

An early issue of *Cats Magazine*, January 1945.

The Jewel Of The City

*The Glendale Public Library's Cat Collection will
make any feline fanciers' eyes sparkle.*

■ STORY AND PHOTOS BY BARBARA DENZER

The Jewel City—Glendale, California—lies at the junction of the sunny San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys in Southern California. Almost diamond-shaped in territory, the city is surrounded by the San Gabriel, San Rafael and Verdugo Mountains, which form the perfect setting for this lovely jewel of a city.

Famous for its proximity and connections to Hollywood, Glendale is better known as the home of DreamWorks Animation, Baskin-Robbins ice cream chain, Bob's Big Boy restaurant chain, part of Walt Disney's empire, and the childhood home of John Wayne—but it's also home of a special museum-like cat collection at the Glendale Public Library.

For cat lovers, Glendale's real treasure is its library, which hosts one of the largest and best public collections of cat books and memorabilia in the world. The gem of a collection includes more than 20,000 volumes, photographs of famous cats by famous photographers, cat posters, cat postcards, cat postage stamps, pamphlets about cats, miniature cat books, cat videos and audio tapes, cat CDs and DVDs, cat magazines, cat-show catalogs, trophies from cat shows, and rare volumes of feline information. The library also houses reference material on cats in artwork, Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) yearbooks, cat calendars, cat almanacs and more.

How it Began

According to George Ellison, assistant librarian of the Cat Collection, the story of the veritable gold mine of cat anthology

Article in the first issue of *Cats Magazine*. The photo was taken in 1945 by Alice M. Clark, who was the president of the Pacific Cat Club at the time. Shown in Therta Merla of the Pacific Cat Club (San Francisco) with Spots, Pickins and Prince, holding war bonds.

begins some 60 years ago with the curiosity of Dr. Harvey Billig, who had an orthopedic practice in Glendale. "To study the similarities between the bone structure of cats and humans, the doctor started collecting and researching feline veterinary medical texts looking for clues to relationships between cat and human skeletons. He became fascinated by cats," Ellison says.

Dr. Billig and his wife Roberta purchased several purebred cats as companions and became devoted pet lovers. What he didn't plan on, but fully supported, was his wife becoming absolutely obsessed with breeding and showing cats. Mrs. Billig began learning everything she could about the Siamese breed and jumped into the world of the cat fancy both feet first. Her passion led her to become a breeder, an international judge with the American Cat Association, a researcher and an author.

