

## **Lippitts, Their Conformation, Nerve Force, “Way of Going,” and Height**

By Deborah Siegrist

### Justin Morgan 1

Four noted stallions were kept for stock that were sired by Justin Morgan 1-Bulrush, Sherman, Woodbury, and Revenge. These stallions exhibited a striking resemblance, in size, character, and form to each other and more importantly to their sire, Justin Morgan. No other known stallion has been noted for stamping his get with his likeness and characteristics, so much so, that Justin Morgan is well known as being the “creator of his own race.”

The Lippitt Morgan traces back to Justin Morgan’s son, Woodbury Morgan 7. Woodbury was also called the “Burbank horse,” after one of his owners. The Woodbury Morgan was Justin Morgan’s most famous son, Gifford Morgan his most noted grandson, and Silas Hale's Green Mountain Morgan his most popular great grandson. Woodbury Morgan 7 was the largest son and possessed a higher degree of the bold and fearless nervous energy that his sire, Justin Morgan was known for.

Woodbury was 14.2 - 14.3 hands high, and weighed from 988 pounds to 1040 pounds. He was of a dark, rich chestnut color with his off hind-leg white from the foot half way to the hock; he also had a white stripe in his face. This stripe began at the edge of the upper lip, filled the space between the two nostrils, and extended more than half way to his eyes. He had a curled mane and tail which was neither thick nor long but still it was full. Woodbury Morgan’s legs had some long hairs on the back-side, but were well shaped, larger than Sherman Morgan’s and not as large as Bulrush’s. His tail had been docked as a colt and left to be about 10 inches long. Like his sire, Justin Morgan, he inherited all the striking peculiarities which made the Morgan horse famous.

“His head was small and lean, with a fine, firm muzzle, the nostrils very large and full, face straight, very wide between the eyes, which were dark hazel, very large and prominent, and showed no white around the edge of the lid. His ears were small and fine, but rather short, and set somewhat wider apart than many would consider consistent with perfect beauty.”

“He was close and compactly built, with heavy quarters and deep flanks; his chest was good and the shoulders finely shaped; he had a short back, and broad, sinewy loins.”

Like Justin Morgan he had what has been termed “nervous energy.” His temperament was so nervous that it was impossible for him to keep still, but still he was controllable.

The color of his stock was mostly bay and chestnut. Woodbury died in Alabama but was kept a majority of his life in Vermont and it was the opinion of Frederick A. Wier that “it is his branch of the Morgan stock which has mainly contributed to establish the very extensive reputation and celebrity which the Vermont Morgan horses have so justly obtained.

The “nerve force,” is an important known peculiarity of the Morgan and was the reason Justin Morgan could out pull, out walk, trot and run any horse. Having a “high head carriage” was also a common noted peculiarity. Both nerve force and high head carriage were noted in Justin Morgan’s sons: Sherman Morgan and Woodbury Morgan. These 2 important traits were passed on generation after generation. An example would be the Wiggins Mare whose son, Ethan Allen 3d was known for both qualities and he was the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of Woodbury’s progeny.

From A. Fullerton Phillips book: “The Morgan Horse as I Found Him,” “The Wiggins Mare, was of such a nervous temperament, that she was very much abused until she fell into the hands of Mr. Wiggins, it was impossible to do anything with her. Nearly all of our great broodmares in history have had that nervous disposition and invariably have imparted great energy to their offspring.”

Morgan type is unmistakable and well noted. They are low built, compact, short backed, well rounded, blocky (square) and have rather short legs. Long bodies were created by wide quarters. The hips were wide and the shoulders were also wide, long and laid back. The Morgan’s short limbs are what made them “low.” The cannons and pasterns were short along with short, close joints. Further verification that Morgan horses were equipped with “short legs” we have the statement by F.G. Chandler; “The old horses my father raised were short legged, round backed, blocky horses measuring about 14.2 hands high and weighing about 950 lbs.; possessing great style and with head held erect, arched necks, great nerve, fine action and much endurance...”

