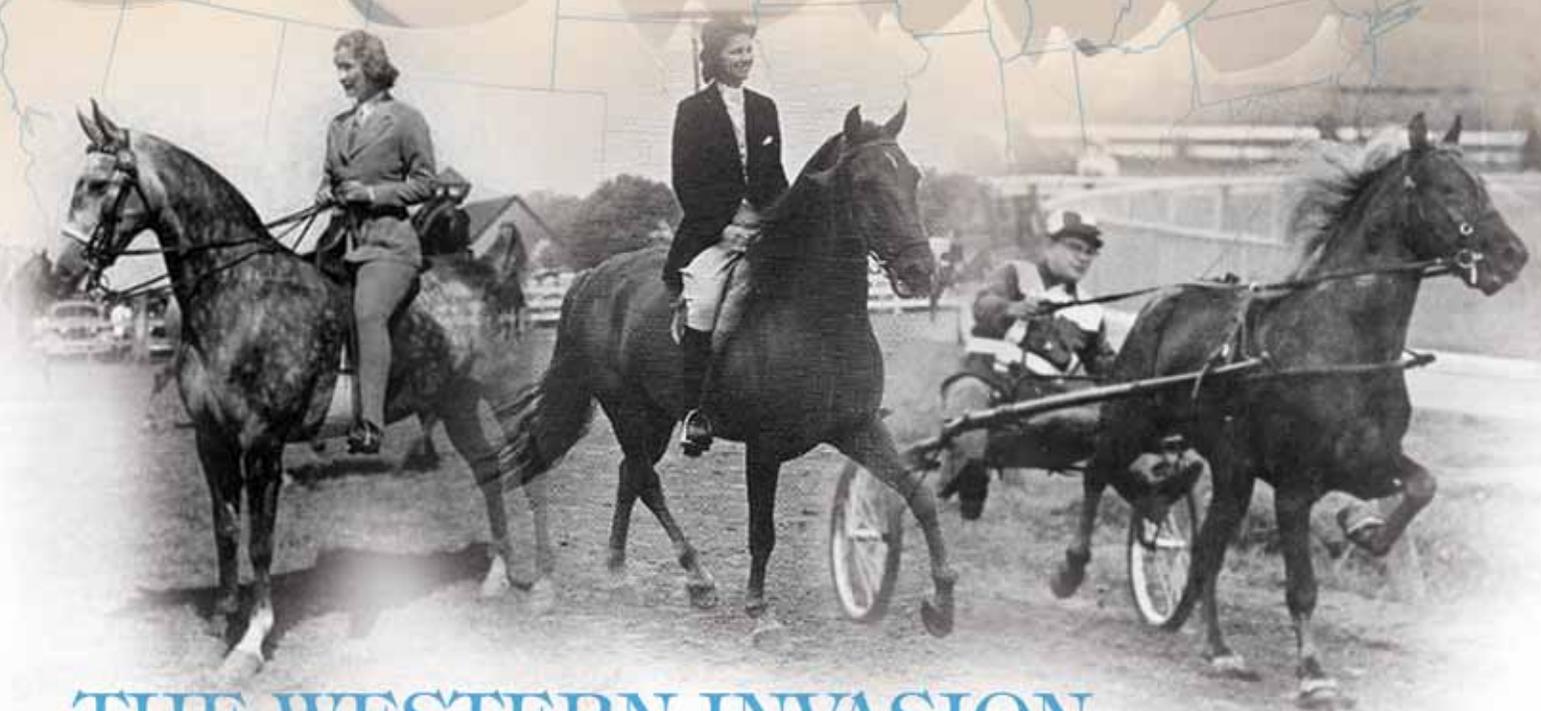


Called the “National,” but long an Eastern dominated event, Westerners still came to compete, and often win, at what was historically the Morgan breed’s premier event.



THE WESTERN INVASION By Renee M. Page of NORTHAMPTON

This year marked the 72nd anniversary of the Morgan horse show originally called The National and now known as the New England Regional Morgan Horse Show.

Before getting into The Morgan National I will review a bit of horse show history with some interesting facts.

