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Historic Hermitage Farm Sold

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Louisville entrepreneurs and philanthropists Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson have purchased historic Hermitage Farm in Goshen, Ky., from Carl Pollard, who will continue his breeding operation on the property under a leaseback arrangement. The purchase price was not disclosed.

Brown and Wilson had previously purchased 180 acres of unimproved acreage at Hermitage in 1993, and under the latest transaction are assuming ownership of the remainder of the 700-acre farm. The couple, whose other business interests include operating the eclectic 21C museum hotels and Kentucky Bison Co.

An April 28 announcement from the couple said the deal is expected to close by the end of May. Brown and Wilson said they will meet May 3-4 with architects and horse industry experts to "chart the proper course of Hermitage. We want to ensure the property remains pastoral, but also continues to be regarded as a site for world-class equine operations."

"Laura Lee and I are thrilled to have the opportunity to become part of Hermitage Farm's great history," Wilson said in a statement. "It has long been a dream of ours that Hermitage farm remain the same beautiful open green space that it is today. We've been working for the last few months to create this unique agreement with Carl, and are confident it will have long-reaching benefits for the community.

"We plan to honor the farm's remarkable tradition far into the future, and intend to place the property in an environmental conservation easement."

The new Hermitage owners said they also hope to generate "interest from international clients coming to Kentucky and searching for places to train and board prior to this fall's Alltech World Equestrian Games."

Pollard, the board chairman of Churchill Downs Inc. who has operated the farm for the last 15 years, said he will continue to do so for at least the term of the lease, which runs through 2013.

"I'll be 75 when this lease expires, so this arrangement is the perfect way for me to continue to protect the farm and employees, and yet free my children of the responsibility of managing such an operation," Pollard said.

Pollard purchased Hermitage from the late Warner Jones, who sold a then-world-record yearling for \$13.1 million in 1985. The colt, a half-brother to Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew, was named Seattle Dancer and became a grade II stakes winner.

Among the top horses produced by Hermitage were 1953 Kentucky Derby winner Dark Star and English classic winner Lomond.