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The PBRCC website is a virtual shelter and resource for owners and caretakers of American Pit Bull Terriers, American Staffordshire Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, and pit bull mixes.

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Breed Information - An All-American Dog: Breed History

Humans have created dog breeds by emphasizing desirable traits and eliminating unwanted ones. It is no different with pit bulls. In the same way that Labradors were bred to retrieve birds, pit bulls were originally bred for dog fighting and bull and bear baiting.



This does not, however, mean that fighting is the sole purpose of these breeds or that this component of the breeds' history somehow makes them abnormal or negates their positive traits and well-known gentleness toward humans. For example, Greyhounds and Whippets were (and still are) bred for "coursing," chasing and killing small prey like rabbits and squirrels. Like pit bulls, these dogs still make excellent family pets.

While some pit bulls may carry the potential for dog aggression, the vast majority of pit bulls are very far from the "fighting lines" of their ancestors, and may not be dog aggressive at all. It's not accurate to say

that pit bulls are "fighting dogs," because such a designation fails to describe such a diverse animal population, most of which are very far from "fighting stock" and will never be involved in fighting of any kind.

From their inception, these dogs have been bred for general human companionship, and since the 1900s, they have been bred for conformation showing as well. From the very beginning, pit bulls have been used as farm dogs, family dogs, military mascots, and all-purpose companions. In England, the Staffie Bull is affectionately known as "The Nanny Dog" or "The Children's Nursemaid" because of their placid and nurturing demeanor toward children. (Regardless of how gentle your pit bull is with kids, dogs of any breed should never be left alone unsupervised with children.)

Throughout their history in America, pit bull dogs have been valued as beloved members of the family. Their negative media image developed only recently. (Some suggest that an absurdly sensationalistic *Sports Illustrated* cover started the hysteria in 1987.) In fact, pit bulls have fulfilled important roles throughout the last 160-plus years of American history. In the nineteenth century, pit bulls were family pets of settlers crossing the United States. They were trusted to watch the children while the adults worked in the fields. As the years passed, pit bulls achieved a position of reverence among Americans, and they appeared in advertising campaigns such as Buster Brown and Pup Brand. A classic children's television show, *The Little Rascals*, featured Pety the Pit Bull. Pit bulls have even graced the cover of *Life* magazine three times.

In 1903, Dr. Horatio Nelson Jackson hit the road with co-driver Sewall K. Crocker and a pit bull named Bud, who wore goggles, just like his master, to keep the dust from his eyes. Together, the three made the very first road trip across the US. Bud drew almost as much public attention as his fellow travelers. While it is unclear as to why Jackson and Crocker picked up Bud about halfway through their trip, one story suggests that Jackson rescued him from dogfighters.

Related Links

- Part 1: Basic Breed Overview
- Part 2: An All-American Dog: Breed History
- Part 3: Pit Bulls and People
- Part 4: Pit Bulls and Other Dogs

England they are known as "The Nanny Dog" or "The childrens nursemaid"

Little Rascals "Pety" the pit bull



In the early twentieth century, pit bulls were not respected for their loyalty, determination and bravery that they were chosen to represent.



America in WWI posters. The first decorated canine war hero was a pit bull named Sergeant Stubby. He was, until his death, a guest of every White House administration.

Many highly respected historical figures have owned pit bulls: President Woodrow Wilson, President Theodore Roosevelt, Helen Keller, Fred Astaire, Humphrey Bogart, and Thomas Edison, to name a few.

Today, pit bulls are respected and dearly loved by those who know them for what they truly are and not the monster the media has created.



Pit bulls still loyally serve society in many roles:

- Search and rescue (Christina Ridge and Doc, appear to the left)
- Therapy dogs visiting hospitals and senior communities
- Working in law enforcement as narcotics and bomb detection dogs
- Educational dogs teaching children about canine safety
- Service dogs

Basic Breed Overview | An All-American Dog: Breed History
Pit Bulls and Peeps | Pit Bulls and Other Dogs