The 1800s

The first recorded horse show was held in Lexington, Kentucky in 1812. St. Louis, Missouri was the largest city west of the Mississippi in 1856 and held the first great fair featuring the nation’s first major horse show that year. Fifty Morgan stallions were shown at the United States Fair held in St. Louis in 1860. Forty of these were raised in Vermont or were direct descendants of horses raised there.

The National Horse Show held in Madison Square Garden was founded in 1883 and holds the distinction of being America’s oldest indoor horse show. Morgan classes there were not offered until 1910.

The Vermont State Fair began in 1853 and was an early showcase for the best horses in the state. The exhibition of two contemporary rivals of the time, Hill’s Black Hawk and Hale’s Green Mountain, is legendary.

The fair was a good one in 1864 with Rutland Morgan winning 1st Premium Vermont State Horse Exhibition. Rutland was sired by Old Green Mountain and out of a daughter of Black Hawk.

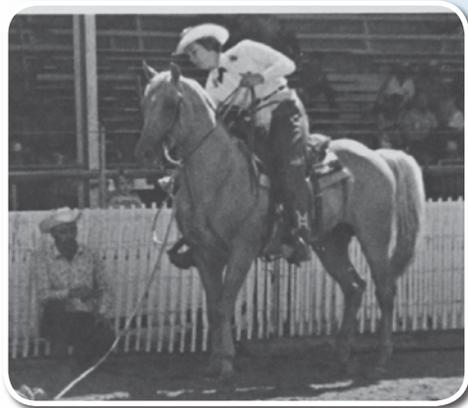
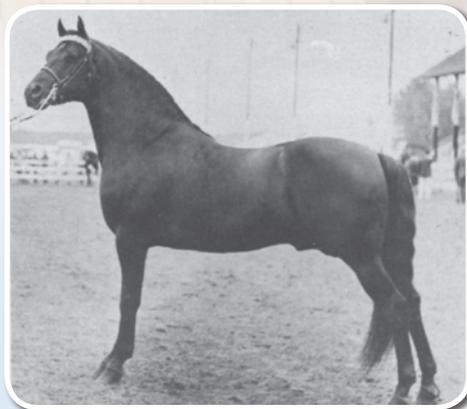
The 1900s

Missouri issued the invitation to “Meet Me In St. Louis” and Easterners came west to try for top honors at the 1904 World’s Fair officially known as the “Louisiana Purchase Exposition” since it celebrated the Centennial of the Louisiana Purchase. Described as “The Grandest and Greatest Fair Ever,” it brought Morgan horses from the East to compete with some of the West’s most prominent.

The Morgan breed at the World’s Fair tied for largest breed exhibited. Morgans and Saddlebreds were the only ones that needed thirty-five different sections of classes. These ranged from aged stallions, stallions three years and under four, to under one year, to just yearlings and so forth. One yearling owned by President Theodore Roosevelt placed second in its section. Frank Chandler of Vermont shipped Knox Morgan west and ultimately earned the title of Champion Morgan Stallion. J. C. Brunk from Illinois was there with his wonderful mare, Senata to win the mare division.

When hard times hit in the 1890s, the fair ceased to exist. With the turn of the century a new Vermont State Fair was revived in an effort to improve the state’s economy as well as an effort to

Above, left to right: Upwey Jubilee Kay, “the National’s first interloper,” Saddle Champion in 1940, 1941 and 1942; Jane Blue and Suncrest Cavalier in 1965 demonstrated what Morgan versatility was all about; George Gobel made his debut at the National Morgan Show as a two-year-old, winning the half mile race under harness, the mile race under harness and the roadster to bike class.



Clockwise, top left: J. C. Brunk's grand mare Senata with foal; Senator Reade, also a member of Brunk's string, placed 2nd in Three- & Four-Year-Old Stallions; Funquest Falcon won a red ribbon for Stuart Hazard in 1965; Archie O, a beautiful stallion and a famous trick horse, joined breeder C. J. O'Neill during his trek from Illinois to New England in 1942; Prince Of Pride ventured from Colorado to compete at the 1962 National.

revive the Morgan breed with a Morgan horse show. The first fair in 1907 was a resounding success and The Morgan Horse Show at the Vermont State Fair came to be considered an event of national importance as years passed.

