





KEENELAND
MERCANTILE

celebrating *Keeneland's roots*

Keeneland Mercantile brings
a timeless tradition
to downtown Lexington

By Liane Crossley

BRANDEN RIGGINS/KEENELAND



Keeneland is synonymous with quality that stretches far beyond world-class Thoroughbred racing and auctions. Keeneland also is revered for hospitality, food and beverage service, team members, facilities, landscaping, customer relations, and other endless elements.



BRANDEN FIGUINS/KEENELAND

Keeneland Mercantile offers regional and local products, ranging from personal and household to consumable and collectible.

The tradition of excellence extends to the Keeneland retail experience at on- and off-site boutiques offering regionally made and locally sourced goods. The flagship shop near the south grandstand entrance recently received a fresh look, and Keeneland Mercantile ushered in a new era in downtown Lexington.

Keeneland Mercantile is on the ground level of the \$200 million Offices at City Center on the vibrant intersection of Main and Limestone streets. City Center includes a 700-car underground garage, celebrated steak house, condominium penthouses, hotels, and an all-season rooftop bar. The shop will blend Keeneland's timeless elegance with a modern ambiance to link its rich Thoroughbred history with the city.

"Keeneland's constant commitment to quality and community all converge on downtown to create a new place that brings together the past and the future in Keeneland Mercantile," said Kyle Cassin, Keeneland's director of retail.

While the store on Keeneland grounds remains focused on Keeneland-branded items and apparel, the Mercantile will offer a select assortment of products from an array of local artisans for both daily use and celebratory occasions.

"Dedication to our heritage and our culture is at the heart of Keeneland Mercantile — a retail destination that showcases the best of what our region, our people, and our craftsmen have to offer," Cassin said. "With a curated selection of beautifully crafted goods from throughout the South, Keeneland Mercantile offers a true sense of place, both for those who call Lexington home and for those visiting the horse capital of the world."

Products are an array of personal, household, consumable, and other items.

Brands include Clayton & Crume, a Louisville-based purveyor of personalized leather goods such as bags, belts, pet collars, and key tags. For the home, Keeneland Mercantile carries collections from Stoneware & Co. of Louisville, an art-based pottery company founded in 1815; silver and pewter bar accessories



Regional specialties include Bittermilk No. 1 cocktail mix, top, and Duck Fat Caramels, above.

from Lexington Silver; and handblown glassware from Terrane in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina.

With Lexington's growing reputation for fine dining and culinary adventure, Keeneland Mercantile has joined in the foodie frenzy by stocking area favorites that are a sure bet to intrigue vacationers and residents. The line includes Bourbon Barrel Foods of Louisville, which bills itself as the nation's only soy sauce microbrewery and a cornerstone in the bourbon and gourmet food industry. Those with a taste for bourbon and elegant candy will relish the options from Louisville's Art Eatables. Chocolate lovers can find a treat from Olive and Sinclair, a Nashville factory known as Tennessee's only bean-to-bar company.

Mercantile will look much different than the traditional decor of The Keeneland Shop to complement the aesthetics of the entire City Center complex. Features include a natural ash wood herringbone floor plan, brass fixtures, and soft honey in the wood tones. The walls are a tranquil blue-gray to blend with the shelving.



Merchandise reflects the region's close ties to bourbon and horses.



Collections from Stoneware & Co. of Louisville pair well with the store's aesthetic.

OTHER OPTIONS FOR KEENELAND SHOPPING

Racegoers and sightseers who bypass downtown still have plenty of opportunity to purchase unique items from designer clothing to tasteful trinkets. They can browse a full array at The Keeneland Shop on the property as well as at pop-up kiosks during race meets. Additionally, Keeneland offers a consolidated assortment of merchandise at the Lexus of Lexington location 10 miles east of the track.

Tucked between the Clubhouse and Grandstand entrances, The Keeneland Shop underwent renovations in early 2019 to further enhance patron experience while maintaining its classic look in marble and wood. Improvements include upgrades to the interior décor, centralized checkout registers, improved lighting, and digital displays to enable live streaming of races. The transformation



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promotes service to customers with a "Shop & Drop" merchandise storage program offered so fans may collect their purchases when leaving the races. Sales associates are always willing to offer assistance with the genuine hospitality for which the South in general and Keeneland in particular are known.

With online buying a mainstay of modern life, Keeneland provides a user-friendly website for those seeking store-to-door service. Consumers can scroll through categories that include new arrivals, featured goods, and clothing, or refine their search with the filter option.

"Upgrades to The Keeneland Shop, coupled with the growth of our shopkeeneland.com platform, are phases of our overall strategy to continually improve year-round service for Keeneland patrons and to present a unified commerce experience," Cassin said.

Internationally renowned for first-rate merchandise, the shop offers something for everyone. All-age designer clothing sporting Keeneland branding in-

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“We have worked to create a retail experience that offers something unique each season.”

—KYLE CASSIN



Merchandise at The Keeneland Shop ranges from small items, such as keychains with the Keeneland logo, to designer clothing.

clude Ralph Lauren, Peter Millar, Draper James, and Beaufort Bonnet Co.

Popular purchases are souvenirs that serve as personal mementos or as tokens of appreciation or stocking stuffers for friends and family. Choices include horseshoes, koozies, cups, glassware, books, and candles.

Other Keeneland-centric favorites are holiday decorations available year-round with expanded selections late in the year. Best-sellers include Keeneland-green balls punctuated with the gold racehorse logo, miniature gateposts, and whimsical Thoroughbreds, race-ready for any Christmas tree.

“We have worked to create a retail experience that offers something unique each season to our guests and has become a must-see part of the race-day experience,” Cassin said. “We offer guests the opportunity to take their experience home with them whether that is through a piece of apparel, dishware, children’s gifts, or commemorative art. We truly have something for everyone.”

CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY

Long before Keeneland became a vision, Lexington’s Thoroughbred competition, starting in 1828, was held at the Kentucky Association track at what is now William Wells Brown Elementary School on East Fifth Street a few miles east of the modern center of downtown. When the Kentucky Association track closed in 1933 after a long and storied run, Keeneland seamlessly took the reins in the then-rural fringes of Lexington.

Since opening day in October 1936, Keeneland has stayed true to the founding members’ vision of a place for folks to enjoy fresh air and sunshine while watching horses race. Vintage video and photographs depict cheerful, well-dressed crowds that are remarkably similar to today’s stylish racegoers. Only the clothes and vehicles are different.

While retaining old-school charm throughout the 1,000-acre property, Keeneland always is a few steps ahead with leading-edge technology and innovative ideas. Numerous activities inaugurated at Keeneland have become mainstays within the organization while spreading throughout the Thoroughbred industry.

KEENELAND PHOTOS

Steeped in the past with an eye to the future, Keeneland constantly seeks novel ideas from within and without the usual routine. Cassin brings a fresh eye to the Keeneland retail team after his past experience in sports and event merchandising primarily in the world of golf's major championships.

"More than 80 years after downtown racing ended, Keeneland is returning to carry the memories, traditions, and culture of those decades," Cassin said. "I am excited to lead the Keeneland retail team in elevating the guest experience to make an even more memorable one for our patrons. The Keeneland Shop has a very loyal following of patrons but it is also an opportunity for us to connect with new patrons and fans." **KM**



Renovations to The Keeneland Shop allow better display of merchandise and improve the customer experience.



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