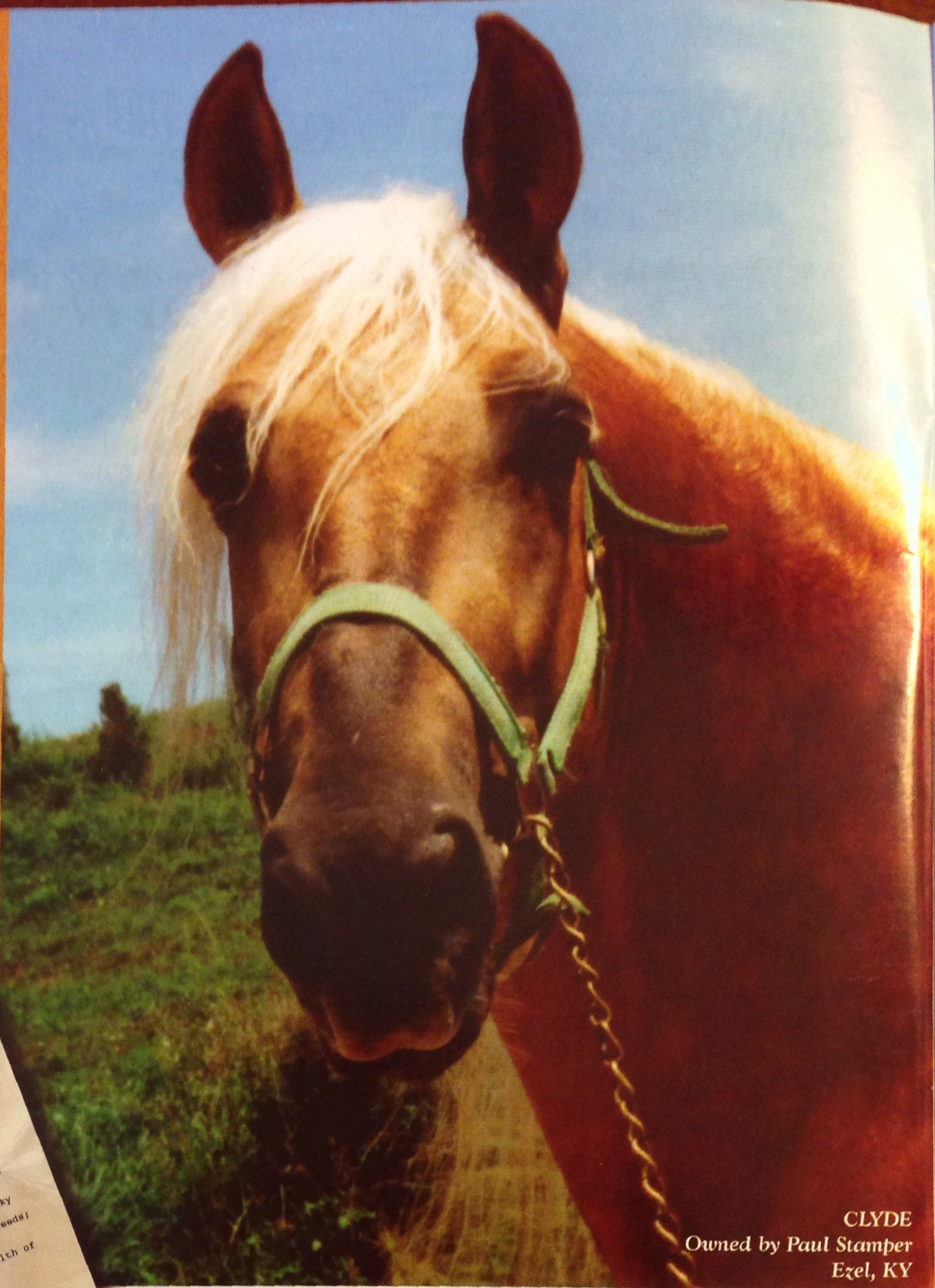


# Breed Profile

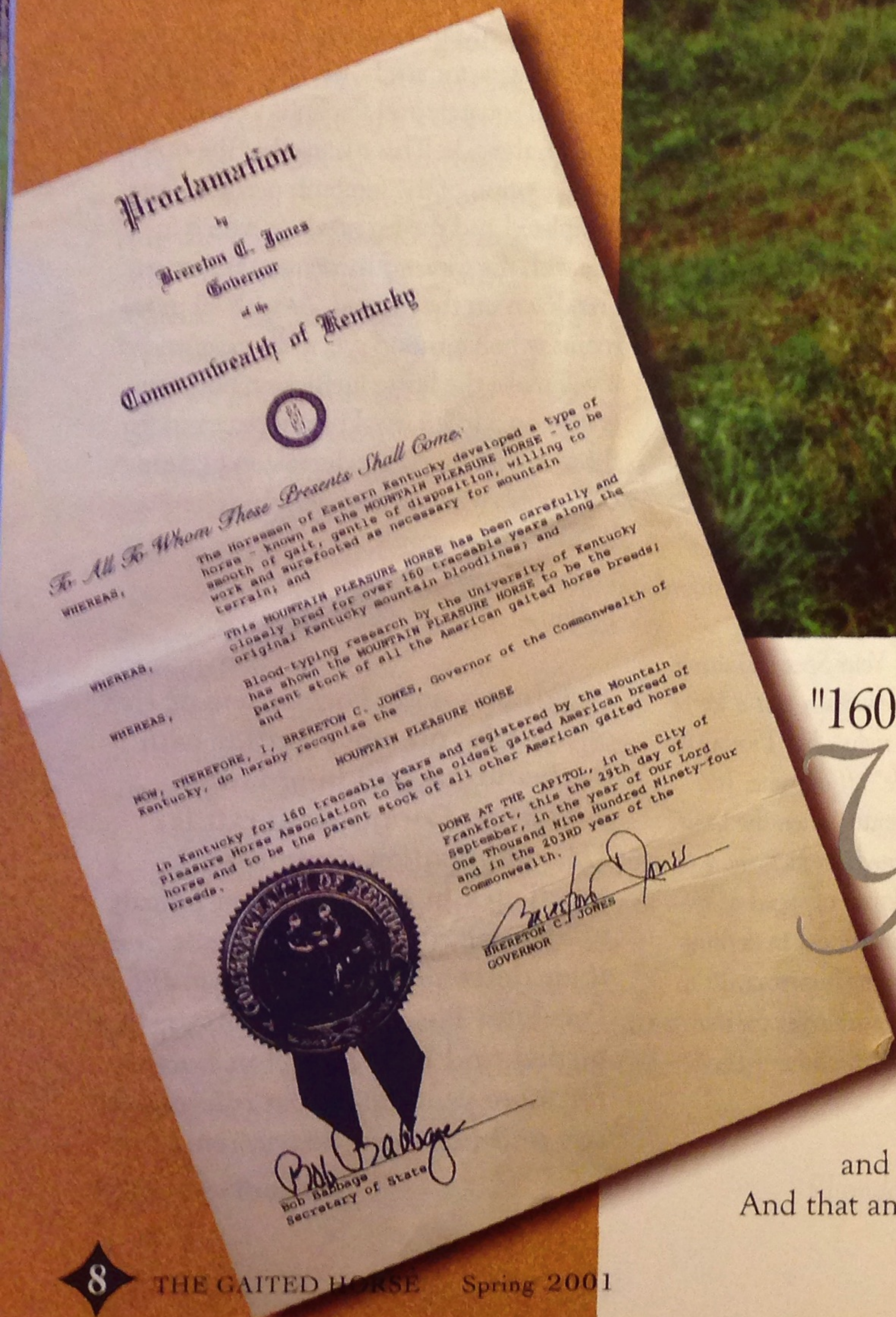
## The Mountain Pleasure Horse

by Rhonda Hart-Poe



CLYDE  
Owned by Paul Stamper  
Ezel, KY

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### "160 Years of Kentucky Gaited Horse Heritage"

You'll have to visit sometime to really appreciate it. The Appalachian terrain of Eastern Kentucky is breathtakingly beautiful, but exhausting. Lush, steep hills, plummeting valleys, and hidden draws are wedged together in a puzzle only an all-knowing Creator could conceive of, or hope to figure out. The fertile soil doesn't know or care that it covers such mean geography.

