



Bayard, son of Archangel import Olga, born 1898 Breeder/owner Mrs. Carew-Cox



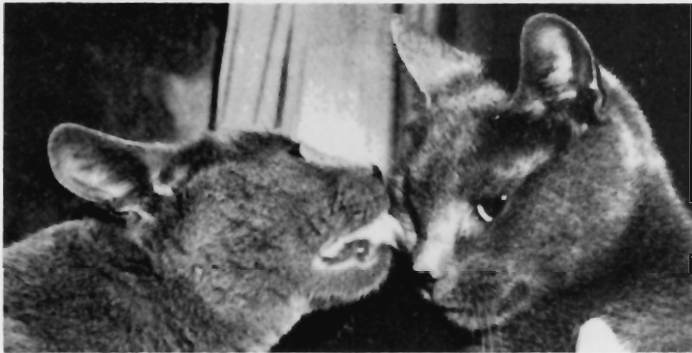
Yula Imported from Archangel in 1901 by Mrs. Carew-Cox



(before Anita of Finlandia picture) Cassimir of Elsdorff born Jan 17, 1945



Muzette of Rossia, born May 17, 1945, with litter and with "Annie", litter sister of Anita of Finlandia



Ch Dunloe Domkovitch (Lela Do, bluepoint Siamese x Gedling Mokey), born Sept 12, 1951, and Legionnaire La Vedette (Dunloe Kabushin x Legionnaire Cigarette), born Jan 7, 1950

Jennymay kittens



# The Russian Blue

## An Early History of the Breed

by Ingeborg Urcia



Int Ch Jennymay Panishky

(after Anita of Finlandia) Int Ch Agaton av Olsenburg, born March 16, 1950



Int Ch Bellamor av Olsenburg, born June 19, 1953

Cat fanciers enjoy telling charming stories about the origins of their chosen breed. Some were supposedly raised as sacred cats in temples of the East, others graced the palace of royalty, others again brought fortune and prosperity and were highly priced in their home country. The Russian Blue breed has a share of such stories, but fascinating as they may be, they are also very fanciful. There is absolutely no factual evidence that either the Tsar of Russia, or Queen Elizabeth I of England, or even Queen Victoria ever possessed a pair of Russian Blues - they may have been cat haters for all we know. And as to the highly dramatic story about Russian Cossacks indulging in midnight torch rides with their faithful Russian Blues clinging to their shoulders (ouch!), it most certainly belongs to the realm of fiction. In fact, there is still some dispute as whether the Russian Blue really came from that country, although evidence does point to a northern origin. Our earliest records of the breed, however, come from England.

**I The Russian Blue in England.** Recorded evidence proves that the breed made its appearance in England as early as 1875. A newspaper report about one of the earliest British cat shows held at the Famed Crystal Palace in London in 1875 speaks of "a very handsome cat coming from Archangel, the bristle port. They should be particularly furry, and give traces of their semipolar origin, but they do not, they resemble mostly the common grey wild rabbit. They leave the long, loose, furry habit to the Persian and Angora cats" (Magazine of the Cat Protection League, Oct. 1981). Obviously a blue cat named Archangel cat after its place of origin had already found its niche in the British cat fancy.

Although the Russian origin of the breed cannot be confirmed beyond doubt, it is interesting that most known early specimens did come from Russia. Mrs Carew-Cox of Saffron-Walden, Essex, one of the earliest breeders, describes her cats in a book entitled **The Cat** by Mrs Simpson (1903). "Blue shorthaired cats, many of them imported from Northern Russia - make very desirable pets, possessing the great intelligence usually to be met with in all shorthaired breeds. A Russian cat should be of an even shade of blue throughout, even the skin itself being often - in fact generally - of a bluish tinge. Kittens frequently have body markings when very young, but in purebred specimens these usually become effaced before they are many weeks old. The shape of the head in many of those imported is more pointed than round, indeed, some have long, lean pointed heads and faces, with big ears. Some imported blues are very round in face and head with tiny ears and eyes set rather wide apart. These are surely the prettiest, but of course it cannot be denied that the long faced variety present the most foreign appearance. The coat should be short and close, glossy and silvery, sometimes it is rather woolly and furry. Some blues are far paler than others in colour. Amongst my kittens are frequently some very beautiful lavender blues. I have remarked that these are rather more delicate in constitution than those of a darker blue." Mrs Carew-Cox also mentions that the eyes of the Russian Blue should be gold or deep orange, and that in order to obtain this shade, some breeders are crossing them with Persians but with very unsatisfactory results. She herself seems to have preferred those cats with round faces and small ears, and states that they are the ones winning most often at shows, - no wonder since Persian and domestic type shorthairs were most prevalent and probably set the standards.

