



~ BREEDER PROFILE ~

THE MORGANS OF HEART'S DELIGHT FARM AND THE WILLIAM H. MINER AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A visionary agricultural institution started in the 1950s provides both Morgan horses and education to the equestrian world today.

When you think about educational institutions that breed Morgans, it's likely that the University of Vermont comes to mind. The University of New Hampshire,

the University of Massachusetts, and the University of Connecticut have also bred many famous Morgans over the years. But there is yet another institute of higher learning that has dedicated breeding and educational programs focusing on the Morgan horse. The historic Heart's Delight Farm at the Miner Institute, located in Chazy, New York, is breeding Morgans that are putting their HD prefix front and center in the sport horse world.

By Laura Hornick Behning

Heart's Delight Farm was developed by William Henry Miner (1862–1930) on his 144-acre family homestead, beginning in 1903.

Orphaned at a young age and sent to live with his aunt and uncle in Chazy, Miner grew up with a love of the land and deep appreciation for farming. Upon reaching adulthood, William brought his passion for learning and good work ethic to Chicago where he worked in the rail yards to fund his engineering education. Facing the devastating loss of their infant son, William and his wife, Alice, moved to Chazy to heal. Mr. Miner made quite a fortune in developing mechanical inventions for rail transportation and, by 1918, the farm had grown to

ABOVE: Panoramic view of Heart's Delight Farm, circa 1915. The only three buildings visible in this image still standing are the Dairy barn (now the Horse Barn) (1906) which is the long building with a ramp; the Farm Office (1908) which is the dark building with light trim near the gardens and in front of the horse barn; and the Store House/Heritage Exhibit (1905) to the left of the horse/dairy barn with the entrance gate next to it. **INSETS:** William Henry Miner, pictured in his early forties; The Morgan mare Rose Queen 02233 (Rex x mare by Jefferson), pictured as a two-year-old in the coach barn at Heart's Delight, January 1910 (photos courtesy James A. Fitzpatrick Library at Miner Institute/Amy Bedard, librarian).



LEFT TO RIGHT: September 2022 view from the Wayside Walk (original farm road) near the farm office. You can see the Horse Barn in the center and Farm Office on the right. The Heritage Exhibit is at the left and essentially hidden by trees (photo by Amy Bedard); Inside the historic horse barn at Miner. Originally the dairy barn, it has been converted for horses and features 22 stalls (photo by Christopher Crosby Morris).

12,000 acres—4,000 acres of cropland, 2,000 acres of pasture, and 6,000 acres of woodland. A variety of animals lived on the farm, including beef and dairy cattle, mules, draft and riding horses, sheep, pigs, chickens, turkeys, pheasants, and brook trout. The extensive facility employed 800 workers and featured a dairy, box factory, icehouse, natatorium, greenhouses, and grist mill. There was a 20-bedroom guesthouse and an entertainment center named Harmony Hall, which included an auditorium.

Miner's will provided for the establishment of a school on Heart's Delight Farm dedicated to teaching scientific and environmentally sound agricultural practices. The William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute, a private, not-for-profit educational institution, was founded in 1951. The primary research programs at the Institute are focused on dairy nutrition, management, and behavior; equine reproduction, nutrition, and behavior; and forage, soil fertility management, and water quality. The Institute is funded in part from the William H. Miner Foundation, which manages the endowment set up by William Miner. Additional funding for the Institute comes from research grants, income generated from the farm, and educational programming. Currently the farm is home to more than 600 Holstein cattle and around 25 Morgan horses.

Katie Stuart Ballard, a life-long Morgan enthusiast and graduate of UVM, launched the equine program in 1986 as a sister program to the Summer Experience in Farm Management (dairy). The decision was made to focus on registered horses, reflecting Miner's belief in improved genetics. Morgans were an easy breed choice for many reasons, including their versatility and hardiness. Photographs from the Heart's Delight archives include horses that are undoubtedly Morgans, and Mr. Miner owned at least one registered Morgan mare, Rose Queen 02233 (Rex 4684 x mare by Jefferson), foaled in 1908.

The equine courses at Miner began on the books at UVM as a work experience/wet lab to support the academics of a college student's career. It was through the Summer Experience in Equine Management (SEEM) that Miner found its present Equine Manager, Karen Nevius Lassell. "There was a tri-fold brochure

pinned at the horse barn classroom for the Summer Experience in Equine Management at Miner Institute," Karen says. "I applied for the summer after my sophomore year but was kindly turned down with the encouragement to re-apply after junior year for which I was accepted. That was 1989." The fledgling herd at Miner was just getting started via a couple of purchased and donated horses that included some mares and a stallion. Karen and her fellow students learned the basics of starting the first HD-prefixed horse, HD Valcour (Helicon Hermes x Foxglenns Charity), to drive, as well as foal handling basics, mare reproduction, and stallion collection. The older horses were used for competitive trail rides, showing, and a drill team. "Following my summer, I was invited to return after graduating for a year-long internship starting in January of 1991," Karen continues. "That year I was essentially Katie's assistant manager. My responsibilities included the day-to-day chores, working horses, and helping teach the SEEM students. My time was extended as I took some adult education classes at UVM and Katie Ballard's family began to grow, so I stepped up to a bit more supervision of the program. Finally, when Katie moved positions at Miner into the Director of Research in the mid-1990s, I became the Equine Manager and have stayed ever since."

