

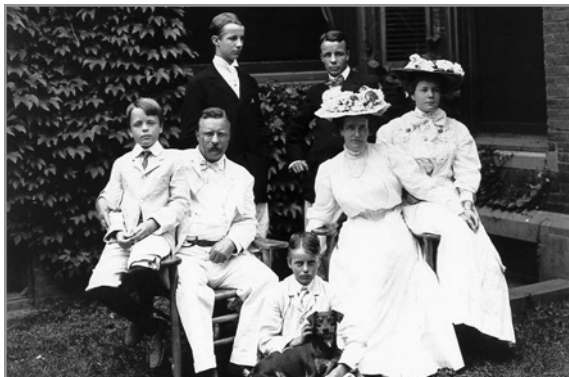
THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

WHHA PRESS ROOM | *Background Info : “Top Dogs” at the White House*

Families taking up residence at the White House since the Theodore Roosevelt administration have encountered the public’s insatiable appetite for stories of everyday life in the Executive Mansion. With the common reproduction of photographs in newspapers and magazines by the early 20th century, presidential pets had to accept the same scrutiny as their distinguished masters. Whether providing companionship or humanizing the president’s political image, White House dogs have done the job well.

SKIP: Theodore Roosevelt and his family were famous pet lovers who kept a menagerie of kangaroo rats, snakes, dogs, birds, ponies, and all manner of small animals. The president preferred what he called “Heinz pickle” dogs from multiple bloodlines. One of his favorites was Skip, a short-legged Black and Tan mongrel terrier, brought home from a Colorado bear hunt. The American Kennel Club recognized the breed in 1999 as a Teddy Roosevelt terrier.

LADDIE: Caswell Laddie Boy was both photogenic and the perfect representation of Warren G. Harding’s campaign slogan “Return to Normalcy.” Laddie sat in on meetings and had his own cabinet chair. He greeted official delegations and once hosted the 1923 White House Easter egg roll when the Hardings were away.



The Roosevelts with Skip [Library of Congress]



Laddie Boy [Library of Congress]



ROB ROY: Calvin and Grace Coolidge's closest companion at the White House was a snow-white collie named Rob Roy. They later acquired and pampered Prudence Prim, a second white collie. However, it was Rob Roy, who would be immortalized in Howard Chandler Christy's official 1924 White House portrait of Grace Coolidge.

KING TUT: Herbert Hoover's lack of charisma and personal warmth was a subject of wry comment in the press. During the presidential campaign in 1928, Hoover's advisors noticed that he appeared uncharacteristically amiable in a portrait with his Belgian police dog, King Tut. Immediately, they printed and circulated thousands of autographed copies to voters and newspapers. King Tut not only fixed Hoover's image problem, but also went on to assist the White House police force as a patrol dog.



Grace Coolidge and Rob Roy [Library of Congress]



Herbert Hoover and King Tut [Library of Congress]

FALA: Franklin D. Roosevelt's lack Scottie was his constant companion accompanying the president to secret meetings or publicized war conferences. Fala was the subject of two MGM films and gave up his toys to promote a rubber collection drive during World War II. The dog became so recognizable that an appearance on a train platform revealed the president was nearby and became a security concern.

PUSHINKA: As a good will gesture toward the United States, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev gave Mrs. Kennedy a dog named Pushinka, "fluffy" in Russian. She was the daughter of Strelka, the first Russian dog in space. Some Americans were suspicious of the gift and believed the dog might be wearing a listening device. Eventually, Pushinka won everybody over, especially Charlie, the Kennedy's Welsh terrier, who became the father of her "pupniks."





Fala [Franklin D Roosevelt Presidential Library]



Pushinka and "pupniks" [John F. Kennedy Presidential Library]

HIM and HER: The beagles of Lyndon B. Johnson gained their fame from the “great ear lift,” an incident when the president playfully lifted the dogs from their ears in front of news cameras in the Rose Garden. He did not lift them from the ground to dangle, but the spectacle sparked outraged protests from dog-lovers.



Him and Her



Yuki

both images courtesy of: [Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library]

YUKI: President Johnson doted on Yuki, an abandoned stray found at Texas gas station by his daughter Luci. The sessions of the vagabond dog and the president “singing” together provide one of the most endearing images of a president and a pet.

KING TIMAHOE: Richard Nixon’s most famous dog was Checkers who did not live at the White House. The Nixons had three dogs well known in their day for their festive Christmas portraits, President Nixon’s Irish Setter Timahoe, Tricia Nixon’s Yorkie Pasha, and Julie Nixon’s Poodle Vicky.





King Timahoe, Vicki, and Pasha
[White House Historical Association]



Liberty [White House Historical Association]

LIBERTY: When the Fords moved to the White House, a Siamese cat named Chan accompanied them. David Hume Kennerly, a friend and the president’s official photographer, gave Gerald Ford a golden retriever puppy named Liberty. While a White House pet, Liberty gave birth to eight puppies and her popularity with the American public soared. Seven of the puppies were given to good homes and one was donated to the Leader Dogs for the Blind in order to serve as a Seeing Eye dog.

GRITS: To welcome her to her new home, a mixed breed/Springer Spaniel puppy, born on the day Jimmy Carter was elected president, was given to Amy by her Stevens Elementary School teacher, Verona Meeder. Amy named the dog Grits. Misty Malarky Ying Yang, the Carter’s Siamese cat, was not fond of the addition to the Carter pet family. In September of 1979, Grits was returned to his original owner. During his stay at the White House, the dog did PR work with a veterinarian to launch a drive against canine heartworms.

REX: Throughout their lives Ronald and Nancy Reagan coddled a menagerie of critters ranging from horses to dogs to cows to goldfish. Their most famous White House pet was Rex, a beloved King Charles spaniel. When Mrs. Reagan was away, the president often wrote in his diary: “Rex and I are lonesome,” “Rex and I are roommates again,” and “Upstairs and waiting for Nancy’s return and here she is. Me and the dog are very happy.”





Grits [Jimmy Carter Library and Museum]



Rex [Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library]

MILLIE: After living a quiet leisurely life in the White House for the first year, Millie gave birth to six puppies and became a media sensation. The event landed Barbara Bush, Millie, and her six puppies on the cover of Life magazine. She went on to dictate Millie's Book, a best seller, chronicling a typical day with her master. The book earned almost \$900,000 in royalties, all of which was donated to the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.

BUDDY: Although the Clintons were first identified with their pet cat Socks, Buddy won the hearts of many American pet lovers when he came to the White House as a puppy in 1997. Administration critics said the adorable chocolate Labrador puppy was a photo prop or a ploy for higher ratings, but Bill Clinton found himself in need of a loyal canine friend during his tumultuous second term. Socks and Buddy made a mark as philanthropists when Hillary Clinton published a book of children's letters to the two pets. The proceeds were given to the National Park Foundation.

BARNEY: Well known to Americans as a web cam media star, Barney was a gift to George W. Bush in 2000. In December 2002, the dog wandered through the White House with a lipstick sized video camera attached to his collar. He recorded the dog's eye view of the White House Christmas decorations launched on the White House web site. His web cam adventures, Barney Cam, Barney Reloaded, and subsequent annual installments have become a popular Christmas tradition for the Bush administration.





[George Bush Presidential Library and Museum]



[William J. Clinton Presidential Library]



Barney [White House Photo]

