

The History and Development of the Dobermann

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The origin of the dobermann, is in part, well documented and is credited to Herr Dobermann of Apolda, Germany and subsequently Herr Otto Goller, also from Apolda. A relatively new breed, the Dobermann pinscher was first recognized in Germany in 1899, 5 years after the death of Herr Dobermann

It is widely accepted that the dogs that Herr Dobermann originally used in the development of his new breed were the smooth coat, bob tailed, German Shepherd Dog (not to be confused with the German Shepherd we recognize today), the black and tan German Pinscher and the Rottweiler Metzgerhund, which is the ancestor of the Rottweiler we see today. The early Dobermanns were only black and tan and had a longish outer coat with a woolly undercoat. Some early drawings and photos show heavy, well muscled dogs with strong bone, thick necks and well-developed hindquarters. These depictions, and the thicker coats on the early specimens, would direct us to the influence of the Rottweiler. The German Pinscher was a lighter, more refined terrier. The name Dobermannpinscher (pinscher meaning terrier) would tend to confirm the theory that the German Pinscher had an early influence on the breed. What Herr Dobermann had developed, was a highly intelligent, large, black and tan, terrier type dog, with a fierce temperament, which was highly sought after as a guard dog.

Several years after Herr Dobermann's death, Herr Otto Goller sought to improve the breed and its' temperament. His goal – to develop a first rate guard dog, who was also a good house dog. Goller was credited with recording the first breed standard, written in 1899, and this standard called for a dog “pleasant in manner and character, faithful, fearless, attentive and reliable watchdog, sure defender of the master, mistrustful of strangers, intelligent, gay, very capable of training, ideal housedog and companion. Running gear must be light and free, temperament lively and ardent.” His lengthy description of the Dobermann pinscher temperament is testament to his dedication to achieving his original goal.

There is no doubt that the Manchester Terrier was used in the early development of the breed. Primarily to develop a smoother coat, darker eye, and improve head type. This terrier is not a large dog, and nor was the German Pinscher, yet the early Dobermann pinscher Standard stated a height of 56-65 cm (23 – 26 Inches) for dogs and 55-60cm (22-24 inches) for bitches, which calls for a specimen taller than either of these breeds. This can be compared to the NZKC standard today stating an ideal height of 68.5 cm for dogs and 64.7 cm for bitches. This indicates that the breed experienced a continuous increase in height in the early, formative years.

All the original dogs used in the development of the breed were black and tan. We know that a Greyhound bitch was used to improve speed and agility and the Gordon Setter to improve coat colour, which apparently it failed to do. There is also the thought that the Beauceron, a blue Great Dane, and the Blue German Mastiff were also used as crosses to improve various aspects of the breed. Certainly, some of these theories would hold some truth as by 1904 we saw the first brown and tan Dobermann pinschers and in the next generation, a blue and tan. However, the breed retained its refined head and, in my opinion, shows little sign of the Mastiff or Great Dane head and body types. But, if neither of these breeds were used, from where does the blue coat colour originate?

By the 1930's, the breed was well established throughout Europe and USA. A photo of Claus v Sigalsburg, whelped in 1931, shows a dog more refined than the earlier examples and by 1940, the Dobermann breed type appears to have evolved to a dog closely akin to today's breed as shown by the famous Ch Ferry Von Raufelson of Giralda. This impressive square dog had a lovely wedge shaped head, long clean neck, deep chest, moderate bone and tight cat like feet.

He is not as well angulated as today's top winning specimens, nor does he have a well developed fore chest, he does however, exhibit most of the breed characteristics as described in today's Dobermann breed standard.

It is interesting to note that the first Doberman Pinscher to win Best in Show at Madison Square Garden, USA, in 1939, was a 28 inch German dog who was so aggressive that none of the three judges could lay a hand on him! Perhaps Herr Goeller had not yet fully achieved his goal.

Time line:

- 1860 The Thuringer Pinscher or Polizeilich Soldatenhund first appeared.
- 1898 The first dog of this breed was exported to USA
- 1899 Name officially changed to Dobermannpinscher
- 1910 Herr Goller formed the first Dobermannpinscher club
- 1911 Breed officially recognized in Germany
- 1919 Austrian Dobermannpinscher club formed
- 1921 Doberman Pinscher Club of America formed (note different spelling)
- 1949 Name changed (except in USA) to Dobermann
- 1956 First Dobermann Dog arrives in New Zealand
- 1959 First Dobermann bitch arrives in New Zealand
- 1960 First litter born in New Zealand

References :

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