

# HORSEMEN'S *YANKEE* PEDLAR

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# HORSEMEN'S *YANKEE* PEDLAR

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# The Working Draft Horse

## A Look at the Historical and Modern Day Uses

BY ELAINE KEELEY

Over the centuries, two major forces have each played a significant role in the development of draft horse breeds: environment, and man's expectations of these horses' work capacity.

Climate and dietary conditions vary from country to country, and have helped to produce a variety of shapes, sizes and colors in the principal breeds. Size and shape, in turn, have helped determine the breeds' utilitarian purposes, and selective breeding has either emphasized certain traits, or de-emphasized them.

It is common knowledge that the various draft breeds of the world have their ancestry deeply rooted in war. From visions of knights in shining armor to the horrific scenes of gun horses in the first World War, a combination of size, muscle mass, and quiet temperament were desirable traits for the equine combatant. War wasn't the only factor, however, in determining the direction of the modern day draft breeds. Agriculture and commerce have played very important, if not more significant roles, and continue to do so into the 21st century.

The American landscape was once filled with the sights and sounds of working horses. Contemporary

midwestern farmers, who measure their land in miles, not acres, are the great grandsons of men who once hitched 20, 30, even 40 horses and mules at a time to early 20th century combines. Cities like New York and Boston, now gridlocked by gas-powered vehicles, were once just as jammed with horse-drawn conveyances.

Although a full century has passed since the American working horse has seen such popularity, there continue to exist horsemen and women who refuse to give up the notion that these horses, and a way of life represented by them, are worth preserving.

### Living the American Dream

Reva Seybolt of Woodstock, Conn., purchased her first draft horse at age 49. Now in her 50s, she is living her dream of being a farmer that relies as much as possible on pure horse power. She takes and teds a

25-acre hay field with a team of Belgians, but relies on a neighbor, dairy farmer Lucas Young, to cut and bale the grass for her. "I feel real confident working on the horse-drawn tedder," says Reva, "but I am not yet confident enough to hook up to a mower or baler." As a single woman with little help farming her 120-acre parcel, she is rightly very cautious about what she will tackle with her horses in place of a tractor.

Reva owns four Belgians—a team named Tom and Ted, and two others that are used more for her riding pleasure than anything else. "The other two aren't particularly compatible," explains Reva, "so I rarely use them for farm work. If you have to worry about your horses' behavior while working with them, it creates a dangerous situation."

A turn of the century photo showing a team of Percherons pulling a load of hay likely weighing 1½ tons or more.



COURTESY OF LINN R. MALLER/MAYING WITH HORSES



## DRAFT BREEDS AT A GLANCE



Above, Reva Seybolt tedding hay with her team of Belgians, Tom and Ted.

SUSAN DIPIETRO

At 13 and 14 years of age, Tom and Ted are well seasoned and trustworthy, a real good "lady's team," according to Reva. Her horses are also a manageable size. Standing just 16.2 hands and 1,700 pounds apiece, they are relatively easy to harness and care for. Reva's horses are pastured in the warmer season, and her own hay feeds them in the winter. "That's what I love about Belgians. They are such easy keepers. My problem isn't trying to keep them fat, but trying to keep the weight off!"

Aside from raking and tedding hay, the horses are consistently used for other chores around Reva's place, such as spreading manure and clearing out rocks and debris. "Anything you would use a pickup truck for," explains Reva, "I use the horses." She also logs with them. "The horses have very little impact on their surroundings, compared to motorized equipment."

She notes that the New England draft

horse community is growing. "One of the most important things," says Reva, "is having a large support system of other draft horse people to call on for help. We rely on each other's knowledge and experience for our well being with our animals. I wouldn't be living my dream if that community of friends wasn't there."

### A Not-So-Simple Way of Life

The Amish and Mennonite way of life has been hugely instrumental in the survival of modern day draft horses in America. These communities, more so than any other group of people in the western world, continue to use horse power as it was before the advent of mechanical equipment. Although Belgians and Percherons are predominant breeds on Amish farms, most farmers tend not to have a preference for any particular draft breed, so long as the horse works.

Typically, these farmers will utilize large



An Amish farmer using six draft mules on a disc harrow with a roller.

ELANIE KELLEY

**BELGIANS:** There are currently more Belgians in America than all other draft breeds combined. They are a very versatile breed, popular for work, show, pulling, and pleasure. The average Belgian stands 17-18 hands and weighs between 1,800 and 2,000 pounds — however, individuals of 19+ hands and weighing up to 2,500 pounds are common. The coloring for American Belgians is varying degrees of sorrel, with roan and brindle patterns sometimes seen. Manes and tails are generally blond, and their legs have light feathering.

