

1924 ARTICLE – The Ledgeland's Kennels of Mrs David Wagstaff



1926 Mrs David Wagstaff from the NY Public Library

The legendary "Ledgeland's chow blood runs deep in the veins of our breed, as it is one of the oldest and most successful in USA history. I was recently contacted by a woman who had purchased the Ledgeland's kennel building in Tuxedo Park NY to renovate for living quarters. It had been converted to a home years ago but these wonderful people want to try to honor the original construction and purpose of the building in their

renovation!!! I'm thrilled to be able to provide any information I can to help in unearthing this amazing "time capsule". I had no idea the building still existed.

They asked for possible photos of the kennel so I dug deep into my materials to discover I did indeed have one photo so far, shown in the outstanding 1924 article below. This was written during the height of the Ledgelands reign and while a mention is made of the beautiful Springer Spaniels she bred, the majority of the article describes her world famous chows and kennel facility.

I have much more about Ledgelands to show you, including many photos of the dogs, but for now I thought this would be a perfect introduction for everyone to begin with! ENJOY!!!

Thank you so very much, Mary Counihan for gifting your original copy of this article to the ChowTales Archive. This is priceless history and a riveting article I couldn't tear myself away from!!!

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The Fellowship of Pure-Bred Dogs

Glory of Winning Prizes Is Incidental to Mistress of Ledgeland's Kennels

By ARTHUR FREDERICK JONES

TO own a successful kennel, one must be at heart a real lover of the dog. To such a person, the mere joy of ownership is not enough. There must also be that intangible thing called companionship. For companionship is the only open sesame to the creation of a right and a proper kennel of happy dogs.

Nowhere is the secret better known than at Ledgelands, the home of Mrs. David Wagstaff, at Tuxedo Park, New York. Companionship is the keystone around which is built her small, but carefully selected kennel of Chows and springer spaniels. Like that of Darby and Joan, it is a sweet and devoted companionship destined to last as long as Ledgelands is the home of pure-bred dogs.

It is an appropriate name that has been given to the place. The old, red brick colonial mansion, with its towering, white Corinthian pillars, stands on a ridge, overlooking Tuxedo Lake. A little back, on succeeding ledges, are the stables, the kennels, the garden, and the greenhouses.

Land of ledges it is; picturesque, rugged, and rocky, and imposingly surrounded by forest—not primeval—but with all the leafy glory of primeval days.

On a late November day, I visited Tuxedo. To me there was a beauty in the partial nakedness of the woodland. Gaunt, but appealing, the trees stood in the carpet of their sum-

mer drapery, bravely waiting for the bite of the wind and the swirl of the snow.

As we sped along the lake road, the cloistered, wooded hills picked up the whir of the motor's flying wheels, and sent it reverberating across the somber waters. Then, from behind a cloud, the sun came out to glorify the gray November day. It shed a smiling warmth over the chill, quiet surroundings. Unspoken phrases came to life, even as the forest murmured a whispered melody.

It was glorious to be alive, and in such a place, and in such weather. There was a crispness and a sparkle to the air that made one think of vintage wine. As we whirled along, beckoning woodland paths invited meditating rambles—paths that were covered by a carpet of fallen leaves.

Exercise is imperative if dogs are to be kept in proper condition. And exercise is an easy matter at Tuxedo. No one knows it better than the owner of Ledgelands. That is why she makes it a rule to be up and off with her dogs, early every morning, for a long ride or tramp over the roads that wind through the Ramapo Hills—glorious woodland mountains—in which lies Tuxedo.

Chows are the favorites at Ledgeland's Kennels. Nor is it any wonder. The Oriental aristocrat is a striking animal; in fact, the canine kingdom produces nothing handsomer than



Photo by Campbell Studios

THE MISTRESS OF LEDGELANDS

Mrs. David Wagstaff is here seen with Ledgeland's Peg O' My Heart, one of her favored Chows

a fine male Chow in perfect coat. Still the breed is comparatively new in America. It was only twenty years ago that the first Chow Chow was registered in the *Stud Book* of the American Kennel Club.

