

Back to the Future

The Story of Great Dane Ch. Ador Tipp Topp

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How many of us wish we could walk back into time and see the dog sport in its infancy? Have you ever dreamed of seeing those illustrious old champions with your very own eyes? If you could, what would you really see? Even the best dog photographer's work is only two-dimensional. How much about champions of the past do we miss simply because we are seeing only an image? What if, instead of photographs, we could slip away to the 1920s? What would we experience?

In the Jazz Age, most of us would have worn hats and gloves to a dog show, but even more surprising would be how different many of our breeds would appear. Not only have grooming techniques changed, but subtle shifts in breed type, things that we hardly notice from one year to the next, would be amplified by the passing of 80-odd years. Though many of us think our breeds are better today, if we could travel back to the 1920s and see dogs in the flesh rather than in photographs, we might awaken to the realization that the best specimens of an earlier era had qualities we have never before considered. If you could travel backward, would you possibly suffer heartbreak at the realization that some intrinsic quality of your beloved breed has not survived the generations? Might you be tempted to bring back an early example of quality to infuse with your contemporary breeding program, or would you bask in the glow of knowing that the evolution of your breed successfully endured the journey through time?

This is a story about a few visionary thinkers and their influence on the dog world. They include a breeder, two scientists, a taxidermist, a student and an artist. All of them were a step ahead of ordinary people in their thoughts and actions. The best of the dog world are like this, too; they can see a dog and imagine the future.

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