From her descriptions and the few pictures we have of those early cats, it seems clear that a common standard for type, body and head had not yet evolved for the Russian Blue. However, coat color and texture are already distinctive and very close to our modern cats if not superior. The picture of Bayard, Mrs Carew-Cox's stud male, shows a thick, dense fur of light silver that would please any modern breeder. Why the eye color was supposed to have been orange is not

quite clear, even Mrs Carew-Cox remarks that it is often impossible to predict eye color in kittens before four months, since it changes frequently between yellow and green. Probably the actual eye color was not all that different from our modern Russian Blues, and Mrs Carew-Cox may have taken her preference for yellow or gold from the eye color of the blue Persian rather than from actuality.

As a breeder, Mrs Carew-Cox kept detailed notes, and her comments on her cats are fascinating for us today as they create a vivid picture of the breed in its early days.

"1890 I received **Kola**, a very pretty blue and white cat - she came from the Kola peninsula, and after having changed hands on the high seas several times, was traded for a leg of mutton on the London docks. Kola was a very lovable little cat with a very round face and very soft fur. She lived till November 1900."

"**Lingpupo** - a very beautiful blue was imported from Archangel, with excellent colour, a fairly long face and legs, muscular and graceful, with strangely lethargic movements and elegant carriage. I bought her in 1893 when she was seven months old."

"**Moscow**" (1893) was a very successful stud and father of many kittens. He won many firsts and special awards. He died in 1897 while I was away from home."

"In 1895 Lady Marcus Beresford gave me a very pretty little male with a very thick coat and very compact body."

"**Olga** came to me in 1893 or 1894 and is still living. She was imported and in her time a big winner. Olga is the mother of Bayard - who was born in 1898 and whose sire was King Vladimir."

"**Fashoda** was born in 1896 and was imported. She was big and strong and a repeated winner."

"**Odessa** is the daughter of Fashoda and Blugown."

"**Yula** came to me in the year 1901, imported from Archangel."

"**Sing Sing** is the cat who as a kitten had black stripes along the spine. It was born on Easter Monday 1899 and came from Fashoda and Muchado."

"**Muchado** who has sired so many prize winning kittens is a son of Mrs Herring's deceased champion Roguey and my Lingpupo. I sold him as a kitten, but after he had had two different owners he came back to me. Now he will never leave me until he is called to the happy hunting grounds which - as I hope - are prepared for all faithful creatures beyond the veil."

Mrs Carew-Cox's description of her cats illustrates that a large number of Russian Blues, at least the ones that featured in English breedings at the turn of the century, actually had Russian origin. Especially interesting is her mention of Kola, a blue and white. Apparently, some of the earliest cats were bi-colors, and those were propagated. Another early cat book Helen Winslow, **Concerning Cats**, (published 1900) speaks of a pretty blue and white Russian Blue owned by a Mrs Frederick Monroe of Chicago. Was it a descendant of Kola?

In spite of the obvious interest in the cats, the Russian Blue was never one of the highly popular breeds. Its somewhat reserved nature may have contributed to this, but "fashions" in cats change quickly and often to no apparent reason, and sometimes the "less fashionable" breeds are the luckier ones. Breeding did continue actively, but we find little records today. Some of the more prominent breeders whose names have come down to us were Mrs Herring, Lady Alexander of Ballochmyle and, best known, Lady Coryton. The oldest pedigree that is still available is of a cat named Theydon Fairy Prince, born Apr. 1, 1940 whose ancestry can be traced back to another Russian Blue named Bingham Oddity, born 1927 and owned by a Miss Geach. (See pedigree #1).