**PERCHERONS:** Originally from France, Percherons were once far and away the most popular breed of draft horse in America, with numbers of registered animals in the early 1900s triple that of all the other breeds combined. Because of an Arab/Andalusian influence, the Percheron was, and continues to be, a very elegant carriage horse. Percherons come in two colors — grey (dapple through white) or black. They are clean legged with very little feathering, stand 17-18 hands, and generally weigh from 1,800 to 2,000 pounds or more.

**CLYDESDALES:** One of the best known breeds in America, the Clydesdale, a close cousin to the Shire, originated in Scotland for the purposes of both agriculture and commerce. Clydesdales are very flashy movers, with heavy feathering on the legs. On average they stand 17-18 hands, and weigh between 1,800 and 2,200 pounds. Colors are bay, chestnut, roan, grey and black, with a preference for heavy white markings on legs and face.

**SHIRES:** One of the oldest breeds of draft horses, Shires originated in England, with their ancestry deeply rooted in war. Like Clydesdales, they are long-legged with prolific feathering, and move in a flashy manner. At one time, they were considered to be the largest horses in the world. Today their stature, on average, is comparable to all the other draft breeds common to the U.S. The largest horse on record, however, was a Shire who, in 1850, stood 21.2 1/2 hands and weighed 3,360 pounds. Colors are black, bay, chestnut and grey, with white on the legs being preferable.

**SUFFOLK PUNCH:** The only breed of draft horse developed specifically for agriculture, Suffolks, native to England, tend to be shorter and proportionally stockier than most other draft breeds common to the U.S. Considered to be a rare breed, there are only 1,350 Suffolks world-wide, with approximately 1,200 in North America. Suffolk coloring is chestnut only.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DRAFT HORSES CONTACT:

Eastern Connecticut Draft Horse Association, P.O. Box 715, Coventry, CT 06238, [www.easternCTdrafthorse.com](http://www.easternCTdrafthorse.com)

Belgian Draft Horse Corporation of America, P.O. Box 335, Wabash, IN 46992; 260-563-3205, [www.belgiancorp.com](http://www.belgiancorp.com)

Clydesdale Breeders of the U.S.A., 17346 Kelley Road, Pecatonica, IL 61063, 815-247-8780, [www.clydesusa.com](http://www.clydesusa.com)

American Shire Horse Association, 1211 Hill Harrell Road, Effingham, SC 29541, 843-629-0072, [www.shirehorse.org](http://www.shirehorse.org)

Percheron Horse Association of America, P.O. Box 141, 10330 Quaker Road, Fredericktown, OH 43019, 740-694-3602, [www.percheronhorse.org](http://www.percheronhorse.org)

American Suffolk Horse Association, 4240 Goehring Road, Ledbetter, TX 78946-5004, [www.suffolkpunch.com](http://www.suffolkpunch.com)

American Cream Draft Horse Association, 193 Crossover Road, Bennington, VT 05201, 802-447-7612, [www.americancreamdraft.org](http://www.americancreamdraft.org)





**Mounted Police Officer Linda Mancinelli (center) and her Clydesdale Callie patrolling the streets of New Haven with Marshmallow (L) and Valence.**

teams, often in "lines" of six or more, an average of six days a week, nine to ten hours a day. Draft horses and mules are used for countless chores—plowing, disc harrowing, mowing, raking, tedding, spreading manure, cultivating, harvesting, hauling produce—the list goes on. The many other ways the Amish use horsepower, however, can seem just as foreign to an outsider as the region's Pennsylvania Dutch dialect.

Terry Joseph of Lisbon, Conn., who regularly conducts business with the Amish, describes an experience he recently had while helping with a chore in Pennsylvania. "Straw is taken off a horse drawn wagon, and put through a threshing machine, which



COURTESY OF LYNN R. MILLER/HAVING WITH HORSES

separates a grain called "spelt" from the straw. The spelt is then blown off the threshing machine into a separate pile, while the straw is blown into a large, three-story room in the barn, with a door on the ground floor and another door just under the eaves. A number of horses are taken into the room, and asked to walk around on the straw to pack it down, while it's being blown in all around them," Terry explains.

"By the time the straw is completely put away, the horses have trampled it into a three-story-high, hard packed mound."

To get the horses back to ground level, the Amish create a steep ramp from straw out the third story door, and the horses literally slide down this ramp. "It is one of the most amazing things I have ever seen!" exclaims Terry, "but they all get up and shake themselves off, and walk away like nothing ever happened. These horses are conditioned to all kinds of work environments. People outside the Amish community

would never even dream that horses could be capable of the things they do with them here."

