

SOME FACTS ABOUT PLOTT HOUNDS

(BY CARLOS VINSON, DAYLIGHT, TENN.)

Thousands of American sportsmen are today asking the following questions. What are Plott Hounds like? What are they used for? Where did they come from? Who are the principal and most reliable breeders of Plott hounds? What about their hunting and fighting qualities, voice, trailing ability and so on? I have received hundreds and hundreds of letters from all parts of the United States asking me these questions during the past three years. I still get the letters, almost daily.

I have taken the time to go back into the mountains and investigate the true history behind this unique breed of hunting hounds. I have also gone on several bear, wild boar and coon hunts where Plott hounds were used to chase, bay and tree the game. In other words, I have spent considerable time investigating the Plott breed, so that my answers to the many inquiries will be strictly authentic.

But to answer each inquiry separately and fully, would require practically all of my time. So I have decided to write this article that fully answers the questions that I have been asked about Plott hounds. There may be some few Plott hound breeders that will not be mentioned, but if there is, it will be because 'Ye humble scribe' is not familiar enough with them to know definitely what he is writing about. In other words, they may not want publicity, in fact, none of the Plott breeders really want it that I know of, and there are plenty of hounds today whose owners claim they are Plotts that are everything but Plotts, and I want to be sure of what I am talking about. I am sure that there are a few breeders of really full blooded Plott hounds that this article will not mention, but I either do not have their consent to

mention them in the article, or I am not sure where their dogs came from. So much for that. Here goes what my lengthy investigation of the Plott breed has taught me about Plott hounds.

The breed had its origination in Europe about 300 years ago. Like most of our other breeds of hunting dogs, it is a built up breed, having been developed for the purpose of chasing and fighting European wild boars. Some of these dogs were also used in Europe for herding sheep. From the best information available, it appears that the Plott hound is the product of long years of careful and selective breeding, having been developed by crossing various breeds of hunting and sheep herding dogs.

The origin of the Plott hound in this country dates back to the year of 1750. It was during that year that Johnathan Plott emigrated from Germany, bringing with him several of the European wild boar and sheep dogs. Johnathan settled in the wild mountains of Western North Carolina soon after coming to this country and, being a natural born hunter, soon took to hunting bear and other game which inhabited the mountain area surrounding his new home. He used the dogs that he brought with him to chase the game, especially bear and coon. At that time the dogs were known as European wild boar hounds. The name Plott hound was given the breed in honor of the family responsible for the origin of the breed in this country, which is as it should be.

While Johnathan's dogs had never hunted game other than wild boars prior to the time he brought them to this country, and none of their ancestors had ever been used for any other game, that is their immediate ancestors, the old German soon learned that they made the best bear dogs imaginable.

Johnathan Plott hunted his dogs and bred and raised them for thirty long years without telling anyone outside of his own family anything about them. He kept their blood strictly pure all during those thirty years, not even once experimenting with cross-breeding with other breeds of dogs. But age finally caught up with Johnathan, and in 1780 Henry Plott took over management of the Plott pack where Johnathan left off. In other words, Henry Plott inherited the Plott pack and the

secret information that went with them, this information having remained in the Plott family up until a very few years ago. In fact, I am strongly inclined to believe some of the Plott hound information still remains a Plott family secret and probably always will remain as such.

Up until the time that Henry Plott took over management of the Plott pack, all that the outside world knew about Plott hounds was what they had seen and heard from a distance. They knew that the old German had an exceptionally good pack of bear hounds, and they knew that he had brought them over from Europe with him (the original stock), but that was all they knew. But that was enough to start many stories circulating. One of these stories eventually grapevined its way across the mountains into North Georgia.

