

# HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

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On **September 17, 1884** a group of twelve dedicated sportsmen, responding to a “meeting call” from Messrs. J. M. Taylor and Elliot Smith, met in the rooms of the Philadelphia Kennel Club, in that City. Each member of the group was a representative or “delegate” from a dog club that had, in the recent past, held a benched dog show or had run field trials. This new "Club of Clubs" was, in fact, The American Kennel Club.

At the next meeting of the group on **October 22, 1884** at Madison Square Garden in New York, a Constitution and By-Laws was adopted, and Major James M. Taylor was elected as the first President. With no headquarters, meetings were held in several different cities—principally New York, but also Cincinnati, Boston, and Newark, New Jersey.

**By 1887, a room was rented at 44 Broadway**, furnished with a desk, filing cabinet, a couple of chairs, and occupied by Alfred P. Vredenburg, the AKC's third Secretary. In 1888, August Belmont, Jr. became the AKC's fourth President. Thus began the long Belmont/Vredenburg reign that lasted well into the Twentieth Century. During this period, it became apparent that the Club had to have a reliable studbook. Dr. N. Rowe, starting in 1878, had assembled three volumes of The *National American Kennel Club Studbook*, and subsequently offered these three initial volumes gratis to the AKC. In 1887, the AKC acknowledged this gift in the fourth volume of The *American Kennel Club Studbook*.

The following year, Belmont put the wheels in motion to produce a “gazette” by guaranteeing against any losses for five years with his own personal security of \$5,000 per year. In January, 1889, the *GAZETTE* made its first appearance; survived those first five years without needing even a penny of Belmont's support; has been published without interruption for over a century; and is one of the oldest dog magazines in existence.

Early American shows followed precedents set in England with respect to the championship title and required three first place wins in the Open Class, which was generally divided by sex. Several changes were made in 1900, and a point scale emerged, based on the total number of dogs at the show, ranging from one point (All-breed shows with under 250 shows) to five points (All-breed shows with 1000 dogs and over). The number of dogs in each breed was not considered. This schedule had obvious inequities. In all instances, regardless of show or entry, an accumulation of ten points was required for the title of champion. All member club specialty shows were rated at four points, while non-member specialties were given a two point rating, regardless of the size of entry.

On May 26, 1908 the AKC was granted its third articles of incorporation under a special charter from the State of New York. The new Constitution and By-Laws were approved January 5, 1909. On January 10, 1910 new Rules Governing Dog Shows eliminated the Graduate Class, substituted an American-Bred Class, and changed the prerequisite for a championship title, requiring fifteen points, under three different judges, three points having to be won at one show.

In 1911 a rule went into effect that concerned territorial protection. In large cities there was a trend toward developing several clubs, often formed by dissident groups. The new rule gave sole privilege to the member club that had held the first show in a given area.

Also, in that year, definite rules for classified and unclassified “special” prizes were established. A classified special prize was one offered in a single breed, somewhat similar to an award for best of breed (although such a win was not recorded by the AKC). An unclassified special was a prize offered in classes involving multiple-breed competition similar to the present groups and best in show. Representatives of several breeds in a single class competed for this prize. “Special” prizes were offered at most shows; dogs could be entered for “Specials only” and this practice is the origin of our present day use of the word referring to champions as “Specials,” or “Specialing” a dog.

The dog show superintendent had been a fixture at AKC events from the very beginning. In August 1905, a rule was passed that "The Superintendent of any show cannot exhibit or officiate as a judge at that show." Then in April 1917 a notice appeared in the *GAZETTE*, "Applicants desiring to officiate as judges and Superintendents at shows held under American Kennel Club Rules can now obtain at this office application forms to act in either capacity." Initially, these applications were approved by the License Committee. In 1931 this authority was given to the Board of Directors.

In 1920, sanctioned matches were begun. They provided useful training exercises for more formal events and they made dog owners more aware of correct show procedures.

In 1923 a committee of directors recommended a number of changes with respect to show rules and judging procedures. This entailed separating the several breeds into five groups and judging each breed in each group to a single winner: best of breed. Group 1: Sporting Dogs, as well as all Hounds; Group 2: Working Dogs; Group 3: Terriers; Group 4: Toy Breeds; and Group 5: Non-Sporting Breeds. These best-of-breed winners in each group were next judged to a best dog in that group, and finally, the five group winners met to decide the best dog in the show.

By 1924, the new group alignment was in general use. The Westminster Kennel Club was the first to include judging for best in show under the new format. Later in the 1920s, the groups were expanded to six, as Hounds became Group 2. In 1929, the first edition of *Pure-Bred Dogs was published*, which in 1938 was renamed *The Complete Dog Book*.

The 1930s saw many significant changes and additions. The AKC decided to require licenses of persons who exhibited dogs for a fee. This led, in 1931, to the formation of the Professional Handlers Association. The first book of AKC rules was presented in the November 1932 *GAZETTE*, and was followed by a separate book of these rules, quite similar to the modern AKC booklet, "*Rules Applying to Registration and Dog Shows.*" The first Children's Handling Classes were held at the Westbury Kennel Club Show in 1932. This class designation was changed to junior Showmanship in 1950. In 1934, the AKC decided to establish a Library. In the mid 1930s, Helene Whitehouse Walker was instrumental in establishing obedience tests. She submitted a pamphlet of procedures to the AKC in December 1935, and in March 1936 the Board of Directors approved it in principle and in April published the first official "*Regulations and Standard for Obedience Test Field Trials.*"

During the 30s, a change in the rules went into effect concerning breeds with varieties. The rule stated that variety winners should be judged to best of breed. This move reduced the number of group representatives for the breeds involved and caused considerable controversy among exhibitors for several years. The matter was not resolved until 1953 when all variety winners were again permitted into the group, and the best of breed award was eliminated in the breeds with varieties at all-breed shows only.

