

Meet the Breed: An American Original

The life of the party and a cuddly companion, today's Boston Terrier makes an ideal house dog.

Kim Campbell Thornton

"I always picture our dogs like young social gentlemen in the early 1900s, going out on the town in New York City, wearing top hats, tails and white gloves, and charming everyone they meet with a twinkle of mischief in their smiles," says breeder and judge Marcie Dobkin. "The Boston is at home in almost any situation and is sweet without being wimpy. With a Boston, there are no strangers, only friends it hasn't met yet."

All-American

Nicknamed the American Gentleman, the Boston Terrier stands out for coloration that gives it the appearance of being attired for a formal occasion, as well as for its lively, intelligent temperament. It is one of the few breeds that can claim to be born and bred in the United States, and it takes its name from that great American melting pot that is Boston, home to revolutionaries, intellectuals, artists and immigrants seeking a better life. The Boston comes from a mixed heritage and, as such, is a perfect representative of all that made Boston its birthplace.

The breed traces its history to a dog named Judge, who was imported in 1870. Dark brindle with a white blaze, Judge was said to be a cross between a Bulldog and the now-extinct white English Terrier. Judge and a white bitch named Burnett's Gyp produced Wells' Eph, whose offspring produced the Boston Terriers of today. That particular mix of Bulldog and terrier created a dog with a new look, one that didn't resemble the other Bull Terriers in the show ring, with its round head, even bite and screw tail.

First known as Round Heads, Bullet Heads or Bull Terriers, the new breed became known as the Boston Terrier in 1889. Boston Terrier fanciers formed a breed club in 1891, and their dogs were recognized by the American Kennel Club in 1893, making the Boston Terrier Club of America one of the AKC's oldest member clubs.

Today it is a distinct breed, but the Boston retains remnants of its dual heritage. "It has the spark, enthusiasm and health from the terriers, and the gentle sweetness and good sense of the Bulldog," Dobkin says.

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