A gnarled and weathered old North Georgia bear hunter heard about the brag pack of bear hounds owned by that 'Dadgum Furriner' over in 'Nawth Caroliney' and he got restless. He, too, owned what he believed to be the best pack of bear dogs living. His dogs were

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Owen's Honey
Creek Joe, UKC
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UKC Reg. No.
C741-577. Dam:
Honey Creek Red
Rita, UKC Reg.
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Owen's Honey
Creek Joe, UKC
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AT STUD

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at that time known as 'Leopard Brindle Bear Dogs.' Later they were commonly known as the old fashioned 'Blue Brindle' cur, a strain that no longer exists in its original state.

Finally the old Georgian got his dusty flint lock rifle down out of the deer horn rack, slung his powder horn over one shoulder and his hound horn over the other, called his dogs together and started out on the long trek across the mountains into North Carolina. He paid Henry Plott a visit.

Henry and the Georgian evidently clicked it off pretty well together, because they went on several bear hunts during the Georgians' visit, first using their packs separately, then as a whole in one 'Grand Slam' bear hunt that will probably never again be equalled. To top that off, when the old Georgian returned home, he took one of Henry Plott's favorite Plott stud dogs with him. He borrowed the dog for the purpose of breeding some of his 'Blue Brindle' cur bitches. He returned to North Carolina the following year, returning the borrowed Plott stud dog, and also presenting Henry with a male puppy sired by the borrowed Plott stud, and whelped by one of his favorite 'Blue Brindle' bitches. Henry thought so much of this puppy that he added it to his pack, and eventually used it as a stud dog.

That was the first instance of new blood having been added to the Plott blood since the origin of the breed in this country. And, this first cross-breeding experiment was the starting point for the many claims that followed of people owning Plott hounds that actually

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B. W.'s Jane Plott, sired by Warren Wilson's Major.

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contained half or less than half Plott blood. As time went on, this percentage of Plott blood grew steadily weaker in the Georgia bear dogs, but claims of ownership of full blooded Plotts grew steadily stronger. Some of these cross-bred dogs were sent to other states, having been crossed with other breeds such as redbone, common cur, airdale and so on by that time, but they were still branded as pure Plotts. Some of them still exist, in fact hundreds of them, their owners will vow that they are full blooded Plotts, but they are far from right.

But the Plott family continued to keep the blood of their strain pure after the one infusion of 'Blue Brindle' cur blood for many more years. In fact, there is no definite proof that the Plott family themselves have ever indulged in any other cross-breeding experiments with their dogs. There has been claims that black and tan hounds, redbone hound and airedale blood has been infused by the Plott family, but John Plott of Waynesville, North Carolina, at present the oldest living breeder of Plott hounds, says very definitely that no such blood has ever been added by the Plott family. All the other Plott hound breeders that I know of refuse to answer this question. I really believe that there has been an infusion of bloodhound blood somewhere along the line since the breed's origin in this country. In fact, some of the best Plott hounds that I have ever seen in action showed quite strong bloodhound characteristics. But I have never seen a real Plott hound that came from one of the Plott packs, or whose ancestors came from one of the Plott packs, that showed the slightest sign of having black and tan, redbone or any other hound breed, or airedale blood in its veins. It is a cinch that signs of these breeds would show up somewhere along the line if the Plott breed had ever been crossed with them, but no such signs have ever appeared in the true Plott strain.

Other than the one cross-breeding experiment with the 'Blue Brindle' cur, and the possibility of one or more experiments in crossing Plotts with bloodhounds, it is fairly certain that the older members of the Plott family themselves never indulged in any other cross-breeding experiments.



Frank Henry's Plott Bear Pack, UKC Reg.

But another western North Carolina bear hunter has been breeding Plott hounds for more than forty years. He is Gola P. Ferguson of Cullowhee, North Carolina. Naturally, Gola's original stock came from the Plott family, in fact, he was one of the first outsiders to obtain breeding stock of the Plott dogs, but there has evidently been some experimenting somewhere along the line with Ferguson's Plotts. However, he has maintained an extremely high standard in the hunting qualities of the Plott hounds. It may well be said that there is actually two distinct strains of really full blooded Plott hounds existing today. 'Fergusons Plotts' and 'Plotts Plotts.'

