



The Morgan Horse

A Vermont Natural and Cultural
Heritage

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America's First Horse Breed



LA11684_000: Example of Morgan Horse, 1910-1920



LS1687_000: Example of Morgan Horse 1910-1920

- In 1795, a singer and composer by the name of Justin Morgan acquired a young horse by the name of Figure and moved his family and the horse from Springfield, Massachusetts to Randolph, Vermont. Unbeknownst to Morgan, Figure would become the founding sire of the entire Morgan breed.

The General Purpose Horse



<http://www.morganphotoarchive.com/1900.htm>: 1900 carriage ride, 1900, East Burke, VT

- With his gentle demeanor and athletic prowess, Figure became famous throughout New England. His most enduring quality was his ability to pass on all of his exemplary traits on to his fledglings. By the early 1800s, farmers, businessmen, doctors and horse enthusiasts were clamoring to own Figure's colts.
- His offspring became so well known and so widely used, that the Morgan became known as the general purpose horse. From pulling farm plows, to carrying the family to Sunday church in a stylish carriage, Morgan's could do it all.

Farm & Family Appeal



LS12302_000: Craig family farm, 1880-1900, Peacham, VT

- Morgans had great cross-over appeal. While they were stately enough to pull wealthy businessmen around, they also were reliable and cheap enough for farmers across Vermont to own. Morgans were able to go from pulling a plow for 10 hours straight to pulling a carriage into town without any fatigue.

Stagecoach Era



LS06081_000: Bristol House stage coach, 1887, Salisbury, VT



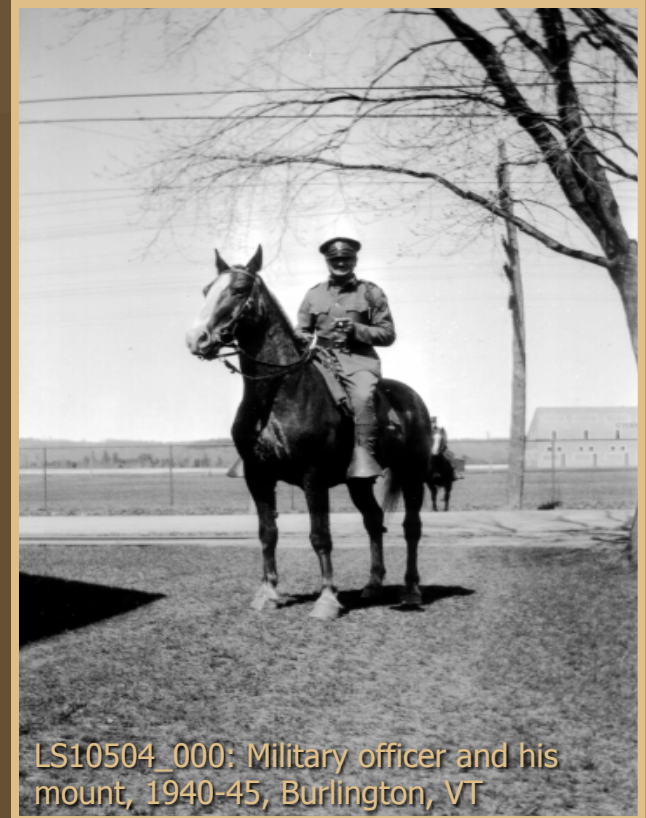
LS06231_000: Bristol house stage coach, 1880-1900, Bristol, VT

- Morgans became the primary horse for stagecoach's travel. Inn's and taverns throughout Vermont offered stagecoach travels throughout New England. This was the beginning of the Morgan's expanse throughout the country.

Military Use



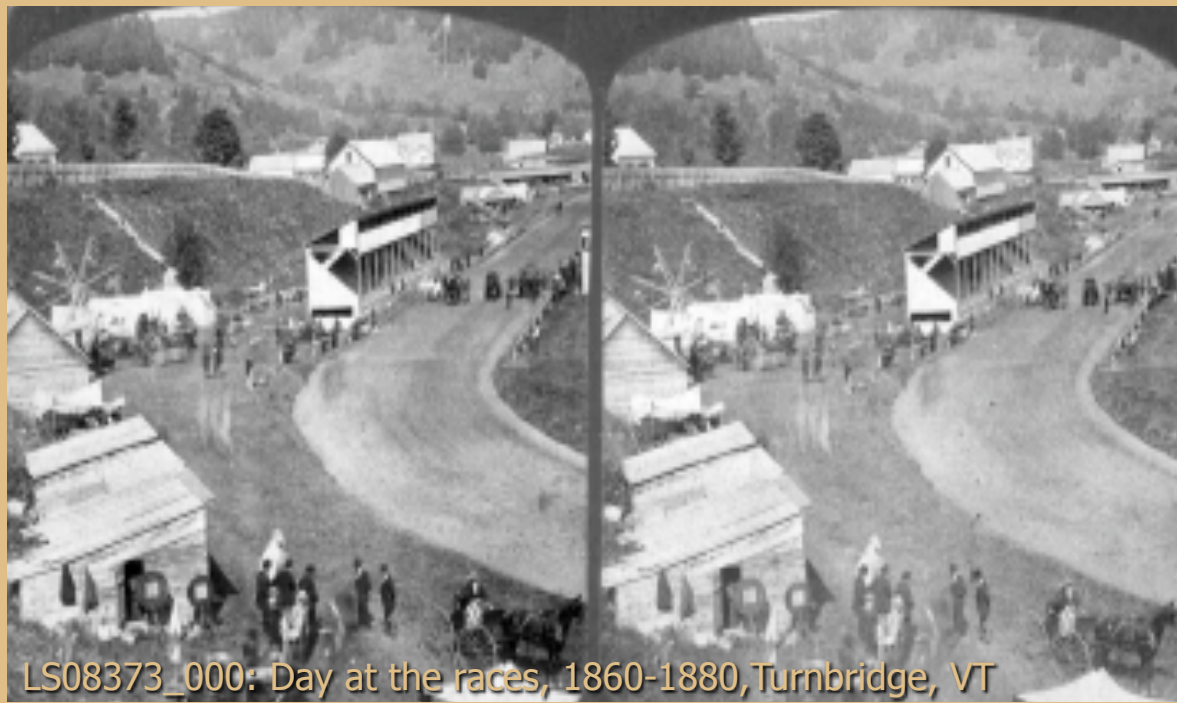
LS01580_000: Military officer and mount, 1914-1919, Williston, VT



