

KEENELAND — A THOROUGHBRED TRADITION

Founding



Keeneland's tradition of outstanding horsemanship and horse racing began with the closing of the historic Kentucky Association track in 1933. A volunteer committee led by Major Louis A. Beard selected the property in 1935. They planned to develop a location to carry on the Kentucky Thoroughbred tradition for future generations.

A survey of prospective locations for the new racecourse resulted in the selection of a site already in progress — 147.5 acres of Keeneland Stud Farm on Versailles Pike — owned by John Oliver (Jack) Keene. The site was on the southwest portion of Keene's property and included a mile and a furlong private track, combination stone castle and barn, a 100,000-gallon water tank, a roadway and land for future stables and parking.

Jack Keene was an internationally known Thoroughbred trainer who started the ambitious project of building his own private racing and training facility during the 1920s on a tract of land that belonged to Keene ancestors long before Kentucky was a state. Keeneland's sprawling stone clubhouse, grandstand and other original structures were quarried from native Kentucky limestone. These beginnings gave Keeneland's planners a foundation for constructing a new facility.

In October 1936, Keeneland opened its gates and became one of the world's first and only not-for-profit tracks. It was managed by the Keeneland Association, which consisted of a team of volunteers under the direction of Keeneland's first elected president, Hal Price Headley. Headley was a well-known local breeder, buyer, seller and owner.

Headley and the other Keeneland founders wanted to create a track that proposed "the shadow of a dream in that it envisions a creation the likes of which has not been seen in America."

Today

Now a National Historic Landmark, Keeneland attracts racing enthusiasts from around the world to watch top Thoroughbreds, trainers, owners and jockeys vie for a spot in racing history. Keeneland prides itself on maintaining the traditions instilled by its forefathers, while remaining consistent with changes in the ever-evolving equine industry.



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In 1940, the Keeneland Association reorganized its corporate structure so that more profits could be channeled back into the community through charitable donations. Today, Keeneland operates as a for-profit company with a not-for-profit mission.

Keeneland began conducting horse sales in the 1940s. Initially, the horse sales were offered on a relatively small scale—in fact the first sale took place under a tent in the Keeneland paddock. Today, Keeneland is the world's largest Thoroughbred auction house, boasting more than a half-billion dollars in gross sales annually.

Fueled mostly by the success of the horse sales, profits are returned in the form of higher purses to horsemen, capital improvements and generous contributions to charitable, educational and research organizations. Keeneland's charitable contributions through the years total more than \$14 million.

Keeneland's proud tradition continues today under the leadership of Nick Nicholson, president and chief executive officer. In 2006, Keeneland again underscored its commitment to the horse by installing a revolutionary Polytrack racing surface on its main track as part of a major track renovation project that also widened and improved the turns to make them safer.

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