



MORGAN HORSE RANCH

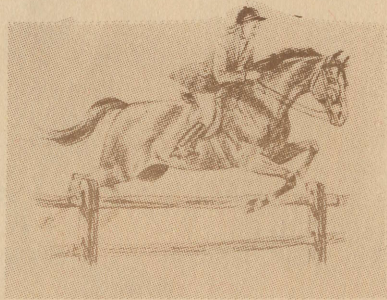


**POINT REYES
NATIONAL SEASHORE**

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



THIS BOOKLET IS MADE POSSIBLE
THROUGH GENEROUS GIFTS BY MEMBERS
OF MORGAN HORSE ASSOCIATIONS



DRAWINGS REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION
OF THE ARTIST: JEANNE MELLIN HERRICK

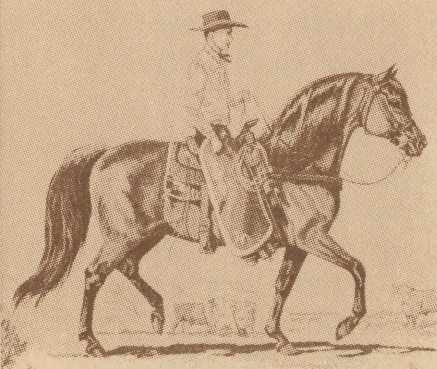
“ . . . *my kingdom for a horse!*” These words that Shakespeare put into the mouth of an embattled English king accurately reflect man’s dependence upon the horse for more than 3000 years. The 15th century monarch in this story lost his horse, the battle, and his kingdom. Had his horse not been cut from under him, would he have kept his crown? It’s quite possible he would have, and thus completely changed the course of history. We do know that in the 60 centuries since the horse was domesticated, the balance of power was usually tipped in favor of the side with the most and best horses and horsemen.

It wasn’t only in warfare that horses were important. Every facet of daily life was in some way dependent upon the horse. In our age of automobiles, tractors, supersonic aircraft, electric power systems, TV, radio, and global telephone networks, we may ask ourselves: “What if we were abruptly deprived of any of these? Could our civilization survive?” Of course. We might be temporarily, even

greatly, inconvenienced, but not paralyzed. In the age of the horse, the answer would have been different, because the horse was all these things: carrier of people, transporter of goods, medium of communication, and power source.

The impact of the horse on our nation is immeasurable. In a land as vast as America, western expansion would have been virtually impossible without the horse. True, we have a

long seacoast and navigable rivers, but without land transportation and power for harvesting the resources of the land, the inhabitants could have eked out only the barest existence. This condition would have existed until the very threshold of the 20th Century.



The covered wagon, the Pony Express, the American cowboy — these terms would be unknown to us. Can you imagine Paul Revere without a horse? The United States Cavalry which we are told always arrived in the nick of time would have never arrived at all. Come to think of it, there wouldn't have been a U. S. Cavalry, would there? An interesting measure of the horse's importance in the early West was the punishment for stealing one. A bank robber or murderer might go unpunished, or at least get a fair trial. But — anyone caught stealing a horse could invariably count on being the guest of honor at a necktie party held under the nearest tree! This nation, indeed, owes a great debt to the horse; without him we would still be a "developing nation."

Today, the greatness of this animal is largely forgotten by all but a handful of people. Most of us look upon a horse as a recreational vehicle in the same class as a bicycle or sailboat. Some of us think of him as a four-legged slot

machine activated by shoving a \$2.00 bet through a pari-mutuel window. He is none of these. He is still indispensable in vast areas of our country where the horse is the only practical means of transportation. Moreover, he is an important part of our national heritage, and an indispensable contributor to our civilization. Wouldn't it be worthwhile to learn something about him?

Here on rolling green pastures in Point Reyes National Seashore's Bear Valley you will find a unique ranch. This is the home of the only breeding herd of horses in the National Park System. These animals, their rich, glossy coats limned against the green of the meadow, cannot help but excite the admiration of all who see them. Those of you who are horse fanciers will immediately recognize in their compact, powerfully-built bodies, short broad heads, deep, well-crested necks and spirited gait, some of the outstanding traits of the Morgan. For the Morgan has been selected to represent the world of horses at the ranch

because this horse is the first truly American breed — just slightly younger than the nation itself.

But what is a Morgan horse? Well, the beginning seems like a good place to start.

The story of the Morgan is perhaps the greatest success story in the animal world, and one of its most fascinating — poignant, yet heroic. Only the most fortuitous circumstances led to the development of the breed. The man who bequeathed his name to the Morgan line was not a knowledgeable horse trader or breeder, but a frail Vermont singing master and composer of hymns. He acquired a horse, reluctantly, in payment of a debt. The year was 1795. Figure, as his master named him, was a little bay stallion, not much larger than a pony, and with no more promise. Justin Morgan, for that was the name of the singing master, was forced to lease Figure to a local farmer for a year at \$15.00.

