

CATS OF YESTERYEAR

THE MAINE CAT

Maine Cats were the first show cats in the United States. No definite records are available, but it is known that exhibitions were held as early as the 1860's centered principally in Maine.



Maine Cat—"Yellow H. 14th Beauty"
Owner by Mrs. Staples.

The natives of Maine took great pride in their cats. They considered them bigger, better and smarter than any other cats in the world. Maine cats were "imports" brought in by seafarers. They soon became "natives", developing a heavy coat as protection against the rugged Maine winters. They were found in all the solid colors — white, black, blue and red or orange, as well as tabby. Intermingling soon produced mixed coloration, often marked with white. Smokes and silver were rare.

Mrs. E. R. Pierce, who lived in Maine for many years before moving to Detroit, was one of the first cat fanciers in America. She made a scientific study of the breeding and care of Maine cats using as her foundation whites and brown tabbies. "Cosie", a neutered brown tabby, bred by Mrs. Pierce and later sold to Mrs. E. N. Barker, was Best Cat in the Madison Square Garden show of 1895. Mrs. Pierce had many other fine brown tabbies. One of her best was King Max, a male, who won in the Boston shows in 1897, 1898 and 1899. His son, Donald, defeated him in 1900.

Among the whites bred by Mrs. Pierce was Dot, a male, who defeated the famed silver tabby, Richelieu, at an early show in Bangor, Maine. Richelieu was a consistent winner in the shows prior to 1895.

Inasmuch as the CFA Stud Books did not list Maine cats as such, it is impossible to determine the number therein. However, Mary Stuart (CFA SB No. 218) is obviously a Maine cat since her sire is given as "Black Maine Cat" and the dam, "Blue Maine Cat". She was a blue with "golden" eyes and was eligible for registration due to her registration with the American Cat Association.



"Tobey", a Maine Cat owned by
Miss Chaple.

The CFA Register was a different story, however. They were provided for under Rule 2 — "A long-haired cat, born in New England, of the type commonly known as 'Maine Cats' or 'Coon Cats', if not eligible for the Stud Book, may be entered in the Register upon a sworn statement that said cat is bred from sire and dam of same breed, long hair, and that neither is a short hair." 28 cats were listed under this rule in Volume 1. It is interesting to note that the first cat in

either the Stud Book or Register was a Maine Cat, Molly Bond (CFA Reg. No. 5), a tortoiseshell female, owned by Mrs. A. L. Ricker.

The popularity of the Maine Cats began to wane shortly after the turn of the century and very few were seen in shows subsequent to 1904. Cats, preferably imports, with lengthy ancestral backgrounds, were fashionable. The fact that the Maine cat failed to thrive in warmer climates also contributed to its extinction as a breed.