

Why the Lippitt Morgan and its History is Unique Amongst the Morgan Families

Even though the American Morgan Horse Register Volume I authored by Joseph Battell, gave the following rules of admission into his register, he himself had his own agenda as to what constituted a Morgan Horse.

THE MORGAN REGISTER.

All animals to be registered in Volume 2d of American Morgan Horse Register must be forwarded at once. Any animal in any of the following classes is eligible to registry in the American Morgan Register:

1. Any meritorious stallion or mare that traces in direct male line to Justin Morgan and has at least one sixty-fourth of his blood. Provided the dam and the sire's dam be of approved speed or roadster blood.
2. Any meritorious animal having one thirty-second or more of the blood of Justin Morgan. Provided the dam and the sire's sire and dam be of approved speed or roadster blood.
3. The produce of a sire and dam both registered in the Morgan Register. The fee for registering stallions one year old and over will be \$2 each, and mares, geldings and colts under one year, \$1 cash.

Joseph Battell,
Middlebury, Vt.

In an article written in 1915 and printed in the Springfield Republican, Mr. H.S. Wardner made the following statement:

“But the causes which led to the almost complete disappearance of the Morgan breed were, in large part, the very sort of breeding methods which Col. Battell permitted to continue in his own stables. Although he stated in the first volume

of the Register that the Morgan horse was essentially a general purpose horse, Col. Battell never quite expelled from his thoughts the now discarded expectation that the Morgan might be converted into a large coach horse or a swift trotter. He believed sincerely, and in the face of proof to the contrary, that a few drops of Morgan blood could leaven an overwhelming quantity of Hambletonian or other alien admixtures and might perpetuate the Morgan breed through such lines.”

Furthermore, under “Stock Notes” in the year 1894 a small article stated:

“When Mr. Joseph Battell bought the stallion Denning Allen, he got also the dam of Denning Allen’s famous son, Lord Clinton, the fastest Morgan in the world. A year ago he bred her again to Denning Allen and now has a stallion colt that is a full brother to Lord Clinton and bids fair to resemble him in color and shape. Lord Clinton, it will be remembered, was timed separately to 2:08 in the great race for the Columbian stakes at Chicago last summer.”

Mr. Battell had a preoccupation with speed horses. The early Morgan was the true Morgan, NO speed horse was a complete TRUE TYPE Morgan. Of the true type Morgans, Flying Morgan was the fastest while also carrying a higher percentage of Justin Morgan’s blood. Battell was involved with the U.S. Government Farm whose purpose was to preserve Morgan type while increasing size through careful selection. There was much adverse criticism of the Farm’s “improved Morgan” when compared to the ancient Morgan type. Col. Battell, the Department of Agriculture and their chosen horses were subjected to public censure for not adhering to the traditional Morgan.

Pages 178-9 Morgan Horses by Peggy Jett Pittenger:

"All things taken into account- his performance, courage, speed, beauty and breeding- Lord Clinton seemed ideally suited to head a stud dedicated to breeding superior road horses. Except for one small detail: Lord Clinton was a gelding. After locating and looking over Denning Allen and Fanny Scott with the greatest of care, Colonel Battell bought both mare and stallion and had them taken to his Bread Loaf Farm in VT. The breeding that produced Lord Clinton was repeated and in 1894 a FULL BROTHER, General Gates, was foaled.”



A breed is an artificially produced group of animals (horses)controlled by man to prevent mixtures with other races. Mongrelizing of a breed results in the loss of distinctive characteristics within a breed. Inbreeding (ex. breeding of a son or daughter of a given horse to a granddaughter or grandson of the same horse) has been proven to be a traditional cross by which great breeds were established. It secured TYPE. This method proved to attain maximum gains with maximum allowable risk.

From D. Phillip Sponenberg, DVM, PhD

"Type" is a difficult concept to define, but is an absolutely vital one when talking about breeds of livestock. One definition of type is the conformational peculiarities that separate one breed from another. It is safe to add that "type" almost represents the ideal mental picture of a breed. Type is therefore central to a breed's character and identity, and it is what sets the different breeds apart one from another. Quarter Horses have a "type", and Spanish Mustangs a different "type". Even closely related breeds, such as the Peruvian Paso and the Spanish Mustang, have subtle

differences in type that help distinguish one from the other.

The Morgan horse is supposed to be a versatile horse...not a versatile breed. Today, however, it is a versatile breed due to the addition of legal and illegal outside blood. One set of prominent (part)Morgans that are not discussed as being a "line or family" of Morgans is the show Morgan.

The drastic phenotypic changes seen are due to the inbreeding and linebreeding of Morgans that carry legal and illegal outside blood. The addition of outside blood has also changed the motion of the Morgan to resemble that action produced by the Hackney and Saddlebred. In 1911, the President of The Morgan Horse Club, H.S. Wardner gave his address at the Annual Meeting of the Club. In his speech there are several keynotes:

"To revert to the ancient Morgan type should be the effort of those who are real breeders of Morgans."