### City Girl

Linda Mancinelli has been a police officer for the City of New Haven since 1995. Her partner, Callie, has been on the police force since 1996, and has helped Linda through some very sticky situations. Through major strikes, rowdy bar closings, drunken and obnoxious crowds—Callie is always by Linda's side. Well, beneath her, actually, as Callie is a Clydesdale mare in New Haven's Mounted Police Unit.

One of only two cities in the state to have mounted units, New Haven currently employs five horses, with a sixth, a grey Percheron, being trained for the job. They are stabled on the outskirts of the city at Edgerton Park, a beautiful property with turn of the century carriage houses and Victorian gardens. Callie is the only draft horse currently working in the state's

## Draft Horse Show

### BIG HORSES SHOWCASE TALENT AT BIG E

The Draft Horse Show was held September 28-October 1 at the Big E in West Springfield, Mass. Brian Coleman of Schulenburg, Texas, made the trip up to Massachusetts to judge the entries in a wide variety of harness classes and a few under saddle classes as well. The draft horse hitches are always a hit with the spectators, who are impressed by their sheer size and elaborate turnouts.

One of the highlights of the show was the \$10,000 Big E Six-Horse Hitch. Ray Houston drove a team from Triple Star Farm to the win in this popular competition. Mark Barie and the Lor-rob Dairy Farm hitch earned reserve honors.

### SHOW RESULTS >>

The following are the results of the Draft Horse Show held September 28-October 1 at the Big E in West Springfield, Mass.

**\$300 CLYDESDALE/SHIRE TANDEM HITCH:** 1. Grandview Clydesdales, Shannon Cobbs; 2. Hobby Knoll Clydesdales, Phil Anderson.

**\$800 BELGIAN UNICORN HITCH:** 1. Sugar Ridge Rv Village, Kirk Fenoff, Mary Wright; 2. Lor-rob Dairy Farm, Mark Barie; 3. Morrisville College, Barbara Richardson.

**\$550 PERCHERON TEAM HITCH:** Brygale Farms, Inc., Ryan Black; 2. Starbrook Farm, Tom Justin.

**\$300 WESTERN RIDING OPEN:** 1. Equine Plus LLC, Bub Harman; 2. Equine Plus LLC, Flo Harman.

**\$800 CLYDESDALE/SHIRE UNICORN HITCH:** 1. Grandview Clydesdales, Shannon Cobbs; 2. Hobby Knoll Clydesdales, Phil Anderson.

**\$1,000 PERCHERON FOUR-HORSE HITCH:** 1. Windermere Farms, Gerald Allebach; 2. Starbrook Farm, Tom Justin.

**\$2,500 BELGIAN SIX-HORSE HITCH:** 1. Triple Star Farm, Ray Houston; 2. Lor-rob Dairy Farm, Mark Barie.

**\$300 BELGIAN TANDEM HITCH:** 1. Sugar Ridge Rv Village, Kirk Fenoff/Mary Wright; 2. Triple Star Farm, Ray Houston.

**\$550 CLYDESDALE/SHIRE TEAM HITCH:** 1. Grandview Clydesdales, Shannon Cobbs; 2. Hobby Knoll Clydesdales, Phil Anderson.

**\$1,000 OPEN MARE FOUR-HORSE HITCH:** 1. Windermere Farms, Gerald Allebach; 2. Brillanger Farms, Aaron Freitag.

**\$300 PERCHERON TANDEM HITCH:** 1. Silk Shadow Farm, Kyle Love; 2. Brygale Farms Inc., Ryan Black.

**BELGIAN MEN'S CART:** 1. Sugar Ridge Rv Village, Kirk Fenoff; 2. Lor-rob Dairy Farm, Mark Barie.

**\$300 CLYDESDALE/SHIRE MEN'S CART:** 1. Grandview Clydesdales, Shannon Cobbs; 2. Hobby Knoll Clydesdales, Phil Anderson.

**\$300 PERCHERON MEN'S CART:** 1. Silk Shadow Farm, Kyle Love; 2. Starbrook Farm, Junior Klein.

**\$300 ENGLISH RIDING OPEN:** 1. Dolan Family/Maple Hill Farm, Anna Soffie; 2. Winter Hill Farm, Davinia Saglio.

**\$550 BELGIAN TEAM HITCH:** 1. Triple Star Farm, Ray Houston; 2. Sugar Ridge Rv Village, Kirk Fenoff/Mary Wright.



BOB BRIANAM

**\$1,000 CLYDESDALE/SHIRE FOUR-HORSE HITCH:** 1. Grandview Clydesdales, Shannon Cobbs; 2. Hobby Knoll Clydesdales, Phil Anderson.