During the War years in the 1940s, the continuation of dog shows, obedience trials and field trials was a triumph of American ingenuity and was greatly aided by The American Kennel Club's flexible reaction to the difficulties that arose. Long-standing rules and regulations were interpreted more loosely and, in many instances, disregarded altogether. Shows were approved to be held in the same building on consecutive days; the number of unbenched shows increased and geographic restrictions were relaxed. To comply with wartime attempts to conserve paper, *The American Kennel Gazette* was reduced in size to a format of 9½ by 6½ inches. In the middle of the 1940s, professional judges formed the Professional Dog Judges Association, which included many of the top all-breed judges of the time. On October 1, 1947, a judges' directory entitled "*Licensed Judges*" was issued. And one important postwar move was the January 1946 appointment of Leonard Brumby, Sr. to the post of full-time field representative. In 1947, Tracking was made a separate class. Until that time, it was part of the U.D. test.

About the same time, early in 1950, the Bred-By-Exhibitor class came into being, as the Limit Class was dropped. This action confined the entry of imported dogs to the Open Class. Another important change enacted about 1950 involved the long-standing registration of a kennel name, or prefix, giving sole use of the name to the owner, with no time limitation. The change limited the exclusive use of a kennel name to a five-year term, with renewal available upon application and payment of a fee. With one-day shows becoming more numerous and daylight hours for outdoor events being reduced in the early Spring and late

Fall, a rule went into effect in January 1951 that restricted judges to twenty dogs per hour. This was subsequently modified to twenty-five with the total number of dogs per day not to exceed two hundred. Also, rules were instituted to require show-giving clubs that had limited entries to indicate the limitations on their premium lists. One of the most controversial issues to be addressed surfaced at the December 1950 Delegate's meeting when an attempt to seat women delegates was made; the motion failed for want of a second.

In 1950, amendments were made to the rules that determined that no show could extend for more than two days unless specific permission from the AKC was obtained. Also, in 1950, a nominal recording fee of twenty-five cents was imposed on each entry.

Over the years, as the Club grew and the office force expanded, there had been a succession of moves to increasingly larger quarters. In 1919, the Club had settled at 221 Fourth Avenue (now Park Avenue) and remained there until it was again necessary to expand.

In 1964, the Club moved to 51 Madison Avenue, occupying space spread out over several floors. In 1967, the long-used best-of-winners class was eliminated. In its place a system of judging best of winners during the judging for best of breed or best of variety of breed was established. In 1967, the condensed premium list was first approved. In January 1969 new, streamlined *Obedience Regulations* went into effect. An important new approach to approving conformation and obedience judges was enacted in November 1969 when the provisional judging system appeared. New applicants with adequate breeding and exhibiting experience were permitted to officiate at three shows, after which the Board of Directors reviewed their performance, and thereafter the provisional judge was either certified or required to gain further training and experience.

The most significant accomplishment of the 1970s was the admission of women as delegates. On March 12, 1974 a motion to allow women to serve as delegates was seconded and carried by a vote of 180 to 7. At the June 1974 meeting of the AKC, the first women delegates were elected: Mrs. Carol D. Duffy to represent the Mid-Hudson Kennel Club; Mrs. Gertrude Freedman to represent the Bulldog Club of New England; and, Mrs. Julia Gasow to represent the English Springer Spaniel Club of Michigan. They attended their first Delegate's meeting in September 1974.

The Dog Museum of America was established in June 1980, and formally opened in September 1982 at 51 Madison Avenue. Five years later, in 1987, it moved to its present location in St. Louis. The Herding Group became Group 7 in 1982, accomplished by splitting the Working Group into two segments. On November 17th and 18th, 1984 The American Kennel Club celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the Centennial Show in Philadelphia. Earthdog tests began in 1984. Dr. Jacklyn Hungerland, delegate of the Del Monte Kennel Club, was elected as the first woman Director of the AKC, March 5th, 1985. Hunting tests were inaugurated in 1985. The following year there were several judging guidelines enacted. Also, in 1986, rules for registering litters conceived by Artificial Insemination from Fresh, Extended and Frozen Semen were established. The Performance Events Division was formed with Directors for Obedience, Field Trials, Hunting Tests and Coonhound Events.

In 1988, the Events Calendar was separated from the *GAZETTE*, and in 1989, the *GAZETTE* celebrated its 100th Anniversary.

The 1990s saw the beginning of Herding tests and Lure Coursing. Four years later, Agility became the latest, and one of the most popular AKC events. The Canine Health Foundation was established and initially funded by the AKC, it still receives substantial support from the AKC every year. The Canine Good Citizen program was established, and in 1995, the very successful Companion Animal Recovery program was initiated. Early in the 1990s another milestone was reached when the AKC made the decision to relocate various departments to Raleigh, NC This gradual process was complete in 1998, and in November, the AKC headquarters in New York moved from its home of 34 years at 51 Madison Avenue to its new location at 260 Madison Avenue. The AKC operations in Raleigh now occupy the entire building, which has been renamed the American Kennel Club Building.