With the beginning of World War II, disaster struck for the Russian Blue as for many other cat breeds. During the war, most of the original breeding stock dating back to Mrs Carew-Cox's cattery was lost, and when, after 1945, efforts

were made to reestablish the breed, hardly any Russian Blues were left to work with. So the breeders turned to a breed which so frequently has helped establish other, newer breeds namely the Siamese. Gedling Mokey, a cat of unknown origin but apparently Russian Blue appearance and described as a "wartime find" was bred to a Siamese, Lela Do (see pedigree #2). From these two, as well as a few other Russian Blues, developed the famous Dunloe line. With the infusion of Siamese, the Russian Blue of postwar Britain took on a definite Siamese look, in fact it even lost its name temporarily and was referred to as Foreign Blue in contrast to the Domestic Blue (British Shorthair and Chartreux). In 1948, however, the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy recognized the Russian Blue again as a breed and accepted the following standard which was slightly revised in 1952.

"The Russian Blue cat is quite different from the ordinary European shorthair cat since it is slender and long (Egyptian type), of graceful build, long, narrow head, narrow skull, and sloping forehead. The chief trait which distinguishes it from all other European shorthairs is the short shiny coat. The Russian Blue has longer legs than the Chartreux and is of more delicate build."

Fur Short and flat lying, shiny

Body and Tail Elongated, elegant body, graceful lines, delicate bones and light type. Very long and thin tail, pointed. Long, thin legs, small, well shaped feet.

Head and neck The skull is flat and narrow, the forehead sloping, the head and neck are elongated, giving the body a soft snakelike and movable appearance."

If one visualizes this description, a blue cat not unlike our modern Oriental shorthair appears. No wonder that Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald states (**Cats**, Penguin PH 30 1957) that "the Russian Blue is not a breed but only a name for a cat of a certain type and color." One of the chief characteristics of the Russian Blue, the thick short double coat seems to have totally disappeared in the late forties and fifties. Another cat authority, P.M. Soderberg (**Pedigreed Cats**, Cassel, London) laments in the fifties that there are no Russian Blues today who are distinguished by such (i.e. thick and plushy) coat.

When the Russian Blues at that time appeared on the show bench they did so against other blue breeds, chiefly the domestic type, and usually lost, no wonder since they must have presented a rather nondescript appearance. However, determined breeders were at work to change this, foremost among them Mrs Marie Rochford of Dunloe cattery. Gradually, Dunloe cats began to change the image of the Russian Blue. The difficulties with which the Russian Blue breeders struggled at the time is well illustrated by a judging report from **Fur and Feather** in 1966 (In England, judges write detailed comments on all exhibits, both favorably and unfavorably and these reports are then published in magazines). "Exhibit #1 (Kitten class) Nice kitten but too British in type, nice eye colour but too round tail rather thick. Nice, even coloured coat. Exhibit #2 (kitten) Nice head with well placed ears, nice eye shape but colour too yellow, good tail, nice coat. Exhibit #3 (kitten) Too British type, ears too small, eyes alright, nice coat." This report shows that the coat on the Russian Blues was coming back, but type was still somewhat in flux, the repeated mention of "too British" indicates efforts to get away from the Siamese type.

**II The Russian Blue in Scandinavia.** While efforts were under way in England to restore the original Russian Blue, breeders in Sweden and Denmark independently were working on the breed too. It all began with a cat named Pierette, belonging to a Mr Schaeffer. Nothing is known about her background, although there are suggestions that she may have come from Finland (Russian background?). Since she was the only Russian blue in Sweden, breeders had to resort again to outcrossing to Siamese. Pierette was

Theydon Fairy Prince 16a 1-4-40

Yale GCCF# 33344 Certified Ped.#1698

Theydon Blue Buttons  
16a 3-4-39 #31894

Theydon Fairy Queen  
16a 14-4-37 #29729

Dmitri Grishovitch  
16a 20-3-37 #29622  
B/O Miss Speakman

Theydon Buntz  
16a #26355 27-1-35

Ch. Eleus Jaun  
16a 26-1-35 #27495  
Br. Mrs. Haslewood  
Own. Mrs. Higgins

Fantôme  
Br. ? Own. Miss Pelly?

