

Kitten History: Maine Coon

This native, North American kitty impresses in both sweetness and stature.

Stacy Hackett

Your Maine Coon kitten certainly lives up to his reputation as the gentle giant of the cat fancy. Sweet, mild-mannered and already big for his age, he charms you with his kitten antics and beauty. Did you know he comes from a long line of native North American cats?

Facts and fiction swirl together in the history of the Maine Coon. Breed enthusiasts know for a fact that a dozen of Americas first indigenous show cats were listed in the program for a Boston cat show in 1878. Various fictional tales mention the Maine Coon as a result of an encounter between a domestic cat and a bobcat; a hybrid breeding with a raccoon; or as a descendant of Norwegian Skogkatts brought to America by the Vikings.

Most Maine Coon breeders will tell you that this distinctive cat is descended from the domestic shorthaired cats of early American settlers. As the young country matured, trading ships brought longhaired cats from other lands. The foreign newcomers bred with the shorthaired natives. Eventually, someone recognized the cats good looks and began showing them competitively. In the 1860s, the title of the champion cat at the Skowhegan Fair was Maine State Champion Coon Cat.

As other breeds were introduced into the fancy, the popularity of the Maine Coon declined. In the early 1950s, Alta Smith and Ruby Dyer formed the Central Maine Cat Club to help rebuild the popularity of the breed. Through hard work and dedication, breed enthusiasts convinced the Cat Fanciers Association to accept the Maine Coon for championship status in 1976.

- Return to the Maine Coon Breed Profile -