appalachian spirit.

Today, Ole Smoky retails in all 50 states and over 20 countries around the world and offers more than 25 creative moonshine flavors and 17 inventive whiskey flavors. Ole Smoky can be found in liquor stores nationwide, as well as at the company's four famed distilleries in Tennessee, The Holler and The Barrelhouse in Gatlinburg, The Barn in Pigeon Forge, and 6th & Peabody in Nashville. For more information, please visit [olesmoky.com](https://www.olesmoky.com) and follow Ole Smoky on social media @olesmoky.

About AmeriGraph Packaging and General Data Company, Inc.

Headquartered in Cincinnati OH, General Data Company Inc., (<https://www.general-data.com>) supplies labeling, coating, packaging, identification and tracking products, services, solutions and technologies that enable companies in diverse industries to streamline operations, improve process visibility, strengthen customer relationships and elevate their brand. AmeriGraph Packaging, a division of General Data, specializes in producing high end prime labels and shrink sleeve packaging for consumer goods and food products for regional and national consumer product brands across the US. General Data has manufacturing, sales and service locations throughout the US.



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