J. C. Brunk decided to take his Morgan string eastward to compete at the 1909 Vermont Fair. They were loaded into a railroad boxcar and shipped east. One cannot be certain, but Brunk may have been the first Midwesterner to challenge the Morgan exhibitors on their Eastern front. His grand mare, Senata certainly was the most illustrious of the group along with her colt, Sangamo. Senata and Sangamo were winners for Mare With Foal. The colt also won the weanling stallions. "It was an object lesson to Eastern breeders to see in what sleek round condition a broodmare can be kept in Illinois. The mare is exceptionally well bred, not quite as typical as some, but quite worthy of a place in any Vermont breeder's stable" were the words written in the write-up published in *The Vermonter*. Senator Reade was also a member of the string, placing 2nd in Three- & Four-Year-Old Stallions.

Then there was the other Brunk mare. Jenny C was her name. She must have caused quite a stir, ultimately winning the Wardner Trophy over Bob B. This from *The Vermonter*: "The Illinois mare should be seen by every student of the Morgan breed. Her short back, her short, flat but very nimble legs, her proudly carried head and neck, are typically Morgan. She is eight years old, chestnut, a good actor, well mannered, fleet and fairly well bred."

So impressive was the little mare that E. A. Darling purchased her on the very first day of the show. By the time the class with the Wardner Trophy was judged Darling owned Bob B and Jenny C. Certainly two exceptional examples of their breed, both were

close to the Hale's Green Mountain pattern. Jenny C was almost as gay in her postures as a stallion" according to *The Vermonter*, "While it would have pleased the spectators to have the Vermont-bred horse win the trophy there was a generous burst of applause for Mr. Brunk, driving the little mare he brought from Illinois, to receive the trophy from Mr. Wardner."

All in all, 1909 was a very important year for the Morgan horse, since it was at the Vermont Fair that the group of breeders decided to form the Morgan Horse Club.

Brunk returned to the Vermont Fair in 1910, this time with Senata, her foal Black Chief and another of his prized mares, Ben's Daisy. She won the 15-mile endurance race (fifteen miles to a speed wagon). She was nineteen years old. She did it well under the hour and a mile and a quarter in the lead.

The Vermont Fair was considered to be of national importance and the peak year for entries was 1912 with 208 Morgan horses coming from New England and West. The decline began in 1914. World War I caused the fair to be cancelled in 1917. In 1918 it was also canceled due to an epidemic of Spanish Flu. Torrential Rains caused the celebration of the fair's 10th anniversary to be a dismal failure in 1919 as well as 1920. Efforts to keep the fair persisted but it continued to decline and after the death of C. C. Stillman in 1926 support from the Morgan breeders simply ceased. The great flood of 1927 ended the Vermont State Fair forever. The Morgan breed would not see a show of such magnitude until 1939 when the Morgan National debuted.

The Birth of The National Morgan Horse Show

1939 was the 150th anniversary of the birth of Justin Morgan as



Clockwise, top left: Doris Ryan showed *The Brown Falcon* to an impressive win in the Three-Year-Old Park Saddle Class; *Modelette*, the 1958 Two-Year-Old Park Harness and In-Hand Champion; *Alfalee*, 1960 Three-Year-Old Mares and Geldings in Harness and Junior Harness Stake Champion; *Foxy Sentora* traveled from Ohio with Floyd Mack to compete in 1962; *Bette Belle* won the Mare 15 Hands and Over Class at the 1960 show with Doris Ryan.



well as the 100th anniversary of the birth of Colonel Joseph Battell, founder of the American Morgan Horse Registry. Owen Moon of Upwey Farms was assigned the task of planning an exhibition of all available Morgan horses to commemorate the event. Since Moon already hosted the Vermont 100 Mile Trail Ride it was logical that he would complete the three day weekend with an all Morgan horse show. And so, the National Morgan Horse Show was born. The show was held at Upwey Farm for two years and then from 1941 thru 1949 it moved to Windcrest Farms, and then to Buena Vista Farm in Windsor, Vermont for the 1950 and 1951 shows.

The show, increasing in numbers each year and attracting entries from the entire Northeastern section of the country, simply outgrew the Vermont facilities. It moved to the Tri-County Fairgrounds in 1952 and continues to attract Morgan devotees from far and wide.

Throughout the early years the show was home to mainly Northeastern born and bred horses shown by New Englanders. A glance at the very early show results indicates the show was pretty much dominated by the United States Government Farm, along with the Orcutt family.