Farmers and settlers of the area never gave it much thought either, only that it was theirs to work, and that any travel across it had better be worth the effort. And that any horse worth keeping there had better be worth his salt.

## Best Kept Secret

By the 1840's a certain type of horse was already an essential thread in the fabric of daily life in these mountains. Long before there were any "breeds" or registries established there, horses were the mainstay of work, travel, play and even life itself. The horses developed in the region had to be dependable both physically and mentally - tough, strong, easy-keepers, with gentle hearts and quiet minds. The terrain demanded a steady, sure-footed mount, the rider a smooth-gaited one, and the legendary Kentucky horsemen of the day demanded, and produced, the perfect horse for the time and place.

These "Mountain Horses" as they were known for generations, were the pride of the region for their hardiness, smooth gait and sweet, willing dispositions. From farm fields to Civil War battlefields, these horses proved indispensable. As is the familiar story with many breeds, the horses were trusted with precious cargo from school chil-

dren to grandma to doctors and clergy. But just as importantly, these rugged, reliable, smooth-gaited horses came to bear the foundation of other breeds that were, in years to come in other places, entrusted just as faithfully.

Genetic markers found through blood typing research by the University of Kentucky, show that the horses bred in these Kentucky mountains contributed significantly to the Tennessee Walking Horse, the American Saddlebred and others, including most recently, the Rocky Mountain Horse. Indeed, in 1994 the Governor of Kentucky, then the Honorable Brereton C. Jones, issued an official proclamation which states:

"The Horsemen of Eastern Kentucky developed a type of horse - known as the



*A friendly Mountain Pleasure Horse mare & Kailah Hart.*  
©Rhonda Hart-Poe

MOUNTAIN PLEASURE HORSE - to be smooth of gait, gentle of disposition, willing to work and surefooted as necessary for mountain terrain; and" "This MOUNTAIN PLEASURE HORSE has been carefully and closely bred for over 160 traceable years along the original Kentucky mountain bloodlines; and" "...the MOUNTAIN PLEASURE HORSE (is) the parent stock of all the American gaited horse breeds."

## The Beauty of the Beast

Describing a Mountain Pleasure Horse is a bit like describing a good country song - words fall short. MPHs generally range from around 14.2 to 16 hands tall and 900 to 1100 pounds. They are substantially built with good bone, clean legs and sturdy feet. The long, loose, laid-back shoulder echoes the smooth stride and the depth of his broad chest resounds the great strength and heart of the horse.



*Mountain Horse Foal*  
©Rhonda Hart-Poe

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Top this with a balanced, arched neck, well set on and easily breaking at the poll for a naturally proud carriage, and a broad face with kind, yet bold, eyes. Medium-sized, well-shaped ears and ample mane and tail round out the appearance. All solid colors are found, including bay, black, chestnut/sorrel, roan, gray cremello, buckskin, palomino, and chocolate. Golden-coated horses predominate in some lines.

The gait is smooth and from the saddle, relatively action-free, with ideally, only a slight front to back motion. The Mountain Pleasure gait is essentially the same as a low, moderate rack, in that it should be 4-beat, square, smooth and without exaggerated knee or hock action. Like other gaited breeds, the MPH covers the ground efficiently, quickly and smoothly without that instant of suspension that jars the rider of a trotting horse.



"Goldfinger", 28 year old Foundation Stallion Owner: Ronnie Little, Pomeroyton, KY.



4-H Drill Team Horses  
"Cheyenne Golden Girl" "Goldfingers Rascal"  
Owner: Rockin' R Farm, Jeffersonville, KY

## The Mountain Pleasure Horse Association

In 1989 the Mountain Pleasure Horse Association was formed by parties determined to

preserve the bloodlines of the original "Mountain Horses" of Eastern Kentucky. Horses are registered on the basis of strict criteria and every September the association sponsors the MPHA Fall Classic Horse Show to promenade the best of the breed.

Today, the MPHA registration books are closed. Registerable horses must be the offspring of a registered stallion and a registered mare, with that parentage verified through blood typing.



A Mountain Pleasure Horse gaits at liberty.