

## Chinook Breed History

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The Chinook was the inspiration of Arthur Treadwell Walden, a sled-dog driver, author, explorer, and innkeeper from the village of Wonalancet, which is nestled at the foot of the White Mountains in north central New Hampshire. Walden created a distinctly tawny American sled dog that had power, endurance and speed, along with a friendly, gentle nature.

Walden's foundation dogs for the Chinook Breed were a descendent of Admiral Peary's Greenland husky lead dog, Polaris, and a mastiff-type farm dog who produced a litter of three pups on January 17, 1917, in New Hampshire. The pups were named Rikki, Tikki and Tavi after the mongoose in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. One of these pups would eventually be called "Chinook" after a sled dog Walden had used while freighting supplies for gold miners in the Yukon. This dog was the foundation dog of the Chinook breed and is the dog to which all Chinooks are related.

Chinook grew to be 100-pounds. In Walden's book *Harness and Pack*, Walden described Chinook as "a large tawny yellow dog, a half-bred Eskimo, with dark ears and muzzle." Chinook was known not only as a wonderful sled dog, but also for his gentle disposition toward children. Descendants of Chinook would later be called "Chinooks" in honor of the foundation sire.

Walden and his dog sled team, with Chinook in lead, were credited with bringing the sport of sled dog racing to New England. In 1924, Walden founded the New England Sled Dog Club, the oldest club of its kind still in operation today. In 1927, Walden was appointed to head the Dog Department for Admiral Richard Byrd's first Antarctic Expedition (BAE I). Walden and his sixteen Chinook dogs were described by Admiral Byrd, as the backbone of the expedition transport. Unfortunately, it was in Antarctica that Chinook was lost nearing his twelfth birthday - reports of Chinook's death were heard around the world and many mourned the loss of one of the greatest lead dogs in history.

In 1931, Arthur Walden received the Congressional Medal for his part in Admiral Richard Byrd's Antarctic Expedition.

Upon Walden's request, Route 113A from Tamworth to Wonalancet, New Hampshire bears the name "Chinook Trail" to honor his famous lead dog. After returning from the Byrd expedition, Walden sold the Chinook Kennels to Milton Seeley and the dogs were then moved to a new location about a mile down the road from the Walden homestead. Milton and Eva "Short" Seeley bred few Chinook litters before focusing their attention on the Alaskan Malamute and Siberian Husky. From what historic pedigrees remain, it appears that the modern Chinook breed may be descended from Walden's breedings through just three dogs, Jock, Hootchinoo, and Zembla, who were sold by Walden to kennel partner, Julia Lombard, prior to embarking on his Antarctic expedition.

There have been a number of notable events occurring throughout the Chinook's history. In 1931, a Chinook named Paugus and his young owner, Lawrence Orne, won a photo contest as "America's most typical boy and dog." The prize was \$250.00 and a handshake from President Hoover.

In 1940, Perry Greene and his wife Honey purchased the Chinooks and eventually moved them to the Perry Greene Kennel in Waldoboro, Maine. In 1941, Perry Greene and his Chinook team made a 502 mile journey in 90 hours, the longest sled dog trek made within the US at that time. The Greens promoted the Chinooks for many years but only sold males or spayed females. They became the sole breeder of the Chinook, creating a great deal of mystique and legend about the breed and its history. When Perry Greene died in 1963, Honey Greene tried to continue breeding Chinooks but by 1965, the Guinness Book of World Records recorded the Chinook for the first of three times as the rarest dog, with only 125 dogs alive and the number dropping rapidly.

In 1966, Boeing Helicopters-Vetrol division obtained a Chinook named Charger as a mascot, and sent Charger to the 228th base at An Khe, South Vietnam. Charger never made it back.

The remaining Chinook dogs came to be kenneled at the Sukeforth (Sukee) Kennels in Warren, Maine. In 1981 Neil and Marra Wollpert went looking for the Chinook and found Kathy Adams working at the Sukee Kennels trying to save the breed from extinction. Only twenty-eight dogs remained, and most were elderly or neutered. The remaining eleven breedable Chinook dogs were divided between the Wollperts of Ohio (Singing Woods Chinooks), Kathy Adams of Maine (Alder Patch Chinooks), and Peter Abrahams (Yokayo Chinooks) of California.

From 1984 to 1994, Harry Gray's Northdown Kennel was influential in preserving breeding stock. Chinooks who passed thru Harry's Northdown kennel are found in all of today's pedigrees.

In February 1990 Harry Gray completed a 325 mile "Trek for Life" with his team of Chinook sled dogs. Harry and his Chinooks traveled from Greenville, ME to Wonalancet, NH in order to raise awareness and funds for the organ donor programs of the Maine and New Hampshire Kidney Foundations.

In June of 2009, after lobbying by the students of Lurgio Middle school, Governor John Lynch signed a bill making the Chinook the state dog of New Hampshire.

In 2001, the Chinook was added to the AKC's Foundation Stock Service and in January 2013 the Chinook became an AKC-recognized breed, designated to the Working Group. As of January 2017, 64 unique Chinooks have competed in AKC events, earning 105 titles: 9 in conformation with the rest in companion events.

The modern Chinook is still a hard working dog and excels in venues such as sledding, packing, skijoring, obedience, agility and herding, but above all else, the Chinook is cherished as a family companion.