"I believe we should stand for the ancient Morgan type because it was better than any modern or ancient amendment of it, because it was the best type identified with the name and breed of the Morgan horse and because it was the type that gave to the breed its lasting reputation. I think we should aim to breed stallions that equal in all respects such a horse as Hale's Green Mountain Morgan. Our pattern is therefore fixed already. That is our standard. We are not groping for something that has never existed except in the cloudy imagination of an individual nor are we confused by or working at cross purposes by reason of schemes and ideals as numerous and widelyvarient as are the minds of horse-breeders generally. We are thus united on a clearly defined object."

"I do not believe that our purpose will be seen achieved. I think it will be years before another Hale's Green Mountain Morgan is born; but we have our defined type to work for."

"At our early meetings one call was: 'Select the type, and breed to it.' I answer that the type is fixed already by the Morgan horses of the past."

The following statement made by Helen M. Herold, Director, Natl. Museum of the Morgan Horse, is contrary to the words stated in Wardner's address.

“I think that all breeders strive to produce perfection. The problem is that not every breeder will agree on the definition of ‘perfection’.” (i.e. Rural Heritage June/July 2014 page 5)

The Morgan breed standard was set a long time ago and is not to be compromised by a breeder’s “idea” of what the perfect Morgan should look like. Now, we look at the purpose stated for the national Morgan horse association for the Morgan horse. It is stated that it exists to preserve, promote, and perpetuate the Morgan horse. Even their registration certificate has the image of Hale’s Green Mountain Morgan on it. The latest scandal involving Bruce Ekstrom and the stallion FCF Rythmn Nation (out of a Saddlebred mare, see The Sunday Post-Dispatch, March 16, 2003) and how it was membership, not the national Morgan horse registry’s board, that sought to expunge this illegal stallion, was the straw that broke the camel’s back for many of its members. The present day “Morgan” shown in its breed journal shows the drastic change in the Morgan. If you stop to consider the fact that Justin Morgan bred to any mare of his time produced a horse that was of 50% of Justin’s blood. Now you possibly have in the show line, an animal with anywhere from 0% to 8-11% of Justin Morgan’s blood. So mayhaps the statement can be made that much of the show-lined Morgans are more of something else other than Morgan. Therefore, that is the reason why the public is seeing something else other than “Morgan.” It was only in 1981 that all producing stallions were to be blood typed by the national Morgan horse association, due to illegal blood being used to mimic the saddlebred. Even blood typing was not solid proof your Morgan was legal as later the action associated with the Hackney was sought after.

With thoughts on Morgan families we must look at the Lippitt Family. We are a “Lippitt Family” not a “Lippitt herd”(i.e. Helen M. Herold, Rural Heritage June/July 2014, page 5). In the 1960’s through the early 1970’s many Morgan owners and breeders became more concerned with the lack of type appearing at the national A rated shows. The first meeting of the ancient Morgan horse enthusiasts happened in 1973. According to Marshall Winkler, the word “Lippitt” was chosen to describe their Morgans as there was a fear that without specifying “Lippitt” as their name, and breeding them the enthusiasts’s purpose could easily fall into the pattern of outcrossing (to avoid inbreeding) our Lippitts into oblivion. Well

meaning people could have outcrossed to a dozen separate bloodlines under the rubric of “high percentage, classic, or ancient,” destroying forever our precious heritage.

The Lippitt Morgan has an established Foundation stock of 25 horses of which consists of 17 mares and 8 stallions. Every Lippitt Morgan can be traced back to these 25 horses on every line of their pedigree.

With the establishment of the Foundation Stock, the Lippitt Morgan is the **ONLY** Family that can DNA their own horses without the utilization of the national Morgan horse organization.. Thereby, the birth of The Lippitt Morgan Horse Registry, Inc. has been established. The Lippitt Morgan Horse Registry, Inc. is the **ONLY** registry that registers purebred Lippitt Morgans using DNA testing (correction to Bethany Caskey’s article stating that there are two registries, The Lippitt Club and the Lippitt Morgan Breeders Association; Rural Heritage, April/May 2014). The Lippitt Club, Inc. as well as the Lippitt Morgan Breeders Association do not register Lippitts. These two clubs are about people who want to get together with a common interest in Lippitts. The Lippitt Morgan Horse Registry, Inc. is about the horse, not about organizing activities for people (a membership). It is non-political, not for profit organization, and intends to stay that way.

As for the debate on the height of Justin Morgan, the horse, as well as other issues, the book entitled: “Justin Morgan Character/ Morgan Controversy “ is a must read. This publication may settle once and for all the question on Justin Morgan’s height.

Deborah Siegrist

The Lippitt Morgan Horse Registry, Inc

www.thelippitmorganhorseregistry.org