

The Devon Horse Show began as a way to encourage the breeding of top horses. A group of wealthy settlers along the "Main" railroad line, met to discuss ways to improve the local horse population used to pull their coaches and buggies. The first show was held at the site of the present show in 1896 and offered 28 classes. The show was even held on the lawn of the Devon Inn for a few years to encourage attendance.

By 1914, Devon has established itself as the largest outdoor horse show in the country with over 1,000 entries. The show also hosted large amounts of spectators. Wealthy patrons from the community enjoyed the 46 Devon boxes covered by an awning and private cooks employed in mansions across the Main Line brought culinary delights to be sold at the food booth.

Devon grew to be an elegant and festive affair. Ladies wore gloves to the show grounds, a dance floor with a band was set up next to the grandstand, and tea and sandwiches were served on silver trays. Funded entirely by the community, volunteers donated everything from fudge to flowers. Just as women were earning the right to vote, a female coalition worked to bring in a country fair, which made its first appearance in 1919. Proceeds from all of these initiatives benefited Byrn Mawr Hospital as it continues today.

The Hackney and Saddlebred classes were the best-filled classes at Devon until after World War I. Saddlebreds were judged by their conformation, quality, manners, and natural ability. They were required to back easily, change the lead on a canter without apparent effort and stand long enough for the rider to dismount and mount again without unnecessary trouble. By the 1930's, the Five-Gaited, Three-Gaited and Fine Harness divisions were separated into classes as we know them today. The Devon insignia celebrates the Hackney with the image of Dr. Thomas Ashton's Wyneewood.

In 1920, William DuPont, Jr. built the first stables on the property and soon there was enough stabling for 600 horses. An underground drainage system was installed in the 1930's and the first night classes were held under the lights in 1940. Following World War II, Devon grew to accommodate nearly 900 horses and new grandstands hosted 333 private boxes. Through it all, young ladies carried wicker trays selling lemon sticks, a tradition that still goes on today. During the 1950's, the elite of Devon society could no longer support a weeklong exhibition on their own and volunteers began to turn over the reins of the County Fair Village to visiting merchants, who set up antique shops & boutiques. During this time the Budweiser Clydesdales made their first appearance at the show.

Horses came in from all over the country and Canada, including California, just to be at this prestigious show. During the 1950's, Wing Commander & Earl Teater dominated the Five-Gaited division for Dodge Stables and Mrs. Alan R. Robson had many memorable performances at Devon. It wasn't considered a great class unless the top horses were sent back out for a workout.

The first pleasure class for Saddlebreds was held in 1976 with Mary Helen Richardson and her horse Denmark's Splendor besting the large class. Since then, the popularity of the pleasure divisions have exploded to become some of the largest and most competitive classes of the show while showcasing the breeds amazing versatility. Pleasure classes are offered today in Saddle Seat, Hunt Seat, Western and Driving. During the 1980's, Devon was bursting with iconic Saddlebreds and classes in every division often boasted double digit entries.

In 1996, the show celebrated its 100th anniversary and the class schedule offered nearly all of the current divisions except the Saddlebred Western & Hunter disciplines which were added in later years.

In 2017 the former Gold Ring was officially renamed as the "Wheeler Ring" in honor of Kenny & Sallie Wheeler for their contributions to the show both as philanthropists and avid competitors in the Hunter, Hackney and Saddlebred divisions.

Today the Devon Horse Show is the longest running and largest outdoor multi-breed competition in the United States. Over 200 volunteers work together to make the show a success. There is no other horse show that can match the history, grandeur, and style of Devon. It is truly one of a kind!