



Back in the early 1900s, the feature in Allan that most interested James Brantley was his gaits. It was the quality of his pace that set the black stallion apart from practically every other horse Brantley or any of his contemporaries had ever seen.

Research has since shown that the unique pace developed in so-called “Plantation Horses” throughout Middle Tennessee during the antebellum and Civil War years had evolved through plowing, pulling carriages and wagons, carrying little children to school, and other rural-oriented tasks. During those days, the horse and his rider were inseparable and, often times, both worked from dawn to dusk. The ride had to be trouble-free and the rider needed to allow his mount to proceed at will across the meadows, woodlands, and fields while he tended to the business of overseeing the plantation’s activities. The distinctive gaits developed during these years best expressed themselves as easy-going strides that provided absolute comfort to the rider, regardless of the number of hours in the saddle.

These gaits are described by Burt Hunter, an early pioneer in the development of the Tennessee Walking Horse as a distinctive breed. In an article entitled, “What Is a Tennessee Walking Horse?” appearing in the August, 1937 issue of *The National Horseman*, Hunter wrote:

The Walking Horse has three gaits, the flat-foot walk, the running walk and the canter. The flat-walk is square on four corners, bold, but with ease and grace. The running walk from which it gets its name is its most popular and leading gait. It is [a] four-cornered gait and is started like the flat-foot walk, but as speed is increased the horse over-steps the back foot over the front track by from a few to eighteen inches. It takes the jar or jolt from its back by the spring of its limbs, the motion of its feet (which is peculiar to the walking horse) and the nod of its head. All walking horses will relax certain muscles while walking their best, nod their heads, swing their ears or even snap their teeth. The canter [that] the walking horse gives you is easy with lots of spring and rhythm and just enough rise and fall to give you a thrill.

Another early authority, Fred Walker, a trainer and winning rider of the two-time World Grand Champion, Midnight Sun, described the gaits in simpler terms:

The flat walk should be straight, square, and bold. The running walk should be straight, square, and in form, plenty of stride.... I also like a good rolling canter with good head motion.

The Tennessee Walker’s inimitable gait provides a much smoother ride than a trotter or pacer. Three feet always remain on the ground, absorbing the shock of the ride. The hind legs imitate a pair of scissors, driving underneath the horse’s body in an overstriding pattern. This overstride allows the animal to cover the maximum amount of ground with the least number of steps and is unique to the breed.



Above: Doloreeue fuguate nulla pariatur. At warem et dignissim qui blsnet prases-cent lupatum delenit molestais expeprtu sint occaecat cupidat non prvide culpa wui offica deserunt mollit ani id est lavboer harumd dereud facillis est er ecpedit distinct. Nam litnodes elitend pltion nihil quod a impedit .

Regardless of how experts of a later time would describe the beauty, uniqueness, and comfort of the new gaits, Brantley recognized a good thing when he saw it, and, what he saw in the little foal he named Roan Allen was an example of the height of development of the smooth-riding gaits that Middle Tennessee horsemen had been admiring in Plantation Horses since before the Civil War.

Allan died in 1910 and Roan Allen passed away in 1930. By then many more descendants of the Allan line had been foaled, among them such recognized names as Hunter’s Allen, Wilson’s Allen, Merry Boy, and Brantley’s Roan Allen. Throughout these animals’ lifetimes, they and their offspring produced quality horses exhibiting the gaits so desired by breeders. By 1942, out of nearly twelve thousand horses registered in the Tennessee Walking Horse Registry, or, Stud Book, more than ten thousand carried Allan blood.