

# TEXAS AMERICAN SADDLE HORSE ASSOCIATION

CELEBRATES

## 45 YEARS OF HORSE SHOWS



### THE HISTORY OF THE SADDLEBRED RUNS DEEP IN HOUSTON

To understand how Saddlebreds got to Houston, you need to go back to the beginning.

The American Saddlebred (ASB) began in the 1700s as a cross between the native Narragansett Pacer and imported thoroughbreds. "The horse America made" was bred to be an all-purpose riding horse with great size, easy gaits, and stamina. By the Civil War, generals from both sides and many cavalry soldiers rode what was then known as

Kentucky Saddlers. Known for a natural high trot and headset, they were regal to behold on the battlefields.

American Saddlebred breeders and enthusiasts began showing them in 1856 in Kentucky. In 1891, the American Saddlebred Horse Association (originally known as the National Saddle Horse Breeders Association) was founded in Louisville, KY and was the first organization for an American breed of horse.

SADDLEBREDS  
EVOLVE AND SO  
DO THE CROWDS!



GENERAL GRANT WITH 'CINNCINATI', KENTUCKY SADDLER



In the show ring today, American Saddlebreds compete in five primary divisions: Five-Gaited, Three-Gaited, Fine Harness, Park, and Pleasure. Each division has its own "look" and desired traits; however, all strive to meet the model of an ideal American Saddlebred. They are judged on performance, manners, presence, quality, and conformation. In addition to their animated style and brilliance in the show ring, the Saddlebred's willing attitude has made it a versatile breed allowing it to excel in other disciplines including dressage, eventing, combined driving, and jumping.



GENERAL SHERMAN WITH 'LEXINGTON', KENTUCKY SADDLER

## SADDLEBREDS SHINE IN THE HOUSTON SHOW RING

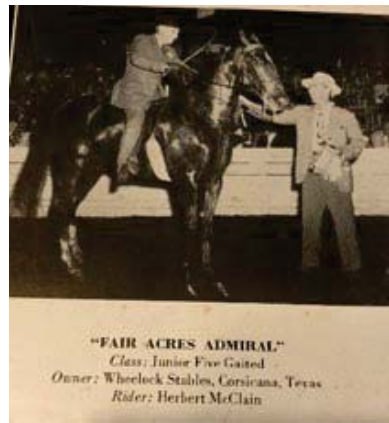
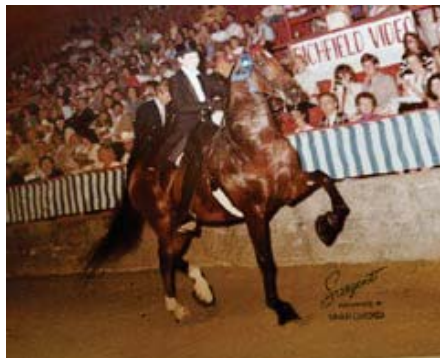
Fast forward almost 90 years to the Pin Oak Charity Horse Show, one of the largest and most prestigious horse shows in the country which debuted in Houston as the "Championship Horse Show" on May 26, 1945, at J.S. Abercrombie's Pin Oak Stables. Saddlebreds were the spotlight breed, and in very short order this annual event became THE social event of the season. At one point when hosted at the original stables in Bellaire, tickets for Pin Oak were harder to come by than Kentucky Derby tickets!



Perhaps the most laudable horse show attitude in history was quoted in 1953: ***"We can't afford ever to reach the top, for there is only one way to go from there - down - so we will keep growing, keep building more boxes, more grandstands and more stalls. We will give the exhibitor more classes, more take-home cash, more entertainment. We will give the spectator more reason to applaud and more reason to put the Pin Oak Horse Show on his 'must attend' calendar each year."***

All through the 50's Pin Oak continued gaining momentum. Most of the top saddle Horses in America, horses like WGC Wing Commander, The Replica, Stonewall's Duke of Dixie, Regal Aire, The Lemon Drop Kid, Beloved Belinda, King Lee and dozens more, appeared at Pin Oak. By the end of the decade, the most famous "official family" in horse show history had been put together and remained almost entirely intact up to 1974.

Pin Oak helped establish Saddlebreds in Houston and brought amazing trainers and supporters to the area; some of whom founded Texas American Saddle Horse Association (TASHA).



**During the height of the Houston Saddlebred fanaticism, the idea for TASHA was born.**

Pin Oak created a demand for Saddlebreds, and riding programs in the area grew exponentially. Local trainers needed to fill a void in the horse show

schedule and created a whole new circuit for amateur riders they named the Texas American Saddle Horse Association.