Growing up in the Boston suburb of Chelmsford, Karen was a self-described "barn rat." Every day she and a group of like-minded kids were dropped off by the school bus at the barn where they went to work cleaning stalls, painting fences, and taking care of the horses. Her first horse, "Sunny," was said to be part Morgan and the two participated in local open shows, in training level dressage and at novice level eventing. She also did hunter paces and even joined a few hunts with the Old North Bridge Hounds. "It was a pretty hard-to-beat childhood," Karen says. "I wasn't entirely sure what my career would be, but just knew it involved horses!"

She attended the University of New Hampshire (UNH) as an Animal Science major with an emphasis in Equine Studies (no Equine Major was offered at the time). There were still a few UNH-prefixed Morgans in the herd and, in addition to the basic nutrition, health, management, and reproduction classes, the Morgans were part of the Colt Training Class, where Karen drove UNH Jetsetter.

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BREEDING AND YOUNG STOCK

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Canon, by UVM Springfield and the only offspring of the famous park mare Pastorale, stands at Miner; The 2014 stallion Field Of Honor; Field Of Honor and Karen Lassell; The yearling colt HD Knox is an excellent example of the type of Morgan produced at Miner.

(photos by Christopher Crosby Morris).

Riding and instructor classes were focused on balanced seat, dressage, and eventing, under the tutelage of Janet Briggs.

Today, Karen oversees the management of the Miner herd, makes breeding decisions, and teaches the equine educational programs. The farm raises three or four foals each year, and the SEEM students and interns, under Karen's supervision, teach them their groundwork. Older horses learn to be lunged, long-lined, started in harness or under saddle, and then are promoted as sale prospects. Miner also works with stallion owners who wish to stand their stallion but lack the facilities and training to do it themselves. "The stabled horses and breeding lab are housed in one of the original Heart's Delight Farm buildings, the dairy barn,

which has been renovated over the years into a very functional space," Karen says. "We train stallions to the phantom, do semen evaluations, offer shipping services, as well as accommodate client mares to either breed to our stallions in-residence at Miner or with transported semen from the stallion of their choice. I'm more than happy to train stallion owners and mare owners how to collect their own stallion or follow their own mare's cycle and breed. I want clients to get what they need from Miner's services, whether that's having us handle it all or learning from us to do it on their own. We work closely with our local veterinary services, but our experience in understanding the breeding cycle allows us to generally get things right the first time. We do all our own

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BREEDING AND YOUNG STOCK

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Sugarlane Dominique with her 2021 colt HD Adirondack, by Privilege CH; UVM Kimberly with her 2018 colt HD Providence, by Privilege CH; Springs National Velvet with her 2021 filly HD Holley, by Townshend Sweet Legacy; UVM Loyalty with her 2017 colt HD Freedom, by Privilege CH (photos by Christopher Crosby Morris).

artificial insemination and mare treatments here.” The Morgans bred at Miner carry the HD prefix (for Heart’s Delight) and are named after places in New York state.

Training of the farm’s young stock is accomplished with Karen’s team of one or two year-long interns and the SEEM students. “We start all our own horses here in their basic training and always have, with a few exceptions,” she says. “HD Providence is with Dustin Freiheit as a Western pleasure junior horse and stallion prospect, and Steve Davis expertly handled HD Freedom for the 2017 NYSSA weanling sweepstakes. As our breeding program has expanded and the genetics of the herd have evolved, our young horses have sold quickly, and we’ve not kept many horses to

maturity over the last eight to ten years.” HD Providence (Privilege CH x UVM Kimberly) is fresh off the Four-Year-Old Western Pleasure Reserve Championship at the 2022 Jubilee Regional and will be representing the farm at Morgan Grand National this fall.

Over the years, Miner has leased or stood such well-known stallions as DPR Bandstand, The Preacher, Ultimate Creation, Legacys Viking, Tedwin Titlist, Aljaks Seeing Double, Delmaytion Razmataz, and Townshend Rob The Wave. “Our first donated stallion was the park horse Trophy’s Beau Dandy,” Karen says. “He wasn’t used much for the breeding stock here, but he was ideal for teasing, teaching collecting, and some stallion semen preservation research. Our early purchased mare from a dairy farm in



FEATURED SPORT MORGANS BRED AT MINER

LEFT TO RIGHT: HD Bliss with owner Samantha Dobbins, up; HD Jefferson and trainer Natalie Bennett at the 2021 Grand National & World Championship Morgan Horse Show® (photo © Howard Schatzberg).

