

Standard to Preserve the Original Type

by Bruce Orser

Height and Weight: 14 H 2 ½" – 975 lbs.

Head: Small to medium finely made and lean. The jawl should be deep and fairly wide, tapering to a smaller and clean cut muzzle. The face straight or slightly dished. The nostril: fine, large, and open. The ears are small and fine and shapely, pointed at the tip and without a heavy appearance. They should be sensitive, lively, alert and carried forward. The eye, medium or larger rather than smaller; set wide apart and prominently from the head; bright, showing little or no white. It should be expressive giving the impression of a pleasant, intelligent, eager, and bold nature; exhibiting fire or kindness as the situation dictates as well as courage and spirit. The muscles above the eye should also convey movement, expression.

Note: One man said of Figure, "You could hang your hat on his eye."

Neck: It should be wide at the base and tapering beautifully to its clean and fairly deep top. It should be wide as viewed from the front, of medium length or a bit longer, not short. It should be muscular, and convey grace and beauty, adding to and blending with the whole animal. The crest should be high and full, less in the mare. It should be placed as if resting upon rather than in front of the body and held naturally perpendicular to the ground. The front line is rather straight with little bulge or protrusion.

Note: Figure and the greater population of his descendants were naturally high headed.

Withers: Ideally high and blending well with back and neck; thin and well-muscled.

Shoulder: Should be heavily muscled, deep, extremely long and oblique. The point is low, forward and well formed. The humerus should be well-muscled,

short and should relate to the shoulder by being more vertical. Note: It has been said that this area is one of the most characteristic.

Chest: Well spread, deep and well-muscled with breast bone protruding. The chest has a roomy, full appearance with pectoralis being deep as well as full. Elbows should be set wide apart and blend closely with the barrel. Legs well muscled with wide bone viewed from the side, also set fairly wide apart, never having the appearance of “coming out of the same hole” as in other breeds having a narrower chest and body.

Note: Figure and early Morgans had a prominent breast bone.

Hindquarter: The hip bone should be well forward. The thigh is muscular and smooth. The stifle should be large, well-muscled, well let down, and forward. The croup should slope gently to a well placed attractive tail set; not flat as in some Arabs or too low as in some draft animals. The buttocks are rounded, well-muscled and blending. It should be viewed from the side and back.

Back and Loin: Short, broad and muscular. A slight hollow is acceptable, rising to the point of the croup. The loin should be wide and muscular.

Note: This point was fairly common in early Morgans; it was noted in True Briton and a few said Justin Morgan.

Barrel: Round, strong and deep with well sprung, close ribs; wide over kidney area and closely coupled to hindquarter-very little space between the last rib and hip. The bottom line should be long and relatively straight; the limbs closely tied in. Top line should be a fine, graceful curve from poll to point of croup.

Note: Due to exceptional width of forequarter and position of the arm, *setting the leg more forward, the body and underline are longer than in other breeds.*

Front Legs: Short, set well apart; flat and wide as viewed from the side; never round boned. The forearm is wide when viewed from the front and side, and very muscular. The front legs are straight, never bench or back kneed, and relatively

long. The knee should be compact, wide and flat, blending above and below. The cannon should be wide and well defined from flexor to extensor, plus “clean” in appearance, not fleshy. The bone should be of medium size; rather larger than smaller, never heavy or round. Well defined, strong, and wide. The fetlock is compact and muscular, wider in back than in front. The pastern should be of short to medium or medium length, never long. The angle relates to that of the shoulder. It should not be straight (posted). The hoof is small to medium in size, shapely, round and open at the heel. The texture is very hard and dense; not inclined to chip or crack.

Note: Figure’s points of perfection include the words, “With all the important muscles far surpassing in size those of any other horse in America.”

Back Legs: Wide top to bottom of the cannon bone, deeply muscled and strong in appearance. They should be straight with well-defined hocks. Clean and not fleshy, firmly muscled. Gaskin: Well-muscled and wide. Fetlock, pastern and hoof, same as front.

Mane, Tail, and Foretop: Full, straight or wavy, never short or sparse. The tail should be carried well out from the dock but not to the side or flat. It should be set on neither too high nor too low. Set higher is less disagreeable than low.

Coat: Soft, fine and glossy.

Color: Chestnut...Bay. Brown. Black.

Action: Stride: Short and quick. Walk: Rapid. Trot: Effortless and elastic; spirited and quick. The stride is shorter than in other breeds with prompt movement, exhibiting sure-footedness. It should appear bold and impulsive. The action performed with obvious play in the muscles with plenty of life and willing spirit. The canter: Bold, balanced, ground covering, with an energetic, animated but never heavy movement.