For the farmer, the price was right, and Figure might



JUSTIN
MORGAN

be of some use in clearing a woodlot — if the logs were small enough. This, indeed, proved to be true, for there was no log too large for him to pull! What the little horse lacked in size, he more than compensated for in strength and spirit. Pulling logs, however, was not all the small bay stallion did well; his speed was equally phenomenal. As his fame spread throughout the area, he found himself pitted against every type of horse in every type of contest; strength, speed, or endurance; that man could devise. He won them all handily. A catalogue of the contests, alone, would show him to be a horse of tremendous stamina. Bear in mind, though, that this was all done in his “spare time.” He was still a working horse, laboring on a farm from dawn to dusk! Here was a truly heroic horse.

Within a few years, the name of Figure had been forgotten. He was now known by all as Justin Morgan, the name of his now-dead owner. Though the little singing master had passed away almost unnoticed, his name has

been immortalized by the small bay stallion who had frisked along behind him on that summer's day in 1795. Though the rest of the little horse's life, under several masters, was a repetition of the hard early years, his vigor and spirit were never diminished. He passed away in 1821, unattended, uncared for, and unmourned, but his living legacy will stand as a monument to the little bay stallion for so long as man can recognize character and acknowledge nobility in an animal other than himself.

One of the most amazing traits of Justin Morgan was his ability to reproduce his own likeness in each of his offspring. It mattered little who the mare was or what her characteristics were. The resulting foals were near-perfect images of their father in size, form, character, and temperament. It has been said with high authority that no horse has ever possessed to a higher degree the ability of stamping upon his progeny his own great characteristics. There were many sons of Justin Morgan, but the present line is descend-

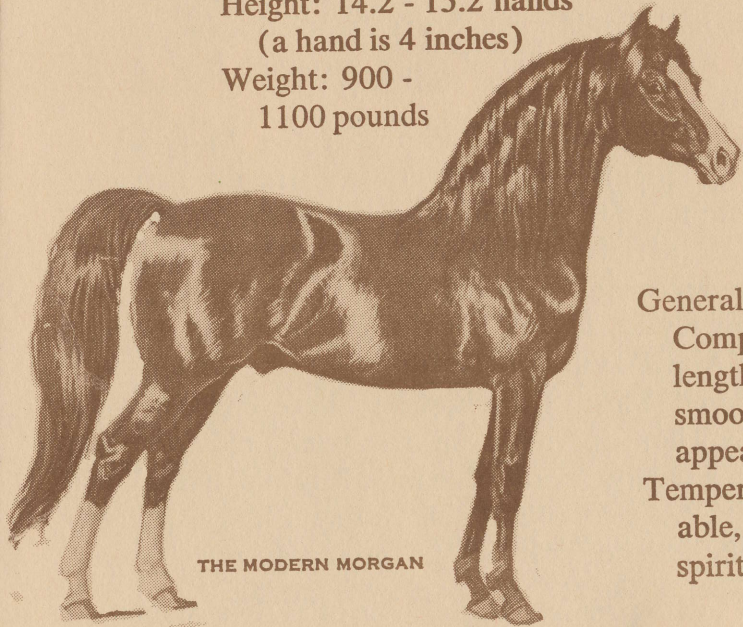
ed mainly through three of his offspring. So dominant were the Justin Morgan genes that, to this day, his great characteristics are to be found in nearly every Morgan horse. Even today, the Morgan bears the distinction of being the only American breed of horse springing from a single foundation sire.

What are these characteristics that set a Morgan apart? This is a difficult question to answer. It's not that there aren't definite characteristics in every breed of horse. The problem is that these differences are comparative. Certainly, there are some breeds that most of us can recognize. This is mainly because of color. Such horses as the Palomino, the Appaloosa, and the Pinto are distinctively marked or colored. Most of us, however, have difficulty distinguishing a Thoroughbred from a Standardbred from a Morgan from a Quarter horse. The knowledgeable horseperson, however, has no more trouble distinguishing these horses from one another than we do in recognizing the difference between a Great Dane and a toy poodle.

Here, then, are some of the characteristics of the ideal Morgan:

Height: 14.2 - 15.2 hands
(a hand is 4 inches)

Weight: 900 -
1100 pounds



THE MODERN MORGAN

General Conformation:
Compact, of medium length, well-muscled, smooth and stylish in appearance.

Temperament: Tractable, but with good spirit.

