

The famous Queen's Plate, a stakes race for thoroughbred horses, is the oldest uninterrupted stakes race on the continent. It received royal assent by Queen Victoria in 1859. It was first run at Toronto's Carleton Race Track on June 27, 1860. The event moved around Ontario before it settled permanently, with the Queen's approval, in Toronto in 1883.

In 1867, the St. Catharines Turf Club was selected to host the event on a leased oval track on the farm of Colonel Thomas Adams. The race was originally scheduled to run on May 24, Queen Victoria's birthday, but track conditions due to rain and a lack of entries, caused a postponement. The new date was set for June 18, just days prior to Confederation. The St. Catharines Turf Club was criticized for the lengthy postponement by the horsemen as they had spent considerably to arrive to race on May 24th. However the delay did not impact the attendance as over three thousand people filled the grounds under ideal weather conditions. However, the original fourteen entries for the eighth running of the Queen's Plate had diminished down to nine by the race date.

The nine horses entered were all Canadian owned, bred in Upper Canada, and had never won a match, purse or sweepstake in accordance with the then entry rules. Two heats and a final were held.

The winner of the Plate was "Wild Rose", a six-year old chestnut mare, owned by brothers James White of Bronte and the Honourable John White of Milton. The jockey was Alex McLaughlin. White Rose had won the first heat in a record time and was only half a second slower in winning the second heat. The second heat created a degree of excitement when White Rose's trainer (or groom), a Mr. Fagan, ran onto the track to encourage the jockey and the horse on. According to the news report in *The Evening Journal*, Fagan was struck in the shoulder by another horse and he was spun around and knocked over.

Though the trophy was indeed a plate in its early days, it has since been replaced by a gold cup. Plate winners earn a gift of 50 guineas from the monarch. But the little purple bag of coins contains not guineas but

sovereigns. Minting of guineas was discontinued by George III, whose forebear, George I, instituted the royal gift of 50 guineas for thoroughbred race winners, a tradition that remains today.