

Morgans--Past and Present

The offspring of Justin Morgan's sons and daughters worked alongside their owners clearing fields and forests. When the week's work was done, they provided transportation to Saturday market and Sunday meeting. In addition, they pulled stagecoaches throughout New England. In the 1840s several breeders in Vermont and western New Hampshire began efforts to concentrate the Morgan lines. By locating second, third, and fourth generation descendants of the original Morgan horse, they established the foundations of the breed. By the mid-1850s, Morgans were selling for high prices and were widely distributed across the United States.

Morgans set world trotting records when the sport of harness racing was in its infancy. Black Hawk and his son Ethan Allen were nationally famous and became household names. The majority of Morgans, however, did their daily work willingly and efficiently. They were highly regarded as general-purpose horses capable of performing a wide variety of tasks. During the Civil War, Morgans served as cavalry mounts and artillery horses. A cavalryman was only as good as his horse and the Morgan is mentioned in many sources as a highly desired horse during the Civil War. The First Vermont Cavalry, mounted entirely on Morgans, gained a wide spread reputation as a fighting unit. Of their more than 1,200 horses, only 200 survived the war.

The stamina and spirit of the Morgan, combined with its build and way of traveling, contributed greatly to the formation of other American breeds including the Standardbred, Quarter Horse, Tennessee Walking Horse, and American Saddle Horse.

Today, Morgans can be found in all 50 states and in more than 20 foreign countries. Individuals generally range from 14.1 to 15.2 hands, with exceptions under and over. Colors within the breed include chestnut, black, bay, brown, palomino, buckskin, smoky black, cremello, perlino and smoky cream. The Morgan has remained a stylish mount with conformation that lends itself well to a vast range of disciplines and Morgan versatility is widely recognized. The breed's soundness, power, agility, and stamina make it the choice of many driving enthusiasts. Morgans comprise a large number of entries at Combined Driving and Carriage events, and were the first American breed to represent the United States in World Pairs Driving competition. Morgans also excel in many other disciplines, including Park Saddle, English, Western, Hunter, Jumper, Eventing, Dressage, Reining, Cutting, Endurance, and Competitive Trail. They are gentle enough for lessons, 4-H, and Pony Club involvement, and due to their steady, comfortable gaits, are in great demand as therapeutic riding horses. Morgans are equally well known for their loving, kind dispositions. Those who buy a Morgan often say they have not only purchased a horse, but have welcomed a new family member.

Morgans in the Civil War

Morgans were a favored mount by cavalry soldiers in the Civil War. They were sensible under fire. They could march tirelessly all day. They maintained their condition on unpredictable rations. And they were loyal to their riders in all circumstances. Morgans recorded by Civil War

stories include Rienzi, Charlemagne, Little Sorrel. Other Morgans included the mounts of the 5th New York Cavalry: Pink, Betty, Cockeye, Prince, Frank, Mink, Mollie, Jack (#1), Topsy, Nellie, Jack (#2), Dunlap's mare, Sukey, Black Dick, Brydon's Nellie, Charley, Jane, Pomp, Wyman Horse, June, Lucy. A monument was built to honor Pink, and a marker was made for the grave of Billy. Betty Root served under Lt. Trussel in the 1st Vermont Cavalry. Old Clem was owned by Colonel Lemuel Platt who organized the 1st Vermont Cavalry. Clifton was ridden by Dr. William Capeheart of North Carolina until he was killed in action in March 1864.

The following regiments of the cavalry were mounted on Morgans when they were first organized. As horses were killed in action they were replaced by Government-owned mounts which varied in quality.

First Maine Cavalry

Second Michigan Cavalry

Third Michigan Cavalry

Fourteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry

Fifth New York Cavalry Company H

First Rhode Island Cavalry (Morgans and French Canadian horses)

Fourth Virginia Cavalry Company H-Also known as the Black Horse Cavalry or the Black Horse Troop, this unit created panic among the raw recruits of the Union army at the First Battle of Bull Run or First Manassas.