WHEN Chows first came to Tuxedo, in 1907, there were many who had never seen the breed. Naturally, they created a sensation. The big, lion-like head; the scowling face; the tremendous, glistening mane; the dense, stand-off coat; the short, powerful body; the plummy tail, curled tightly over the back; and the cat-like feet reminded the uninitiated of wolves or other savage creatures.

Since they first arrived, there have been many well-known Chows at Ledgelands. Possibly not a one has been dearer to the heart of Mrs. Wagstaff than Kiyodai—"The Beloved Sister"—who, although one of the first great matrons of the place, still lives within the forest-encircled kennels.

It was thirteen years ago that Kiyodai, sired by the renowned English champion, Chelsea Pensioner, was born at Ledgelands. Since that time she has had many puppies — puppies that have developed into winners, whose fame has gone abroad throughout the land.

Although motherhood has endeared her, there is another reason why Kiyodai—affectionately called 'Sister'—is such a favorite. Twice distemper, the dread scourge of the World of Dogs, has laid a heavy hand upon the kennels. The first visitation was in 1909. The only dogs that survived were Ch. Black Dragon and Ch. Chittah, original stock when the kennels were first started.

Four years later,



Photo by Tauskey

CH. LEDGELAND'S SANCHE

This handsome, red Chow is probably the greatest of Ledgelands' present-day winners and stud dogs. He is the son of Kiyodai, a great favorite at Tuxedo

the unconquered disease again appeared. This time Chittah, Kiyodai, and the first Koon Kan escaped. Naturally there are memories connected with these animals, memories that are shared apparently by the dogs themselves; or at least by Sister, who, living apart from the youngsters, shuns the kennels, and insists on the more pleasing atmosphere of the home.

Possibly it is not a distaste for the

kennels that causes Sister to spend her time within the house. More likely it is a love for her human friends and the place in which they dwell. Be that as it may, in regal manner the famous matron wanders around the rooms, or lies quietly gazing through the windows and across the valley.

One can hardly blame Kiyodai for remaining in the hospitable atmosphere of Ledgelands. The house is just the setting you would expect for a woman who loves dogs and horses and lives the life generally associated with the "country families" of the British Isles.

In the large living rooms, famous paintings of sporting events adorn the walls. One in particular instantly catches the eye.

It is *The Spanish Pointer* by Stubbs, an artist able to put the fire of life into his work. Etchings are in the library and these tell of the making of sporting history. Incidentally, that library is a Nimrod's paradise, as it contains books and rare prints on fishing, hunting, and kindred sports of forest and stream.

STILL the kennel is the real home of dogs; and even the most aristocratic of Chows has no right to complain regarding Ledgeland's Kennels. They are both pleasing and practical. Each stall is separated from the next by wire netting, supplemented at the bottom by sheet metal. The floor is of concrete, sloping gradually towards the center of the house, so that it can be flushed out with water. On top of the concrete in each box is a wooden platform which may be removed for cleansing. Stable windows provide fresh air.

At one end of the building are large tubs for bathing; bins for food;



Photo by Tauskey

WHERE THE DOGS LIVE AT LEDGELANDS

No Chow has the right to complain regarding Ledgeland's Kennels. Ideally situated in a forest, they are both pleasing and practical. A feature is the exceptionally long, narrow runways, designed according to the owner's original ideas. These give the dogs an opportunity for plenty of exercise



Photo by Tauskey

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ABOVE: I have enlarged the kennel building photo so you can see more details



Photo by Tauskey

THE HOME OF MRS. DAVID WAGSTAFF AT TUXEDO PARK, N. Y.

Ledgelands has been well named. The old, red brick colonial mansion, with its towering, white Corinthian pillars, stands on a ridge, overlooking Tuxedo Lake. It is in an estate that is picturesque, rugged, rocky, and imposingly surrounded by forest

and a small iron stove. This stove is used for cooking and for keeping off the chill in cool weather. It is not particularly large, as Mrs. Wagstaff is opposed to too much heat inside the kennels.

