

Greyhound History

The greyhound has deep roots in the history of the world. Murals, sculpture, and paintings created more than 4,000 years ago depict dogs strikingly similar to the greyhounds we know today.

Greyhounds are thought to claim descent from the desert dogs of the pharaohs and Arab sheiks. These ancient dogs were held in high regard in the Middle East and were the companions of Egyptian and Arab princes. Etchings of greyhound-like dogs have been found on the walls of the tombs of ancient pharaohs. The pharaohs prized these dogs, both as pets and as hunters. The Arabs, too, so admired greyhounds that they were the only dogs permitted to share their tents (a high honor in nomadic tribes) and to ride atop their camels. The birth of a greyhound ranked second in importance only to the birth of a son.

A greyhound was the first dog mentioned in literature. Homer's *Odyssey*, which was written in the 8th century B.C., features Odysseus's faithful greyhound Argus, who was the only member of the household to recognize Odysseus when he returned home 10 years after the end of the Trojan War.

Greyhounds are the only canines mentioned in the Bible. In the writings of King Solomon (considered to be the wisest of the wise), greyhounds are described as one of four mighty beings that are "stately in their stride" (Proverbs 30:29-31).

In the Middle Ages, British royalty prized greyhounds for their speed, agility, and keen eyesight. Howel the Good, a ruler of Wales in the 900s A.D., set the punishment for killing a greyhound at death — the same penalty as for killing a person. In 1016, King Canute enacted the Forest Laws to keep poachers out of the royal forests. A provision of these laws made it illegal for anyone not of noble birth to own or hunt with greyhounds.

In the late 1800s, greyhounds were imported to America to help farmers control jackrabbit populations. Eventually, greyhounds became a source of great entertainment, as greyhound racing was established in many sections of the United States. In 1921 the first successful greyhound track opened in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Throughout history, prominent people have kept greyhounds as pets. Among them are Queen Cleopatra of Egypt; Britain's Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, and Queen Victoria; U.S. president Rutherford B. Hayes; General George Custer; actresses Bo Derek and Tea Leoni; author JK Rowling; musician Trent Reznor; *The Simpsons* creator Matt Groening; L.A. Dodgers manager Don Mattingly; and even our own Ron Gardenhire, former manager of the Minnesota Twins.