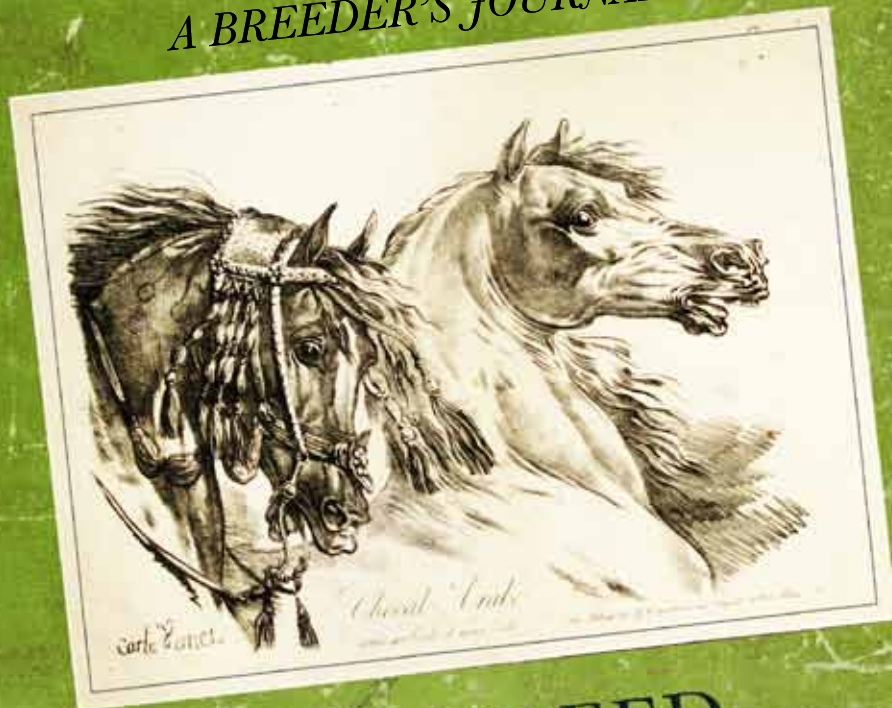


A BREEDER'S JOURNAL



THE BREED
CHARACTERISTICS
of the
ARABIAN HORSE,
Part 2: Styles & Versatility

by Christie Metz



*CHEVAL ARABE,
Lithograph by Carle Vernet,
Private Collection of Christie and Henry Metz*

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*Designer & Editor,
Beth Ellen Hunziker*

There is something so magical and beautiful about Arabian horses, people can't help but fall in love with the breed – instantly. The power of the Arabian horse to reach us by touching our hearts is impactful and inspirational. Some people walk away from their first experience with a joyful smile and others want the magic they feel to never end. Such is the power of the Arabian horse, a mythical creature that forever captivates our hearts. Sometimes I am amazed that more than 25 years have passed since I first became involved with Arabians and yet, I am still under its spell.

The first article in this series I wrote was, *“Arabian Characteristics, Type & Quality.”* This article, *“Arabian Characteristics, Part 2: Styles and Versatility,”* will continue the exploration of Arabian Characteristics and will focus on the many different body “Styles” of Arabian horses, how they evolved and how they shape our breed today.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, style has several definitions including these:

STYLE: (noun) a way of doing something, especially one that is typical of a person, group of people, place, or time: a special quality that makes a person or thing seem different and attractive: a particular form or design: fashion

STYLE: (verb) to arrange or design elements such as hair, clothes, a room, etc., so that it looks attractive.



*No other breed compares to the style of an Arabian horse.
MAJESTIC NOBLE SMF (Marquis I x Nagda by Nabil).*

If you wish to create or design a breeding program for Arabian horses, or for any animal, it is essential to understand how to develop a methodology and system to accomplish your goals and to create your vision of your dream Arabian. Understanding the history and traditions associated with Arabian horse breeding and how it evolved from the past to the present, will definitely help in this endeavor. No matter whether you are a breeder, an owner or professional equestrian, this knowledge will enhance your enjoyment of this great breed.