First Vermont Cavalry-this unit received shipments of more Vermont horses during the war, 200 of the original 1,200 Morgans used to mount this regiment survived the war. They inspired the following remarks:

"The mounts of the First Vermont Cavalry were decidedly the best I had ever seen. Everybody was attracted by them. I have heard both General Buford...and General Hatch...say that the mounts of this regiment was the best in the army. General Buford...also told me that he would as soon have this regiment of Vermont volunteer cavalry as a regiment of the regular army." - Charles Tompkins, Captain, U.S. Army

"The other day, a very fine horse being offered at the Inspection Ground, I bought him. He is a chestnut horse about 15.2 hands high, five years old, weighs between 1,000 and 1,100 and is pretty as a picture. He is of the Morgan breed, proud and high spirited, yet fearless. He will stand within four feet of a puffing locomotive and never thinks of being frightened. He is deep-chested and has very powerful and muscular limbs. Built for strength, speed and endurance. He

has a very fine head and ears and a neck that might serve as a model in painting. In fact, he is a prince among horses, and I doubt not that I shall be envied my treasure when I rejoin my regiment. I ride him a little every day and enjoy it hugely. It seems good to be once more in the saddle. On the street his proud bearing attracts much attention and the rascal gets more admiring glances than his rider." - Captain William C. Hazelton, 8th Illinois Cavalry, letter to his mother, June 3, 1864.

"Dad fought in the Civil War and saw a lot of that company from Vermont that had all the Morgan horses. Dad was with the artillery. Six horses were needed to pull each big piece of equipment and Dad got two of those Vermont Morgans for his lead team. He sure thought a lot of them and according to him there wasn't anything they couldn't do. They were constantly in demand to move pieces of artillery that were mired and other teams had failed to move." - A.G. Maier speaking of his father and his Morgan horses in 1950

Famous Morgans

Rienzi (a.k.a. Winchester) was ridden by General Philip Sheridan to rally his Union troops and was commemorated in the poem and painting, "Sheridan's Ride," written by Thomas Buchanan Read. Rienzi was preserved and is at the Smithsonian museum.

Little Sorrel was a Morgan ridden by Confederate General Stonewall Jackson in his Civil War campaigns.

Comanche, the lone survivor of the Battle of the Little Big Horn is widely considered to have been of Morgan lineage.

Charlemagne was the Morgan mount of General Joshua Chamberlain when he won the fight of Little Round Top during the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863.

Black Hawk, a son of Sherman Morgan, was famed for his speed and elegant style. He in turn sired the world champion trotter Ethan Allen.

Ethan Allen 50, the fastest trotting stallion of his day, he was sired by Black Hawk. The popular trotting horse weather vane was based upon his silhouette.

Morgans in Other Breeds

Ninety-percent of today's Saddlebreds carry Morgan blood. The original list of stallions selected as foundation sires by the National Saddle Horse Breeder's Association in 1899 included the Morgan stallions Cabell's Lexington and Coleman's Eureka. Today, the majority of Saddlebreds carry Morgan blood through the Black Hawk grandsons, Gist's Black Hawk and Indian Chief; and the great-grandson, Peavine.

Tennessee Walking Horses owe much to early Morgan blood. The foundation sire, Allan F-1, traced to Black Hawk through his dam. His son, Roan Allen F-38, also out of a mare tracing to Gifford Morgan.

The early Morgan contributed bottom, stamina, substance and purity of gait at the trot to the lines of the American Standardbred, enhancing the speed later given to the breed by the Hambletonian stallion.

Important Morgan Dates

1789-Justin Morgan (or Figure), the breed's foundation sire, is foaled in Springfield, Massachusetts.

1857-D.C. Linsley's book *Morgan Horses* is published. This is the earliest book documenting the history of Justin Morgan and America's first breed.

1894-Volume I of the American Morgan Horse Register is published by Colonel Joseph Battell.

1907-The U.S. Morgan Horse Farm is established in Weybridge, Vermont, by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the breeding and preservation of the Morgan horse.

1909-The Morgan Horse Club is formed at the Vermont State Fair.

1921-To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Justin Morgan, a Justin Morgan statue is presented by the Morgan Horse Club to the U.S. Morgan Horse Farm. It still is exhibited there today.