New Hampshire, Peterbarb Top Delite (Waseeka's Tiz Tops x B L Incredible) was very successful in the show and dressage ring and bore four foals before her untimely death due to colic. Her first foal, HD Saranac (by Belcrest Anthem) was exceptional as a young hunter pleasure horse with me and was many times a winner in the carriage division. Now at 29 years old, her show days are over, but she's more than happy to teach students how to drive a pretty horse!"

Another mare donated to the program, Sugarlane Dominique (Courage Of Equinox x Sugarlane Masquerade), produced 12 foals with the HD prefix. "Her youngest colt, HD Adirondack (by Privilege CH) is quite special and could end up a nice sport horse or Western pleasure prospect, the routes most of her offspring have taken," Karen says. Another daughter of Dominique, the five-year-old HD Waverly (by Townshend Rob The Wave), was recently purchased by Denny Emerson to be his next Morgan mount to bring along in dressage and use in his continued efforts to promote the breed. Denny says, "Waverly is a combination of two friends' breeding programs, Townshend and East of Equinox. So, there's that. Plus, she has that big weathervane trot that many of the good trail horses can pull out of the hat so readily." Now 21 years old, Sugarlane Dominique is retired from broodmare duties and is living her best life in a field with fellow senior Fayrehale Almanzo Wilder.

Miner Institute's relationship with the University of Vermont has had a marked influence on their breeding program, and the blood of generations of UVM greats runs strongly through the farm's current herd. Canon (UVM Springfield x Pastorale), leased from Janet and Chris Morris, heads up the current stallion selection at Miner. The lineup on the distaff side features UVM Loyalty (UVM Lash x UVM Mystic), UVM Kimberly (UVM Equity x UVM Happy), and Spring's National Velvet (UVM Springfield x Futurity's Velvet Vicki), all leased from Janet and Chris Morris, as well as the farm's own HD Villenova (DPR Noble Viking x Spring's National Velvet). Miner offers stallion station services for resident studs Privilege CH (UVM Springfield x Nemours Celestial Lady)

and Field Of Honor (Privilege CH x UVM Loyalty), both owned by Chris and Janet Morris, and this season stood Pond Brook Sampson (Otter Brook Xenophon x Taproot Molly Stark) for John Lawrence as well.

The generosity of Morgan breeders over the years has enabled Miner to acquire outside stallion services and breeding stock. The current herd features stallions and mares owned by Janet and Chris Morris of Paradise Morgans. The Morrises began breeding Morgans in 1997, shortly after they acquired UVM Springfield and UVM Christine from the UVM Morgan Horse Farm. Then headquartered in Kentucky, the couple also bred Thoroughbreds, in addition to their Morgans, from 2004 to 2014. Their farm offered pre- and post-natal, post-surgical, artificial insemination, embryo transfer, and related equine breeding services. "When the time came to disperse our Kentucky herds, we did not pursue a strategy of auctioning them to uncertain circumstance but rather sought like-minded breeders with whom to collaborate in further realizing the potential of these thoughtfully curated combinations from all over the Morgan gene pool," Chris explains. "A good friend recommended Miner to us; in a few weeks Karen Lassell came to look. She left with two stallions, a gelding, and two mares to add to Miner's Heart's Delight Morgan program. Within a year we saw the first Paradise/HD offspring and were delighted; HD Kingston and HD Bliss were in the first few crops by Canon. Subsequent years would see HD Burke, HD Providence, HD Freedom, and HD Springfield (by frozen semen). Things were turning out well—friendships were blossoming—so much so that after winning 2014 World Champion Western Pleasure, Privilege CH and his son, Field Of Honor joined UVM Kimberly, UVM Loyalty, and Spring's National Velvet at Miner."

Chris and Janet's favorite aspect of the horse business is breeding, and they are passionate about the way their horses are managed. "We learned valuable lessons from running our own horse farm, and Miner's program, deftly managed by Karen Lassell and Katie Ballard, fits us and our horses perfectly," says Chris. "The quality, conformation, and tractability of the resulting stock shows us all we



FEATURED SPORT MORGANS BRED AT MINER

LEFT TO RIGHT: HD Rochester and trainer Tecia Buttons (photo courtesy Cynthia Mulligan); HD Kingston and owner Kimberly Brow winning Amateur Masters Western Pleasure at the 2021 Summer Kickoff Horse Show (photo © Sarah Bennett)

need to see about how well our stallions are meshing with the herd at Miner. In fact, this year we have designated Field Of Honor our freshman sire; we can't wait to see his first foal crop in 2023. Waiting in the wings we have HD Knox (Canon x Spring's National Velvet), who, of course, is descended from the Knox Morgans of antiquity, a stallion prospect with unique breeding and, we think, great potential. Since joining forces with Heart's Delight, our lines have flourished, their progeny finding their way into wider Morgandom."

