



Saint Bernard National Archives
&
Hall of Fame
Year
1878

**In The Beginning...
Dog Shows in America**

Please make it a point to read Mrs. Geraldine Hayes's article on *The Evolution of Dog Shows* featured in the "Newsroom" in the Saint Bernard National Archives on the web. Gerry (the American Kennel Club's Archivist) takes us on a step-by-step journey from **1859** to the present covering all the major early events that took place in the world of dogs. It is hard to comprehend dog shows in the days before RVs, SUVs, station wagons, airplanes, only a few cars and just a decade past the American Civil War! You will find this article most informative, and at times you will shake your head at the way things used to be done. Perhaps you will discover a new appreciation of dog shows--that's for sure! Thank you, Gerry, for sharing this historical article with us.

Going back in time to the beginning of dog shows in the United States, one finds very few records on file. Keep in mind, the early kennel clubs' record-keeping was in the beginning stages, and the American Kennel Club (AKC) was *not* even in existence in the **late 1870s when dog shows began in America.**

To put this date in a historical time frame: The 1870s was the decade following the American Civil War. We are talking stagecoach days! The first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, and Orville and Wilbur's first flight was in 1903--a quarter of a century later! During these early years of showing dogs, there were very few shows each year and the difficulties of travel further limited the number of shows dogs and kennel men could attend. Travel was very difficult; dogs on the West Coast did not travel to the East Coast or Mid-West, or vice versa.

Championships were awarded (pre-AKC) so trying to locate the first American champion seemed like an impossible task. **The research starts with the year 1877, which is the year of the earliest show catalog (Westminster KC) at the AKC Library.** The Westminster KC (WKC) predates the AKC and their show catalogs were an intricate part of my research. The WKC catalogs progress forward year-by-year, plus many were even marked with the class winners! Since the WKC was the big show of the year in the United States, many of the early Saint Bernards were shown in New York City.

There are no listings of a Saint Bernard Champion, in any of the show catalogs, at the AKC Library for the year 1878.