

## New distillery, tasting room to open on Mare Island



Artist's rendering courtesy of Lennar Mare Island

By [Rachel Raskin-Zrihen](#), *Vallejo Times-Herald*

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The Splinter Group has agreed to establish a distillery for its line of whiskeys in Building 45, in the Mare Island Historic Core, Lennar Mare Island officials announced Thursday.

The signed lease indicates the company will “move in and begin distillation work this year with a tasting room and tours to follow,” Lennar Mare Island spokesman Edward Moser said.

“Lennar Mare Island is thrilled to have the Splinter Group coming to Building 45 on Mare Island. This unique use of a historic asset is a perfect fit for the character of our community and will bring jobs, visitors and economic activity to Vallejo,” Moser said.

The Splinter Group was founded in 2014 by David Phinney, who also runs the St. Helena-based Orin Swift wine label, Moser said. The

group produces Straight Edge Bourbon Whiskey and Slaughter House American Whiskey, which was awarded a gold medal and Best in Class at the 2015 Whiskies of the World competition, Moser said. “When I first came to Mare Island, I fell in love with the historic buildings and the location,” Phinney said. “The city of Vallejo has been great, and we are excited to get started and establish ourselves in this new location.”

Phinney began making wine in 1998, and since then has grown the Orin Swift wine label into a multinational brand that now includes 300 acres of vineyards in the Southwest of France, according to company information. This “international ambition has led to projects in Spain, Italy, Corsica, Argentina and other locations around the globe,” it says.

The Splinter Group ages its spirits in wine barrels from its Orin Swift wine label and uses spring water from the Alexander Valley, the information says.

Lennar Mare Island began the rehabilitation of the approximately 16,000 square foot building 45, in 2015, “preserving and enhancing the historic exterior of the structure while creating a new interior space,” Moser said.

Built in 1864, Building 45 is one of the island’s oldest structures, located just north of the Mare Island Museum and less than one block from the future ferry terminal, Moser said. The Navy used it as an apprentice training facility, he said.

In May, Vallejo’s Architectural Heritage and Landmarks Commission approved a rehabilitation effort to prepare the building for reuse, he said.

“Building 45 is a special piece of Mare Island and we have been seeking a business who appreciates its history, understands its future and can attract visitors to Mare Island,” Moser said. “We look forward to having The Splinter Group as part of Mare Island’s diverse and growing business community and seeing them succeed here in Vallejo.”

Lennar Mare Island has invested more than \$115 million in the infrastructure, building rehabilitation and reuse of the former Naval Shipyard, Moser said.

“This investment supports job growth through the rehabilitation of former Naval buildings and improvements to infrastructure, which will lead to expansion of business opportunities island-wide, he said.

Vallejo Mayor Osby Davis said the distillery and tasting room fits nicely with the city’s vision for the area.

“The city of Vallejo is working with businesses, in partnership with Lennar Mare Island, to facilitate building rehabilitation efforts and to help implement the community’s vision for Mare Island,”he said. “I’m proud to be able to drive business growth and bring opportunities like this to Vallejo, while preserving the Island’s rich history.”

For more information, visit [www.discovermareisland.com](http://www.discovermareisland.com).

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