Head: Medium size, wide between eyes, profile straight or dished, never Roman-nosed. Eyes are large, dark, and prominent. Ears are small, fine pointed, set wide apart and carried alertly.

Neck: Medium length, well crested, deep at the point of the shoulder; mane full.

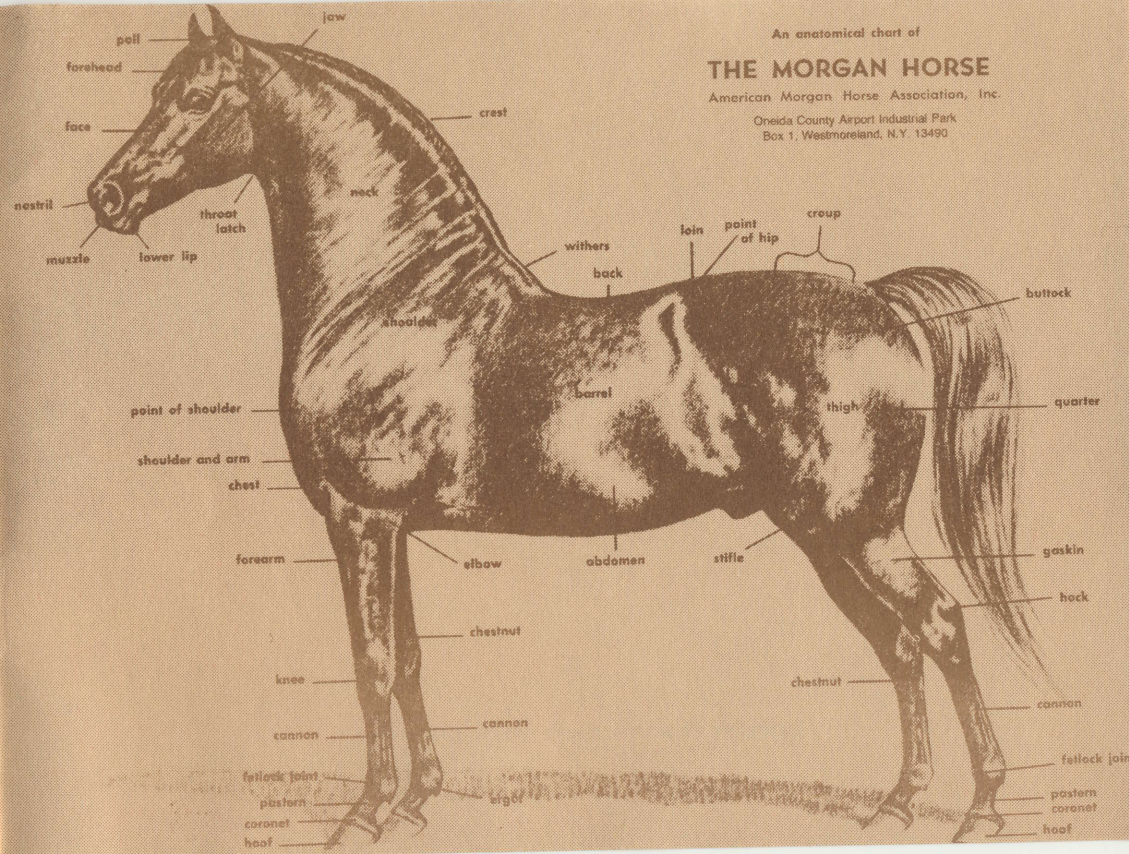
Body: Conformation of the body is distinctive, with chest of good depth and width; back short. Barrel should be large and rather round.

Action: This is another distinctive characteristic. The Morgan's step is short, nervous, and energetic.

This is a small sampling of the characteristics that distinguish a Morgan, but it's enough to show you what we mean by "comparative." Visit the exhibit at the Ranch; there are drawings and photographs of ideal Morgans. Then, take a few minutes to visit with the interpreters stationed there. They'll also be glad to tell you whatever they can about horses in general.

The Morgan Horse Ranch at Point Reyes was formally dedicated in 1970. Since that time, thousands of visitors have seen these horses. They have gone away with a new appreciation for this animal, not as an ingredient of a Western movie, or an automobile trademark, but as a living, intelligent, affectionate and lovable being. Besides its primary purpose of interpretation and in helping you to become acquainted with Morgan horses, the Ranch has a highly utilitarian function: many of the horses used for patrol work in the western National Parks have been foaled and trained here for this exciting work. The Ranch has not only furnished the mounts, but trained their prospective riders as well. Moreover, this rider training has been given, through formal 3-week programs, to personnel of county and state parks.

We hope that you enjoy your visit to the Ranch, and hope that you will, as many do, come back to visit your "favorite horse."





DEWOLFE PRINTING, POINT REYES, CALIFORNIA