



## Thoughts on History

August 2018

### *In the Dog Days*

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# Dogs in America

## *Pre-colonial Dogs*

Apparently, early dogs did not evolve in the Western Hemisphere, but came here along with the first people.

There are four distinct canine groups native to North America: wolves, foxes, coyotes, and dogs. It's thought these native dogs migrated, probably from Asia, more than 10,000 years ago with the people who would become Native Americans. The horse, camel and pig families that had inhabited this land were wiped out by the end of the last Ice Age, more than 10,000 years ago, and Native Americans didn't have large domesticated animals. The only animal they regularly domesticated was the dog.

Though native dogs became somewhat specialized in different parts of the continent, in all cases they were attached to humans, serving as guard and sometimes pack animals, as well as assisting in the hunt.

Some tribes, including the Iroquois, regularly ate dogs but many others did not except in emergencies. Mid-Atlantic tribes were said not to have eaten their dogs, and archaeological studies bear this out, though there is evidence that dogs were sometimes ritually sacrificed. Archaeologists have found dog skeletons at Powhatan trash dumps and in many other cases, dogs have been buried individually. They sometimes were buried with humans

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This image of a Mid-Atlantic Algonquian village was drawn by an early English settler, and many copies and interpretations have been made of it. If you squint, you'll see a dog, about knee-height, in the upper left quarter of the village center. See the next page for a better picture of a similar dog. (from a painting of the Pomeiooc Village on the Carolina coast, attributed to John White, 1585)



This handsome guy, Hunter, was one of the Carolina dogs whose DNA test showed a significant link to pre-Columbian American dogs. Dogs similar to him would probably have been living in native villages when the colonists arrived.

## Pre-colonial Dogs cont'd

as well, both in Algonquian (such as Powhatan) and eastern Siouan (such as the Monacan and Mannahoac) tribes. One Powhatan grave of an elderly woman includes the body of a small dog curled in sleeping position and laid across the woman's feet with a clay pot inverted over it.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the more varied and larger European dogs had interbred with Native dogs or replaced them, and the Native American dog was thought to have vanished. Then in the 1920's, feral dogs were found in North Carolina that matched descriptions of pre-colonial canines. The breed has been protected and studied. DNA testing shows now that the Carolina Dog as well as the Chihuahua and the Peruvian Hairless have a reasonable percentage (10-35%) of DNA matching that of pre-Columbian dogs. Tell your Chihuahua (s)he's a classic!

Carolina dogs today weigh 30-60 lbs. and stand 17-25 inches high at the shoulders: larger and heavier than their ancestors. Temperamentally, they're like most other dogs: social and playful, but it's said they tend to interact more easily with other dogs than with people.

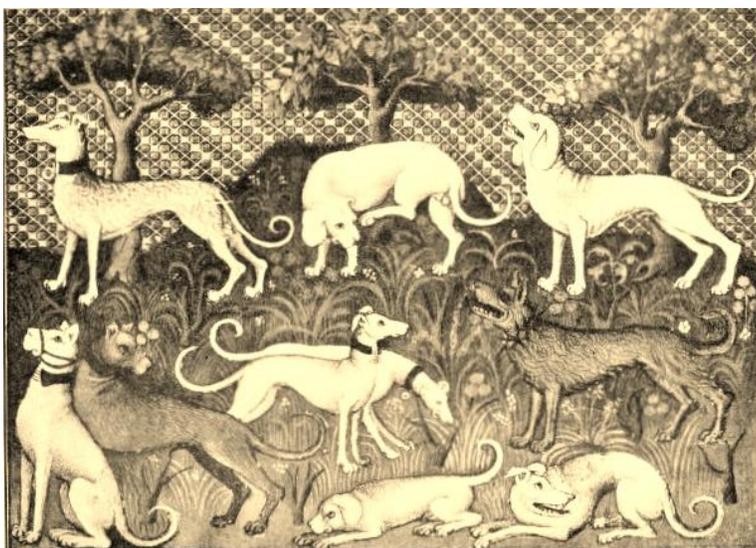
## Colonial Dogs



"Also the goodness of running hounds and of all other kinds of good hounds cometh of true courage and of the good nature of their good father and their good mother."  
*Master of the Hunt*

The labor of dogs, like that of women and children, was pretty much taken for granted in Colonial times. Colonists brought horses, cattle, swine, poultry, cats and dogs with them from Europe to the New World. Though mastiffs which even then were large, heavy dogs, prevailed because of their usefulness, hounds and spaniels as well as smaller dogs were also popular.

