

The Life and Times of a Kennel Club

The history of the Minneapolis Kennel Club reflects dramatic changes in the dog world.

Muriel Lee

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We are all familiar with the well-known kennel clubs whose shows are known for the number of dogs entered (Louisville Kennel Club), the beauty of the show site (the old Santa Barbara Kennel Club), and for the prestige... Westminster Kennel Club, Chicago International and Montgomery County. However, around the country there are hundreds of other shows that are the backbone of the sport in America, and these are the "every day" shows.

These are the shows that have an entry of 800 to 1,400 dogs, where the local Lions Club mans the food booth, the Helping Paws program does the scooping for some extra money for their projects, and club members pray for good weather and a decent entry so that they can break even on the expenses. Some of these shows are held on county fairgrounds, parks or in local arenas where there could be more space for grooming or better bathroom facilities. The "old-timers" in the Midwest can still remember when Menards opened its first store in Eau Claire, Wis., and half the building was empty. The Eau Claire Kennel Club rented the space for several years and we still call the Eau Claire show, "The Menards Show."

This is the history of one such club, and it is not only the story of the club, but a telling of how the world of dog shows, and how the show-giving clubs, have changed.

The Minneapolis Kennel Club was incorporated in the state of Minnesota in 1933 and held its first benched dog show in April, 1934, at the old Minneapolis Auditorium. The show catalog cost 50 cents and it took two days and three judges to judge the entry of 442 dogs. There were two rings and the judging times both days were 10 a.m., 2 p.m and 7:30 p.m. with the groups starting at 8 p.m. on Sunday evening. There was a "trained dog" exhibit (obedience) both days at 7 p.m. Truly a full weekend affair! Notable breed entries were 71 Cocker Spaniels, 25 Collies, 29 Wire Fox Terriers, 29 Pekingese, 25 Boston Terriers and 24 Bulldogs. The Sporting group was the most popular with an overall entry of 166, while the Hound group lagged far behind with a total entry of 10! Few of the dogs entered had either a champion sire or dam. In general, prize money for a first placement in the classes was \$1.

A second show in 1934 was held at the Polo Grounds at Fort Snelling, and the 1936 show was held in the Hippodrome at the state fairgrounds. At that show there was an entry of 197 dogs in 36 breeds. Obedience was offered for the first time at the 1939 show. In 1941 the show was held over a two-day period at the parade grounds during the Minneapolis Aquatennial festival, and a picture of an Aquatennial float was featured on the cover of the catalog. First-place money prizes were now up to \$2, and when the entry was five or more in the breed the prize was \$5.