

A 'History' Of Grooming

By BARBARA WHITE-TAYLOR, Correspondent

History tells us that animals have been around since the beginning of time. Certainly when Noah called all the creatures into the Ark he did not forget the smaller ones, like dogs and cats.

It is probable that earliest Stone Age men beat their hair with rocks in order to shorten it! (I can just imagine a household pet standing still while papa "rocked" it a hair cut!) And we know from the Bible that sheep were sheared by using sharp knives or razors.

A stroll through any art museum or gallery will reveal the many animals immortalized in paintings and sculpture that tell us that dogs and cats were popular long before they became well bred and domesticated, prized in courts of princes and kings. Even the common folk were pictured as having an animal or two sitting by the hearth or getting



under foot.

Although most of the animals pictured are of short haired varieties, such as hounds and other suitable hunting breeds, very early Seventeenth Century paintings depict spaniel types and rather neatly kept Pomeranians, short-haired cats, and skimpy-furred Angoras. These frivolous animals grace the portraits of prominent citizens, and one or two have crept into scenes of life as it was in Europe and later, in the United States in the mid-to-late Seventeenth Century. But not until the latter part of the seventeen hundreds are fancily clipped poodles introduced in art.

It is said that during the Manchu Dynasty of Imperial China, in the mid-sixteen hundreds, the Chinese groomed and clipped their popular Shih Tzu dogs to resemble miniature lions. And certainly, the Tibetians groomed their Lhasa Apsos so that they were presentable to the Delai Lama.

In the late Eighteenth Century, a parti-color poodle (size unknown), owned by the Spanish royal family, was painted sporting a "show" clip. The similarity in type between early poodles, water dogs and water spaniels, indicates the breed's usefulness in and near water. Called the "Pudel," or "water dog," in Germany, and the "Caniche," or "duck dog," in France, the name "poodle" was probably after the German "to splash in water." Whatever it is called, this breed is probably among the first to be clip-

ped for utility, comfort and show. The most suitable clip left a mane of hair on the foreparts. Back and hind-quarters were completely shaven and resembled what is known today as the "Continental" clip.

During the reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI, of France, the toy poodle had become the official court dog. Grooming one's dogs was then the fashion of the aristocracy, and the first recorded grooming parlors were established in France at that time, although grooming was mainly confined to poodles.

As poodles gained in popularity special clips were established to show off coat and conformation for the show ring. The Continental and the English saddle clips are now the only two allowable poodle clips for the show ring in the United States. As clips evolved, utility and cleanliness became a prime concern for other sporting breeds, too.

But aside from the clipping of early Shih Tzus and poodles, very little is actually known about when professional grooming actually got started, or who was the first professional groomer. Yet, as history suggests, people have had the need for cleanliness since the discovery of soap and water, and one would tend to think that dogs and cats were not exempt from this routine.

It is not precisely clear when the first scissors were invented, who introduced the first electric grooming clipper, or what were the first groom-

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ing products introduced specifically for pets. Probably the first person to recognize that razors and sharp knives did a fine job of cutting dog and cat fur was the first to recognize that pet grooming could become a growing trend. Many people could lay claim to having been the first to do this or that in the grooming industry, but where it all really began has been lost in the annals of time.

In all probability, the very first, actually experienced, real, honest-to-goodness pet grooming business began this way:

Once upon a time, in a suburb of a foreign city, a long, long, time ago, a cute, rather furry little dog who lived on a big estate in the country, managed to get itself into a mess about two hours before company was expected. The lady of the house was very irritated with the little dog, because she was busy making preparations for that evening's dinner party and couldn't possibly stop what she was doing to give the dog a bath.

Her husband was off somewhere on a hunt and her daughter was frantically trying on everything she owned to see what looked best, so she could make a good impression on the handsome young nobleman who was coming to dinner. So they weren't any help, either.

Everything was going to be perfect, except for the small, dirty little creature that was bound to ruin the entire evening, as it liked to jump on people and sit in their laps.

In desperation, the lady took the dog out to the stable and asked one of the men who was grooming the horses if he would mind giving the smelly, little dog a bath with some of the stuff he was using!, and while he was at it, would he mind cutting off some of those ugly clumps of fur, and cut its nails? He did, and the lady was pleased, and the evening was a huge success, and everyone loved the little dog so much that the lady made an "appointment" so the little dog could be done again the next time the man groomed the horses.

And that's how I think this whole business really got started. And look where we've come from there! □