Grisha  
16a 18-9-33 #25576  
Br. Mrs. Ramsey O. Miss Speakman

Princess Olga  
16a 11-4-33 #21594  
Br. Miss Geach Own. M. Speakman

Ch. Morning Mists  
16 April, 1932 #21594  
Br. Unknown Own. Mrs. Bolton

Silver Web  
16a March, 1934 #23660  
Br. Unknown Own. Mrs. Bolton

Unregistered Blue SH  
(Imported)

Unregistered Blue Tabby SH

Not Available

Not Available

Karl (No Card Available)

Unregistered

Karkushin (No Card Available)

Bingham Oddity  
16a June, 1927 #19330  
own. Miss Geach

Jennymay Astril of Felinest (Imp)

Meadliam Cheiron

Archon Titania

Meadliam Oscar

Ch. Dunloe Blue  
Cap

Ch. Dunloe  
Silvertoes

Archon Paprika

Beulah Salomon

Beulah Silver

Ch. Dunloe  
Domokovitch

Legionnaire La  
Vedette

Dunloe Blue Socks

Dunloe Gedling  
Mokey

Dunloe Domokovitch

Archon Antonis

Unregistered

Unregistered

Beulah Salomon

Beulah Sabrina

Lela Do 24a  
(Russian Ancest)

Gedling Mokey

Dunloe Kabushin

Legionnaire Cigarette

Ch. Dunloe Blue Boy

Dunloe Katrina

Unregistered 16a

Unregistered 16a

Lela Do 24a

Gedling Mokey

Dunloe Domokovitch

Unregistered Blue-fact-

Ch. Zy Azure Phandah  
Southampton Tinkey Toe

Unregistered 16a

Unregistered 16a

Ch. Dunloe Silvertoes

Dunloe Pavola

Unknown

Unknown

Theydon Fairy Prince

Dunloe Blue Dawn

Dmitri Grishovitch

Dunloe Blue Dawn

Ch. Zy Azure Phandah

Southampton Tinkey Toe

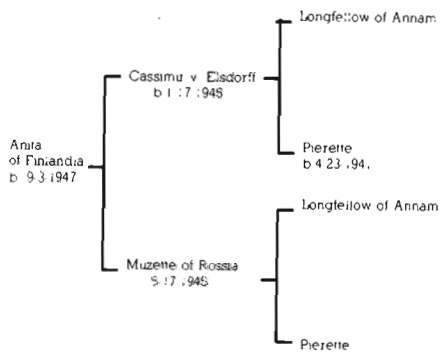
Unregistered 16a

Unregistered 16a

Lela Do 24a

Gedling Mokey

mated to a bluepoint male, Longfellow of Annam, raised by Mrs Langenberg, Pierette's son, Cassimir of Ellsdorff (born 1945) was mated to his sister Muzette of Rossia, and this breeding produced the first true Russian Blue in Sweden, Anita of Finlandia



Thus the Scandinavian Russian Blues were based on five cats: Pierette, Longfellow (Siamese), Blue Boy of Bellahoj (Russian Blue), Scholda of Bellahoj (Siamese) and Pan Du Bois. The latter was imported from Denmark, possibly from Finland in 1948. His pedigree states that his parents (unknown) were imported from Russia (see pedigree #3). After Anita of Finlandia, the second important cat in the history of the Scandinavian Russian Blue is Bluebell of Finlandia (Hans af Bellahoj x Tanja af Olsenburg) who was imported to Sweden from Denmark. From Bluebell descended such well known Russian Blue lines as Dalecarlias, Tinnerdalen, Kabbarps, whose Erica Feline was mother of Blue Bass of Molleby, a well known ancestor of many American Russian Blues, and the Danish cattery of Lefine. Blue Moon of Molleby is an outstanding example of these Swedish/Danish cats.

Until the mid sixties, the Scandinavian Russian Blues practiced close line breeding and produced lines which were totally without outside influence until two Russian Blues from England (Sylphides Topo and Sylphides Mareshkova) were imported to Sweden in 1965. What were those Scandinavian cats like? Apparently, the breeders had hit on some very successful combinations. Mr Stirling-Webb, well known English judge, stated in 1951 on occasion of a cat show in Stockholm: "The best cats I had to judge were undoubtedly the Russian Blues of a type I never saw before, and had we not those stringent quarantine rules I would not have failed to buy one or two to renew the blood of our English lines which during the war had been nearly extinguished." Other judges made similar positive statements about the Danish cats, especially about the Finlandia line. Stirling-Webb's suggestion of an exchange came finally true in 1965 when a Kabbarps cat, Kabbarps Blue Iris, went to Mrs Lauder in England. Blue Iris became a significant factor in Mrs Lauder's well known Jennymay line. A similar exchange took place when after years of Scandinavian import to the U.S., finally an American cat, Happy Day's Kosack, went across the ocean to join the Swedish cattery of Eiwor Andersson.

