



Pets in America: A History

Katherine C. Grier

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Entertaining and informative, *Pets in America* is a portrait of Americans' relationships with the cats, dogs, birds, fishes, rodents, and other animals we call our own. More than 60 percent of U.S. households have pets, and America grows more pet-friendly every day. But as Katherine C. Grier demonstrates, the ways we talk about and treat our pets--as companions, as children, and as objects of beauty, status, or pleasure--have their origins long ago.

Grier begins with a natural history of animals as pets, then discusses the changing role of pets in family life, new standards of animal welfare, the problems presented by borderline cases such as livestock pets, and the marketing of both animals and pet products. She focuses particularly on the period between 1840 and 1940, when the emotional, behavioral, and commercial characteristics of contemporary pet keeping were established. The story is filled with the warmth and humor of anecdotes from period diaries, letters, catalogs, and newspapers.

Filled with illustrations reflecting the whimsy, the devotion, and the commerce that have shaped centuries of American pet keeping, *Pets in America* ultimately shows how the history of pets has evolved alongside changing ideas about human nature, child development, and community life.

This book accompanies a museum exhibit, "Pets in America," which opens at the McKissick Museum in Columbia, South Carolina, in December 2005 and will travel to five other cities from May 2006 through May 2008.

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