The Morgan horse was, after all, an Eastern product, but their popularity determined their migration West and with the passing of time earned the respect of breeders across the entire country. The Brunks and C. J. O'Neill in Illinois, as well as the J. J. Lynnes family in Iowa come to mind as early breeders who also found themselves showing their prize Morgan horses. They were not the only ones, but just a few who pop into my head as I write this.

So, in the beginning, the New Englanders really cornered the market at the National. Or did they? In actuality, for the most part, they did. However, look at the results for the second show in 1940 and you will see that Upwey Jubilee Kay was the Saddle Champion, a title she kept in 1941 and 1942. While she carried Owen Moon's

prefix she was, in fact, bred by J. C. Brunk, making her The National's first interloper. And she was not only Midwestern bred but was quite controversial due not only her gray color, but also because her dam was a registered American Saddlebred.

C. J. O'Neill was the first Midwesterner to challenge the Eastern breeders when he loaded his prized Morgan stallion, Archie O into a truck and headed to New England from Manteno, Illinois to participate in the 1942 National. Archie O was not just a beautiful Morgan stallion but was noteworthy as a famous trick horse. That year the show claimed 23 exhibitors along with 60 horses.

Gerald Taft was another early Midwesterner who traveled east to show off his Springbrook Morgan horses. He brought Springbrook Linda Lee, Justa, Rozella, Springbrook Peggy Ann and Springbrook Midnight to Northampton in 1947. He also returned in 1948. By this time the show was growing in numbers with nearly 150 registered Morgans from the six New England states, plus New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Michigan.

Taft was an avid exhibitor throughout the years and in 1953 swept the harness division with Springbrook Peggy. By that time the show had grown to 196 entries. Two years later, in 1955, the show was described as the biggest and best National with attendance at an all time high with 250 entries.

In 1957 there were 290 entries from 13 States. Stuart Hazard sent *The Brown Falcon* with Doris and Ed Ryan. He may have been the first Morgan horse bred and owned west of the Mississippi to compete at the National. The little brown *Flyhawk* son had everybody talking when he entered and won the Three-Year-Old Stallion Saddle class that attracted 26 entries including *Waseeka's Nocturne*.

The Ryans of Irish Lane were back for more in 1958. This time it was Ed Ryan driving Stuart Hazard's pretty bay *Modelette* to win the Two-Year-Old Park Harness. She was also first in In Hand.

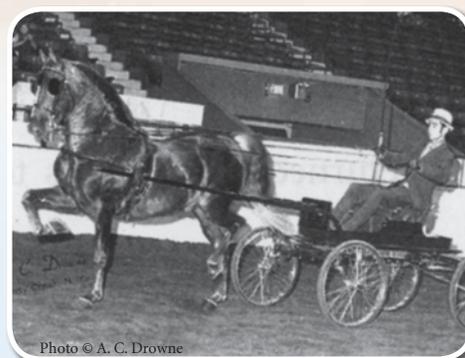


Photo © A. C. Drowne

Clockwise, top left: Doris Ryan drove Belafina to win the Mares & Geldings In Harness in 1964; Irish Breeze, 1965 Reserve Grand Champion Mare; Fleetwing's Prophet won the Park Harness Championship and the Park Harness Stallions Under 15 Hands in 1970; Black River Pegasus claimed the blue in 1971, winning Three-Year-Old Stallions In Hand and Harness as well as the Junior Park Harness Championship; Prince Omar, 1971 Grand Champion Gelding.

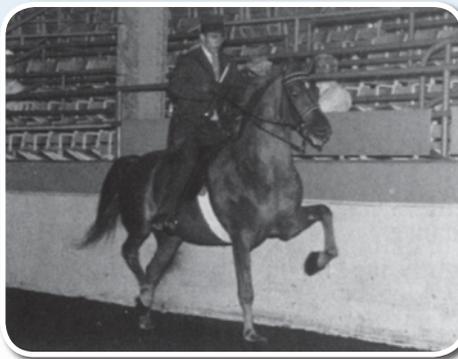


Photo © A. C. Drowne

Big Bend Farms also made the trek east with the acclaimed roadster, George Gobel, who not only won the roadster, but also both trotting races driven by Harry Andre.

