



DOGS IN ANCIENT TIMES

History of The Mastiff—Ancestral Forebear of Many Breeds

MUCH has been written about the Mastiff and its early history, and of the various breeds that trace back through the centuries to the original Mastiff or what some biographers term as the Lion Hunting Family. The breeds include such popular dogs as Great Dane, St. Bernard, Bulldog (English and French), Pointer, Dalmatian, Boxer, Boston terrier (in part), Pug, Pekingese, Setter, Spaniels (all varieties), Retrievers (all varieties), English Toy Spaniel, Bull Mastiff and the Mastiff as it is known in our modern times.

Little does one realize that the small Pekingese finds root in the same ancestral branch as does the big St. Bernard or the merry Cocker Spaniel, yet careful research proves that each of the breeds have descended through the line by way of many countries where the different dogs were selectively bred for purposes best suited to the conditions of that land and to the whims and fancies of the breeders of the day.

History states definitely:

"The Mastiff, in something like his present mould, appears to have existed from the earliest dawn of history. Evidence of this is afforded by the admirable bas reliefs to be seen in the Assyrian Rooms at the British Museum, displaying the dogs of Kings Esarhaddon and Ashur-bani-pal used for hunting wild horses, and lions, in the seventh century B. C."

These dogs are of a type practically identical with the Mastiff of the present day, though apparently of greater size.

They were evidently highly thought of, and we find that in Assyria the dog was the emblem of the god Gula.

Of great interest, too, are many of the terra-cotta plaques to be found in the wall and table-cases in the same

rooms. One of these plaques is stamped with a scene representing a man leading a dog—plainly of Mastiff type.

Five more terra-cotta models of Mastiffs of similar type have each the name of the dog inscribed on its left side. Evidently it was not then, as now, customary to give dogs human names, but to name each dog in a way descriptive of his character, or powers.

The translations of the names inscribed on these five models are: 1, "Hesitate not; work thy jaws"; 2, "Conqueror of the foe"; 3, "Biter of his opponent"; 4, "Expeller of the wicked"; 5, "The strong of his bark," i.e. "The Loud-bayer."

Similar terra-cotta models of dogs have been frequently dug up, in excavations of the sites of ancient cities in Babylonia. These were formerly considered to be simply models of the hunting dogs of Ashur-bani-pal. But it is now known that the Assyrians were in the habit of burying figures of dogs of different colors under the thresholds of their houses, so that the spirits of the dogs might repel the attacks of evil spirits who might attempt to enter the house.



The Springer comes through the Mastiff line.—Courtesy Maridell Kennels.

It seems that dogs of similar type were kept by the ancient Egyptians, and Mr. E. C. Ash in his great work on dogs, shows an illustration which he tells us, dates back to about 2,000 B. C. Aristotle says that the Egyptian dogs were smaller than the Greek.

The history of the Mastiff during Classical times has no doubt been veiled in obscurity, but it is not to be presumed that the breed came suddenly to an end after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, only to appear again in England some centuries later.

There is indeed a considerable amount of evidence that dogs of Mastiff type existed in many parts of the world during the Greek and Roman eras.

The following quotations from Philemon Holland's translation of *Pliny's Natural History*, 1601, shows how Mastiffs were used as War Dogs for actual fighting.

"There was a king of the Germanes who was brought back from exile, and recovered his royal state againe by the meanes of 200 dogges that fought for him against all those that made resistance and brought him home maugre his enemies. The Colophonians and Castabaleans" (both peoples inhabiting Asia Minor) maintained certain squadrons of mastive dogges for their war-service; and those were put in the vaward to make the head and front of the battaile, and were never known to draw backe, and refuse fight. These were the trustiest auxiliaries and aid-souldiers, and never so needie as to call for pay. In a battell when the Cimbrians were defeated, and put all to the sword, their dogges defended the baggage. Yea, and their houses (such as they were) carried ordinarily upon charriots."

It is perhaps worthy of remark that the term "Canis Molossus" has always been translated as "Mastiff" among others by such great authorities as Du Cange, Galfridus Grammaticus, Stephen Skinner and Camden.