Another key to the breeding decision making process is gathering as much information as possible. Talking with other breeders, seeing their horses, visiting farms, attending Arabian horse shows, seminars, collecting photos, books and videos will all contribute to making an informed decision. So much information is available on the Internet today, but looking at all this data does not replace the experience of actually seeing the horses in person.

Interestingly, through this very process of studying and experiencing horses first hand, Henry and I were able to choose the direction for our breeding program at Silver Maple Farm. As we began to recognize and understand the specific styles of Arabians, our eyes seemed to zoom in on the straight Egyptian horses, or those with a large percentage of straight Egyptian bloodlines in their pedigrees.



JENNIFER OGDEN PHOTO

We love the unique qualities of the straight Egyptian Arabians. Henry Metz with one of his personal favorites, DANIKAH SMF (Ali Saroukh x Dance Diva by Raquin RA).



*There is no mistaking this is an Arabian stallion.
ALI SAROUKH (Ruminaja Ali x Glorietasayonaara by Ansata Abu Nazeer)
bred and owned by Silver Maple Farm.*

For us, these specific bloodlines maintained and retained the physical traits we love. Horses with these bloodlines inspired us to plan a program based on this “Style” of Arabian. We have found that to be a successful breeder, to achieve your individual goals, you require horses that consistently pass on the unique, specific and recognizable physical and genetic traits that you prefer. So please believe me when I say that phenotype (physical shape) and genotype (genetics) should always go together when making a breeding decision.

Today, Arabian horses vary greatly in their physical shape and size. Some horses are bigger, wider and stronger, others are smaller, finer and more delicate. Some are amazingly exotic and even ethereal looking, while others have straighter profiles in the shape of their head, but are still quite beautiful. However, I believe it is essential for the health of this breed that they remain instantly recognizable as an Arabian horse. Otherwise, why breed or own Arabians?

Identifying Hallmarks of the Breed:

Typically, the proud carriage of an Arabian horse with its floating movement and tail carried like a flag, beautiful, dished head, large dark eyes, sharply shaped ears and big flexible nostrils ARE the distinctive hallmarks of the breed. It is my opinion that these distinguishing traits and treasured characteristics are exactly what we need to guard and preserve most vigilantly within our breed. If not, we risk losing the authentic Arabian horse and the qualities that made it become the global breed it is today.

Past influences on styles of Arabian horses:

The Bedouin (desert nomads of the Middle East) are most often “the” recognized group of people that are historically credited with the development of the Arabian horse as a breed. They were practical people chose horses that could withstand the harsh environment of their lands, the demands of their nomadic lifestyle and that enhanced their lives both commercially and personally. To accomplish this, the Bedouin needed horses with specific physical and mental characteristics.

Facing Page: BINT BINT SAYO (Ali Saroukh x Samura by Anaza El Farid) and her 2015 colt, Sheikh Sayeed SMF, sired by Symbolic SMF, demonstrate the physical traits that are characteristic of the Arabian breed.



STAMINA – This was an essential trait for a horse to survive the long desert caravans over rough terrain, with even tougher climatic conditions and with little food and water.

BRUMARBA RED SHAI (Simeon Shai + x WCA Mon Cherie by Monogram) and his owner, Lori McIntosh, conquering the famous Cougar Rock of the Tevis Cup Ride, an American endurance race covering 100 miles in one day. The Tevis Cup Ride is the oldest modern day endurance ride, having been held annually since 1955. It has been the inspiration and model for the most challenging endurance rides in the world. Endurance racing requires tremendous stamina, which is why Arabian horses excel in this popular international sport.

BILL GORE PHOTO



STRENGTH – The Arabian horse was expected to carry riders, pull goods, wagons and armory, and to do it all in a balanced, smooth way while always maintaining a good attitude.

H MOBILITY H (MHR Nobility x RY Fire Ghazi), is a purebred Arabian stallion, bred by Annette Venteichera and owned by Hennessey Arabians. He is pictured at right being ridden by Mary Trowbridge. H Mobility H is a Regional and Scottsdale Park Horse Champion as well as a United States Reserve National Champion in English Pleasure Futurity. The Park Horse performance division is one of the most demanding classes for Arabian Horses. It requires great physical and mental strength. Yet some horses thrive on this level of competition. H Mobility H is a prime example of an Arabian horse whose strength and conformation allows him to carry his rider with ease and grace.