European dogs had been categorized into breeds and bred intentionally for many centuries by the 1600s. In his book, *Livre de Chasse (Book of the Master of Game, 1387)*, French Count Gaston de Foix lists a great many dogs of the hunt. This book was highly regarded and was translated and expanded in English by Edward of Norwich (1373-1415). It was edited and expanded again and published in America in 1909 with a preface by Theodore Roosevelt.



On this plate from *Master of the Hunt* are greyhounds, running hounds, mastiffs, alaunts (large working dogs from Asia, lower left) and spaniels.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century except in maybe in hunting, specific breed characteristics were often not considered in selecting dogs. Dogs mostly were chosen according to what they were likely to be good at doing. Where possible, puppies values according to their parents' skills. For dogs generally, consistent breed standards weren't applied until the late 1800's.

## Dogs as Pets in England and America

Dogs and people just naturally seem to align. We've worked, shared food and shelter and jointly defended our homeplace for millennia.

Though many a lady in her manor no doubt kept a dog for companionship and to amuse her while her husband was out hunting, the dog as a pet rather than a working animal was a concept that didn't generally take hold in Europe until the 1500-1600's. In any society, aristocrats and royalty can start trends that eventually influence a culture. Mary Queen of Scots was fond of small white dogs similar to today's Maltese spaniels. It's said that on February 8, 1587 the doomed former queen took one of her spaniels to the execution block with her, hidden in her skirt. It was not found until she had been beheaded. The dog was unharmed.

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One of the best-known dog fancying monarchs, Charles II, ruled England from 1660 to 1685. Several paintings of him as a child and at least one as an adult show him with his favorite small red and white spaniels. His name became attached to the breed and to its descendant breed, the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, which is very popular today.



Charles II as a child with two of his sisters  
*The Three Eldest Children of Charles I*  
Anthony Van Dyck, ca 1635.

*“There are three faithful friends:  
an old wife, an old dog, and ready  
money.”*

Benjamin Franklin



Thomas Hewart after Hendrik Danckerts, *John Rose, the Royal Gardener, Presenting a Pineapple to King Charles II*, c. 1676

*“Qui me amat, amat et canem meum.”* (who loves me, also loves my dog). This quote from a sermon by St. Bernard of Clairvaux in the 1100’s is thought to be the origin of “Love me, love my dog.”

Note: St. Bernard dogs were not named for Bernard of Clairvaux, but for St. Bernard of Menthon, who died in 1008. He founded a monastery in the Alps which used dogs to find and rescue snow-stranded travelers. The monastery kept strong, heavy, long-haired work dogs able to withstand alpine storms and cold.

In Colonial times, the word “favorite” was used instead of “pet.”



of most settlers drew large working dogs and their people closer together.

As the colonies slowly, sometimes painfully, found their way to stability, it became easier to keep pets of many sorts, and it became stylish during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to have wild pets. Squirrels, song birds, and deer became favorites, but by then the dog had come to reign as the household pet.

Cats, of course, shrugged and did whatever cats do. Their time would come.

## Angel the Imp a Dog Story of Today



Sure, late life marriages are easier than first marriages, but they've got their issues, too. Emmy and I were lucky: when we married, we were able to pull our lives and households together unusually well. It even was sort of fun—well, except for one thing. She had a little white and brown Jack Russell terrier she'd gotten from the SPCA: that's what we used to call "The Pound" when I was a kid. She'd named the dog, of all things, Angel. Emmy doted on that silly mutt, but I'd never had a dog and wasn't much interested in them.

