

GREENLAND

Collector

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Dear Reader,

The year 2003 will be an exciting philatelic year for POST Greenland with a grand supply of new and beautiful designs from our Greenlandic artists. Just to mention a few exciting themes - our beautiful ships are illustrated and engraved by Martin Mörck and the Greenlandic sledge dogs are illustrated by Naja Abelsen and engraved by Lasse Sjöblom. We continue the series of joint issues, this time with Post Danmark, by marking the 100th anniversary of the Danish Literary Greenland Expedition.

This year POST Greenland will participate in a series of exhibitions and we will try to be represented at as many exhibitions as possible. We are happy to meet our current

and new customers around the world and we are delighted at the increasing popularity of Greenland stamps.

Our website www.stamps.gl enjoys a continuously increasing number of visitors. The number of electronic enquiries via email is also constantly growing. We regard this as a positive growth and as such POST Greenland plans to update the website in the near future, to make it more dynamic and user friendly for all our visitors.

POST Greenland is closely monitoring the development in all relevant fields for improvement in the quality of our stamps. As a result, in 2003 we will introduce other types of paper for our stamps. These types of paper are adjusted to the printing methods, which are used on our stamps.

Abroad many people connect the winter in Greenland with bitter cold and a lot of ice and snow. Indeed, we do have plenty of these things, however, an overwhelming plain of snow upon snow is also hidden in a mountain plateau, often bathed in bright sunshine – it is a must to experience this fascinating and magnificent natural landscape at least once in a lifetime.

Enjoy your reading.

Yours sincerely,



Søren Rose
Philatelic Manager



THE HUSKY

(KALAALLIT QIMMIAT)

By Emil Rosing, the managing director of the National Museum & Archive of Greenland.

Emil Rosing was born in Tasiilaq in 1939. Educated at teacher's colleges in Greenland and Denmark, he took a philosophy examination at the University of Copenhagen in 1971. During the period 1974 to 1980 he was head of the Graphic Workshop, today's Art School of Greenland. He took ethnology as a subsidiary subject at the Institute of Eskimology in Copenhagen in 1984. From 1984 to 1985 he was employed in the Arctic Section at Musée de l'homme in Paris. Since 1991 he has been managing director of the National Museum & Archive of Greenland in Nuuk.

Generally when referring to the husky there is no particular BREED of dog in question. The word husky relates to the SLEDGE DOG, which nowadays is only kept in West Greenland from Kangerlussuaq (Søndre Strømfjord) to the Thule district and in every settlement in East Greenland. In the desolate National Park in North and Northeast Greenland amongst other things, the military sledge patrol Sirius uses the dog sledge during their work of exercising the Danish sovereignty.

Dogs in Greenland

The oldest traces of dogs in Greenland stem from the oldest period in Greenland's pre-history: The Saqqaq culture. In archaeological excavations in a present-day dog



01107303. 12.03.2003
Mini sheet.
Sledge dog puppies
DKK 36.00



01107304. 12.03.2003
Mini sheet.
Portrait of a Sledge Dog
DKK 38.00

district like the Disko Bay at Qeqertasussuk near Oasigiannugit (Christianshåb) and Qajaa (in the Jakobshavn Ice Fiord), several canine bones have been found, which are among the oldest known canine bones in the Eastern Arctic. They are about 3,500 years old. The bones clearly show that the Saqqaq dog resembled the present-day Greenland sledge dog. However, we do not know what it was used for, since there is no knowledge of any sledge remains from that period; however, there are many indications that it was a pack animal. Cuts in the bones indicate that the dogs were presumably also consumed as food.

The dog in pre-historic times

You can imagine that the dog and the human were closely connected during the Saqqaq era. The Saqqaq people lived in a region in which sealing has had immense significance up to the present-day, especially during winter. When the Disko Bay was covered with ice and the Ringed Seal was maintaining its vital breathing holes in the compact ice – and during the polar nights, the Saqqaq man set out to hunt on the sea ice along with his dog, which was skilled in tracing and marking the breathing holes of the seal by means of its sensitive sense of smell. The dog tracked down the sealing



ground and so the hunter was able to harpoon the seal at the right time. The illustration at the bottom of page 6 by Jens Rosing clearly shows how the man and the dog helped each other to sustain life.

The dog in historic times

We know from the earliest contacts with travellers and whalers from Europe that the Greenlanders used dogs as draught animals in front of a sledge. It is documented as early as in "Perlustrationer" by Hans Egede, which portrays the life in West Greenland during the 18th century and later on in the beginning of the 19th century, e.g. the meeting of John Ross with the people of the Thule district.