Heading to New England in July became habitual for the Ryans and in 1959 Doris was driving Springbook Camille while Ed was in the buggy with Foxfire's Suzay. Chief Red Hawk won the Roadster Under Saddle that year. And Modelette returned to win the Three-Year-Old Mares and Geldings in Harness as well as Three-Year-Old Saddle. Big Bend was also back, with Windcrest First Love, Hopi Azee and of course, George Gobel.

1960 was the year Alfalee, owned by Stuart Hazard shown by the Ryans, was a winner in harness. Doris Ryan, up on the powerful brown Flyhawk daughter, Bette Belle, took the blue in the Park Saddle Mares, 15 hands and over.

Four Midwestern Morgan breeders found their way to Northampton in 1962. Beverly Du Shone from Michigan entered Secret Vigil. Walter Carroll sent Danbury, Foxfire's Suzay and Green Hill's Hi Tone (Yearling Stallion winner) from his Green Hill Farm in Michigan. The National became habitual for Big Bend Farms and they were there. Mary Woolverton ventured out from Littleton, Colorado to show Prince Of Pride and Redwood Mollie while Floyd Mack from Ohio exhibited Foxy Sentora.

1964 was a good year for the Midwesterners with Doris Ryan driving Belafina to win the Mares and Geldings in Harness. Judy Swan and Trophy's Becky Date for Val Farms made her first appearance in New England. Rich Rudish was there, as was Claude Morrette and Kane's High Society. The Woods, Vee Ann and Ernie, were seen on the grounds with Vee Ann showing Lurgan in harness.

1964 was also noteworthy because the Mosher Brothers traveled from Wyoming to give New Englanders a glimpse of how adept the Morgan could be as cutting horses.

Jane Blue hauled Suncrest Cavalier from Kentucky to show

at the 1965 National and demonstrated what Morgan versatility was all about by winning the dressage, stock horse, and road hack as well as the English Pleasure Stallion and Gelding events. This would be just the first of many trips east for Jane.

Doris Ryan's plucky little Irish Breeze was the Reserve Grand Champion Mare in 1965. Then Doris was in the irons to win the Reserve Junior Park Saddle title. Irish Lane took the blue in the Three-Year-Old Geldings In Hand class in his Northampton debut, while the lovely Summer Tan placed second under saddle. Funquest Falcon was on hand receiving a red ribbon for Stuart Hazard.

The year was 1969 and two boys from Ohio turned the tables on New England showing two Fleetwing sons. Black River Dandy was crowned Grand Champion Stallion and little brother, Black River Major was the Junior Champion Stallion.

The Rise of the Professional Trainer

Up until the late sixties the Morgan show horse, as well as the Morgan Horse Show was pretty much a family affair and, for the most part, the National was the All-Morgan Horse Show. Morgans were shown across the country at open shows and State Fairs. It had the distinction of being the only All Morgan horse show.

When various Morgan Horse Clubs decided to hold breed shows across the nation, the regionals were born. At that time there were just a few professionals who specialized in training and showing Morgan horses, such as Joe Parker and Bob Baker, and of course, Bob Orcutt and Doris Ryan, who also qualified as breeder/owners.

As time marched on and they began to dominate the show scene, more breeders began sending their horses with professional trainers. In so doing, Morgan horse shows were forever changed. Carousel Stables found their way to the Jubilee challenging all and creating a stir. It wasn't long until they were a full-fledged Morgan



Photo © Johnny Johnston

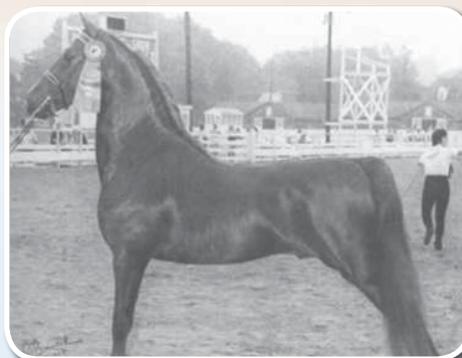


Photo © Bob Moseder

Clockwise, top left: *Topside Firefly* was crowned *Grand Champion Mare* in 1975; *Eaton's Talisman* and *Schenectady* traveled with the Price family to compete in 1975; the *Rutledges* continued their path to glory, led by *Val's Terry*; *Rapidan Apollo* had an outstanding show career before being used primarily as a breeding stallion.

