

# The Adventures of Seaman



"Broker's" registered name is CH. Midnite Boy's Smart Asset, from the Midnite Bay Newfoundland Kennel, owners Mike & Reggie Schneider.

## MERIWETHER LEWIS' DOG SEAMAN

**Background of the Breed** - The Newfoundland breed of dogs evolved from dogs found originally in the Pyrenees Mountains of northeastern Spain. These dogs were developed by the Basque shepherds who occupied this region, and the dogs evolved originally from a European breed known as the Great Pyrenees. The Great Pyrenees dog was second only to the St. Bernard in size and weight. Fully grown, the Great Pyrenees would stand about 30 inches at the shoulder and weigh nearly 150 pounds.

Some of the Basques were fishermen, rather than shepherds, and eventually migrated to the plentiful Grand Banks fishing area off the coast of present-day Newfoundland, Canada. These Basques took with them on their ships the Great Pyrenees dogs. Being strong swimmers, the dogs were indispensable when needed for sea rescues.

Their swimming proficiencies in large part were due to their having webbed feet.

After a period of time, the Canadian Great Pyrennes dogs evolved into the Newfoundland breed as it is known today.

**Appearance and Characteristics** - Newfoundlands are strong, active dogs that can be used for heavy work, yet have a gentle nature and make excellent pets. They are deep bodied, well muscled and coordinated. The head is large and the eyes are dark brown, relatively small and deep set. The tail of the Newfoundland is used as a rudder when swimming. The average

height is 28 inches and the average weight is 150 pounds. They have a double coat which is water resistant. The outer coat is moderately long, but not shaggy. The under coat is soft and dense, but less so in summer months. The predominant color is black, although some have a tinge of bronze or a splash of white on the chest and toes.

**References to Lewis' Newfoundland Dog in the Lewis and Clark Journals** - Seaman proved to be a fine companion for Lewis and the other members of the Expedition. On more than one occasion he also contributed to the safety of Expedition members. The first mention of Lewis' dog in the Lewis and Clark Journals was in September of 1803 about ten days after Captain Lewis had taken possession of the keelboat in Pittsburgh and was proceeding down the Ohio River.

**September 11, 1803:** Lewis writes "...Observed a number of squirrels swimming the Ohio and univserally passing from the W. to the East shore...I made my dog take as many each day as I had occasion for, they wer fat and I thought them when fryed a pleasant food... My dog was of the newfoundland breed and very active strong and docile, he would take the squirrel in the water kill them and swimming bring them in his mouth to the boat." (Moulton, Vol. 2 )

**November 6, 1803:** Lewis' journal for the day recounts "...one of the Shawnees a rsepectable looking Indian offered me three beverskins for my dog with which he appeared much pleased, the dog was of the newfoundland breed one that I prised much for his docility and qualifications generally for my journey and of course there was no bargain, I had given \$20 for this dogg myself..." (Moulton, Vol. 2)

**August 25, 1804:** Clark reports, while a small party of men pay a visit to an "Indian Spirit" mound, that "our dog was so Heeted & fatigued we was obliged Send him back to the Creek (near their boat)..." (Moulton, Vol. 2)

**April 18, 1805:** "...one man killed another goose... Scannon...(pulled the goose) out (it is presumed, of the river)..." (Ordway)

**April 25, 1805:** Lewis reports "...my dog had been absent during the night, and I was fearful we had lost him altogether, however much to my satisfaction he joined us at 8Oclock this morning." (Moulton, Vol. 4)

**April 26, 1805:** "...Saw a flock of Goats (possibly antelopes) swimming the river this morning...Cap Lewises dog Scamon took after them (and) caught one in the River...Drowned & killed it and Swam to Shore with it." (Ordway)

**May 19, 1805:** "Semon Cap Lewiss dog got bit by a beaver." (Ordway)

**May 29, 1805:** "...in the course of last night we were alarmed By a Buffalow swimming across the opposite Shore...& went with great forse up the bank to the fire where the men were sleeping & was within 18 inches of their heads...the dog flew at him which turned him from running against the lodge (in) which the officers layd..." (Ordway)

**June 27, 1805:** Lewis reports on Seaman's assistance in keeping bears out of their camp in the evenings. "...a bear came within thirty yeards of our camp last night... my dog seems to be in a constant state of alarm with these bear and keeps barking all night."

**July 26, 1805:** Lewis records the pain and suffering that the Expedition members and his dog have from contact with thistle plants - "...these barbed seed thistles ... penetrate our mockersons and leather leggings and give us great pain until removed... my dog suffers with them excessively, he is constantly biting and scratching himself as if in a rack of pain." (Moulton, Vol. 4)

**April 11, 1806:** Indians try to steal Lewis' dog and he records the episode as "...the Wah-cel-lars, stole my dog this evening, and took him towards their village (near the Columbia River)... (I) sent three men in pursuit of the theives with orders if they made the least resistance...to fire on them..." The three men were able to oavertake the Indians and reclaim the dog for Lewis. (Moulton, Vol. 7)

**May 23, 1806:** Clark reports that "Sergt. Pryor wounded a Deer at a lick near our Camp and our dog prosued it into the river." (Moulton, Vol. 7)

**July 15, 1806:** Lewis comments on the vexing problem of "...mosquetoos continue to infest us in such manner that we can scarcely exist...my dog even howls with the torture he rperiences from them..." (Moulton, Vol. 8) This is the last mention of the dog in any Lewis and Clark Journals.

**After the Expedition** - Lewis and Clark historians generally assume, although there is no historical record of the matter, that Lewis' dog returned to St. Louis with the rest of the Expedition in September of 1806. What might have happened to him after that is also unknown.

**What is the Correct Name of the Dog?** - All editions of the Lewis and Clark Journals until the Moulton edition of 1986, as well as other Lewis and Clark publications during the same time period, refer to the name of the dog as being Scannon. The late Lewis and Clark historian Donald Jackson is credited with clarifying and "correcting" the name in an article published 1985.

As a result of research Jackson was doing at the time, related to Lewis and Clark geographic names, he became convinced that the correct name for Lewis' dog should be Seaman. He felt that the spelling of the name as Scannon was based upon an incorrect interpretation of the original, hand-written journals. Jackson's conclusion has been widely supported by Lewis and Clark historians since 1985.

## Sources -

Jackson, Donald, "Call Him Good Old Dog, But Don't Call Him Scannon," *We Proceeded On*, July, 1985. Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Great Falls, Montana.

Osgood, Ernest S., "Our Dog Scannon - Partner in Discovery," *The Magazine of Western History*, Summer 1976. Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana.

Moulton, Gary. (Ed.) *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, Volumes 1-13, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln:1986.

Quaife, Milo M. (Ed.), *The Journals of Captain Meriwether Lewis and John Ordway*, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison:1916.

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