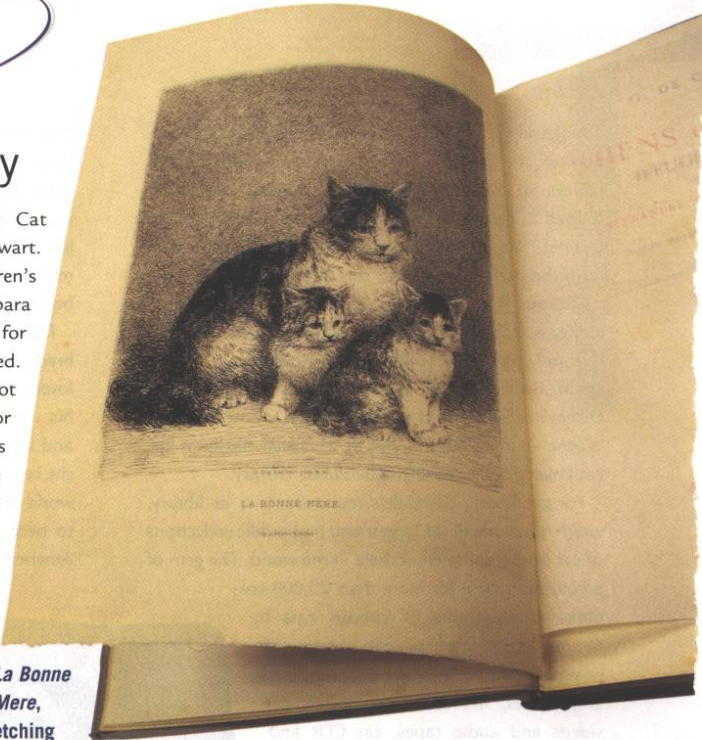


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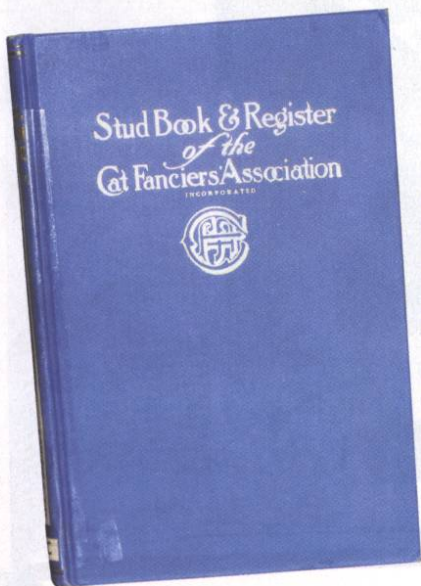
Another substantial part of the Cat Collection came from Marian Sisk Stewart. She had a large collection of cats in children's literature and was acquainted with Barbara Boyd, the librarian who was responsible for the collection when it was first donated. Although Boyd acknowledged she was not fond of cats, she took her responsibility for the collection very seriously and was accountable for indexing and sorting the first collection. "Ms. Boyd was quite a character," says Nora Goldsmith, the current head librarian of Special Collections. "She kind of 'barked' instead of 'purred' when she wanted something, but she had a heart of gold. She personally convinced Mrs. Stewart to donate her own considerable findings to the library's existing treasure house."

The Glendale Public Library created a special area to house the mini-museum, which now includes two

La Bonne Mere, etching by Eugene Lambert from *Chiens et les Chats*, 1888.



offices, a showroom lined with special locking cabinets, book cases, and tables and chairs. There's also a back room with stacks of the periodicals and books, and cabinets full of the special items, such as calendars, miniatures, videos and DVDs. All are available for viewing or research. The collection's catalog can be examined on the library's website: <http://library.ci.glendale.ca.us>



Glendale Public Library's Cat Collection houses numerous purebred cat books, registries and cat club newsletters.

Cat Museums

- Katten Kabinet, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Mann Antiques & The Cat Museum, Middlesex, England
- Kipper Cats, The Ramsbottom Cat Museum, Bury, England
- The Cat Museum, Moscow, Russia
- Cat Museum, Kuching City, Malaysia

—Barbara Denzer

Goldsmith, who owns two cats, as well as a Boxer, says the collection outgrew its original location and was moved to allow more access to cat fanciers. She notes that the abundance of information is available to researchers. "We'd also be happy to share our collection of cat club periodicals with any of the clubs that would like to have their historical records," Goldsmith says. "There's such a wealth of information here. We have newsletters from clubs all over the United States from 1975 to 1991."

Goldsmith's orange tabby, Dewey (yes, named after the Dewey decimal system), was found abandoned in the library's dumpster and rescued by staff members. So, although he isn't an in-house library cat, he is intimately connected with the Cat Collection.

The Cat Collection, a veritable storehouse of information and history, began with copies of *Paw Purri*, the Jewel City Cat Club's quarterly newsletter. Each issue is a small encyclopedia of current cat shows and events; information about breeding and pedigrees; poems and biographies of cats; and training information for judges, handlers and contestants. Each edition ran about 20 pages in length, and included a complete annotated bibliography.

Cat Appeal

The collection may appeal mostly to those who do serious work in the cat fancy: breeders, judges and



Miniature cat books and special-edition cat stamps are just a few of the treasures you will find in the Cat Collection.

