

THE PALIMPSEST

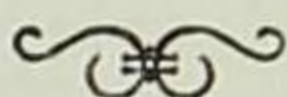
EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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Hogs in the Colonies

The first hogs in America were brought to Cuba by Columbus on his second voyage in 1493. They were reddish in color and presumably originated in Spain. Allowed to run wild, they increased in numbers rapidly. Bands of wild dogs hunted them down and fed upon those they killed.

In 1539 DeSoto captured some of these Cuban hogs and took thirteen sows with him to Florida. At the end of a year the number had increased to three hundred. From this stock the explorers took animals with them throughout the south and as far west as Mississippi. For many years the wild boar provided great sport for the hunter.

The first importations of hogs of any consequence were made to Virginia in 1608, to Massachusetts in 1624, and to Manhattan Island in 1625. Importations continued until almost every type of hog existing in Europe was found in the colonies.

The hog in the early history of the country was allowed to roam, deriving his existence from

acorns and grazing. It was a case of root hog or die. The Indians stole many of them, making it necessary for the owners to use identification marks, either "cropping" the animals or slitting their ears.

Trouble also soon developed from hogs ravaging fields of grain and rooting in the unfenced fields. Most colonial towns passed regulations requiring owners to put rings in the noses of their pigs. The town of Hadley selected "hog ringers" annually who were to ring all pigs fourteen inches high found unringed in fields from March 1 to December 1. In some places the pigs were required to be yoked as well as rung.

As the colonies developed, hogs of a more profitable type were imported, George Washington being one of the first importers. Coming from different countries, they varied in type, size, and color. Later on they were used to form the basis for the development of most of the leading American breeds. Some of the crosses developed became known as Chinas, Bedfordshires, Irish Graziers, Red Rocks, Guinea Reds, Jerseys, Cheshire, Siamese, Suffolks, Chesters, and Essex. These names were later dropped. It was not until about 1840 that the present-day breeds became distinct and fairly uniform in type and color.

ELVIN LEE QUAlFE

ARTHUR L. ANDERSON