**III Early Russian Blues in America.** The Russian Blue had its official start in the U.S. when in 1947 Mr C.A. Commaire of Texas imported Dunloe Jan and Dunloe Blue Silk from the leading British cattery. Mr Commaire's cats were not really the first Russian Blues in this country. Almost fifty years earlier, a Mrs Clinton Locke of Chicago had imported some Russian Blues from Mrs Carew-Cox, but nobody seems to know what had become of them, and no systematic work seems to have been carried out with the breed. The only indication that Russian Blues may have been shown in the early forties is an American standard, mentioned by one of my sources and dated 1942, which speaks of the "rare Russian Blue with decidedly long face and narrow skull, and large, pointed ears."

In any case, the Dunloe pair was the start of the modern Russian Blue in this country. To broaden his breeding base, Mr Commaire also imported some cats from Scandinavia, among them Cassimir of Ellsdorff, the son of the first Swedish cat Pierette. In 1950, the first Russian Blue club was formed whose roster is a veritable "who's who" of Russian Blue pioneer breeders: Howard and Blanche Warren of Casa Gatos (imported Dunloe Uzsak, Dunloe Aphrodite, and later Dunloe Blue Queen), Mr Hoeller of Hoeller's cattery (imported Dunloe Kabushin) and Florence Gate and Margaret Pusey of Flo-Mar cattery (imported Dunloe Rany and Dunloe Natasha). Other well known early catteries were Mission City and LaMar. Other English and Scandinavian imports followed as the breed began to gain acceptance. Paramount names were Windywhistle, Michifer, Medham, Jennymay and Sylphides from England, and Olsenburg, Braheborg, Kabbarps and Lefine from Scandinavia.

Among those early cats there are some names who appear again and again in early pedigrees. We know a little about some of them. The most influential Scandinavian imports were doubtlessly Pavel of Braheborg and his sister Erosjina of Braheborg who were imported by Dorothy Lech of Three Crown cattery. A picture of Pavel shows a cat with a fairly round head, although allowance must be made for stud jowls, but his chief contribution to the breed were those marvelous emerald eyes and a straight profile. Erosjina was bred to an American Russian Blue (three generations all U.S. bred) named Felinet Silver Dollar (see pedigree #4). Silver Dollar is an interesting cat, his pedigree derives from an equal mixture of British and Scandinavian, his sire being almost entirely Dunloe and his dam all Swedish. But unlike the Scandinavian imports who had good but rather dark coats, Silver Dollar was very light, in fact he has been called the original lightcoated Russian Blue. The result of his mating with Erosjina was Pam San's Silver Token of Velva, one of the foundation cats of the



Anita of Finlandia with breeder Karin Olsson



(before Blue Moon of Molleby) Int Ch Dasha Lefine



Int Ch Andruschka av Olsenburg, born Sept 29, 1956



(before Jennymay kittens and Jennymay Panushky) Dunloe Pavola, born Apr 6, 1945



Int Ch Andruschkan av Olsenburg  
(Pjater av Olsenburg X Int Ch Ballamor av Olsenburg), born

well known Velva line, and judging from Russian Blue pedigrees, a very prolific stud. He is described as a large cat with beautiful eye color. Bred to a half sister, Felinest Tonya of Velva, he produced another "super stud", Felinest Flying High, whom my annotated pedigrees describe as "beautiful type and head, lime green eyes". Flying High can be found repeatedly in almost every Russian Blue pedigree. Another Swedish import of significance is Rasdedjan Ninoushka who was important in the Velva line and is described as a very hard bodied cat with large eyes but dark color.

