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## Acting Governor Guadagno Visits “NJ Tried And True” Business Laird & Co.

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### *America's Oldest Family of Distillers Has Kept the "Spirit" of Tradition Alive for Nine Generations*

**Trenton, NJ** – Continuing her tour of New Jersey's unique family-owned and longstanding businesses, Acting Governor Kim Guadagno today visited America's oldest native distillery, Laird & Company in Colts Neck. This visit is the fourth stop in her "NJ Tried and True" business tour.

For nine generations, the art of producing AppleJack has been passed down through the Laird Family. In 1780, Robert Laird established America's first commercial distillery, with License No. 1 from the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Today, Laird & Co. produces several brands of wines and spirits, including the Banker's Club, Laird's and G & W brands, and is the nation's only remaining producer of applejack.

"Founded in 1780, Laird & Co. is a symbol that even in our country's infancy, the American Dream could be realized," said Acting Governor Guadagno. "Today, generations later, the Laird family continues the rich traditions and passion for their craft, making them not only a true New Jersey success story, but an American one as well."

In 1698, William Laird emigrated from Scotland with his father and brother and settled in Monmouth County, where he began producing AppleJack for personal use. The Laird family founded the Colts Neck Inn in 1717, where "cyder spirits" would later become a standard menu item.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, George Washington wrote to the Lairds requesting their AppleJack recipe. Robert Laird would later serve under Washington during the War, and the Laird family supplied AppleJack to the troops. Washington wasn't the only President impressed by the spirit; in June of 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson presented a case of Laird's AppleJack to Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin at the Glassboro Summit.

"When a person thinks of a historical distillery, New Jersey does not come to mind. And here we are still nestled in Monmouth County nine generations later," said Lisa Laird Dunn, Vice President for Advertising and Public Relations for Laird & Company. "We are honored to have Acting Governor Guadagno visit us during her Tried and True Tour to share our heritage and to recognize the state treasure that our family company is."

During Prohibition, the company produced other apple products, such as sweet cider and applesauce. In 1933, Laird & Co. was granted a federal license to produce Apple Brandy for medicinal purposes, allowing the company to re-open the distillery and have aged inventories of AppleJack available immediately after the repeal of Prohibition. Production was interrupted by World War II, when the plant was converted to prepare products to aid in the war effort. Today, Laird & Co. distills its apples in Virginia and operates a bottling and warehouse facility in Colts Neck.

Across the United States, family-owned businesses account for 50% of the gross domestic product and 78% of all new job creation. Only 30% of family-owned businesses in America will be passing the reigns to the next generation, even though close to 70% would like to keep their business in the family. By the third generation, only 12% of family-owned businesses in the US are typically still viable. By the fourth generation and beyond, only 3% of family-owned

businesses continue to exist. Through war, Prohibition and the passing of centuries, the Laird family's dedication to its work has made the company a fixture in Monmouth County for nine generations and a testament to the lasting power of New Jersey's businesses.

Businesses considering a move or in need of assistance are encouraged to call New Jersey's Business Action Center at (866) 534-7789 or visit the State's Business Portal at [www.newjerseybusiness.gov](http://www.newjerseybusiness.gov).

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