According to the best information available, the original Plott hounds were of buckskin-brindle color. At least, it seems, that is the color that strongly predominated in the breed. Gola Ferguson claims credit for developing the dark brownish-brindle strain of Plott hounds with black saddles. Gola says that he developed the dark brownish-brindle color with black saddles more by acci-

dent than otherwise. He says that he was breeding for superior hunting qualities, rather than color, when this new color appeared. And, Gola says that he has kept the blood of his dogs strictly pure all during the forty years that he has been breeding them. But Gola has farmed a lot of his Plott hounds out over the years. More about this at the conclusion of this article.

Perhaps the most astute breeder of Plott hounds that the Plott family ever produced was George Plott. Young George was killed in the Invasion of Europe. George was a favorite of his Grandfather and more actual Plott information was probably handed down to him than has ever been handed down to anyone else. Up until the time that George went into the Service, he had developed what is likely the outstanding pack of Plott hounds of all time. George had been several years developing his pack. The night before George sailed for Europe H. T. (Hack) Smith-deal of Johnson City, Tennessee, called him long distance and bought his entire pack at a staggering figure. So, it may well be said that 'Hack' stepped into George Plott's

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shoes as a Plott hound breeder. But let's get back to George Plott for the time being, and discuss 'Hack' and his pack later.

Maltese colored Plott hounds still appear in litters from a mating of pure Plott quite often. There have been claims that Plott hounds have been crossed with a strain that existed in the mountains of eastern United States some thirty or forty years ago that were known as 'Blue Delch'. From the information I get, these 'Blue Delch' dogs were very similar to the Plott dogs except in color. They were of a deep bluish-gray color, and were used for hunting bear and other game.

'Hack' Smithdeal owned a maltese colored Plott hound that was one of the best bear hounds that I have ever seen. This brave hound died fighting a bear after a sixty mile chase that started in east Tennessee and ended some distance over in Western North Carolina. He was the only hound still in on the chase when it ended.

I do not claim to know for sure, and I seriously doubt if anyone else does (George Plott probably carried this information to his grave with him), but the occasional cropping out of the maltese color in Plott hounds points toward either the original 'Blue Brindle' cur cross, or the reported 'Blue Delch' cross, or possibly both. 'Hack' Smithdeal has drank moonshine liquor and slept in shuck pens for days with Von Plott, another Plott hound breeder of long standing, trying to get this information out of him, but if Von actually knows, he definitely isn't talking. This is perhaps as near an approach to the true

A PLOTT BOOSTER AND FANCIER

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Rags Nichols and Old Stormy

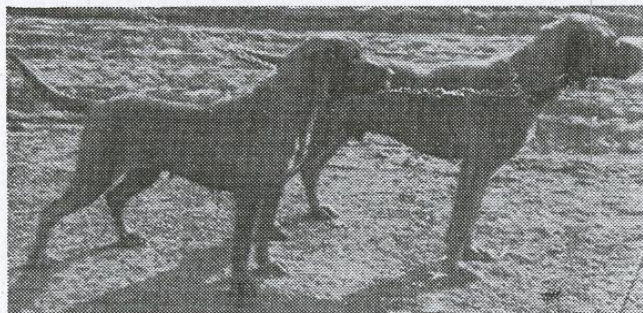
history of the Plott breed of hunting hounds as will ever be available. But it is a known fact that the blood of the Plott breed has been kept strictly pure for at least the past eight generations, and in my estimation that very definitely entitles them to registration and recognition as a distinct breed. I am talking about the true Plott hounds, the Plott family, Gola Ferguson and 'Hack' Smithdeal hounds, and not the various and sundry strains that are erroneously called Plott hounds. I am talking about the UKC registered Plott hounds, and not the unregistered so-called Plotts.