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The Twenty-eighth Annual Combined

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Twenty-four Specialty Clubs Participating under the auspices of the
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The Central States Airedale

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Judge: Mr. Emmett Warburton

German Shepherd Dog Club

of America

Doberman Pinscher Club

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See next issue for additional

breeds.

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breed in which you are interested.

The Canis Molossus, as he was at the time of the great days of Athens, is perhaps best shown today by the magnificent statue of the "Dog of Alcibiades" at Duncombe Park, Helmsley, England.

The dog of Alcibiades, and other statues seem to afford conclusive evidence of the existence and popularity of dogs of Mastiff type among the Greeks in the fifth century B. C. and later.

Interesting is Aristotle's statement that Indian dogs are derived from a cross between the tiger and the dog but from the third cross, for they say that the first race is too fierce. They took the bitches and tied them upon the desert and many of them were devoured, if the wild animal did not happen to desire to mate.

It is somewhat surprising to see this statement repeated by Pliny.

No such crossing was of course possible, but the owners of the dogs doubtless found that the reputé was a good advertisement. One might perhaps reasonably surmise that these dogs were brindles.

There seems to be no doubt that Mastiffs were found in England by the Romans when they first landed there, and that they were afterwards exported for the purpose of fighting in the colosseum and other amphitheatres.

Mastiffs were also exported from Britain by the Gauls for the purpose of fighting with their armies, and Holinshed says "The Gaules did sometime buy up all mastiffs, to serve in the forwards of their bat-taille."

It has been suggested that they were introduced by the Phoenicians in the course of their trading with Cornwall, and the Scilly Islands, whence they procured tin by barter. Though this seems to be quite a possible theory, it would appear to be at least equally probable that they were introduced from the Continent. There is a record of trading between England on the one hand, and Gaul and Belgium on the other, anterior to the first Roman invasion, and trade in dogs between these countries certainly flourished during the Augustan age and in the third century A. D.

Thus with so many able historians and philosophers upon whom we can lean for facts, we can readily perceive the predominance of the "family head" in ancient times that leads up to the beginning of the nation of Great Britain. England has long been recognized as the proving ground for purebred dogs, and little wonder is

it that many of our best known breeds have been developed to a high state of perfection on British soil.

The Pointer, Setter and Spaniel family find an earlier history in Spain, but importations into England made it possible for the breeds to attain their present day high standard, and it is more common to consider these various breeds of British origin rather than of Spanish.

Of course, the German breeds separated from the strains that found their way south into Spain and across the channel into the Isles, and were developed according to the needs of the different peoples. Looking back into the history of the Pug and Pekingese, we find that the "mastiff" family moved eastward into the realm of China where the Chinese used their arts in breeding their small "royal" breeds.

There are six basic dog families: Mastiff, Terrier, Herding, Lupine, Sight Hunting and Scent Hunting. Examples of the latter three are: 1, Eskimo, Pomeranian, Chow; 2, Russian wolfhound, Greyhound, Afgan hound; 3, Bloodhound, Otterhound, Foxhound. Etc.

All of these basic breeds have their own ancient or medieval history that proves as interesting as the fore-mentioned treatise on Mastiffs.—*RSS.*

BORDER PATROL DOGS

Dogs may be merely mascots to some branches of the United States service, but to the Immigration Border Patrol they serve a useful purpose. In fact, the effectiveness of this Patrol along Uncle Sam's long, unfortified borders is due in great measure to the dogs which co-operate so splendidly with the men. This is the subject of the article, "Dogs Are Used By Our Border Patrol," written by Edwin M. Reeves, a Senior Patrol Inspector, in the September American Kennel Gazette.

These dogs take their work very seriously, guarding the men's equipment, horses, and automobiles and lending their keen ears and noses to the important task of finding smugglers. Writing of "Tex" a bird dog that served with the unit at El Paso, Mr. Reeves relates:

"Headquarters frequently would receive a phone call from the Santa Fe Street International Bridge, that a Mexican man or woman wanted to talk to some patrolman on duty, stating there was information to give. After one particular call, the Desk