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# 'THE STANDARD OF PERFECTION'

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## History and Outline

Justin Morgan was, in at least one respect, the greatest horse recorded in history. He was the only horse of which we have record that has possessed the prepotency to establish a family, type or breed, which has been able to exist basically unchanged over a period of one hundred and fifty years. Many breeds have been established during and before this time, but they have been produced by a group of individuals, none of which marked the family after his own image, as did Justin Morgan.

These other breeds, for example, the Thoroughbred, Standardbred and American Saddle Horse have been bred for a definite purpose and a standard of performance has guided their formation. The breeding stock of the race breeds were selected for their individual speed, and their offspring. The breeding stock of the American Saddle Breed was selected and valued in a similar manner, with show-ring performance as the goal. The type accepted has been the type of the individuals most satisfactorily meeting the performance requirements. This resulting type was far from that of the animals credited as founders of the breeds.

Considering the Morgan as a breed, the circumstances of its development were completely different. Justin Morgan came into being as a new type. He and his descendents were the only animals that have ever produced that type. The breed has been one of type and type alone. In this case the type was the standard. The prepotency has been so great, the type or standard is still with us. The present strength of this type indicates that the future of the breed holds great promise, if a standard of perfection in type is established and used as a guide by all breeders.

No breed of horse can exist for long, unless it serves a useful purpose. The Morgan type has been useful type and has been used for a variety of purposes during its existence. In the early years of the breed, it was the most highly prized utility harness

horse. The economy of the nation has changed, and the utility of the horse has changed with it. The future of the breed depends upon his utility as a pleasure horse. No other type is so well adapted to the need of the pleasure horse owner as the Morgan. His beauty, strength, endurance, durability and mental adaptability are not equaled by any other breed, in the field of the utility pleasure horse, though many are superior for a particular purpose.

In the past, many deviations from type have been attempted, to make it more suitable for a particular purpose. When this is done, the Morgan individuality is lost, even though the suitability for the limited purpose is improved. There are already excellent breeds capable of filling every special requirement, but the Morgan is still best qualified as a utility pleasure horse. He is capable of doing everything any other horse can do, as well as his amateur owner can himself qualify in these diversified fields.

The amateur pleasure horse owner gets the greatest enjoyment from a horse that can be used in a variety of ways. The enjoyment he receives from the use of his horse is the only excuse for ownership. This horse should be capable of good performance, both in harness and under saddle. The amateur horseman usually wishes to invade all fields of equine sport. This means driving, trail riding, amateur show riding and under either English or Western tack. The Morgan type is the type that looks best and does best in these highly diversified fields of equine endeavor.

The number of good type Morgans available to the pleasure horse owners is far short of the demand. This market is being filled by individuals of the specialized breeds, or just by horses, most of which fall far short of the expectations of their new owners. Because of the rapid encroachment of the specialized breeds on the utility pleasure horse field, a definite Standard of

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Perfection is necessary to strengthen the Morgan breed and guide it in its future production.

In New England, the concentration of Morgan blood came about early in the history of the breed, as both stallions and mares directly descended from Justin Morgan, contributed toward the breed formation. From here, stallions were taken to all parts of the country. A few mares went with them, but the numbers of Morgan horses grew from the use of stallions on the mares available. The available popular mares varied greatly in type, depending upon the section of the country they were in. For example, in Kentucky, mares used in light harness or under English saddle, were more often bred to the Morgan stallions. In the Mid-West, driving horses and small work horses were being raised, and these mares came to the available Morgan stallions. The Southwest used their horses for handling cattle. These were of the type that contributed to the Quarter Horse breed, and many of them contributed to the Morgan breed as well.

Morgans from all these sections went on into the far West. In the early years of the breed, the traffic in breeding stock was, for the most part, from East to West. Recently, with rapid transportation available, the traffic in breeding stock has followed no particular pattern, and the recent generations may have a background of blood from several sections of the country. The early breeders based their system of selection on the individual need for which they bred their Morgans. Some selected for greater size, some under saddle, some for speed in harness and some for stock horse work. Recently, the selection has been based on use under saddle, almost entirely, with a great difference of opinion on type. There was a great variation in the prepotency of the other than Morgan blood involved. Some was very quickly and completely dominated by the Morgan element, and some left a very definite mark. Regardless of the blood background or the ba-

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sis of selection, all have one thing in common; the blood of Justin Morgan and all are prepotent to some degree, for Justin Morgan's type. It is evident without question, that the prepotency of Justin Morgan and his descendents for his distinctive type, is the only factor responsible for the continuation of the type.

The stud book has been closed, with no further infusion of outside blood, a return of type is bound to come. The speed with which it returns, depends upon the degree of uniformity of purpose of the breeders.

It is reasonable to believe that the horse possessing the highest percentage of Justin Morgan's blood, with no recent infusions of potent outside blood, are the most capable of reproducing Morgan type. The intensification of the blood of Justin Morgan, with the selection of breed stock based on a standard of type perfection, will quickly eliminate the influence of outside blood, and result in a uniformity of breed type. No other young breed of horses presents the possibility of breed type uniformity, as does the Morgan. All Morgan horses have a common blood the most prepotent of all time, that of Justin Morgan.

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### **Standard of Perfection For The Morgan Horse**

The Morgan Horse is a distinct type and differs from all other horse types in many respects. The various parts of this type may be described as follows:

#### **Head**

The Morgan head is one of the most distinctive parts of the type. It should be wide at the poll, wide at the eyes, long from ear to eye, short from eye to nostril and deep from the eye to the jowl. The ears should be short, shorter than other breeds and set wide apart and erect. The eyes should be large, dark and prominent, set well out on the sides of the head. The forehead should be flat, profile straight or slightly dished below the eyes. The nostrils should be large and the lips fine and small. Viewed from the

front there should be a tapered appearance from the eyes to the nostrils; from the side, the skull should appear short and tapered, from the jowl to the lips, with a fineness throughout.