Another quip on short legs possessed by the Morgan horse is from D.C Linsley’s “Morgan Horses; page 67; “A good many of them have considerable long hair about the legs, and this we do not like, as it detracts from the beauty of the animal, and retains the moisture about the limbs longer after the animal has been exposed to the wet. True, if carefully groomed, they will not be left wet, but it is a melancholy fact that grooms are not always thus careful. Where the limbs are otherwise unexceptionable, we do not consider this a very serious objection, especially in horses whose legs are short, the vital energy great, and the circulation consequently good.”

Mr. Weissinger, former editor of the Louisville (KY) Journal (American Morgan Horse Register I; page 18) said; “but their most striking peculiarity is in their carriage; legs well under, trot quick, short and springy, the forelegs bending remarkably; the very reverse of the slow, slouchy movement of the race-horse in the trot.”

The important **peculiarities** of the Lippitt Morgan are:

**Nerve Force/Nervous Energy**

**Upright Head Carriage**

**Compact with short back and short legs, heavy quarters, deep flanks**

Dr. Parks Lippitt Morgan Description

The Morgan should have a fine, expressive head; well crested neck, coming out of the top of the shoulders, blending smoothly through the withers into the well sprung, deep body, with round rear quarter, which balances the front quarters.

The whole structure should be heavily muscled and round, giving the impression of great substance and refinement, combined with strength and agility, grace and beauty."

The neck should be of medium length, never long....(it) should be heavily crested; the stallion having a heavy rounded crest and the mare a fine knife-like crest. The throttle should be comparatively deep but clean cut."

The withers should not be high and narrow....The crest and withers should blend together, with no depression on the topline in front of the withers."

"The croup should be long, wide and slightly sloping."

And Lastly:

The Morgan is a small, compact horse. The height should range between 14.1

and 15.1 hands...the ideal is 14.3 hands and 1000 pounds. The best type is associated with the smaller individual. A Morgan over 15.1 usually lacks many of the breed characteristics."

With that being said, we will move on to the true Morgan's “way of moving.”

There is much verification as to how Justin Morgan and Morgan horses of his time moved:

“The old Justin Morgan was said to have been a very fast walker, but in trotting he had a short nervous step, a low smooth gait, square and fine. He was not remarkably fast as a trotter, though his speed was never developed as it has been with the greatest assiduity in many of his descendants. In travelling he raised his feet but slightly, only enough to clear the inequalities of the ground, but not withstanding this he had the reputation of being very sure-footed. His style of movement was lofty, bold, and energetic, full of life and spirit, but he was managed with great ease, and it was said that a lady could drive him with perfect safety. He was much admired as a parade horse.”

From the Southern Cultivator IV 1846; “There is no doubt whatever of this – that the breed of the Morgan horse was, and IS now, in the few instances where it can be found, far the best breed of horses for general service that ever was in the United States – probably the best in the world; and it is remarkable that this breed was and is now known by many striking peculiarities, common to nearly every individual. They have a full, heavy, wavy mane and tail, good head and neck, small, well-shaped ears, are broad between the eyes, legs broad and short with large tendons, bodies rather thick set; but their most striking peculiarity is in their carriage, legs well under, trot quick, short, and springy, fore legs bending remarkably, the very reverse of the slow, slouchy movement of the race horse in a trot. They are likewise exceedingly hardy and well-tempered.”

Because of the way the Morgan moved they were often termed as “daisy clippers.”

From the Spirit of the Times; Jan. 08, 1842 page 535:

“A Morgan glides away at eight or nine miles in an hour, with an easy and eager movement, as if his legs felt best when so employed.”

From an edition of the Albany Cultivator in 1847:

“They are of medium size, from 13 ½ to 15 hands high;...They have an easy rapid trot, and glide along with a good load, without clatter or apparent effort, at the rate of 10 to 12 miles an hour.”

The Lippitt Morgan of today still retains this “way of going” unlike the modern show Morgan who can be seen exhibiting movements like that of the Hackney or Saddlebred.

Foreign blood, be it legal or illegal, is not seen in the Lippitt population due to the diligence of the owners/ breeders who believe in keeping the Morgan blood “pure.”