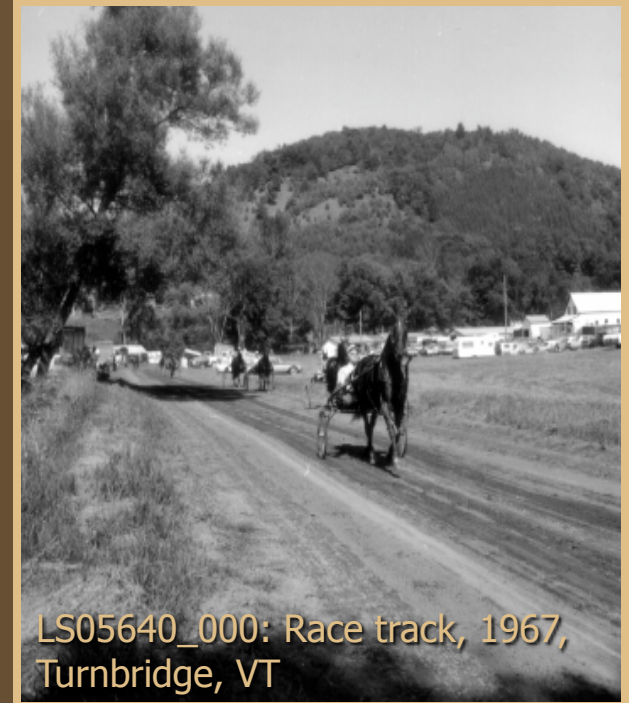
LS10504_000: Military officer and his mount, 1940-45, Burlington, VT

- Morgans were extremely vital in early warfare. They were prized well above other breeds for their calmness and responsiveness during hectic battles. During the Civil War, the First Vermont Cavalry was entirely mounted on Morgans.

At The Races



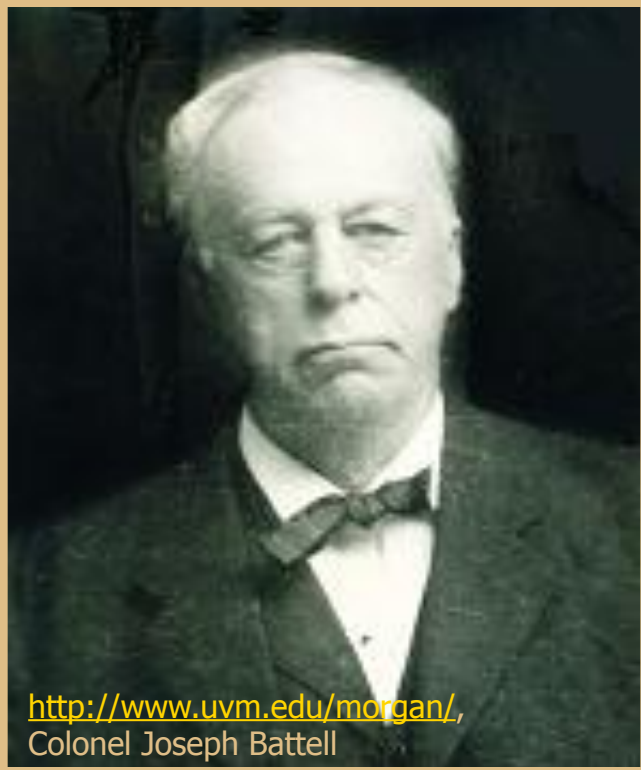
LS08373_000: Day at the races, 1860-1880, Turnbridge, VT



LS05640_000: Race track, 1967, Turnbridge, VT

- As more mechanized modes of transportation and equipment emerged, the demand for Morgans, and horses in general, fell. However, being the all purpose horse, the Morgan found wide success and popularity on ranches out west and on the Northeast's race tracks. To this day, the Morgan still holds world records in trotting and driving events.

Creating A Breed



- It was shortly after the turn of the century, when Morgan enthusiasts began to worry about preserving the breed. Breeders were beginning to mix Morgan's with other breeds in order to create more variety. However, in doing so, they greatly diluted the Morgan's genetics. Vermonter Joseph Battell began a concerted effort to concentrate the Morgan breed. He started both the Morgan Horse Register and what has since become the University of

Morgan's Today



- Today, Morgans are just as popular as ever. While they no longer are clearing fields and forests, they have found homes across all fifty states in at least twenty countries world wide. They still compete heavily in national and international carriage and driving events. They can be found in 4-H lessons, and as mounts for police officers.

UVM's Morgan Horse Farm



- Morgans and Morgan horse farms can be found in every corner of Vermont. Today, the equine industry accounts for around \$27 million per year in Vermont. The Morgan farm started by Joseph Battell still exists today and is operated by the University of Vermont. Today, the farm is used for educational purposes.

Sources

Background Information

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Picture Resources

- Self, M.C. (1967). The Morgan Horse in Pictures. (2nd ed.). No. Hollywood, CA: Wilshire Book Company.