That pup was misnamed—she should have been called Imp. She was like a two-year old kid: full of energy and always up to something. After I moved in, little Angel got me in her sights and focused all that crazy energy on me. She was always sneaking around me looking for a trick to play. When I was sitting, she'd steal the handkerchief (yes, I still use a handkerchief) out of my pocket, or when I was undressing she'd grab one of my socks and then she'd run around sort of waving it at me. Emmy said the dog was trying to be my friend, but I wasn't sure about that. I ran after her but finally figured I was doing exactly what she wanted. Then I ignored her instead and soon she gave the game up. I still am missing a few socks.

She was noisy, too—barking and yipping for any reason or for no reason I could tell. I'd swear if a dinosaur had walked across our yard she'd carry on just the same way she still does when she sees a butterfly. It was her whining when she wanted something that really bugged me, though. I wished that dog had a "Mute" or "Off" button. What a pain she was!

I felt like swatting her when she played her tricks on me, but Emmy said that wasn't good. It could make her afraid of me and maybe even mean. I thought that wasn't right, but Angel was Emmy's, not mine, so I just left her alone. I don't much like swatting, anyway. My wife said the imp and I would work it out in time. I wasn't sure about that happening, either.

Putting up with her dog was little enough price to pay for sharing my life with Emmy. We were happy, and we lived quietly, doing what we wanted and enjoying our senior years together.

Then one day Emmy unexpectedly just keeled over. The medics thought it was a heart attack and went to work on her, but she was pronounced dead at the Emergency Room. I was alone again. I'd been widowed before and I knew the drill. Emmy was an organized woman, so it wasn't that much work to make calls and arrangements and do the filings, but it was hard to do. I hated it all. I wanted my sweet wife back.

For Emmy's sake I took good care of Angel while deciding what to do with her. She whined so much though: almost more than I could stand. On the fourth day of my new solitary life, I added "Take dog to SPCA" to my new, long, *Things to Do* list. I told myself she'd be OK there. After all, it was where she came from.

Angel slept in a crate, and Emmy used to tuck her in every night. She'd give the dog a little treat and sing her a song with words she made up about good dogs, to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." I didn't know the words, but of course I knew the tune, so when I put the pup to bed I would give her a treat and hum to her while I closed the crate. It seemed like a kind thing to do. On the fifth night after, well, after Emmy was gone, I was humming to Angel and putting her to bed. Suddenly the memory of my wife's voice came back strong to me and I just broke down. I guess I must've left the crate door open.

I went right to bed hurting, missing my wife and feeling terribly alone when I heard whining and looked around. At the edge of the bed I could see a pair of perked-up brown ears, and I looked over the side. Angel was on her hind legs, stretching hard to get up on the bed. Leaning over the side, looking down into hopeful doggie eyes, I couldn't help myself. I lifted her up on the bed, lay back down and watched her.

She walked around the covers, sniffing, whimpering quietly. When she got to Emmy's pillow, she sniffed it a long time, then curled up against it and sighed. I didn't know dogs could sigh but knew just how she felt. I said,

“I miss your mom too, girl,” petted her a while and then fell asleep. Around two a.m. I woke to find Angel snuggled warm against me. When I went to the bathroom she jumped down and sat waiting politely by the door. I picked her up and put her on the bed again and went back to sleep. It was very good sleep, the best I’d had since Emmy died.

I spent the next day working on my To Do list. When I got all the way down to the note to take Angel to the SPCA, I crossed it off and mailed them some money in Emmy’s memory instead. Then I went on-line and ordered a set of dog steps for the bed, so I wouldn’t have to pick the dog up all the time. Emmy would have liked that: I sure did.

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### Why We Say... “Dog Days”

In the Northern Hemisphere, days from mid-July to mid-August are when summer heat is usually most intense. It also happens to be the time when Sirius, the very bright star in the constellation *Canis Majoris* (the big dog), starts to reappear after months “behind” the sun, showing just at dawn. If you draw a line through the three stars in Orion’s belt, it will point you toward Sirius. The Romans decided that Sirius’ constellation was the constellation Orion’s hunting dog. The name Dog Days is thought to come out of that coincidence of hot days with Sirius reappearing.