There is actually very few really full blooded Plott hounds in existence today. 'Hack' Smithdeal probably owns more of them than any other one man. He started with the George Plott pack, then bought additional Plott

hounds from John and Von Plott and Gola Ferguson, and from these he has developed a pack of coon, bear and big game hounds second to none. That is saying a lot about a pack of hounds, but I truly believe that I am right.

'Hack', having every desire to carry out the Plott family tradition in breeding and hunting Plott hounds, breeds them with hunting qualities, yet, superior hunting qualities, foremost in his mind. He hates the very thought of the commercialization and kennelization of the breed. Like the Plott men and Gola Ferguson, 'Hack' is firmly convinced that the commercialization and kennelization of the breed would eventually lead to the deterioration of the true hunting qualities of the breed.

'Hack' told me personally not so long ago that he was afraid that commercialization was eventually going to damage the hunting standards of the breed because the high prices offered for Plott hounds would tempt some breeders to fail to weed out the inferior specimens.



HAZELWOOD RIP, UKC No. C757-091—Sire: Plotts Happy, UKC No. C745-833; Dam: Plotts Jenny, UKC No. C735-088.

"PR" HAZELWOOD BELLE, UKC No. C580-762—Sire: Plotts Mack, UKC No. C747-050; Dam: Plotts Flirt, UKC No. C750-164.

Both are two and one-half years old and hunted only on bear and cat. Both are brindle in color, though Belle is darker. Rip has a little white on his chest.

JOHN L. MOORE, BOX NO. 451, MADISON, N. J.



Chas. Bowman's Judy II, UKC 733-023

This weeding out process is something that has been carried out through many generations of Plott hounds, too, by the Plott family, Gola Ferguson and 'Hack' Smith-deal. Gola Ferguson puts it this way. Those that failed to learn to fight right, the bears or wild boars killed, and those that refused to fight or stick to a trail, the hunters killed on the spot. In other words, the true Plott hounds existence has been a 'Law of the Jungle' system or survival where only the fittest have survived. That is probably one reason why there is no more Plott hounds in existence than there is today.

Fighting, treeing, baying and trailing vicious game has been bred into them for almost 200 years that we know of for sure, the poor hunting specimens have been

kept weeded out, and a truly superior breed of hunting hounds has been developed.

The Plott hound is a medium sized dog, with deep chest and muscular fore shoulders, rather beefy head and medium length ears, and usually a deep open trailing voice. Although they have been used principally for hunting bear and wild boar in the mountains for many years, they make top notch coon dogs, taking to water like spaniels. They have also been used on mountain lions, wolf, coyote and wildcats with great success. They are at their best when hunting game that will fight back savagely when cornered.

Their hunting intelligence, trailing ability, endurance and fighting qualities in my estimation, are unequaled anywhere else in the entire hound world. They have speed galore and will fight until they die. They do not know the quality of quit when they are in a fight. The thing that hurts them most is the thing that they fight the hardest. Remember, I'm still talking about true Plott hounds and not so-called Plott hounds. I saw Smithdeals 'Old Heavy', in my estimation the top bear hound living today, tie into a porcupine while we were on a bear hunt up in northern Michigan. I helped to pull more than a hundred quills from his nose and mouth. It took four of us to hold him during the process. We had been told by some of the Michigan hunters that no sensible dog would attack a porcupine the second time. I disagree with that belief. I know that 'Old Heavy' is richly endowed with canine intelligence, but he tied into the second porcupine

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in less than an hour after he tackled the first one. Over a hundred more quills were pulled from his mouth and nose with a pair of pliers. He trailed down and treed a 200 pound bear the next day. How's that for taking punishment and standing up under it? Plott hounds are like that, true Plotts are.

