



The Road To New England

America's oldest original breed of horse, exhibited at the oldest all-Morgan horse show, which is held at the oldest agricultural fairgrounds in the United States: How did New England Regional get to where it is today?

By Helen Herold, *Director, National Museum of the Morgan Horse*



Bob Baker with Mr. and Mrs. J. Cecil Ferguson, all stalwarts of the Northampton memory banks.

The National,” as it was once called, was first held to commemorate the 150th birthday of Justin Morgan, the horse, in 1939 at Upwey Farm in South Woodstock, Vermont; then moved to the F. O. Davis’s Windcrest Farm in Windsor, Vermont in 1941 and ’42. After a hiatus during World War II the show resumed at Windcrest in ’47, ’48 and ’49, moving to Buena Vista Farm, also in Windsor, for the next two years.

The show had grown quickly and a larger facility with more capacity for horses and owners was needed. J. Cecil Ferguson, then President of the New England Morgan Horse Association, headed a committee to choose a new location that would continue the outdoor show and the family atmosphere. It is interesting to note that 1952 was the first year in Northampton and was also the first year that the American Horse Shows Association rulebook contained a separate division for Morgan horses.

The Three County Fairgrounds was founded in 1817 as the Hampshire, Franklin, and Hampden Agricultural Society. It’s stated

mission is to “promote agriculture and agricultural education,” which it does to this day through exhibitions, competitions, and demonstrations. Northampton is the geographical center of New England. A common misconception is that the fairgrounds are operated by the State of Massachusetts, when in fact they are privately owned. Many improvements have been made to the show ring and barns in recent years as part of a master plan to rejuvenate the facility.

Competing at New England creates memories that last a lifetime and have created extended Morgan families that have endured generations. The tradition of honoring great horses and larger than life people each year has created poignant memories and emotional moments.

The history of this great horse show consists of facts, figures, dates, show results, and weather reports. This history also lives in each of the experiences and memories that are special and unique to every one of us who spend the last week in July, each year, in Northampton. Don’t forget to pack your umbrella. ■