THE Chows are fed twice a day and the food is varied as much as possible. Like people, dogs dislike monotony in diet. The early meal, given at about 8 A.M., consists of broken dog-biscuit for the older animals and, for the puppies and younger dogs, some kind of cereal and milk. Eggs are sometimes fed at this meal, but not regularly, being kept more as a delicacy, or to whet the failing appetite of a dog gone off its feed.

The second meal is given at 4 P.M. On three nights of the week it consists of cooked meat and vegetables—onions, carrots, celery, cabbage, garlic and in fact all green vegetables—but never potatoes. The meat and vegetables are cooked together and then thickened with dog-biscuit and stale bread. On the re-

maining nights of the week, raw chopped meat is given.

Of course, the puppies are fed more often. After they are first weaned, they eat every four hours, the number of meals being gradually reduced until, at one year of age, they are on

the regular two meal per day schedule. Starting at about four weeks of age, the mother's milk is supplemented by outside feeding.

As soon as a puppy is seen to leave its feeding dish, it is lifted and put in the pan. This pan, which is placed in one corner of the puppy house, is about six feet long by four in width and about two inches in depth. In it is kept scattered disinfectant sawdust. As the natural instinct is for a puppy to empty itself as soon as it has finished feeding, it soon learns to go to the pan by itself.



Photo by Tauskey

LEDGELAND'S WAR RISK INSURANCE

This red Chow, which gained its name as a combination of history and heredity, has been shown seven, and has been winner on reserve five times

THE Chow is by nature an exceptionally clean dog both in the house and kennel. It has been found that, by using this method of early training, little or no "house-breaking" is required to safely take the puppy directly from the kennel into the house.

Mrs. Wagstaff explained these facts regarding diet while we were watching Ernest Wells, head kennelman and stud groom—to whom much of the present



Photos by Tauskey



SPRINGER SPANIELS ARE BECOMING FAVORITES AT LEDGELANDS

These English hunting dogs are beginning to make canine history for Mrs. Wagstaff's kennels. On the left is seen Ledgeland's Bellercoft Buckle. The other is Ledgeland's Sheila of Darnick, a bitch that has won Best of Breed at many shows. In the Ramapo Hills, the springer has proven exceedingly valuable for hunting.

success of the kennels is due—superintend the preparation of the second meal. Wells comes of a famous line of English jockeys. Before he came to this country, the kennelman was a well-known rider on the other side. His knowledge of dogs comes from the fact that he worked with the Duke of Hamilton's pack, and, later, with the Pychley Hunt in England.

ONE of the main ingredients of the meal was an ample supply of big, fat onions. The popular mind believes that onions are excellent to cure a cold. Certainly, an onion is not the most enjoyable vegetable to encounter on the breath of one's vis-à-vis in a subway crush. But does the popular mind know that onions are splendid to develop a Chow's coat?

"I have discovered," said Mrs. Wagstaff, "that onions are excellent for the coat. Of course, the odor is not pleasant. Still I put up with that and insist that my dogs have plenty of onions in their diet."

If one may judge by the Chows at Ledgelands, the onion feeding diet is a capital one. The dogs had wonderful coats. Several appeared like great, tawny lions. And, like caged Kings of the Forest, they paced up and down, up and down, the long, narrow length of their runways.

These runs were contrived according to the owner's original ideas. She is a strong adherent of exercise and maintains that dogs move about more in a long, narrow run than in a wide, moderately long pen. These run-

ways are about fifty feet in length.

There is a strange fascination watching a kennel of happy dogs. At Ledgelands the Chows are red and brown and black—the tones contrasting sharply—with a silken cream, adding the final bit of color. These animals, as they played, formed a striking canine review. Some romped and jumped, some seemed to be playing tag, while others were lying on the ground or standing sedately, posing.

A dog's life is a happy one at Tuxedo. But it is not all play. As at other successful kennels, the Chows must learn the intricacies of the show ring. Early in their lives they are placed on a judging bench and are taught the meaning of each move of the attendant.

ACCORDING to Mrs. Wagstaff, there is little difficulty in training Chows for the show ring.

