



KEITH & RACHEL MCCLELLAND

STONELEIGH FARM

Nearly a century after his great-grandfather opened a Thoroughbred farm in Maple, Ontario, and 75 years after his father began a Hall of Fame career, Keith McClelland continues the family's proud tradition of breeding, selling, and racing horses in Ontario. Alongside his wife, Rachel, Keith operates Stoneleigh Farm in Rockwood, a picturesque 99-acre property where they grow hay, raise Thoroughbreds, ride, and retrain horses. The farm is also home to Gandria, the family's champion mare bred by Keith's parents, Don and Jane-Anne, who serves as Stoneleigh's cherished matriarch.

"We're really enjoying the business," Keith said. "We decided to downsize slightly—not that we were ever very large—and now we're focusing a bit more on racing our horses."

This year, Keith and Rachel have high hopes for their homebred filly Tabei, a fourth-generation Thoroughbred who embodies the finest of the family's celebrated bloodlines. Later this summer, the couple eagerly anticipates offering two well-bred yearlings at the annual CTHS Ontario auction.

The McClelland family's racing legacy dates back to the late 1930s, when Ron McClelland established Maplewood Farm, a 200-acre facility dedicated to raising racehorses in Maple. His son Don took the reins in 1949, acquiring his own property in King City with his wife Jane-Anne, aptly naming it Farm On a Hill.

Utilizing one of Ron's mares, Noon Maid, Don bred the legendary King Maple, who captured every significant Ontario stakes race as a two-year-old and was named the 1953 Canadian Horse of the Year. King Maple would ultimately win 19 races, including 11 stakes victories, and set track records at both Woodbine and Long Branch.

Don and Jane-Anne's successful breeding program produced numerous stakes winners from their boutique broodmare band, including Jansum Regal, dam of Dauphin Fabuleux, the 1984 Horse of the Year and Champion Two-Year-Old for Sam-Son Farms. Jansum Regal's final foal, Myrtle Irene, also excelled, earning over \$700,000 as one of Canada's top mares.

The standout among their many successful horses was Gandria, by Green Dancer from Regent's Paradise, winner of the Prince of Wales Stakes at Fort Erie, where she defeated Queen's Plate champion Woodcarver. Gandria earned the title of Canada's Champion Three-Year-Old Filly in 1999, two years after Jane-Anne's passing. Don, who passed away in 2003, was inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame the following year.

Keith, one of five McClelland children, carried on the family tradition, initially experimenting with pinhooking and racing fillies. He met Rachel in 1998, finding in her a shared passion for farm life and horses. Rachel, an accomplished equestrian whose father taught animal sciences at the University of Guelph, grew up on a farm in Puslinch.

Two years after their marriage, Keith and Rachel purchased a weanling filly by Cape Canaveral for \$20,000. Her bloodlines traced back to Friars Carse, a champion filly bred to Man o' War, producing notable progeny like War Relic and War Kilt. Initially unsellable due to an unsightly splint, the filly, named Roving Angel, trained under Bobby Pion and earned over \$435,000, including two stakes wins.

The earnings from Roving Angel helped Keith and Rachel invest in their first broodmares, notably Chick, a daughter of champion Sky Classic, who produced Langstaff, a stakes winner and \$100,000 yearling sale graduate. In 2009, the McClellands reclaimed their family heritage when Gandria became available at the CTHS Mixed Sale, promptly purchasing her for \$20,000 in foal to Langfuhr. The resulting offspring, Wings of Paradise, continued the family's racing success, producing Pemberley, who earned nearly \$200,000 before being claimed last year. Tabei, currently racing, is another promising daughter of Wings of Paradise.

"My dad always told me to breed from good racemares," Keith said. "My parents didn't chase the most expensive stallions, but they found success in the middle market."

Beyond managing farm responsibilities, Keith and Rachel also balance other careers. Keith serves as a supply teacher for the Upper Grand School District, while Rachel operates her own business crafting handmade bags. They share their love of horses with their daughters, Claire and Emma. Claire, in particular, has embraced equestrian life as an eventer and trainer of young and off-track horses.

Although the McClellands have scaled back their operations slightly, they are now committed to breeding more locally rather than choosing American stallions.

“Supporting the local market is vital,” Keith emphasized. “The purse structure and breeder incentives in Ontario are strong, and Ontario-bred horses truly are the backbone of our local sales.”

With Tabei actively racing and promising yearlings preparing for the upcoming auction, the McClellands eagerly anticipate another fulfilling summer.

“We're still going strong and loving every minute of it.”

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