SPEED & AGILITY – In days of old, a horse with these qualities gave their Bedouin owners the advantage in raids, combats and tribal games.

VALLEJO CYLEBRITY (Rohara Moon Storm +/-x Cytrina by Cytrys). This purebred Arabian gelding is a seven time National Champion Working Cow Horse owned by Vallejo III Ranch LLC, Kathie and Audrey Hart. The sport of working cow horse, as well as cutting, reining and team penning, are extremely popular with Arabian enthusiasts in the United States. The Arabian horse is ideally suited for these performance disciplines, which require speed, agility, soundness and intelligence.



MIKE FERRARA PHOTO

TEMPERAMENT - The wonderful kindness and amazing intelligence of Arabian horses are cherished traits and are perhaps the most important hallmarks of this breed. Without these traits, they certainly would not have fit well into the Bedouin lifestyle, nor into today's demanding world. Possibly the strongest example of the Arabian's gentle nature is how they interact with children. They seem to be acutely aware of a child's vulnerability and act accordingly, with intelligence and kindness. From ancient Bedouin camps to the horses of today, the temperament of the Arabian horse has ensured its desirability on a global basis.

OM EL SHAHMAAN (Sanadik El Shaklan x Om El Shaina by Camargue) with Sophia Merz. Om El Shahmaan is a purebred National Champion Stallion with champion offspring all over the world - yet he is gentle and kind enough for a little girl to handle. Om El Shahmaan is also a performance champion and Sophia has ridden him in many competitions. Om El Shaaman is a wonderful example of the beauty and temperament of the Arabian breed.



OM EL ARAB PHOTO

BEAUTY – Beauty is easily recognized and universally appreciated as a desirable attribute. However, the other traits mentioned often meant the difference between life and death for the Bedouin.

PRINCESS SAMARIA SMF (PVA Kariim x Samura by Anaza El Farid) is bred and owned by Silver Maple Farm.

This purebred mare of straight Egyptian bloodlines, exemplifies the exotic beauty of the Arabian breed.

Princess Samaria represents three generations of Silver Maple breeding and she has produced her first foal for the farm, a beautiful son, Noble Prince SMF, sired by Majestic Noble SMF



These same traits endeared the Arabian horse to people outside of the Middle East as well, especially soldiers from other countries. Some essential traits for horses of war were strength, stamina, and adaptability to the environment and of course temperament. Arabian horses have these traits in abundance, even now.

Arabians first began making their way to Europe and other continents through war and territorial expansion efforts. Opposing military forces saw the horses firsthand in action and recognized how they gave their riders an advantage over their soldiers riding large, slow horses. The European militaries desired Arabian horses for themselves. They were always searching for ways to infuse their existing cavalry mounts with more overall quality. They appreciated all of the traits listed above, which were cherished so deeply by the Bedouin. They soon realized just how valuable the Arabian horses and their unique attributes truly were.

In these other countries, armies used their horses for transportation, to go to war, fighting from their backs, and to pull armaments to the battlefields. With their unique beauty and superior qualities, Arabian horses became highly sought after spoils of war, as well as political gifts from rulers to other kings, queens, presidents and diplomats.



NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE ON MARENGO CROSSING THE ALPS

by Jacques Louis David, (1748-1825), oil on canvas, 1801.

Credit: ©Versailles, Château de Versailles et du Trianon.

Marengo was an Arabian stallion and Napoleon's favorite mount.

~ BREED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARABIAN HORSE ~

Over the years, machines replaced the warhorse. The military no longer used them, except for special displays of pageantry, entertainment and in some places as a source of income. Some European countries including Poland, Russia, Hungary, Turkey and Spain maintained state sponsored stud farms, because their governments valued this breed, not only as a warhorse, but also for their unique beauty and specific breed characteristics.

At this time, more and more breeders recognized the Arabian's unique traits and found they were also valuable for other activities and those traits became the motivation to breed for sport and personal pleasure. As Arabian horses became more readily available, private breeders began collecting and developing breeding programs.

