

Two Dogs Travelled with the Pilgrims

“So far as appears the only domestic live-stock aboard the May-Flower consisted of goats, swine, poultry, and dogs.”

“It is quite possible that some few sheep, rabbits, and poultry for immediate consumption (these requiring but little forage) may have been shipped, this being customary then as now. There is ample proof that goats, swine, poultry, and dogs were landed with the colonists at New Plymouth, and it is equally certain that they had at first neither cattle, horses, nor sheep.”

“Of course the she-goats were their sole reliance for milk for some time, whether afloat or ashore, and goat's flesh and pork their only possibilities in the way of fresh meat for many months, save poultry (and game after landing) - though we may be sure, in view of the breeding value of their goats, poultry, and swine, few were consumed for food.”

“The goats, swine, rabbits, and poultry were doubtless penned on the spar-deck forward, while possibly some poultry, and any sheep brought for food, may have been temporarily housed — as was a practice with early voyagers ...”

“ ... in the (unused) ship's boats, though these appear to have been so few in number and so much in demand that it is doubtful if they were here available as pens.”

“The “fresh meat” mentioned as placed before Massasoit on his first visit was probably venison, though possibly kid's meat, pork, or poultry. Of swine and poultry they must have had a pretty fair supply, judging from their rapid increase, though their goats must have been few.”

“They were wholly without beasts of draft or burden (though it seems strange that a few Spanish donkeys or English “jacks” had not been taken along, as being easily kept, hardy, and strong, and quite equal to light ploughing, hauling, carrying, etc.), and their lack was sorely felt. The space they and their forage demanded it was doubtless considered impracticable to spare.”

“Much of the cargo originally stowed in the Speedwell, a part, as we know, of her company, and a few of her crew were transferred to the Mayflower at Plymouth, and there can be no doubt that the ship was both crowded and overladen.”

“It is altogether probable that the crowded condition of her spar and main decks caused the supply of live-stock taken - whether for consumption upon the voyage or for the planters' needs on shore - to be very limited as to both number and variety.”

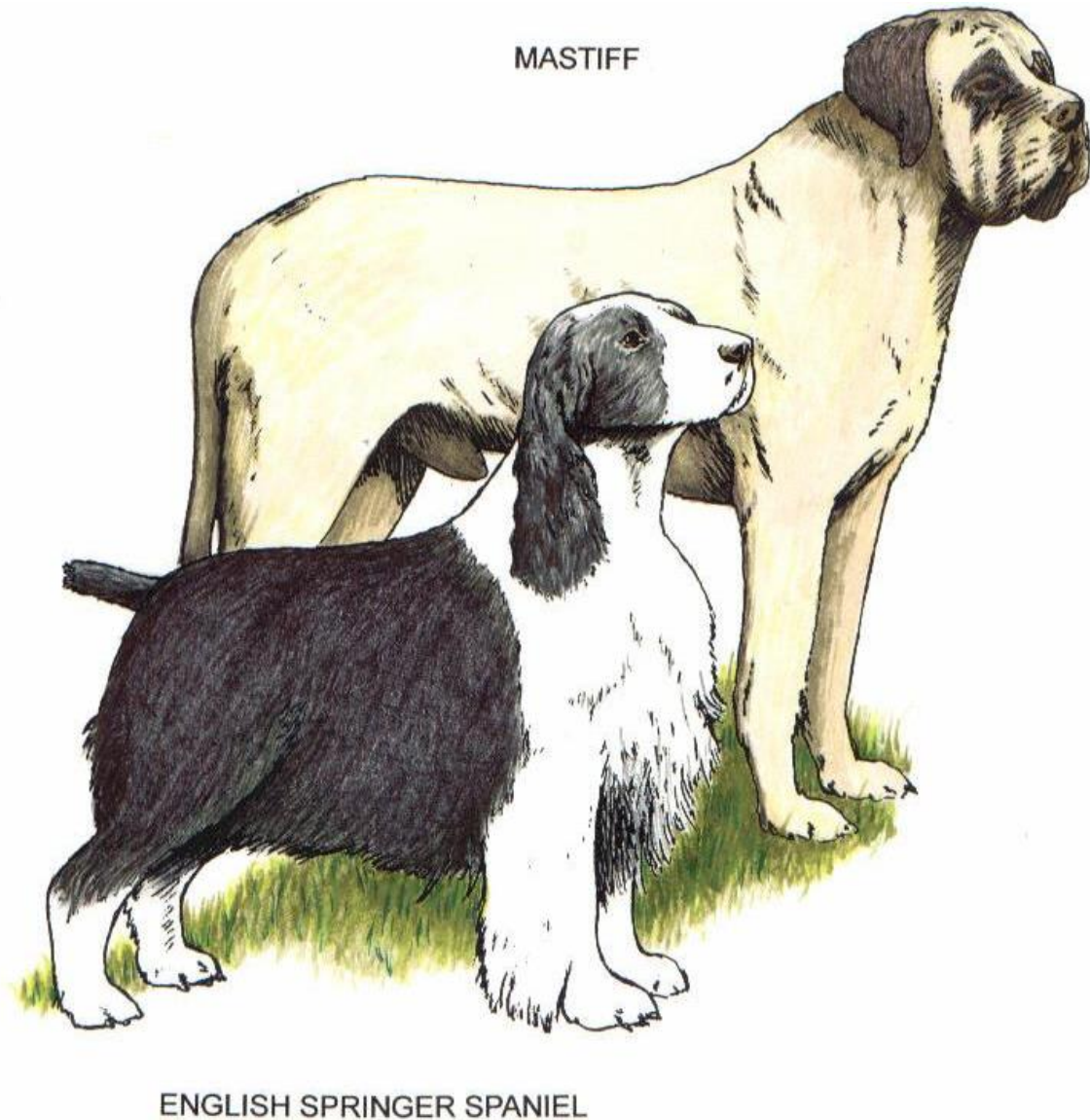
“It has been matter of surprise to many that no cattle (not even milch-cows) were taken, but if - as is not unlikely - it was at first proposed to take a cow or two (when both ships were to go and larger space was available), this intent was undoubtedly abandoned at Plymouth, England ...”