Karen estimates that more than 150 interns have completed the program at Miner since its inception. Most had never worked with Morgans before but soon developed an appreciation for the great qualities of the breed. Some have later purchased their own Morgan, often from Miner. Samantha Dobbins, one of Karen's 2014 summer interns, recalls her first meeting with HD Bliss (Canon x HD Massena). "Friday, June 13th, under a full moon, 'Bliss' made her entrance two weeks early and was our second foaling that day," Samantha says. "When she gained her feet, instead of walking over to her dam, she made her way over to the door where another intern and I were standing. And I remember thinking, 'Oh boy, I'm in trouble.'"

For the rest of her internship, Samantha helped teach Bliss and the three other foals to lead, to have their feet picked, to accept fly spray, "and all the other little things that go into making baby horses into solid citizens," Samantha continues. "I left at the end of the summer to finish my degree, hoping it wouldn't be goodbye forever. When I graduated college I decided to go back to Miner as the year-long equine intern. The first thing I did when I returned in the fall of 2016 was go find Bliss, now a two-year-old. When she saw me standing at the gate, she came over to investigate. I like to think she remembered me, but more likely than not she just saw a person and came running. As the year-long intern I got to pick one horse that I worked with exclusively as a project. That was an easy decision. During my year at Miner, I helped break Bliss to saddle and got her going solidly at walk and trot and started her

cantering. When it came time to leave Miner at the end of my year, I knew I couldn't leave Bliss behind. So, two months after I got settled in my new job working as a young horse groom at a warm-blood breeding farm, Bliss came down to Maryland to join me."

For the first year that Samantha and Bliss were together they focused on flat work, but Samantha's hunter/jumper background was calling for more. "On New Year's Day 2019, I popped her over a jump for the first time," Samantha says. "Two weeks later I took her to her first-ever show and we cleaned up. That year, we showed at a local horse show series and ended up with seven year-end division champion and reserve champion titles. In 2020, we did another local show series and ended up with five year-end division championships. In 2021, we started doing our first rated shows and ended up seventh in the Maryland Horse Show Association Regional Open Jumpers. Currently, we're sitting in second in the same division." Samantha and Bliss will head to the Maryland Horse Show Association Finals in November.

Josephine Trott had worked with Karen during her six years as manager of the cooperative horse barn at UVM in the early 2000s. When she and her husband left Vermont for new jobs at UC Davis in 2007, she was advised to find a companion to live with her "slightly neurotic" warmblood at their new home. "I'd been promoting the Morgan horse around the world with my friend and colleague, Dr. Betsy Greene, while at UVM, so when we had to leave Vermont for California I thought it fitting that I bought a Morgan horse," Josephine explains. "It was logical to ask Karen if she had a big Morgan (myself and my husband are both six feet tall), who was sound, had a good temperament for a husband horse, and would be a good companion to a bossy Hanoverian. She said she had a four-year-old green-broke gelding named HD Redford whom she thought would make a good police horse, but I tried him out. My impressions were that he was very willing and very sensible and since then he's proven 100-times over that he is both."



FEATURED SPORT MORGANS BRED AT MINER

LEFT TO RIGHT: HD Redford GCH and Josephine Trott; HD Providence and Dustin Freiheit (photo © Avalon).

Josephine's new purchase had an interesting trip westward to his new home on the West Coast that included being stopped by a snowstorm in Colorado. At one point, Josephine could not reach the shipper to check on her horse's whereabouts. It turned out that "Red" had grabbed the shipper's phone and broken it while he was leading them to pasture on a layover. "So, that was our introduction to owning a Morgan," she laughs. "I can attest that he has since then also eaten a pager of a friend who let him get too friendly with her pockets, eaten a plastic bag containing carrots (I found the bag after he deposited it undigested in a pile of manure), and also a paper bag of fresh basil that somebody left me at the barn but left it too close to Red's inquiring mouth!"

HD Redford GCH (Tedwin Titlist x Perinton Serenity) and Josephine have a long and impressive list of accomplishments together. They began competing in USEF/USDF-rated shows at Intermediate II and Grand Prix in 2018 and earned many year-end awards, including USDF All Breeds Award Open and AA Champion at both levels, ending up 40th in the Horse of the Year awards at Intermediate II. They also earned the bronze, silver, and gold medallion that year from the AMHA Open Competition Awards, and the Morgan Dressage Association Intermediate II and Grand Prix Champion Award of Excellence. Topping it off, Red earned his GCH title that year. The following year, Red and Josephine were Grand Prix All-Breeds Champion and Red became the first winner of the platinum medallion from the AMHA Open Competition Awards. Josephine didn't want to go all the way to Oklahoma for the 2019 Grand National and only compete in two dressage classes, so she and Red started competing in Western dressage and working hunter over fences. They were third in the