“This season of the year has had a bad name for a special unhealthiness since the time of Hippocrates.”  
JAMA, 1902

For non-air-conditioned societies, which was every society until the mid-1900s, or for people who work out of doors, the dog days can be miserable. Nights are too hot for sleeping well and the days are long and tiring. Populations of towns and cities can especially suffer: hot pavement radiates stored heat even after sundown, apartments can lack cross-ventilation, and the press of people and buildings limits air flow even out of doors. City dwellers who could, often went to the roof at night for cooler air, while those who could afford it would summer at the shore or mountains during the dog days.

**Dog Days Relief:** 25-year-old Willis Carrier invented the first mechanical air conditioner in 1902. It was a large machine for industrial use that removed moisture from the air. By 20 years later, he had made inventions and changes that reduced the machine’s size and cost and Memorial Day of 1925 saw the debut of theater air conditioning at the Rivoli Theater in Times Square. For decades after, air-conditioned movie theaters were a refuge from summer heat, and entertaining, high-dollar blockbusters became a film industry standard for the summer season.

“...mad dogs and Englishmen step out in the midday sun.”  
- Cole Porter

### But... What About Rabies?

For centuries, rabies has been believed to be related to heat, and many people think it’s the source of the name “dog days.” Though they can happen anytime, rabid bites occur most often in the summer.

Rabies is a highly contagious fatal viral infection of the nervous system that infects mammals and is transmitted by saliva through scratches or bites. Louis Pasteur developed the first rabies inoculation for animals in 1885 and adapted it for humans. Rabies is still a health problem, and some people still die from it, but with proper treatment and the inoculation of pets it is much less of a threat. In America today, bats and raccoons are the primary carriers of the disease, and bites do happen. They always must be taken seriously, whenever they occur.



## The Dogs of *A Good Place*



*Rufus, Bronson, Daisy, and Rufus the Younger* are mastiffs who share the daily lives and the perils of a colonial family in *A Good Place*.

A story of settlers on the banks of the James River during the early years of the Virginia colony, the book centers on four historically documented people: John Powell, his new wife, his daughter Mary and their indentured servant Thomas Prater. It's a tale of how they, along with three fictional characters: a transported Puritan prisoner, an undersized eight-year-old orphan, and a Manahoac slave, struggle to make the wilderness a place that could be good for them.

*A Good Place* is the third volume of *Helena's Stories*: historical narrative about the personal lives of documented people living in interesting times. Though all are from one family's history, the books are independent of each other.

*A Good Place* and its companions: *Helena's Stories*' Volume I, *A Perfect Plan*, and Volume II, *Rule!* are available on Amazon as Kindle or soft-cover books or as e-books on Smashwords, Nook, Kobo, and Apple iBooks. Look for the title and Carolyn Osborne, and you should find them easily.

To learn more, please visit my website: <https://carolynowrites.com>

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## Sources for Graphics

Page 1: Header graphic: from *River Landscape in the Late Afternoon* (1663) by Adriën Van de Velt, Source: [www/the-athæneum.org](http://www/the-athæneum.org)

Page 2: Spaniel (ca 1655) by Adriën Van de Velt, Source: [www/the-athæneum.org](http://www/the-athæneum.org)

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Page 3: Anthony Van Dyck, *The Three Eldest Children of Charles I* (ca 1635).  
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Girl with songbird from Katherine C. Grier, *Pets in America: A History*, University of North Carolina Press, 2006, Chapel Hill, NC

Page 4: Jack Russell photo, uncredited. Google Images.

Page 5: Constellation from Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog\\_days](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog_days)

Mad dog graphic:

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Page 6: Mastiff graphic: from *Studies of a Dog* (undated) by Adriën Van de Velt, at [www/the-athæneum.org](http://www/the-athæneum.org).

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