"They are natural posers," she said, "and some of them are positively bold. Of course, there are exceptions, just as there are temperamental people."

"I have found that if temperamental dogs like the surroundings, they will give a perfect exhibition. But if they find things distasteful, they will be indifferent."

Better than the show ring records of the animals is their attitude when not being shown. Each dog at Tuxedo is of a companionable type, and directly suitable for the home.

Possibly the greatest of Ledgelands' present winners and stud dogs is Ch. Ledgeland's Sancho, whose dam was old Kiyodai, and who was sired by Ch.

Sum Sulton, he by Ch. Win Sum Min T'Sing. On the maternal side, Sancho is a descendant of Ch. Chelsea Pensioner, an English Chow of renown.

But there are others of note at Ledgelands. Ledgeland's War Risk Insurance, who gained his name as a combination of history and heredity, is a great-grandson of Ch. Chelsea Pensioner. War Risk, as his name is often contracted, has been shown seven, and has been winner or reserve five times. Like Sancho, War Risk is a red Chow.

Among the youngsters is Ledgeland's Yun-Ho, one of the three blacks in the kennels. One of his successful exhibitions was at Rhinebeck. This dog is one of the most promising at Ledgelands.

A stud dog of exceptional worth is Ledgeland's Hildewell Ki-Ku, imported from England a year and a half ago. This fellow, who was sired by the famous Ch. Hildewell Ba-Tang, has had great success as a sire and his puppies are all doing well.

ENGLAND has added another gem to Ledgelands. Long as her name is the record of Ledgeland's Winnie of Tien H'Siä, by Irresistible of Tien H'Siä, who is also in this country. Winnie was bred by Mrs. E. B. Herbert Adam and has already won twelve points toward her championship. The bitch is remarkable for bone and shortness and cobbiness of body. One of her puppies is Ledgeland's Brown Sister, winner in all her puppy exhibitions, and who has now

started a successful career in the limit class. Winnie and Ki-Ku are both reds.

Yula of Sheen is another bitch who has caused a stir in her show ring ventures. She is one of the two cream-colored Chows at Ledgelands. Yula has gained seven points toward her championship, and was judged the best bitch at the Chow Club Specialty Show last year. Since that time she has had a litter of puppies sired by War Risk.

Mrs. Wagstaff is particularly proud of Ledgeland's Wick-See, a beautiful black bitch. She was sired by John Richardson's Little Boy Blue and her dam was Ledgeland's Lu-Lu, imported from the kennels of Mrs. Lionel Faudel-Phillips of England. Wick-See has already won five points toward her championship. She is just out of the puppy class.

These are the outstanding dogs and bitches at Ledgelands. But there are other fine specimens. Ledgeland's Solo-Chink, a cream-colored dog by Sancho, has won his four exhibitions in the puppy class. Then there is Ledgelands' Koon Kan, a red Chow, full sister to War Risk Insurance, who has five points toward her championship.

And finally there is old Ledgeland's Bizzy Issy, a brood bitch, and one of Kiyodai's oldest puppies, sired by Ch. Win Sum Min T'Sing. Bizzy Issy, whose name results from an old nickname applied by Mrs. Wagstaff's children, has also been the winner of many ribbons.

It must not be imagined that Chows are the only dogs at Ledgelands. Recently springer spaniels have been interesting Mrs. Wagstaff. To tell the truth, Mr. Wagstaff is principally interested in the spaniel. The Master of Ledgelands enjoys nothing better than roaming the Ramapo Hills with these hunting dogs. Hence the advent of the English springer into what has always been the Temple of the Chow.

