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The History of The Cat

These days we are quite used to having cats around, but up until 10, 000 years ago the cat was unknown as a human companion. Unlike the dog, who has been by our side for as long as 50, 000 years, the cat, typically reticent, held back until conditions were favorable.

The reason for this is simple. Cats are supreme hunters and did not need charity nor hand-outs to survive.

You may wonder why cats allowed themselves to become domesticated at all, and as with most things to do with cats, it was because it suited them. With the invention of agriculture, large storage silos were erected to house grain crops. Rodents moved in to feast on this bounty, and cats moved in to feed them.

The first domestic cats probably descended from the African wild cat (*Felis Libyca*). Archeological records suggest that they were first domesticated in the Middle East, where organized agriculture started.

But there are at least two other varieties of wildcat that may have contributed to the genetic make up of domestic cats. One is *Felis Silvestris*, the European wildcat, while the other is *Felis Manul*, the Pallas or Steppe cat, from Asia.

Records regarding the early domestication of cats are scant, but there is evidence that cats were commonly kept as pets as far back as 6, 000 BC. Statues found in Turkey from that date show women playing with cats.

The earliest written records about cats appear in approximately 4,000 B.C. in Egypt. Here cats were used to control rodents in grain silos, and were considered the embodiment of the goddess Bast.

When the Romans conquered Egypt, they took domesticated cats back with them to Italy, and from there the cat spread throughout Europe. They became popular as pets in Britain and were revered by the Vikings, whose goddess Freyja, had a chariot drawn by winged cats.

However, by the Middle Ages, things had turned bad for the cat. The church declared them servants of Satan and they were killed and tortured in their millions. Europe would come to regret their persecution of the cat. Due to the cat's demise, rodent populations ran out of control, causing the Black Death, a plague that killed millions of Europeans.

The cat's reputation would eventually be restored in Europe, and by the 1600's they were again being kept as pets. They also had many high profile admirers, including the great artist Leonardo, who called them, 'God's perfect creation'.

In Asia, the cat's status had never been in question. They were cherished and revered throughout the Orient where they were believed to bring good luck and ward off evil spirits. They featured widely in the art of both China and Japan.

In the modern day, the cat's popularity continues to grow. In the US, they've even overtaken the dog as the most popular pet species - a worthy tribute to our fascinating feline friends.

If you've just adopted a cat and are searching for potential [kitten names](#), visit catnameshq.com. You'll find thousands of cat and kitten names, including an extensive selection of [female cat names](#).

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