For more information on the Cat Collection

Glendale Public Library
222 E. Harvard St.
Glendale, CA 91205

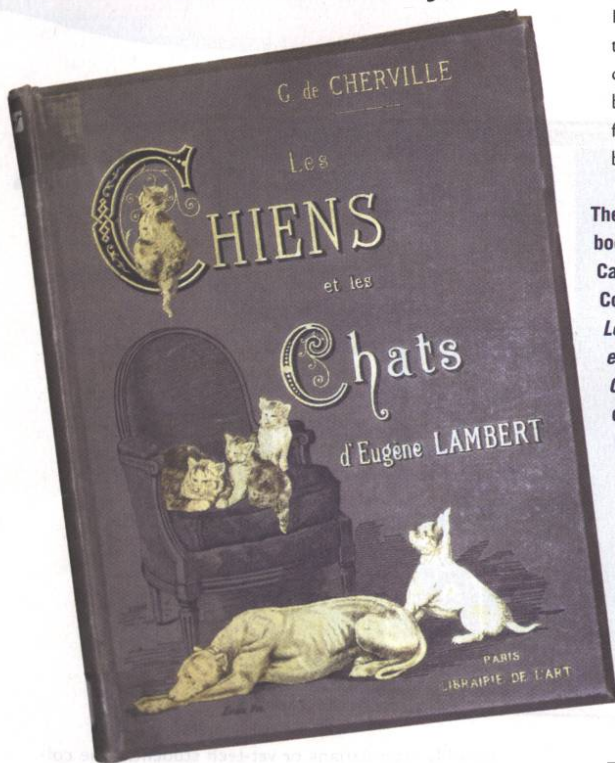
The Special Collections room is open to the public Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to noon, and 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., and by appointment. Please call (818) 548-2037 for more information.

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possibly veterinarians or vet-tech students. The collection includes studbooks (histories of pedigrees) that date back to the early 1900s, medical books about cats, and books on genetics and histories of the breeds. Some of the medical books, such as *The Brain Stem of A Cat* by Alvin L. Berman (University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), are extremely specialized in content.

However, in the same collection are hundreds of cat items for even the most casual cat fancier. Some of the most popular volumes are those of *Garfield* cartoons and B. Kliban's cats. An entire collection of children's literature features cats from *Puss in Boots* to *The Cat in the Hat*. The well-known cat mystery collections are here, too: *The Cat Who...* books by Lilian Jackson Braun, the Carole Nelson Douglas' *Midnight Louie* stories, Rita Mae Brown's "Mrs. Murphy" series, Garrison Allen's "Big Mike" mysteries and Shirley Rousseau Murphy's *Joe Grey* series to name a few.

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One of the most charming volumes is a 1½-by-2-inch miniature book by 1940s Illinois Democratic governor Adlai Stevenson. In 1949, the Illinois legislature voted to pass Bill No. 93, entitled, "An Act to Provide Protection to Insectivorous Birds by Restraining Cats." The Cat Bill, as it was commonly referred to, set up quite a controversy with unsuspecting cat owners. Governor Stevenson was against the bill. His associates privately printed 250 copies of a miniature, illustrated book that listed his reasons for vetoing the bill. Thirty of the little numbered editions were hand colored by artist Alice Garman, who illustrated the pages with cats and birds.

The oldest book in the collection dates

back to 1888. It was printed in Paris and was published in French. Titled, *Les Chiens Les Chats* and very rare, it features cat illustrations and etchings of artist Eugene Lambert. There's also a 1903 volume, *The Book of the Cat* by Frances Simpson, who founded the Blue Persian Cat Society in England. The book contains a wealth of knowledge about the breed standards and pedigrees of the English cat fancy. Both books are in very good condition, and feature beautiful pictures and abundant feline information. The books, along with other rare copies of books contain-

ing cat art, are kept in a locked cabinet in the Special Collections room.

The oldest book in the Cat Collection:

Les Chiens et Les Chats, by d'Eugene Lambert, 1888.

Of special interest to readers of *Cats Magazine*, the collection includes the complete issues of the magazine from its first debut in 1947 until it ceased printing in August 2001. The rights to *Cats Magazine* were later acquired by BowTie Inc., which began publishing the cat magazine again in 2004.

Something for Everyone

If you're looking for that very special cat recipe, a song about cats or the lineage of your own purebred, call or visit the Cat Collection (or check it out on the web), housed in the Special Collections room on the second floor of the Glendale Public Library and make your own appraisal of this gem of a resource on cats. ■

Barbara Denzer lives in Southern California with her white cats Taco Belle and Popcorn. She is the author of *The Crazy Kids Guide to Cooking for Your Pet* (Crazy Pet Press, November 2003).

Other Cat Collections

- Jean Baker Rose Memorial Library at the Cat Fanciers' Association headquarters in Manasquan, New Jersey
- Beneicke Library's Rare Book and Manuscripts Library and the Yale Collection of American Literature at Yale University. New Haven, Connecticut.
- Philip Wood Gallery for The Museum of Non-Primate Art in Berkeley, California (cat art)

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