2019 Level 3 Western Dressage World Championship and reserve champion in the Amateur-Junior Exhibitor Working Hunter Over Fences. "We were also reserve world champion for FEI dressage, with the winner being the extremely successful Deb M'Gonigle with Forsite Renoir GCH," Josephine says. "In 2020, I started competing in working equitation. Red has been National High Point Champion at Advanced Working Equitation two years running, and I hope to move up to the masters level before we get too old." Rounding out his impressive resume, HD Redford is used in riding lessons, including bareback and bridleless. "It's really hard not to laugh though, to see a hapless rider trotting around, desperate to canter, but Red's just ignoring them because they're not sitting up straight when they ask," Josephine says.

Kimberly Brow of North Berwick, Maine, had never heard of the Miner Institute, but during the summer of 2016 she was intrigued when she spotted an ad for a yearling colt that Karen had posted on Facebook. She wasn't really in the market for a youngster but she contacted Karen for more information anyway. "Several comments on her post referenced his likeness to his grandsire, Courage Of Equinox," Kim says. "I've always been a fan of that lineage and was excited when she filled me in on his sire, Canon. We drove to Chazy, New York, to meet "Kingston," and I was totally impressed with the beautiful green pastures, the Museum, and the stables. After talking with Karen, I was even more impressed with their knowledge of breeding Morgans, along with the Institute's studies of potential health issues such as Cushings, laminitis, and insulin resistance." Kingston was brought out to one of the pastures to play and show off and Kim took dozens of photos which she looked over on the ride back home. "There were no bad photos of him," she says.



FEATURED SPORT MORGANS BRED AT MINER

LEFT TO RIGHT: Denny Emerson has chosen HD Waverly as his most recent Morgan prospect for development; HD Harkness competing at the 2013 Walnut Hill Carriage Driving Show, Mary Chris Foxworthy, whip.

“Something told me that if I didn’t buy him, I would regret it. So, I contacted Karen the next morning and the purchase was made.”

As a yearling, Kingston stood 14.2 hands but surpassed the predicted size of 15.3, reaching an impressive 16.1 hands at maturity. Kim placed him with Judy Nason for his saddle training. Judy showed him in Western pleasure as a junior horse in 2019 and did quite well on the New England circuit and at New York Regional. The pandemic put a temporary halt to Kingston’s career in 2020, but he was back at Judy’s for the 2021 and 2022 show seasons. Kim showed him these last two years with blues at several prestigious New England shows, including first place in Amateur Masters Western Pleasure at the 2022 Summer Kickoff Show and at the 2022 New England Regional. Future plans for Kingston include moving him into the Western dressage arena.

Many of us have experienced the addition of a horse that really wasn’t in the plan, so to speak, but things just fall into place. Such was the case for Cynthia Harding, who brought her mare to Miner to be bred to Canon in the spring of 2019. “I honestly had no intention of buying another horse at the time,” Cindy says. “I saw ‘Tommy’ (HD Jefferson) sticking his head out of his stall. There was something about him. I walked over to him and just stood there talking to him and petting him. It was love at first sight.” A few weeks went by and she could not forget the friendly bay gelding who had stolen her heart. She called Karen and asked if he was for sale; he was, and Cindy had a new horse.

Foaled in 2014, HD Jefferson (Democracy x Spring’s National Velvet) made his dressage debut in 2020. He won three classes and placed second in three more at the Dressage at the Seacoast in Mystic, Connecticut, in August 2020 with a high score of 66.9 percent, ending up as the 2020 Region 8 [Massachusetts] Schooling Show Champion of the Year. His 2020 show season was cut short by equine influenza, a cross country move to Cindy’s new home in Arizona, and shipping fever. Tommy and trainer Natalie

Bennett were back in action in 2021, winning two firsts, a second, and a fourth at the 2021 Arizona Dressage Association Spring Celebration show, with a high score of 69.6 percent, their personal best in a rated show at the time. At the 2021 Morgan Grand National, Tommy and Natalie took a first and two seconds in Grand National Dressage Training Level Division and took home the Dressage Training Level World Championship [High Score] with an average of 72.759 percent, topping their former personal best score. “Tommy winning at Morgan Grand National in 2021 was a lifelong dream come true,” Cindy says.

Tommy is currently taking the year off from showing, training at first level with plans to show at the 2023 Morgan Grand National. It’s well known that Morgans are like potato chips, you can’t have just one; Cindy is currently in the process of purchasing Tommy’s half-sister from Miner. “I love the breeding, training, and sense of community at the Miner Institute,” she says. “The barn is always open to visitors. Karen Lassell truly loves the Morgan breed, and she produces beautiful, trainable, and levelheaded horses. HD Jefferson is all of those. He’s always a barn favorite, and his trainers are head over heels in love with him.”

