

Primary Sources

Why Beagles Love America

By Kim Pearson

Goody Beagle here. You don't know me unless you have read my book *Dog Park Diary: the social round of Goody Beagle*. It's a good book, and mostly true, but after it was published I discovered that I have more to say. In this article I want to tell you how Beagles came to America.

Beagle history is filled with intrepid dogs who have been braving rabbit holes for over a thousand years. That's right – over a thousand years! Beagles probably originated in Britain. We were around before there was a Britain, Great or not. We were chasing hares in Wales before the Romans invaded, when you humans were practically living in caves. We provided meat for your table (except you didn't have tables then) and you just might have died out as a species if it wasn't for us! Well, perhaps I exaggerate, but you get the idea.

Beagles are aristocrats, the chosen companions of Kings and Queens. Kings Edward II and III kept beagles for rabbit hunting. Edward III even took us onto the battlefields with him during the Hundred Years War. The Crusaders who took off to banish the "heathen" from the Holy Lands took beagles with them. (We hunted rabbits, not heathen.) Queen Elizabeth the First liked to carry beagles in the pockets of her dress. This is why people called us "pocket beagles." Elizabeth sometimes let her beagles loose on the royal dinner table to gambol through the plates, and dare anyone to object. No one ever did. I wish my human would do that with me. But she's not a Queen so she probably won't. I wouldn't fit in her pocket anyway.

Because of our popularity with royalty, beagles were in with the nobility. It was the "done thing" to keep a pack of beagles on your country estate, so the men could play their hunting games, and the ladies could let us curl up on their laps afterwards.

Then the dark times came. In the 1700s the new craze was for hunting foxes instead of rabbits. Some gentleman with too much time on his hands thought he'd breed beagles to be better at fox hunting. He cross bred a Buckhound with a Beagle, and the Foxhound was born. Soon everybody who was anybody was keeping packs of foxhounds instead of beagles. You humans are so fickle!

Fox hunting is senseless and cruel. Nobody even ate the foxes! Besides, foxes are our canine cousins and I think Foxhounds are betraying their own. How can they live with themselves?

Soon the only beagle packs in Britain were in small farmholdings in Wales and Ireland, where they hunted rabbits for food. Beagles may have even died out, if it hadn't been for America. In the 1860s some English beagles lucky enough to survive the foxhound invasion were brought to America and bred with small Southern hunting hounds. The American Beagle came to be, so let's hear a howl for America!

© 2008 - Kim Pearson is the author of five books, including Dog Park Diary, and a ghostwriter of more than thirty non-fiction books. Dog Park Diary is the first she has ghostwritten for a dog. For more about Dog Park Diary, visit www.dogparkdiary.net, and for more about Kim's ghostwriting services, visit www.primary-sources.com.