#### **Neck**

The neck should be of medium length, never long; medium thickness from side to side, well crested on top, straight on the bottom line and deep from the top to the bottom at the shoulders. The throatlatch may be a little deeper from the poll to the jowl than other breeds, but it should be clean cut. The crest should rise close to the ears and form a smooth curve ending where the withers join the back. The neck should have the appearance of setting on top of, rather than in front of the shoulders, as in the speed type horse.

#### **Shoulders And Forelegs**

The shoulders should be long and set well back on the top, blending with the crest to form a medium height withers. The withers should not be high and narrow, but of medium height and smooth at the sides. The crest and withers should blend together, with no depression on the topline in front of the withers, especially in the stallion. The point of the shoulders should be well let down and closely joined to the body, the breastbone projecting slightly in front of and below the shoulder points. The arm should be long from the shoulder point to the point of the elbow, heavily muscled and blended well into the body. The point of the elbow should be a little lower and further forward than in the speed type, because of the extreme slope of the shoulder. This angle of the shoulder and arm, places the foreleg a little further forward than in other types, and with the long forearm and short cannon, is responsible for the characteristic gait of the Morgan. The forearm should be long, wide both from the front and side to elbow and tapered smoothly to large flat

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knee. The cannon should be wide from the side, thin from the front and relatively short as compared with the length of the shoulder, arm and forearm. The fetlock joints should be large and wide as viewed from the side. The pasterns should be of medium length and at an angle comparable to that of the shoulder. The feet should be small, round, wide and low at the heel and of dense texture. A vertical line from the highest point of the withers to the ground, places more of the forequarter of the Morgan in front of this line than is true of any other type.

### **Body**

The body of the Morgan should be short, deep and wide. The ribs should be well sprung as they leave the back bone, forming a round barrel. The back should be short and joined smoothly to the rear quarters by a short and broad, heavily muscled loin. The body should be deep at the flank and well ribbed up to the point of the hip. The muscles of the neck, shoulder and back should blend smoothly together, forming an excellent saddle back, placing the saddle in an advantageous position in relation to the center of gravity of the animal.

### **Rear Quarters**

The croup should be long, wide and slightly sloping in appearance, but heavily muscled and well rounded; the tail set high and carried well up and straight. The thigh should be long, broad and heavily muscled as viewed from both side and rear. The stifles should be low and well forward, blended into the body by a well let down flank. The gaskin should be long and wide at the top viewed from both the side and back, and tapered to well let down hock. The hock should be large and clean cut. The cannon should be short as compared to the rest of the leg. The fetlock, pastern and foot similar to the front except the rear pastern should be a little more upright. The distinguishing characteristics of the rear quarters are, long thigh with the stifle forward and low, long gaskin and short cannon.

### **Height And Weight**

The Morgan is a small compact horse. The height should range between 14.1 and 15.1 hands, and weight should be 900 to 1,100 pounds, in working (not show) condition. The ideal is 14.3 hands and 1,000 pounds. The best type is associated with the smaller individual. A Morgan over 15.1 usually lacks many of the distinguishing breed characteristics.

### **Color**

True Morgan type is always associated with a solid color, either bay, brown, chestnut or black. Justin Morgan was bay with black points and no white markings. This may well be considered the true Morgan color. However, through the years, brown and chestnut have been about as prevalent as bay, and many have white foot, leg, and face markings. Chestnuts tend toward the darker shades, and the manes and tails are usually the same color as the body, in the best specimens. The body hair is short and fine. The mane and tail long and full. A little long hair about the fetlock is characteristic.

### **Temperament**

Temperament is the peculiar physical character and mental cast of the individual. Morgan temperament should be tractable and spirited, lending itself readily to intelligent training and spirited enough to display this training to a useful advantage.

### **Gaits And Action**

The natural gaits of the Morgan horse are the walk, trot and canter. The distinct and characteristic type of the Morgan is responsible for his characteristic way of going. The walk should be fast, accomplished by a short and rapid step. The trot should be low and smooth, with an elastic and energetic stride, giving the impression of power and speed. In reality the Morgan trot is not fast, but the rapidity and power of his action gives the impression of speed. The canter, like the walk and trot, should be accomplished by powerful, rapid and elastic movement. The gaits

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should be done in a spirited and fearless style of action.

**Summary Of The Morgan Physical Outline**  
Briefly, the distinguishing characteristics of the Morgan horse are: short broad skull with heavy jowl and short ears; well crested neck, deep at the shoulders, with crest, withers and back well blended together; ribs well sprung, deep short body; well muscled fore and hind quarters; short cannons and a characteristic rapid way of going.

### **Countenance**

True Morgan should express more than is seen in his physical outline. His countenance should express an abundance of controllable energy, exemplified by his friendly attitude; bold, fearless and energetic movement.

Mid-West Morgan Horse Owners, Incorporated has been aware of the need for a detailed and authentic standard, to be used as a basis by all Morgan breeders.

We are grateful to Dr. Parks, for his timely and useable standard. We commend him for his ardent study and years of devotion to the Morgan breed.

With the adoption of this standard, we believe Dr. Parks to be the most outstanding authority on the Morgan breed, since the days of Linsley.

We are privileged to cause to be issued, a Certificate of Honorary Life Membership, to Dr. C. D. Parks and his family.