Cynthia Mulligan’s gelding, HD Rochester (Canon x Sugarlane Dominique), now six years old, is just beginning his dressage career. Cynthia had inquired on another horse at Miner in the fall of 2018. After speaking to Karen about what type of horse she was looking for, she was given a selection to potentially choose from. “I just knew from the videos I would end up with ‘Chess,’” Cynthia says. “He was smaller than I wanted, but big-bodied and had such a twinkle in his eye, and with his way of going I just knew if he made it to the dressage arena he would be recognized. Chess is happy, cheeky, and a joy to own. I’ve trained many as an amateur rider/owner but never one like him. He’s silly, smart, but most importantly, a wonderful partner to ride. He’s working first level at home now but is still too green to start showing. At six, he’s a late bloomer

BREEDER PROFILE HEART'S DELIGHT FARM AND MINER INSTITUTE



PROMOTION

LEFT TO RIGHT: Twenty-nine-year-old mare HD Saranac at the July 2022 Almanzo Wilder Homestead Open House, student Nora Allen of Cazenovia College, whip (photo courtesy of Lynn Warren); Director Eric Bendick with Privilege CH, Karen Lassell, and Chris Morris on the set of the PBS production *American Horses*, August 2021 (photo courtesy Grizzly Creek Productions).

physically but now gaining strength, and we hope to start showing in the near future. The best part about Chess is he makes you smile and laugh every ride. He emanates joy in his personality and willingness to work for his rider. You can see it on his trainer's face!"

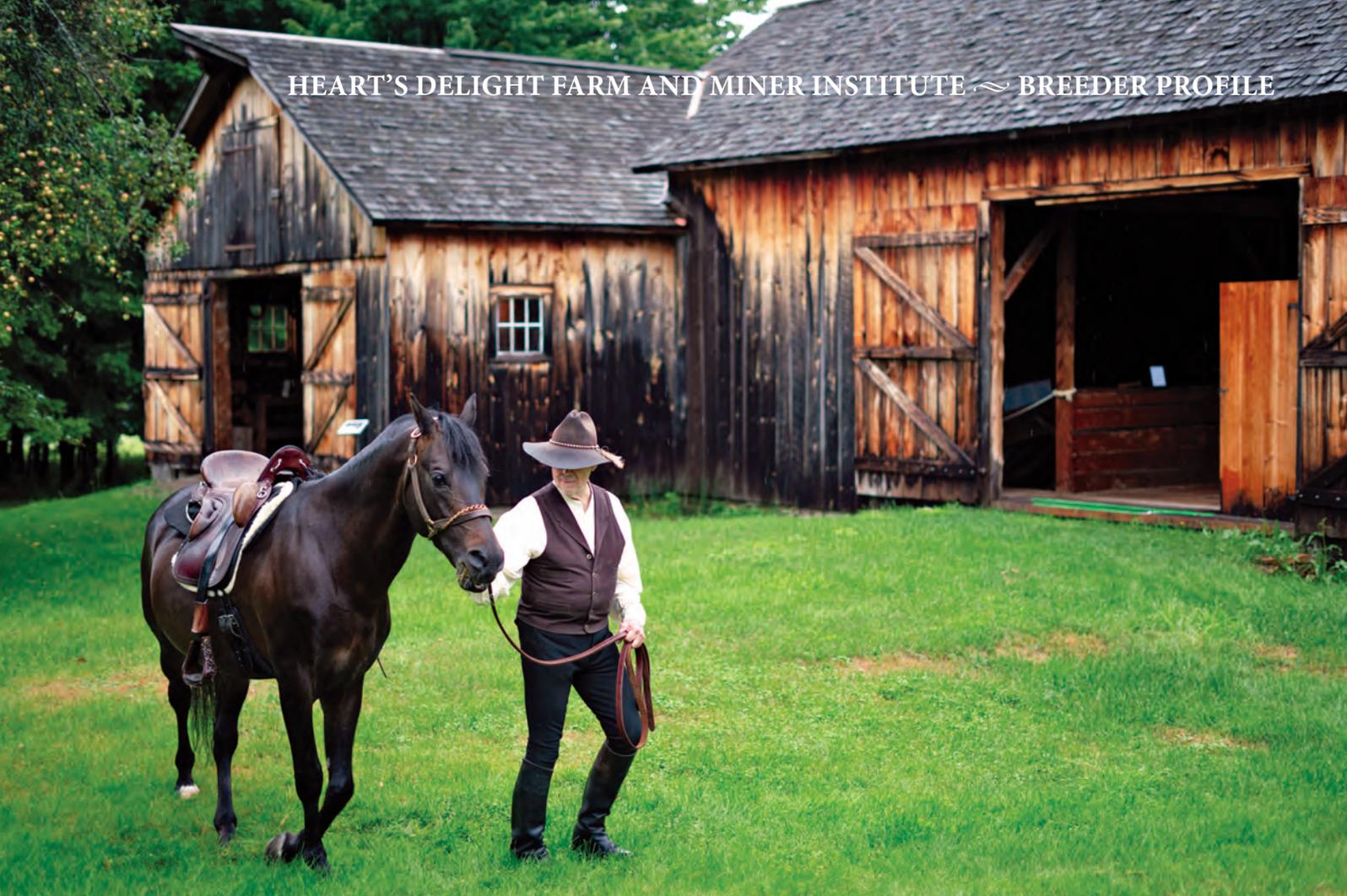
There have been more than 80 Morgans foaled at Heart's Delight since the program's inception. One of the earlier foals produced by the farm was HD Harkness (DPR Bandstand x Foxglenns Charity), born in 1998 and owned by Mary Chris Foxworthy. This bright bay gelding has had an incredible 20-year show career, mostly in the carriage driving division, where he has demonstrated his talent at many prestigious shows, including the Walnut Hill Carriage Driving Show. "In July of 2000, we were looking for a young Morgan horse to add to our little herd of three other Morgans," Mary Chris explains. "This was before YouTube, Facebook, and websites, so we contacted owners and breeders throughout the United States and Canada and had them send us videos of their sale horses. It was a hard decision, but I was leaning toward a lovely two-year-old bay stallion. So, we gathered a group of friends and had a video viewing party—with carrot cake, of course! After the viewing, everyone was to vote by secret ballot. The decision was unanimous. It was decided that the lovely two-year-old bay colt, HD Harkness, would become a member of our family."