Note: Due to his short legs, extreme musculature and high degree of nervous energy the true type Morgan is possessed of unique action. If this Morgan does not possess any one of the above characteristics, his gait will be atypical.

C. Blodgett said of Justin: “He had unusual strength, nerve and action. The Woodburys were free and pleasant drivers.”

Youatt complains: “They take too many steps in a mile.”

Linsley says: “Now it’s because they take more steps in a mile than the long-strided horse that the Morgans so easily leave them behind before nightfall. It will take a long time, for this writer or any other, to convince the horsemen of Vermont that a long stepping animal is the thing for an “all day horse.” “Short steps come from short legs, and short legs are indispensable.”

Wier says: “Sherman was a trappy, free driver.” The New England Farmer says: “The Woodburys were free and pleasant drivers and lasters.”

Linsley says: “Legs well under and springy the forelegs being remarkably the reverse of the slow, slouchy movement of the racehorse at the trot.”

Temperament and Nervous System: Very high order; a nervous, restless organ with fire and ceaseless activity. His temperament dictates almost endless energy and activity, enabling the stamina of the true type, at once animated and docile.

Note: Nerve force gave the Morgan his versatility, stamina, and endurance. It imbued him with his unceasing activity. This was noted in many early Morgans and made them favorites at muster training day, parade, and ceremony. Justin Morgan was in demand from Montreal to Boston for his noble bearing, activity, and nervous manner, yet would carry or drive a lady to a dance or to town always with perfect manners and kindness. A horse without this energy is dull, lethargic, and lifeless. It has no presence and little expression and is very un-Morgan-like. The nerve force was very high in the ancient Morgans and is as much a part of the true character as their great muscularity or high-headedness or low build. Without this nerve force he is a different animal.

Linsley says: “It comes fully to our standard with this exception that they sometimes have more fire and impetuosity than we think desirable in the ‘business’ horse, but such generally make very superior roadsters under proper management and good driving.” This aspect of his constitution cannot be too

strongly emphasized for it is what drives the true type or Justin Morgan type. It has been said that a Morgan without this true characteristic is a horse that only looks like a Morgan. Linsley says: "His proud, bold, vigorous style of movement, and his vigorous, untiring action, have perhaps, never been surpassed.....and when ridden at military reviews (as was frequently the case), his bold, imposing style and spirited, nervous action, attracted universal attention and admiration."

Again Linsley: "and next we see him at Military review mounted by the Commander- In-Chief and displaying all the fire and pride imaginable, and after 50 years witness the same remarkable traits in many of his offspring." From AMR Vol. I: " In action they make a heroic appearance and their hoofs beat melody from the path. In them is dash, shine, and rhythm, they strike the road with the same nervous stroke with which the pigeon in full career strikes the air and like the tense winged courier of the sky, they laugh at the hills and mount them with a dash of spirited flight." "Any other horse" says A.F. Phillips, "other than a Morgan, is deficient in that inestimable quality of nerve force and I think we should try to retain that virtue so rare in large and more phlegmatic breeds. Our greatest mares had this quality." On Justin Morgan – from the NY Evening Sun Feb. 18, 1908; "He was nearly perfect in conformation but it was to the immense amount of nerve power that was attributed his all-around ability."

Intelligence: Of the highest order.

Note: It is doubtful if this could be improved upon.

General: He is at once noticed for his low, blocky round, muscular build, his upright neck and high head set, full mane and tail; the depth and breadth of his form. One notices the expression, the lively eye and ear, open nostril; his fine head, high and beautiful crest. Again, notice his great muscularity throughout the form and the play of each when moving. In motion it is seen his prompt, nervous, vigorous, unceasing action, and the eager, willing attitude therein. On closer examination, one notices his kind, willing, and pleasing nature. When taken in hand he will be the most eager to please and will do all that is asked of him with an exuberance of spirit, and sprightly manner that is in essence the true Morgan spirit. In use will become noticed his great powers of strength, endurance and

the accompanying cheerfulness with something left over at the end of the day. At parade he will exhibit all his fire and nerve force; prancing gaily along the route as if he were the only object in view. The action of his legs is quick, sure, and easy. The play of his muscles is wondrous and promises his great powers of strength and endurance.

His most noted characteristics:

His great bone and muscle,

His nerve force,

His intelligence,

His kindness.

His oblique shoulder

His legs: Shorter than in other breeds