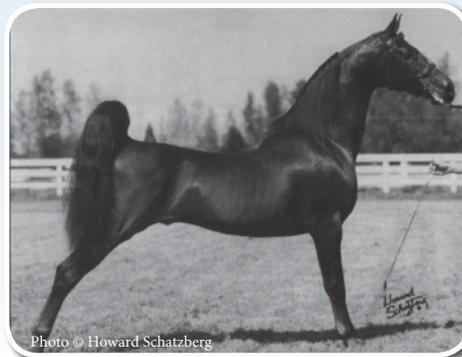


Photo © Howard Schatzberg



Photo © Bob Moseder

training stable. Bob Whitney saw the writing on the wall and became one of the most formidable of all Morgan trainers along with wife, Judy, in the history of the Morgan breed.

In 1970, the Morgan National became the Eastern National and the show was held in Springfield, Massachusetts for the 28th annual show with 626 entries. Horses came from Colorado, Indiana, Illinois, Oklahoma, Washington, Michigan, Ohio, Florida, and Canada, as well as the New England States.

Fleetwing's Prophet dominated the park division, winning the Park Harness Championship as well as the Park Harness Stallions Under 15 Hands and Park Saddle Stallions Under 15 Hands, shown by Phil Price. Phil also drove Big Bend Black Rose to win the Roadster To Bike class that year. Melissa Eaton rode the Carousel trained Holly's Teacher's Pet to first in Ladies Park Saddle Mares.

In 1971 it was back to Northampton with more than 600 Morgans showing. Phil Price owned and showed Prince Omar to the Grand Champion Gelding title. Big Bend H Bomb was the Junior Park Saddle Champion with Penny Price up. Phil took Black River Pegasus to win the Three-Year-Old Stallions in hand and harness as well as the Junior Park Harness Championship. Black River Glory wore the blue in the Yearling Fillies. Owen Price was in the buggy to win the Park Harness Mares and Geldings with UVM Princess.

Francis K. Smith sent his Emerald's First Date from Denver, Colorado to Fred and Jeanne Herrick to show. And show she did, winning the Ladies Park Harness and Ladies Park Saddle.

This was just the beginning as exhibitors continued to send their favorite horses east to compete. Numbers continued to grow with more than 800 in 1975. Ralph Ketcher from Temecula, California sent the beautiful *Topside Firefly* to Jim Anderson. A Western girl, born and bred in Colorado, and owned by a Californian, was the beauty queen that year, wearing the crown of

Grand Champion Mare.

The Price family had a whole slew of notables with the likes of Big Bend H Bomb, *Eaton's Talisman*, *Schenectady*, *Sunday Hawk*, *High Hawk*, *Royal Oaks Andrew*, *Shaker's Fancy* and *Bayberry Belinda* scoring well.

And of course, Bob and Judy Whitney were there with the *Rapidan* contingent—*Rapidan Apollo*, *UVM Revelry*, *UVM Nancy* and *Rapidan Arletor* are just a few who come to mind.

A review of the 1975 event tells us the 136 classes offered were overflowing and that the list literally expanded to 180 with all the splits. It was also the first year that three judges officiated in every class.

The biggest, however, was yet to come. Morgan horses numbering 1,000 or more took over the Tri-County Fairgrounds in 1976, making it the largest Morgan horse show ever. Once again the Prices and Whitneys came, saw and conquered. A new face as an exhibitor was *Raintree Morgans* with the nice Junior Pleasure Driving mare, *Zephyr's Ebonette*, shown by Max Brittingham to the Junior Championship. Jill Decker from Michigan won the Equitation Championship and the *Rutledges*, with *Val's Terry*, continued their path to glory.

And so it continued to thrive throughout the 70s and even into the 80s and 90s (Time and space does not permit a review of the past 31 years but during these years the show continued to see the invasion from the west). No one worried about the stabling, the heat, the rain, it was the Morgan horse show and to many stalwart diehards it is still the one. Even the birth of the Grand National in 1973 has not deterred exhibitors from heading East to show with the best of New England. Seventy-two years later and Midwestern breeders, owners and trainers continue to head East to show and win in Northampton. New England is still the place to be in July! ■