The uniqueness of the Arabian horse literally captivated the entire world. Owning an Arabian horse became a sign of affluence, good taste and sophistication. In the early 1900's, they were collected by royalty, movie stars and moguls. Later, as their numbers increased, Arabian horses became available to people from every walk of life. The diversity of owners resulted in diversity of uses, which in turn created the demand for a horse that could meet many needs. The Arabian horse's unique traits and versatility made it a great choice for many owners.

~ PART 2: STYLES & VERSATILITY ~



SILVER MAPLE FARM PHOTO

ENKIL X (The Elixer x VP Shaklana by El Shaklan), bred by Ron and Jeri Drassel of Chez-Moi Arabians, and owned at the time of this photo by Christie and Henry Metz. Enkil X is a purebred gelding that proved his versatility with Scottsdale and Regional championships in Halter and in Sport Horse Under Saddle, ridden by Kristin Hardin.

~ BREED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARABIAN HORSE ~

Today, Arabian horses are bred for a multitude of ridden disciplines and sports. The Arabian horse with its unique, and many believe, superior qualities definitely enhances our lives by contributing to family enjoyment and providing entertainment in a way that exceeds all other breeds! In addition, entire business industries have grown up around this horse because of its versatility.



KHABERET PGA (Khadraj NA x RA Kela by Magnum Psyche), U.S. National Champion Western Pleasure Horse bred by Devon Benbrook, owned by Nancy Risen and ridden by Liz Bentley.

~ PART 2: STYLES & VERSATILITY ~



SHOWGUN PGN ++ // (Showkayce x PGN Solitaire by Bey Shah), bred by Kristine Krauch and owned by Carol Steppe. With 11 National Championship titles in Halter and Performance, Showgun demonstrates the athletic ability, intelligence and temperament that makes the Arabian horse the perfect competitor and companion.

External Influences on Breeding and Selection for Specific Physical Traits Today:

As the Arabian horse made its way out of the Middle East and across the globe, breeders outside the region tried to emulate the same breeding practices and selections used by the Bedouins. However, practicality, the climate and the geography of the horses' new homes definitely played a role in breeding programs in Europe and in other parts of the world.

In the desert, the Bedouin needed light horses that were fleet of foot and tough. However, in the colder climates of Europe, they needed larger, stronger horses due to inclement weather conditions and tough terrain. Taller horses were sometimes required in order to travel through deep snow and to carry larger, taller people. Heavier hair coats evolved for the horses to withstand the freezing cold. Heavier bone added strength in order to deal with pulling loads and harsh tasks. However, they never lost the look of a beautiful Arabian. In reality, the influences of every country and their cultures are reflected in the styles of their horses being developing today.

*DA TRIPOLLI +// (Triften x Berry Flirtatious by Hucklebey Berry),
bred by Dolorosa Arabians and owned by Brian McKee.*

DA Tripolli +// is a purebred Arabian stallion and a National Champion in English Pleasure Junior Horse. He is also a Champion Pleasure Driving Horse.



~ BREED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARABIAN HORSE ~

Personal preferences and the trends of the show ring have become two of the major influences on the styles of today's Arabian horses. The most popular types of competitions today include exhibiting horses in hand for halter and breeding classes, as well as under saddle and driving in multiple performance disciplines. The diversity of body styles we see in horses competing in these classes reflects selective breeding methods used to meet the necessary criteria for each category.

Sometimes personal notions of what is most beautiful in a specific moment becomes a trend. Much like fashion, our Arabians reflect popular tastes and trends, and this makes them ever evolving. The various performance disciplines such as western, English, hunter, jumping, as well as the sports of endurance or flat racing all have different styles. These definitely influence changes in the conformation and physical styles for the Arabian horses. Some people want a horse with an upright neck to show in the English pleasure division. Others want a horse with a long, curvy and horizontally set neck for showing in western pleasure or working cow horse classes. The style of the horse depends upon the athleticism demanded by the discipline of the class.

AMNESTY (Justify x Amenety by Eternity), was bred by Bob and Janene Boggs and is owned by Jill Nelson and Janene Boggs. Amnesty is a Scottsdale, Youth National and National Champion in Hunter Pleasure.