**\$2,500 PERCHERON SIX-HORSE HITCH:** 1. Windermere Farms, Gerald Allebach; 2. Brygale Farms, Ryan Black.

**\$300 JUNIOR CART:** 1. Winter Hill Farm, Davinia Saglio; 2. Silk Shadow Farm, Chelsee Omeara Tamburo.

**\$300 OPEN MARE LADIES CART:** 1. Brillanger Farms, Nelda Cook; 2. Sugar Ridge Rv Village, Mary Wright.

**\$550 LADIES TEAM HITCH:** 1. Lor-rob Dairy Farm, Jocelyn Barie; 2. Windermere Farms, Melissa Allebach.

**NE OWNED LADIES TEAM HITCH:** 1. Sugar Ridge Rv Village, Mary Wright; 2. Silk Shadow Farm, Suzee Tamburo.

**\$300 JUNIOR TEAM HITCH:** 1. Silk Shadow Farm, Chelsee Omeara Tamburo; 2. Winter Hill Farm, Davinia Saglio.

**\$300 PERCHERON LADIES CART:** 1. Brygale Farms, Tara Billing; 2. Starbrook Farm, Tila Kline.

**BELGIAN LADIES CART:** 1. Lor-rob Dairy Farm, Jocelyn Barie; 2. Dolan Family/Maple Hill Farm, Melissa Dolan.

**\$300 CLYDESDALE/SHIRE LADIES CART:** 1. Grandview Clydesdales, Justine Cobbs; 2. Hobby Knoll Clydesdales, Renee Anderson.

**\$800 PERCHERON UNICORN HITCH:** 1. Brygale Farms, Ryan Black; 2. Windermere Farms, Gerald Allebach.

**\$1,000 BELGIAN FOUR-HORSE HITCH:** 1. Lor-rob Dairy Farm, Mark Barie; 2. Triple Star Farm, Ray Houston.

**\$2,500 CLYDESDALE/SHIRE SIX-HORSE HITCH:** 1. Grandview Clydesdales, Shannon Cobbs.

**\$2,500 OPEN MARE SIX-HORSE HITCH:** 1. Windermere Farms, Gerald Allebach; 2. Brillanger Farms, Aaron Freitag.

**\$1,000 FOUR-HORSE DRIVING:** 1. Morrisville College, Scott Seymour.

**\$300 LADIES CART CHAMP:** CH: Brillanger Farms, Nelda Cook; RE: Dolan Family/Maple Hill Farm, Melissa Dolan.

**\$550 TEAM OBSTACLE DRIVING 4 WHEEL WAGON:** 1. Shale Hill Farm, Joe Hanson; 2. Shale Hill Farm, Tom Hanson.

**\$10,000 BIG E SIX-HORSE HITCH:** 1. Triple Star Farm, Ray Houston; 2. Lor-rob Dairy Farm, Mark Barie. ●



mounted units, but Linda hopes that, with the possible addition of this new horse, the trend for the future will be to employ more drafts and draft crosses.

"Drafts are more sane than the light breeds," Linda says. And if their temperaments make them perfect for the job, so does their size. Callie stands a whopping 19.3 hands. "That works for us in two ways," explains Linda. "First, her size is very intimidating in situations where we want people to be intimidated by us, even though those situations are really few and far between. Secondly," she continues, "the general public finds her stature so impressive, and, because she is so gentle and personable, people are just enchanted with her. She is wonderful for public relations!"

Although public relations is first and foremost, these horses are expected to do their fair share of police work as well. Linda explains that the horses are rotated between day and night schedules. Daytime work generally consists of crowd control, with lots of smiles and pats from city children.

The night shift generally consists of bar hopping. "We go from bar to bar, making sure people are moving along,

not causing any trouble at closing time," says Linda. Like her human partner, Callie puts in a 40-hour work week, plus some overtime and holidays. A rewarding career, a work partner she can trust, and a beautiful place to call home—what more can a working horse ask for?

The working life of the contemporary draft horse continues to parallel that of his ancestors in surprising ways. In spite of the furious evolution of mechanized civilization and the skepticism of its jaded citizens, draft horses have stoically stood their ground on American soil.

Police officers have replaced the European knights that once sat on their backs; agricultural communities based on unbending faith help to perpetuate an honest bloodline through the virtue of usefulness; and gentle farmers, in the midst of hurried office communities, proudly keep these horses as trusted companions and working partners. As long as American men and women such as these willingly stand up for the purpose of the draft horse, so shall the draft horse willingly contribute his good worth to modern day society. 🐾



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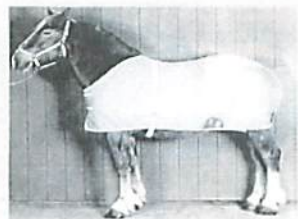


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