Why, the first time Gola Ferguson tried his pack on wild boars in the Santeelah Mountains of North Carolina, four boars were killed by the hunters, but Gola's pack of Plotts were cut up something awful, as it was their first experience in fighting the vicious tuskers. When Gola returned home with his badly cut up pack, they made for his domestic hogs and killed four of them before he could stop them. In other words, Gola's hounds were really mad at the entire swine race.

I have told the true story of this unique breed of hunting hounds, from the information that has been given to me direct by Plott hound breeders of long standing and from my own actual experiences and investigations, with the hope that those that read this will get the information that they desire from this article. To tell the truth, my Plott hound correspondence is getting ahead of me. I can only answer so many letters.

As previously stated, the blood of the real true Plott breed of hounds has been kept strictly pure during the last eight generations. But back of that, there is good evidence that 'Blue Brindle' cur, Bloodhound, and a strong possibility of 'Blue Delch' and the old time 'Black Brindle' cur having been added to the strain sparingly.

I am inclined to believe, from evidence that I cannot divulge at this time, that some member of the Plott family back of George Plott (I believe that this information was handed down to George) experimented with the Plott—'Blue Delch' cross, and I am also strongly inclined to believe, also from confidential evidence, that someone



Gola Ferguson's Old Spinner, UKC

that Gola Ferguson had Plott hounds farmed out to conducted a secret cross-breeding experiment and injected the 'Black Brindle' cur blood. I am convinced that that is where Gola got his darker colored Plott. If such a secret experiment did take place, and I am convinced that it did, I am sure that Gola is innocent of knowing anything about it.

But the old time 'Blue Brindle' and 'Black Brindle' curs were both great hunting dogs. Both strains were descendents of dogs that were originally brought over from the Old Country, and were probably as purebred strains as there ever has been. The cur title was given to them after their origin in this country simply because those that owned them did not know what else to call them. Even if the Plott breed does contain blood from both these starins, it is certainly no disgrace to the breed. Anyway, in my estimation, the Plott hound is the greatest breed of hunting hounds of all time.

TIGER LIL

Sire: Smithdeal's Nigger
Dam: Brandenburger's
Queen

Tiger Lil is one of the best cat dogs in the U. S. Trained by the Washburn Bros., Chama, New Mexico, and they say she is "one in a million."

I have a full sister, a year younger, and if she trains out good, I'll have two good females to raise pups from later.

I want to breed the best cat dogs possible.

FRANK A. STAAB

Route 2, Grangeville, Idaho



I am convinced that no one will ever know the full history behind the plott breed. I do not claim to be an authority on the breed, but I believe that the dog we know today as the Plott hound is a breed whose predominating blood came from Europe, and that Bloodhound, cur and 'Blue Delch' blood has been added in this country sparingly.

A TRUE STORY ABOUT PLOTT HOUNDS

(By Carlos Vinson, Daylight, Tenn.)

One of the oldest breeds of hunting dogs that we have is now coming to the front where it rightfully belongs. For more than 100 years the secret of that unique breed of hunting hounds, the Plott hound, remained with the Plott family of Western North Carolina. They were a tight lipped family of mountain people and preferred to keep their special strain of bear dogs and all information concerning them to themselves. But finally some of the younger generations of Plott men were

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persuaded to sell some of their dogs and then the true story of the history of the breed leaked out.

The story of the history of this unique breed of hunting hounds is an interesting story within itself. However, that story has already appeared in various dog and outdoor magazines, so I have endeavored to unearth a story that will describe the true hunting qualities of the breed and the main reasons for those superior hunting qualities for which the breed is famous.

I approached a Plott hound breeder of long standing. Mr. Gola P. Ferguson of Cullowhee, North Carolina, for some information about his famous pack of Plott hounds. I found him in a rare mood for giving out such information. Here is the story he gave me.

I have been breeding Plott hounds for forty years. Most of that time I have had from 25 to 30 of them. I have always kept a fair sized pack of the dogs at home for my personal use in bear hunting. The others I have