Major cats deriving from the Dunloe line imports were Es-Tas Tao of Aberdeen, a descendant of the Dunloe/FloMar imports, and Hoeller's Baltika, a third generation descendant of the Dunloe/Hoeller imports. According to many Russian Blue breeders, the British line contributed the plushy light coat as well as a special sweetness of disposition. Eye color of the British cats seems to have been less spectacular than that of the Swedish, and more of a yellow green.

With Russian Blues regularly appearing in the show ring, they began to appear in the winner's circle too. Silver Dollar was one of the earliest Russian Blues to achieve Grand Champion. It must be remembered that many of those early cats, although no doubt good representatives of their breed, had to overcome the handicap of being "new kid on the block", and had a much harder time competing with old, established breeds than their later, more successful offspring. Nevertheless, in 1968 the list of Russian Blues having won Grand Champion had doubled from 1966, where there had been only three (Silver Dollar, Selene's Alexander of Marrakesh and Tinnerdalen's Njusia of Bobcat, a Swedish import). Among those making Grand Champion in 1968 were the famous Pavel of Braheborg and Kabbarps Innula. Velva's Blue Viking was Best Russian Blue in CFA in 1970 and became 7th Best Cat in 1971 and 2nd Best Cat in 1972.

And so the story continues. Succeeding years have brought a large array of Russian Blue cat-teries to fame and fortune, swelling the ranks of CFA Grands and national winners. They constitute the next chapter in the history of the Russian Blue which has already been written or will be told by others. Yet its great names - Gr Ch. Velva's Williwinky, Gr Ch. Hi-Line's Silver Queen, Gr Ch. Tsar Blue's Zane Grey, Gr Ch. Miribu's Tora Tora, to mention just a few - could not have been possible without those earlier, unsung cats. Our search into Russian Blue "antiquity" has unearthed not a romantic saga of royalty and Cossack adventure, but of determined, dedicated and often frustrating work done by pioneer breeders on both sides of the Atlantic who were creating what Phyllis Lauder calls the "Connoisseur Cat", a beautiful animal like no other, the Russian Blue.

**Note:** This search into the past history of the Russian Blue would not have been possible without the gracious help of Ms. Beryl Stade, Swedish Russian Blue breeder and Fife judge who supplied information and pictures of the early Scandinavian cats, and of Mrs. Elizabeth Weber, German Russian Blue breeder who sent me the picture of Bayard, and much helpful information on the early English Russian Blue.

To truly understand the history of the breed, it is necessary to see pictures of some of its foundation cats. Those are not always easy to obtain. In addition to those printed here, I have found several photos in older cat books which were not available to me for printing but can be consulted by interested readers. An excellent photo of Dunloe Blue Cap (Ch. Dunloe Domokovitch x Legionnaire La Vedette) born 1953 can be seen in John R. Gilbert's *Cats, Cats, Cats, Cats*, Hamlyn, 1972, pg. 56. In the same book there is also a picture of a late 1950's litter of Russian Blue kittens (unnamed). Doris Bryant's *Cat Book* has a picture of Russian Blues supplied by Margaret Pusey (pg. 44) which are not named but are early FloMar. The book was published by Ives Washburn in 1953. Leon F. Whitney's *The Complete Book of Cat Care*, Doubleday, N.Y. (the original edition, not the recently published revised one) has a picture of three Russian Blues imported from England by Mrs. Blanche Warren. Although they are not named, they are most likely Dunloe Uszak, Dunloe Aphrodite and Dunloe Blue Queen. Finally, for those interested in seeing Silver Dollar, Mrs. Calkins, his owner, ran a full page ad in a 1973 issue of *Cats* magazine with a large picture of Buck.



Int Ch Blue Bell of Finlandia (Int Ch Hans af Bellahoj x Tanja av Olsenburg)



Int Ch Blue Moon af Molleby (Leo av Olsenburg x Int Ch Blue Bell of Finlandia)



Ch Dunloe Silver Toes, born March 12, 1947



Gr Ch Velva's Blue Viking (Gr Ch Felinest Flying High x Velva's Anastasia)



Gr Ch Pavel of Braheborg (Int Ch Blue Bass af Molleby x Ch. Blue Berry af Molleby)

Kabbarps Erica Felina (Int Ch. Blue Bass of Molleby x Licinka of Braheborg) born July 29, 1964