On the trip home from New York with their new addition, the Foxworthys got stuck on a bridge in Toronto during a tornado warning. "The horse trailer rocked terribly in the wind, and we feared that poor "Hark" would panic and get injured and probably never want to get in a trailer again," Mary Chris recalls. "When the storm died down, we got out to check on him and he was quietly and happily munching his hay. No storm was going to keep him from enjoying a road trip to some awesome new destination. To this day, when he sees the horse trailer with the doors open he starts nickering and whinnying; it's all we can do to hold him back. He stops and then leaps—literally leaps into the trailer." This extremely calm nature landed Hark the job of leading the local Michigan

Morgan horse parade unit for several years. He had to go through Detroit Mounted Police horse training and was the only horse to pass on the first day. You might even have seen HD Harkness on the header of the AMHA website's pleasure driving page. Still going strong at age 24, Hark is fresh off his latest carriage driving win in ladies driving at the Villa Louis Carriage Classic in September.

The mission at Miner—education, demonstration, research—is taken to heart by everyone working there. While their focus is students and education, Miner has participated in many research studies on Equine Metabolic Syndrome in collaboration with Michigan State University, the University of Minnesota, and Virginia Tech. Teamed with Texas A&M, Miner supported research evaluating the effect of shipping follicular aspirations from equine ovaries on the subsequent in vitro maturation and fertilization of horse oocytes (eggs). "Of the three parts of Miner's mission, the research is probably the least involved relative to horses, but I will say that we approach all our work with horses from a scientific basis and think like researchers relative to figuring out best practices for each horse," Karen says. "We have conducted our own research into vitamin E supplementation in Morgans, as well as various methods to improve semen preservation techniques. In the equine recreation world, there's not a lot of research dollars available, unfortunately. With the future addition of a full-sized indoor arena, we hope to add other aspects to our research program involving the horse-human connection."

The goal of education at Miner includes promoting the breed and Karen and her team have found several unique ways of accomplishing that. In July, they once again brought Morgans to demonstrate at the Almanzo Wilder Homestead's Open House in Malone, New York. Karen's familiarity with the site led to her suggesting its use for the PBS documentary *American Horses*, produced last summer and aired in the spring of 2022. "They'd already done some footage at the UVM Morgan Horse Farm and were looking for some historical looking bits to round out the piece,"



PROMOTION

Privilege CH and owner Chris Morris as Justin Morgan on the set of the PBS production *American Horses*, August 2021 (photo courtesy Grizzly Creek Productions).

Karen explains. “Based on the story they were trying to tell, I just knew the Wilder farm would be the ideal location. Privilege was chosen to portray Figure under saddle, and his owner, Chris Morris, a music teacher in his own right, fit the bill beautifully as Justin Morgan, the man.”