At the present time three springer puppies are at Ledgelands. They make

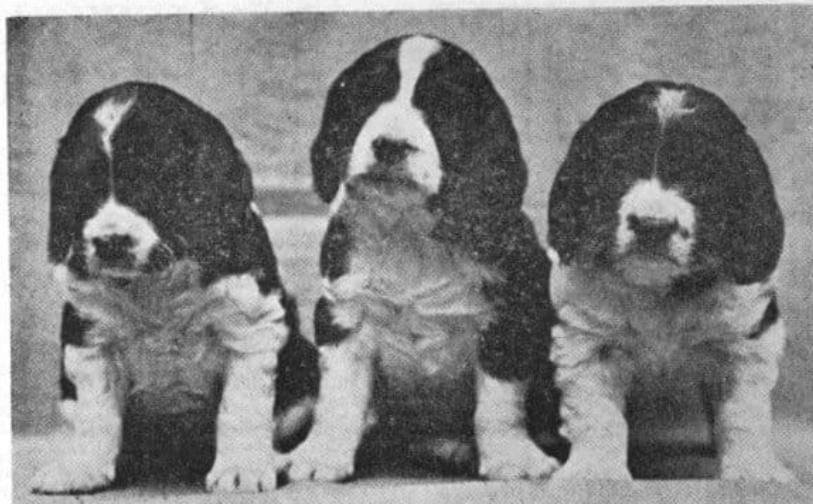


Photo by Tauskey

SPRINGER PUPPIES AT LEDGELANDS

These happy little fellows are winning all hearts at Tuxedo. They are marked in the same liver-and-white symmetry, which is characteristic of Ledgeland's Sheila of Darnick, their mother. They give promise of development into bench show and field trial winners.

their home in an old box stall in the stables. They are wonderful little fellows that tumbled over themselves in their joy to greet Mrs. Wagstaff on the day that I was at Tuxedo Park. Happy, little whimperings came from their throats, and pink tongues sought caressing hands. Those puppies could have posed for a picture of unalloyed joy.

All were marked in the same liver-and-white symmetry which is characteristic of their mother, Ledgeland's Sheila of Darnick, who was mated to Ledgeland's Bellcroft Buckle. The dam has a record of considerable success, having been Best of Breed at Queensboro, Mt. Kisco, Mineola, Long Branch and Newport dog shows; in fact, she has never yet been beaten.

NOTWITHSTANDING the Chows and the springers, a dog of another breed is the real Lord of Ledgelands. I met His Highness toward the end of that most enjoyable November day. First came the padding of soft feet. Then Choggy entered, asking me to come out into the failing light and toss him his ball. Small in body but with the heart of a lion, Ledgelands' history is written around the Pekingese form of Woo Chog of Sunnyfields Farm.

Years ago, Choggy was a gay and peppery youngster. Unlike his family, the Peke loved to venture far afield, hunting mice and muskrats in the woods and streams. A tale is told of how, while chasing an elusive musk-

rat, Choggy suddenly discovered that he was mired in a bog.

The situation was serious, and it might have been the end of Choggy had it not been for another dog.

On that day, Peg O' My Heart, a Chow bitch, was accompanying the valiant Choggy. And in a canine way, Peggy loved the little warrior. Realizing that Choggy was in trouble, Peggy ran to bring aid to her mired hero.

Mrs. Wagstaff was at afternoon

tea when Peggy arrived. With sharp barks of alarm, the Chow tried to tell her mistress the story of the trouble. It was some time before Mrs. Wagstaff realized that something was wrong. Finally she decided to investigate, and Peggy led her mistress to the mired Choggy. They arrived in the well-known "nick of time" and saved the little fellow.

JUST as there are people in the world who continually are getting into trouble, so also are there dogs unable to live a quiet and a peaceful life. Choggy is of that breed. Still each incident in his adventurous career has endeared the valiant little Peke more and more to the Ledgelands household.

Lately, the Peke has shown a strong affection for a large tom-cat called Growly by his human friends. Choggy has carried his friendship to such an extent that it is quite common to find the Peke quietly sleeping in his basket with the tom-cat.

To a lover of dogs it is a joy to visit a kennel such as Ledgeland's. It confirms the impression that dogs should not be kept for the glory of winning prizes. It proves that love and companionship and understanding can exist between an owner and the inmates of a kennel.

And if these are cultivated—as they have been at Tuxedo—the owning of pure-bred dogs becomes a pleasure the equal of any other found in this cold and heartless world.