“... when it became evident that there would be dearth of room even for passengers, none whatever for cattle or their fodder (a large and prohibitive quantity of the latter being required for so long a voyage), and that the lateness of the season and its probable hardships would endanger the lives of the animals if taken.” (Ames, The Mayflower and Her Log)

The Dogs

“It is also probable that some household pets - cats and caged singing-birds, the latter always numerous in both England and Holland - were carried on board by their owners, though no direct evidence of the fact is found.” (Ames)

We know from journal records that at least two dogs were traveling with the Pilgrims (as illustrated in Cline’s image):



“The canine adventurers - one a Mastiff, the other an English Springer Spaniel - belonged to 25-year-old John Goodman of England, whose life they are credited with saving on at least one occasion and whom they both outlived.” (Denver Post)

(Sadly, due to illness, Goodman did not survive that first winter in the New World, but his dogs were cared for by the remaining pilgrims.)

Mourt's Relation helps explain ...

Friday, the 12th [January, 1621], we went to work, but about noon it began to rain that it forced us to give over work.

This day two of our people put us in great sorrow and care; there was four sent to gather and cut thatch in the morning, and two of them, John Goodman and Peter Brown ...

... having cut thatch all the forenoon, went to a further place, and willed the other two to bind up that which was cut and to follow them.

So they did, being about a mile and a half from our plantation. But when the two came after, they could not find them, nor hear any thing of them at all, though they hallooed and shouted as loud as they could, so they returned to the company and told them of it.

Whereupon Master Leaver and three or four more went to seek them, but could hear nothing of them, so they returning, sent more, but that night they could hear nothing at all of them.

The next day they armed ten or twelve men out, verily thinking the Indians had surprised them. They went seeking seven or eight miles, but could neither see nor hear any thing at all, so they returned, with much discomfort to us all.

These two that were missed, at dinner time took their meat in their hands, and would go walk and refresh themselves. So going a little off they find a lake of water, and having a great mastiff bitch with them and a spaniel, by the water side they found a great deer ...

... the dogs chased him, and they followed so far as they lost themselves and could not find the way back. They wandered all that afternoon being wet, and at night it did freeze and snow.

They were slenderly appareled and had no weapons but each one his sickle, nor any victuals. They ranged up and down and could find none of the savages' habitations.

When it drew to night they were much perplexed, for they could find neither harbor nor meat, but, in frost and snow were forced to make the earth their bed and the element their covering.

And another thing did very much terrify them; they heard, as they thought, two lions roaring exceedingly for a long time together, and a third, that they thought was very near them.

So not knowing what to do, they resolved to climb up into a tree as their safest refuge, though that would prove an intolerable cold lodging; so they stood at the tree's root, that when the lions came they might take their opportunity of climbing up.

The bitch they were fain to hold by the neck, for she would have been gone to the lion; but it pleased God so to dispose, that the wild beasts came not.

So they walked up and down under the tree all night; it was an extreme cold night.

So soon as it was light they traveled again, passing by many lakes and brooks and woods, and in one place where the savages had burnt the space of five miles in length, which is a fine champaign country, and even.

In the afternoon, it pleased God, from a high hill they discovered the two isles in the bay, and so that night got to the plantation, being ready to faint with travail and want of victuals, and almost famished with cold.

John Goodman was fain to have his shoes cut off his feet they were so swelled with cold, and it was a long while after ere he was able to go; those on the shore were much comforted at their return, but they on the shipboard were grieved at deeming them lost. (Mourt's Relation)

Per the American Kennel Club, "The First Thanksgiving" art by Jean Louis Gerome Ferris (1915) correctly includes a dog with the Pilgrims; however, it is "a modern Springer-type spaniel [not an English Springer Spaniel], among other historical inaccuracies."



In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the Mayflower, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young