~ PART 2: STYLES & VERSATILITY~



MIDWEST STATION | PHOTO

We humans are an interesting species, full of different preferences, ideals and opinions. Some folks like heavier, larger Arabians while some prefer smaller, finer and more ethereal horses with less bone. Some prefer heads that are of a classic shape, with a slight dish and some prefer a more extremely dished face with a fluted muzzle, often described in these times as a sea horse face. All of them are Arabians and none are more "correct" than others - as long as they all exhibit the essential Arabian characteristics. Humans have always made breeding selections based on their personal criteria - that has never changed. Very possibly, the Arabian horse, if allowed to evolve on its own, would have developed body styles based strictly on climate and geography in order to survive.

Bloodlines & The Influence on Physical Traits:

As people became more aware of genetics, they learned that certain bloodlines are able to transmit specific physical traits and “looks” within the Arabian horse. In an effort to create a certain look, people discovered they could achieve their goal by using a specific gene pool. This has resulted in “breeds within the Arabian breed,” such as Al Khamsa, Straight Egyptian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Heirloom, Crabbet and Sheikh Obeyd to name a few. Some of these breeders are conservationist groups dedicated to preserving specific bloodlines and some are a result of selective breeding that has resulted in a specific style of horse associated with geographic areas or countries. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a herd of strictly Saudi bred horses dating back to some of the first recorded stud books. The same is true of the country of Bahrain. However, the resulting horses remain recognizably Arabian horses. For those of you that wish to learn more about these different “Breeds” within our breed, there is an excellent article titled, “What’s in a Name? Demystifying Bloodlines and Conservation Groups,” by Anita Enander. This is located on the Institute for the Desert Arabian Horse’s website.

In today’s world, people make breeding choices or own Arabians for a variety of personal reasons. To improve each generation of Arabian horse, yet maintain the “essence” of the breed and meet the demands of today’s



*Straight Egyptian mares of Silver Maple Farm, left to right:
Shaboura, Sahbine and Glorietasayonaara.*

market is not an easy feat for breeders. However, it is not impossible. Breeding Arabians is a combination of heart, art and science.

The heart is the passion we feel toward the horse. Breeding requires a passionate dedication, no matter how difficult the circumstances are. In my humble opinion, breeding Arabian horses is a calling. To be involved with them in any endeavor is a passion whether it is your vocation or avocation. The art of breeding is the vision we see of our ideal horse. The science is gaining an overall knowledge of the breed, and learning the practices of successful breeding.

~ BREED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ARABIAN HORSE ~

Preserving the Essence of The Arabian Horse:

As we move forward in this technological age, it seems that more and more people are losing touch with nature and animals – including the Arabian horse. Instead, they are sitting in front of their computers or are glued to mobile devices. Because of this, our beloved Arabians may suffer from their owners' lack of historical and hands on knowledge of the breed.

To preserve our breed, we need to know its history and how it has shaped the horses of today. With all of these outside forces influencing the newest styles, there may come a day when our horses do not in any way even resemble the shape or form of an Arabian horse.... we all need to guard against this. Regardless of how we use and enjoy our horses, our goal as breeders should always be that our horses are immediately recognizable as an Arabian.

As a community of breeders, owners and equine professionals, I believe we need to celebrate this breed's many diverse "Styles". However, we also have a responsibility as stewards of the breed, to retain and maintain those basic hallmarks and uniquely distinctive characteristics, which are the "Essence" of the Arabian horse.

~ FINI ~

~ PART 2: STYLES & VERSATILITY~



JASOOR SMF (Simeon Shai + x Jade Lotus SMF by Ali Saroukh), bred and owned by Silver Maple Farm, is a beautiful example of a classic Arabian stallion. Photographer Jennifer Ogden truly captured his essence in this wonderful image.



I wish to acknowledge and thank the following people whose knowledge skills and talents helped to make this project possible:

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The Classic Arabian Horse
- Cambridge Dictionary:
www.dictionary.cambridge.org

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Artwork: Private collection

Notation: Several horses' names in this article bear AHA achievement symbols, which designate levels of achievement. For information and explanations of these AHA awards and designations visit www.arabianhorses.org

JADE LOTUS SMF
(Ali Saroukh x Imdal's Jade by Imperial Imdal)
bred and owned by Silver Maple Farm.



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