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April also means sale time

Juvenile auction marks 70 years of sales at Keeneland

By Steve Bailey

On April 8-9, Keeneland holds its annual April Two-Year-Olds in Training Sale for the 15th consecutive year. The history of selling Thoroughbreds at Keeneland, however, goes back even further—nearly three-quarters of a century.

On April 25, 1938, Keeneland held its first sale. *The Thoroughbred Record* recorded the event this way:

“The first paddock sale to be held at Keeneland took place there Monday afternoon, when 31 lots were sold for a total of \$24,855, averaging a trifle over \$800. The high dollar of the sale was reached after a spirited bidding contest between Henry H. Knight, Almadel Farm on the Harrodsburg pike about ten miles from Lexington, and Emerson F. Woodward, Valdina Farms, Texas. Marmitina, nine-year-old daughter of Light Brigade and Marmite by Sweep and her day-old chestnut colt by Cohort were secured by Mr. Woodward for \$3,500.

“Mrs. Charles R. Thompson, as

agent, was the largest consignor, the nine head consigned by her, the broodmares with foals being sold as one lot, bringing \$11,200. Mary T., chestnut mare, 6, by Upset—Drollery by Chicle with a chestnut colt foal by Wise Counsellor, topped this consign-

in charge. ‘Doc’ Bond wielded the hammer with G.B. Leach as announcer.”

Oh, how times have changed.

Last April, Keeneland sold 82 of 155 horses offered during its two-year-olds in training sale for \$16.6-million, with an average price of \$202,890.

Owner B. Wayne Hughes paid a sale-high \$1.75-million to purchase Patricia’s Gem, a daughter of Horse of the Year Mineshaft, from the Hartley/DeRenzo consignment. Kirkwood Stables was the sale’s leading consignor, selling 16 horses for \$2,444,000.



Early Keeneland sales were held in a tent. Today, horses are sold in the state-of-the-art Sales Pavilion located next to the track.

Keeneland Library

Spring fever

Today, Keeneland is the place for the world to come to buy the best Thoroughbreds with four annual sales: the two signature events, the September Yearling Sale and the November Breeding Stock Sale, along with the January Horses of All Ages Sale and the April sale. In 2007, Keeneland sold a total of 9,124 horses for a grand sum of \$815,401,000.

A total of 191 horses were cataloged for this year’s April sale, which has a history of producing talented racehorses. Graduates include Thun-

ment when T.W. Murphy, famous trotting horse driver and developer of Twenty Grand for Mrs. Payne Whitney, gave \$2,300 for her and her foal, the second-highest price of the sale.

“... The sale was held under the management of E.J. Tranter, Thomas B. Cromwell, local representative being

der Gulch, who was sold in 1994 and went on to win the Kentucky Derby (G1) and be named the champion three-year-old colt the following year, as well as Gal in a Ruckus and Keeper Hill, who went on to win the 1995 and 1998 Kentucky Oaks (G1), respectively. Others sold at the April sale include champion Beautiful Pleasure and Grade 1 winners Borrego, Elloluv, Lady Tak, Panty Raid, Point Ashley and Wild Escape.

"It's very much a boutique sale, and we inspect the quality of the

horses very closely prior to accepting them," said Keeneland Director of Sales Geoffrey Russell. "Most of these horses are trained right up to the sale and ready to go once a sale is made.

"Spring in Kentucky is Derby time, and a lot of people start to get Derby fever. Everybody is excited, and I think everyone hopes in the back of their minds they might get lucky enough to find a Derby or Oaks horse among the bunch."

Night moves

In each of the past 14 years, the April sale has been held to one session, and many of those sessions have been held during the day. This year, the sale was arranged to cover two sessions, each beginning at 7 p.m., and was moved to the week preceding the Toyota Blue Grass Stakes (G1) on April 12.

"We've found that the nighttime sessions seem to be more special to our buyers, and we've split it up over two nights to give potential buyers time to see all of the individual

Keeneland
April Two-Year-Olds
in Training Sale
April 8-9
Sessions begin at 7 p.m.
www.keeneland.com

breezes and inspect the horses over an extra day," Russell said. The day before the first session of the sale, horses perform under tack on the Keeneland racetrack in a one-day Preview Show.

Keeneland sales are open to the public and held adjacent to the racetrack in the Sales Pavilion, where buyers, sellers and others enjoy comfortable, state-of-the-art accommodations. Racing fans are always welcome to attend a Keeneland sale and experience a significant side of Keeneland that is almost as old as the racetrack itself. 🐎

Steve Bailey is deputy news editor of *Thoroughbred Times*.



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Patricia's Gem was sold for the sale-topping price of \$1.75 million at the 2007 Keeneland April Two-Year-Olds in Training Sale.

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