Morgan movement and “type” have been kept as characteristics within the Lippitt Morgan population. True Morgan movement is a direct result of the way the Morgan is built. The strong, powerful muscles acting on short bone

structure of the limbs produces rapid, powerful and graceful movements. Always, the accent of the action produced is on the flexion of the pasterns, not the knees and hocks as seen in Saddlebreds and Hackney horses. Because of the way a Morgan is supposed to move his stride is not long nor high, but very powerful, elastic and elegant.

## Height

A few quotes always come to mind when discussing height and the Morgan Horse:

“The best type is associated with the smaller individual.” (Dr. Parks Standards/Justin’s Drench)

Another quote comes from an old Morgan Horse breeder named Amasa Bemis who is credited with saying; “Never display your ignorance in speaking of a Morgan Horse by mentioning size, as that is the thing he does not possess.”

Height and movement go hand in hand, and so it has been stated that; “If size is, as is claimed by some, the measure of power, it will be found that form is the measure of action. Too much size is, indeed, incompatible with rapid and long-continued action.”

(Morgan Horses by D.C. Linsley, page V.)

The average height of the Lippitt Morgan horse still follows with the statement from The Morgan Horse Register I; “The average height of Morgan horses may be stated at from 14 to 15 and a half hands. There are a few that will fall below 14 H, but the number is very small, and there are also some that will exceed 15 and a half hands, but it is by no means common, and in such cases it will generally be found that the animal has but a small amount of Morgan blood. Their weight may be stated to range from 900 to 1100 pounds the usual weight being about one thousand; any great deviation from this weight should induce the suspicion of a large infusion of other blood, although exceptions may, and doubtless do occur, in the case of animals that can show a good pedigree; still they must be considered as the exceptions to the rule, and not the rule itself.”

From “R. L. Allen, Esq., an accomplished gentleman in New York, and a thorough horseman, having no interest then or since in Morgan stock, so far as we can ascertain, thus speaks of them (author’s note: Morgan horses) in his ‘American Agriculture.’

“They are of medium size, from thirteen and a half to fifteen hands high....”

A letter written April 21, 1856 by a M. O. Walker states; "It is also true, that but few Morgan horses have, as yet, been brought from New England west of the lakes, and equally true, that their services are very generally sought by intelligent breeders of horses throughout the country. Any number of inferior horses may be found in the West, which are claimed to be Morgan blood. This attempt to palm off counterfeits is the highest evidence of the value of the genuine blood. The ready and general objection in the West, with those who are not familiar with the Morgans, is want of size, forgetting that their size should be judged by their weight, and not by the length of their legs, and that the same bodies, upon longer legs, would look much larger."

From D.C. Linsley's "Morgan Horses," They are particularly remarkable for their great strength in proportion to their size, and for their power of endurance, bearing up under hard labor that would break down the strongest of draft horse."

"The Morgan horse, though a small animal, is noted for his great bottom and hardiness, as well as for compactness and roundness of form."

From The Albany Cultivator, in the October number of that paper for 1841, vol. 8, p. 162, the following letter and accompanying affidavit:

"Messrs. Gaylord & Tucker: I lately received great satisfaction from hearing what appears to be a correct account of the origin of the Morgan horses of Vermont; a breed known and esteemed for activity and hardiness, throughout all the Northern states; not remarkable for size, and scarcely known to the sportsman for speed. Their height is from 14 to 15 hands; color, bay; make, round and heavy, with lean heads, broad and deep chests, the fore-limbs set far apart, clean and sinewy legs, short strong backs, with that projection of the ribs from the spine which is a sure indication of powerful lungs, and consequently, of great wind and bottom."

From all the sources of information on Justin Morgan 1 and his descendants the fact remains that though he was small he could not be beaten, when strength, speed, and endurance were the test. The most common complaint concerning Justin Morgan was that he lacked size.

Finally, there are those that report that there is no concrete information written on the height of Justin Morgan prior to D. C. Linsley's famous book entitled; "Morgan Horses."