The PBS episode featured four American Breeds: the Morgan, Quarter Horse, Mustang, and Appaloosa. Director of the series, Eric Bendick, explained why the Morgan was chosen. “With the Morgan, we found a quintessential American origin story and, remarkably, one that could be pinpointed to a single American horse. For this reason alone we couldn’t imagine leaving the Morgan horse out of a story whose purpose was to reveal the evolution of American breeds across the country. The motivation to tell the story was also to bring a natural history perspective to the legendary horses among us, many of whom we take for granted without a complete understanding of how, where, and what forces created them. It was the novel potential of seeing these American horse stories from the horses’ perspective, rather than the human perspective, that drove us at Grizzly Creek Films and our producers at *PBS Nature* to develop the concept of “American Horses” and to select singular breeds that helped reveal diverse pieces of American history, landscapes, and traditions along the way.”

It seems appropriate that a place with a history as rich as that

of Heart’s Delight Farm should raise a breed as truly American as the Morgan horse. But there is something more, almost intangible, about Miner. Chris Morris understands it well. “The staff at Miner don’t shove it at you or go glassy-eyed relaying their remarkable history, but the people who daily hum around the Miner campus are powered by something that if pressed, they call the ‘Miner Spirit,’” he says. “To us, it is an upper octave of purpose in keeping with William Miner’s call to his utopian vision of hosting research, demonstration, and education, in loving service to agriculture and the betterment of those dedicated to improving the means, whereby we bring beauty and sustenance from the earth. And this is what bonds us with Miner, where a small herd of our mares and stallions are breeding on to posterity and doing so in a manner that reflects the Miner Spirit, creating beautiful, sound, and sane Morgans for the future.” ■

The author wishes to thank Karen Nevius Lassell, Christopher Crosby Morris and his wife, Janet, Miner librarian Amy Bedard, and all of the owners of the wonderful Morgans featured in this article for their assistance in putting it together. To learn more about the Heart’s Delight Morgans and the Miner Institute, visit their website at www.whminer.org.

THE MISSION OF MINER

How both summer and long-term internship programs are producing horsemen for the future and meeting Miner's educational purpose.



GRADUATES OF THE MINER INSTITUTE'S INTERN PROGRAMS

LEFT TO RIGHT: Lucy Finocchiaro Charvat; Ryan Brooks; Shannon Heibeck Tarrant with HD Sandy Creek (UVM Jubilant x Sugarlane Dominique)
(photo © Terry Young); Carrie Ostrowski (photo © Mb Dixon Photography).

Miner Institute strives to produce sound, sane, and typey Heart's Delight Morgans, but the real "product" is students. Chartered as an educational institution in 1951 as a center for teaching best agricultural practices, William H. Miner's vision continues today. Since its inception, thousands of students, ranging from school-aged children through young professionals pursuing advanced degrees, have been beneficiaries of the Miner legacy.

Resident internships center around the Heart's Delight Morgans, the keystone of the equine program. The Morgans' smart, inquisitive, and sensitive nature makes them ideal teaching horses. Students learn how to be more observant of themselves, their environment, and how to "read" the horses. Sarah Ruby, now a Veterinary Assistant in the Theriogenology Department at Cornell University, gives credit to her time at Miner as excellent preparation for her work: "Knowing Morgans' brains inside and out has helped me work with other breeds. The hands-on experience at Miner is something I use every day in my current job."

The Summer Experience in Equine Management (SEEM) turned 35 years old in 2022 and has 160 alumnae. Working as a tight-knit team under Equine Manager Karen Nevius Lassell's guidance, SEEM and year-long interns provide the backbone of work on a busy farm. Miner's learn-on-the-job ethic is part of every interaction with the horses and their care.

Now a Master Instructor at Colorado State University, Ryan Brooks notes that the diversity of his experiences at Miner "from training, facility management, to reproductive work, remains part of my toolbox today."

Lucy Finocchiaro Charvat reflects on how much she learned in the daily operations of a farm, becoming more aware of health-related issues in horses. In her role as a certified therapeutic riding instructor, Lucy brings her Miner experience to her lesson horses and recognizes Karen's teaching methods in her own work. She says, "Karen was always explaining different approaches while working with us and it has helped me be a better instructor for the varied backgrounds and abilities of the riders I work with."

At Miner, the soft skills of teamwork, communication, leadership, and empathy for horses and humans alike are the hard-to-measure qualities that come from participation. Shannon Heibeck Tarrant felt well-prepared for her career, which has taken her from grooming to managing a sports medicine practice to her role as an equine veterinary recruiter. Shannon says, "In addition to the invaluable technical skills, Miner fostered leadership and communication skills and provided a network within the equine community."

Young people may graduate from the program, but they carry a piece of the place when they leave. Back home from competing in the World Singles Driving Championships in France, Carrie Ostrowski says, "My life has many moments I can point to that are 'butterfly effects,' that if they didn't happen, I wouldn't be here today. Being an intern at Miner is one of them. I explored all of my interests in the equestrian world and made contacts that led me to where I am now. Miner will always hold a special place in my heart!"

The gravitas of the Miner legacy and Heart's Delight Morgans provides graduates the resources, both personally and professionally, to make the equine community better. ■