TASHA was founded in 1973 by George Roberts, Jr., Margueritte Newton, and Charles Isom as an independent non-profit corporation. The original mission of the association was *"to organize a horse show circuit in Texas, promote the education of people in Texas in the breeding, care, use, handling and development of the American Saddlebred Horse, encourage good sportsmanship and proper conduct among horsemen and women, foster good fellowship, encourage proper and humane handling and care of the American Saddlebred horse and prevent cruelty to animals."*

TASHA quickly became one of the largest ASHA Charter Clubs in the country. Hosting up to three shows in every calendar year for the last 45 years, the association has certainly lived up to its original mission. Reported as the "All Amateur Horse Show" for years, their shows had many classes dedicated to the Academy programs which were not available at the larger, more popular horse shows across the country. Academy or lesson programs were huge in Texas during the 1970's and 1980's, developing young riders who were eager to show even if they could not yet obtain a horse of their own.



A TASHA SHOW AT BEAR CREEK

The TASHA shows attracted participants from all over the region, some barns bringing 20-40 head of horses to every show. In 1988, Liz Smith wrote for an article in *Saddle & Bridle*: "Because so many barns continue to support the hard-working TASHA organization, these shows will forever be a major force in the continuing growth of the Saddlebred industry in Texas. TASHA nurtures the



young rider and horse and develops seasoned riders and horses. It sends them on to greater heights, gives them the desire for ownership, love of the breed, and most importantly, the need to give something back to the industry."



The thought was, if you want the breed, discipline and organizations to survive, you need to provide a gateway for the next generations no matter their financial status. Although Academy horses, or lesson horses, are not always registered Saddlebreds, TASHA mixed the ASB Performance and Pleasure division classes with the Academy classes. This allowed the Academy program exhibitors and their families to see all the beautiful ASB's in the show ring as well. For a time in the 1980s, Academy riders at TASHA shows were even asked to dress in full riding suits, rather than the traditional shirt and vest only, to give them the full show ring experience.



THE TASHA RING AT GSWE C IN THE 1980S



THE TASHA RING TODAY IN THE TELLEPSEN ARENA AT GSWE C

Two decades of TASHA shows were held at the Bear Creek Arena in west Houston, Supreme Acres Stables in Stafford (Fort Bend Co.), and in Liberty County before making a move to the Great Southwest Equestrian Center in Katy and more recently also in Bryan, TX at the Brazos County Expo Center. The show schedules have evolved somewhat and now include a balanced mix of Academy and ASB classes as well as several Open Breed pleasure classes in both western and English disciplines.



THE TASHA RING TODAY IN THE WHELESS ARENA AT GSWE C

TASHA has always been a family affair. From the announcing to music to presentations and ribbons, parents of the academy riders were always there ready to lend a hand. Their involvement turned the show into a family-friendly event, encouraging all generations to participate in some way. In addition to the traditional classes, TASHA shows were known for many 'fun' classes as well garnering audience support and participation which made for some great memories!

## IT'S ALL FOR GOOD WORKS

Beyond the mission for breed promotion, TASHA has benefitted several charities in and out of the Houston community as well as encouraged its youth to make the most of their horses and education. Just a few of these projects, past and present, are: art contest for the cover of the annual membership directory, essay contests for a youth scholarship, pet adoption events held at shows, the Southwest Circuit Invitational World Cup Competition where riders from the U.S. and South Africa enjoyed team competition during the show, Ride for the Rescue, Recuse Horse Challenge, Barn Card Challenge events to benefit Saddlebred Rescue, Inc., fundraisers for the American Heart Association, and most recently, partnering with the HARTH Foundation to help fund its veterans program.

To facilitate these good works, TASHA raises funds through show sponsorships, show program advertisements, show ring signage, website advertising, and merchandise sales. Volunteers spend months before every show reaching out to the community to enlist financial support so that every goal can be met.

In the fall of 2018, TASHA will celebrate 45 years of shows in Texas, and would love every horse enthusiast from every breed and discipline to participate in some way. Admission is always free, and TASHA members are also treated to several different hospitality events.

## Save the Date

The anniversary spotlight show will be held in  
**BRYAN, TEXAS**  
**DECEMBER 1-2, 2018**  
and all the details can be found on the TASHA website.

In May 2019, TASHA will hold the Spring Classic horse show in the Tellepsen Arena at GSWE C, as they begin the next 45 years supporting the Saddlebreds of Texas and beyond.

## THE AMERICAN SADDLEBRED IS THRIVING IN TEXAS!

A TASHA show is a wonderful place to bring your horse for fun, to show, to compete, and to enjoy! Exhibitors, horse owners, barn staff, show volunteers and officials return show after show because the dedication of the association to continue the traditions of the founders and their mission create an amazing, fun environment for all.

Inquiries about membership, shows, or area riding programs are always welcome by emailing [info@texasasha.com](mailto:info@texasasha.com) or visiting [texasasha.com](http://texasasha.com).

*Written by Jennifer McDowell with excerpts from [asha.net](http://asha.net), [pinoak.org](http://pinoak.org), [texasasha.com](http://texasasha.com)*

*Contributions from Cheri Newberry, Jean Huffstickler, Ricky Kamins, Joan Cantrell, and Liz Smith*