

# The Vizsla News

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## The Origin Of The Hungarian Vizsla

BY MIKE KENDE

former secretary of the National Vizsla Club of Hungary

(translated by Elmer Halden and edited by Joan Hunt)

This history on the Vizsla Breed represents over two years work and research by Mike Kende. It will be continued in the next issue.

I was prompted to write this article because I had read a statement sent by Mr. Hunt, the former Secretary of the Vizsla Club of America, that one of the States now independent, but formerly part of Hungary was claiming to have been the originating country of the vizsla breed.

Mr. Hunt asked me because the first Hungarian vizsla to be imported into the U.S.A. in 1938 by Mr. Pulitzer, came from me. My research was stimulated by the fact that as early as 1917 I had a vizsla, and have had a continued interest in the breed, especially since 1932. My hunting dogs have always been Hungarian vizslas and they have given me many pleasant and enjoyable hours. I considered it my duty therefore to protect one of our natural treasures from expropriation and keep it where it belongs in the People's Democratic Economy. In my research I used the archives in the National Record office, the National Szechenyi Library in the Agricultural Library as well as the Nimrod Hunting News and articles in the Fox Hound.

Anonymous, the nameless writer of Hungarian King Adalbert III (1235-1270) collected and elaborated the legends and sagas current among the people about the origin and wanderings of the Magyars. He wrote in his history that according to tradition our forefathers between cattle breeding occupied themselves with hunting. The proverb "the hunter is a dog without hounds," probably originates from this time. At this era there were camp and sheep watching dogs, (mongrels and sheepdogs), driving dogs, (pulik) and also vizslas. This is proved by the old story about ancient Hunor and Magor who chased a hart with hounds until they came to their second ancestral home, the so-called ETEL River district in southern Russia.

An interesting manuscript in the Beesi Kepes Kronika, (Viennese Illustrated Chronicle) which was written by Carmelite Friars by order of King Louis the Great of Hungary in 1357. This Codex discusses the economic, cultural and military life of Hungary at that time. The original codex is still in the Hungarian National Szechenyi Library, but because of its great value it is not available for the general public. However, I was able to get a photostat from the authentic copy made by artist-painter Bicsérdy in 1900. Three initial illustrations are of particular

interest to dog-lovers, since they show contemporary hunting scenes.



The first of these which we have entitled 'Hunting' shows four canine figures. Two of these remind us of those vizslas which were used in Hungary and especially in Transylvania and in North Hungary before the First World War and were known as the Transylvania Beagles or Buckhounds. The beagles are led in front of the noble. These beagles were bred to find the track of big game and drive them in front of the huntsman, just as the wild boar hounds do in our time, or the bear hounds did in the eighteenth century. Of course, at the time of this illustration there were no firearms, so our forefathers killed big game with javelin, spear or sword. It often happened that the wounded beast did not fall on the spot, but escaped injured, leaving a trail of blood in the wilderness. A type of hound was needed therefore to follow the wounded game by the blood spore and to find where it lay, or if was not so weak and could still travel and make another stand. This hound held the prey at bay and diverted its attention so the huntsman could stalk them and give them the coup de grace. If they found the prey dead, they bayed a death call, and barked continually till the huntsman guided by the sound reached them, or, probably, went back to the huntsman and led him to the carcass. It is evident from

the picture that our ancestors had such hounds, because in the illustration two hounds may be clearly seen led by servants after the noble huntsman; and these hounds it can be supposed were bred and trained for trailing.



The second picture could be entitled 'Bear Hunting'. This illustrates a party in the course of a hunt. They are attacking with swords and javelins some bears roused by beagles, (vizslas). The searching and driving vizslas are released from their leashes and have stopped the game, but the trailing hounds are still leashed in the rear, and so this picture makes it clear that they were only used when the huntsman had wounded the game. The little picture is most stirring and interesting, and the two bears are most characteristic. If anyone has ever seen bears in the open, he can state that the painter of the picture was a real artist and naturalist who has seen bruin in the forest. From the fact that he had illustrated the bears so well, it can be taken for granted that the painter had not misrepresented the dogs, but that they were as we can see them in this picture. The attitude of the baying hounds is also so natural that we have to accept their proportions and forms as seen in the picture. This little picture is full of life even today.

The third picture gives an illustration of falconry. We have only to take a look at the striking falcon and its quarry, all the figures and their gestures are natural and perfectly drawn. In this picture we can see the third sort of hunting dog of our ancestors. Although the artist pictures a dog generally similar to a hound, the smaller size and shorter tail imply a different sort of dog. By itself, the tail-length of a dog on an initial illustration would not seem very much to base such a big conclusion. In

the two previous pictures, however, the tail of the buck hounds show such similarity that it seems probable that the artist would have painted this one like the others of he hadn't wished to depict another breed. It is this dog which is the ancestor of the Hungarian 'vizsla' of today. It seems likely that the ancient Hungarians selected from their buckhounds certain dogs who stopped immediately when they



*ur autē construxit mo'asteni*

found game. This halt was developed and became of longer duration. They bred these hounds that were trained to stop on finding game, and so the ability was passed down to succeeding generations. It is also possible that in this breeding the bird or falcon hound became smaller than his ancestors.

The hounds depicted in these initial pictures are all short-haired and in the main yellow-colored. The bird hound is white. This does not rule out the possibility that the bird dog was bred from the hounds, but probably later, in need of new blood, the bird dog was returned to the root, the buckhound, and so the yellow color returned. This may be a reason for the white mark which still appears in the present day Hungarian vizsla, on the chest and on the paws.

Before the use of firearms hunters caught wild-birds with net or with the falcon. They used scenting hounds to search the countryside so that they could find the game more easily. It is clear from those old letters, enumerated below, whose originals are to be found in the Hungarian National Record Office.

First Michael Komlossy writing on August 15th, 1515 writes to his younger brother . . . "Furthermore, I ask you my dear brother, to send me a good retriever, a good quail dog. I ask you for a good one, as my knight, Sir John Kotsis knows his falconry, because he has dealt with falconer Christopher Kras-say and fowler Ferenc". (Lampert, Old letters 203).



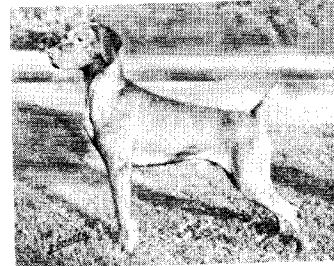
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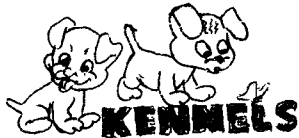
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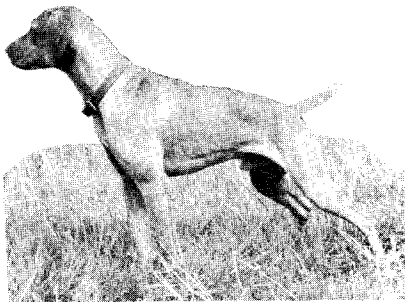


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Business office, Route 3  
Phone (402-643) 8647

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