The husky was born to "live and die in a harness", as the sealer Elmar Drastrup expressed in the 1930's after having resided for many years as a sealer in Northeast Greenland. The husky has been trained throughout many generations to function as a draught animal for heavy transportation on long journeys, where it is capable of dragging several times its own weight hour after hour, even day after day. There are countless accounts of its value on expeditions, sealing trips and tourist trips. The husky was not exactly born to be a racing dog – it is a hardy worker, with a body structure that has not changed notably for thousands of years. We know that Scottish and other European whalers and travellers from Newfoundland brought along dogs on their cruises, especially to North Greenland, where the sledge dog is at home. It is inevitable that a certain amount of crossbreeding took place. The typical signs of a husky are the upright and proportionally small ears. One wonders if the dogs with the "bent" ears could be repercussions of the crossbreeding and what about the longhaired Meqquijuut?

"Dog and Sledge"

The sledge dog and sledding make up an important part of Greenland's culture, which

is seen from abroad as characteristic of Greenland. Concurrently with the growth in population and the regulation of society, it has also become necessary to draw up rules and regulations regarding the keeping of dogs, which are enforced by the authorities in the districts and on a national basis and which have to be observed by the dog owners. Today the number of sledge dogs in the dog districts is estimated at 25,000 to 30,000. The dogs, which are kept tied up all year round, apart from during sledge rides, demand efficient care and attention if they are to be a source of pleasure. Consequently, it is very demanding to keep a dog team. To take part in sledding activities, it is to this day necessary to observe certain principles and cultural features.



Care and attention of puppies is important. It is possible to achieve a uniform and satisfactory team by selecting the right mating partners for the bitches. Screening of puppies may be necessary. In order to obtain robust, good-looking dogs with stamina it is also necessary that feeding is carried out with great care

Breeding and training demands knowledge, time and patience. E.g. it is necessary to have a well-developed communication with one's dogs in order to be able to control them, especially in dangerous situations.

Naming is a chapter in itself, which can be both varied and funny, but it is also very

important in the communication with the dogs.

Signals e.g. for speed have always been individual and private. They are constructed and used by the most skilled and experienced sledge drivers.

The equipment is very traditional, but nowadays it is obviously made of new materials. There are variations, especially in the design of the sledge throughout the three dog sledding regions made up of Thule, East Greenland and West Greenland. The differences are conditional on the nature of ground, the extent and character of the ice and the cultural traditions. The sledge fundamentally consists of two runners, joined by crossbeams and two stanchions. The shape is ancient. The oldest known sledge remains is a small sledge dragged by ropes from the Dorset era approx. 600 years B.C. (2,600 years before now). The dog sledges of today descend from the people of the Thule culture, who arrived in Greenland approx. 1200 years A.D.

The harness, which can be described as the "clothing" of the dog, is very important. It has to be individually adjusted to the particular dog that is going to wear it. In that way its body is taken care of during the hard work it has to perform. The traces, which lead from the sledge to the dog, need to be of a certain length and easy to detach, in order to be able to disentangle the dogs at any given time. The harness system was constructed for the dogs to run in the formation of a fan, which has always been used in Greenland.

The dog whip, which to this day is made of a wooden stick with a thin strap of seal-skin, is primarily used as a tool to guide and control the dogs, if they do not obey the control language that they have been trained in by the sealer.

Equipment for the sledge

Of course the actual equipment for the sledge and the sledge ride can vary from



01303012. 12.03.2003
 Souvenir folder
 Sledge dogs
 DKK 30.50



01301211. 12.03.2003
 Stamp booklet no. 11
 Sledge dogs DKK 61.00



owner to owner and according to the objective of the ride. Sledding is connected with those regions where you find compact ice during the winter and, when winter approaches, both people and dogs look forward to go sledding during the coming winter season. Throughout centuries the people have used the possibility of sledding during the winter for sealing and fishing, for transportation from place to place, for visiting trips between towns and settlements and for pleasure trips for family and friends in their spare time.

Sledge racing

On 9 March 1949, the first organized sledge race was arranged in the now abandoned coal mining settlement Qullissat in the Disko Bay with 19 participating sledges from the surrounding settlements in Vajgat. The route was 40 kilometres long and the fastest driver took 2 hours and 11 minutes. Today most North Greenlandic towns have sledding clubs and every year during early spring they arrange both local sledding

and the Greenland Championships. At the same time the clubs accomplish a major and commendable piece of work in maintaining the sledding culture, in which they pay great attention to maintenance and improved nurturance of the Greenland sledge dog. The many sledge races during the winter are to this day extremely popular and provide great joy for both the locals and the tourists.



01100303. 12.03.2003
 Sledge dog puppies
 DKK 4.50



01100304. 12.03.2003
 Portrait of a sledge dog
 slædehund DKK 4.75



01100305. 12.03.2003
 Sledge dog at work
 DKK 6,00

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