1921-Registry Rule II is adopted. This allows the registration of horses tracing in direct female line to Justin Morgan and having 1/32 of Justin Morgan blood.

1927-The Morgan Horse Club is incorporated as a membership corporation under the laws of the State of New York. This is the first time that certificates of registration were issued by the Morgan Horse Club.

1939-The first National Morgan Horse Show is held in Woodstock, Vermont.

1941-Owen Moon Jr. of Vermont starts the Morgan Horse Bulletin, now known as *The Morgan Horse* magazine.

1948-Registry Rule II is rescinded.

1949-Otho Eusey of Massachusetts became the printer of *The Morgan Horse* magazine, a duty he fulfilled until retiring in May of 1980.

1951-The U.S. Morgan Horse Farm is taken over by the State of Vermont, becoming the University of Vermont Morgan Farm.

1952-The Morgan Horse Show division was recognized by the American Horse Shows Association, which is now the United State Equestrian Federation (USEF).

1961-The book, *The Morgan Horse*, written by Jeanne Mellin, is published.

1964-The High White/Blue Eyes Rule is adopted by AMHA. This required complete and natural pigmentation of the iris in both eyes and that the horse have no natural white above the most prominent point of the radius immediately above the carpal joint or the point of the hock, except on the face.

1971-The Morgan Horse Club, Inc. is renamed the American Morgan Horse Association, Inc.

1972-The American Morgan Horse Foundation is established. It later becomes the American Morgan Horse Institute

1972-The Disney movie "Justin Morgan Had A Horse" is released.

1972-The Morgan Horse Judging Standards is adopted by AMHA

1973-The first annual Grand National Morgan Horse Show is held in Detroit, Michigan.

1976-The AMHA is recognized as a member of the National Bicentennial Sports Alliance, and the Morgan is recognized as the Bicentennial Horse.

1976-Regional representation to AMHA Board of Directors is instituted by the Association's bylaws.

1981-The AMHA receives an official invitation to participate in the Presidential Inaugural Parade for President-elect Ronald Reagan.

1981-All producing stallions must be bloodtyped; random 1 percent of foals tested to sire and dam.

1982-The First Annual Membership Convention and Seminar is held in Los Angeles, California, on February 12-14.

1985-A breed first, Morgan horses represent the United States in the World Pairs Driving Championships in Sandringham, England.

1985-The U.S. Postal Service issues commemorative stamps depicting the Morgan horse.

1985-Canadian reciprocity in effect January 1st.

1986-All producing maiden mares bloodtyped; maiden mares tested to sires.

1988-AMHA moves to permanent headquarters in Shelburne, Vermont.

1994-All producing mares bloodtyped; 100% foals blood tested to sire and dam.

1995-Registry Rule III, aka "Bright Line Rule, adopted.

1996-High White/Blue Eyes Rule rescinded, February.

1997-The Grand National & World Championship Morgan Horse Show celebrates its 25th year.

1997-The first Canadian National Championship Morgan Show was held in Regina, Saskatchewan.

1998-Voluntary DNA testing begins.

2001-Parentage verification by DNA testing required for registration.

2002-All applicants for Registration must DNA test to Sire and Dam

Important Towns for Morgan

Chelsea, Vermont-Location of the grave of Justin Morgan, the horse

Randolph Center, Vermont-Town where Justin Morgan brought his horse. Location where the man Justin Morgan is buried.

Shelburne, Vermont-Location of the American Morgan Horse Association headquarters.

South Woodstock, Vermont-Location of the old National Morgan Horse Show before it moved. Also the home of Upwey Morgan Farm, which has become the Green Mountain Horse Association.

Weybridge, Vermont-Location of the farm where the Government-bred Morgans for cavalry. Now it is the home of the UVM Morgan Farm.

White River Junction, Vermont-Where the Morgan Horse Club was formed in 1909.

Springfield, Massachusetts-Birthplace of the original Justin Morgan Horse.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma-Location of the Grand National & World Championship Morgan Horse Show® every year.