Apparently this is in error as I found an article; Black Hawk Horses; Truth; Southern Planter (1841-1866); Aug. 1855;15, 8; American Periodicals page 230;

“It is an error to suppose that these horses are small from degeneracy. The race was never large. The first Morgan got by True Briton, only weighed about 950 pounds, and was less than fifteen hands high.”

#### Affidavits

1. Maine Farmer & Journal of the Useful Arts 1833-1842 ; this affidavit Oct. 23, 1841 by George Barnard, Sherbrook, P.C. August 1841; states:

"not remarkable for size"

"Their height is from 14 to 15 hands, color bay..."

2. Affidavit from David Connell J. P.

In June of 1804 David Goss Jr. rode over to Connell's farm with a message from his father requesting Abel Shorey train a horse his father just then bought over from Randolph, distant 40 miles. They all went over to David Goss's place. Connell stated JM was "a little heavy, handsome active bay horse." John Goss engaged Shorey to take the horse the next day to training at Major Butler's and then saw him cover 4 mares. Connell said his uncle, John Goss, kept him through he season working the farm and putting JM to mares. He also kept him the next season and the ensuing spring when the foals were born and they were termed "universally excellent." "uncle John took him back to Randolph where he made his second season: the third season he was brought to St. Johnsbury and stood at uncle David's again.

14 August 1841

David Connell, J.P.

Spirit of the Times; Jan 8, 1842; page 535

Letter from George Barnard, Esq

"Americans who buy for breeding in Canada, seldom choose the best, being led away in favor of large size. The height of a true bred Morgan of the right sort, reared as he should be , in the rough way of the country, rarely exceeds 14 h. 3 inches, and when up to 15 hands, there is reason to suspect a long legged cross in the pedigree (Deb chuckles), or that the colt has been stall-fed, with a view to sale; or what is worse, a constitutional propensity to coarse growth, which will not show tidily in the offspring. I have bred from one of these horses so low as 13h 1 inch and have always found the stock to grow larger than the dam."

Stearn's says that the horse (referencing JM1) was about 14 hands high, as to 'take your eye completely.'"

In conclusion, I hope that I have opened the Lippitt breeder's eyes as well as the Lippitt fancier's as to exactly what they should be breeding and looking for:

The nervous energy/nerve force that Justin Morgan inherited from his Arabian ancestors and True Briton. This is “Morgan spirit!”  
The high head carriage/upright neck. From “Horseman,” a letter written by Mr. Backman; “They were as a rule, high-headed and short gaited horses.”  
Also, note the old cuts that were traced from original daguerreotypes in D.C. Linsley’s “Morgan Horses.” Almost every picture depicts a Morgan exhibiting the high head carriage.  
Do you have a Lippitt that truly has the peculiarities discussed in this article?  
Please look at the following pictures that portray what “is” Morgan.

### **Further Notes on “Long and Low”**

Long and Low can be seen in the below photographs.

The leg of the Morgan is actually shorter than his underline.  
The leg of this Thoroughbred is longer than his underline.

The true type Morgan horse has short legs giving the appearance of being built “low” to the ground.

The deep barrel of the Old type Morgan also helps create this low appearance.

They (the true Morgan horses) are considered long through the body because of a wide hip. That makes the hind third of the horse longer than a narrow hipped horse

It is the same in the front third of the Morgan horse. The shoulder (scapula) has a shallower angle than some other breeds. It is also slightly longer than in other breeds. This adds to the length (underline) of the horse while the back remains short.





The below picture has Justin Morgan's image transferred onto the picture of the Thoroughbred.

You can see that Justin Morgan is longer (the underline) than the Thoroughbred, his legs are shorter and there is a big difference in the shoulder and front third of the horse. Both horses are the same height. Justin Morgan is longer and lower on his legs than the same height Thoroughbred and it is easy to see that the underline of Justin Morgan is longer than that of the Thoroughbred.

**Short legs, long underline, hence longer body.**



### **Bibliography and Notes:**

Note: Long and Low references a long body and being low to the ground.

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