



Lee was famous for his deep attachment to his dogs – especially Spado. Samuel Adams Drake wrote ' his great fondness for dogs brought on him the dislike and frowns of the fair sex: for the General would permit his canine adherents to follow him to the parlour, the bed-room, and sometimes they might be seen on a chair next to his elbow'. He was never without his dogs and Spado was his particular favourite.

SPADO - of the Pomerania breed

We are very fortunate that there is an engraving of Lee with his beloved companion Spado, by B. Rushbrooke circa 1770/1771, depicting Lee just after his return to England. Spado appears to be a small/ medium sized black dog sporting the fashionable 'lion-cut' of the era. Rashbrooke's caricature exaggerated the features of both Lee and Spado leaving the dog with a slightly porcine head. Spado stands close by his master displaying his loyalty and is clearly taking direction from him off lead indicating he was an obedient dog.

Just where Lee acquired Spado is not known. Gilman speculated he was perhaps 'brought with him from Portugal'. It is unlikely he came from Portugal as Lee left there in 1763, some 12 years earlier, however if this was the case Spado would have been 13 to 14 years old when he went missing. Lee was not an economic immigrant and certainly could have afforded to bring a favourite dog with him. Such was the deepness of Lee's attachment to his dog it is most likely he had owned him for a number of years.

(Please see footnote regarding the breed in 18th century America.)

Spado's name is unusual and Lee was known to select odd names. One English author wrote in 1825 the names were often ' contemptible' adding ' but yet blasphemy, the most sacred names were those chosen and the effect was partly ludicrous partly distressing'. In Spado's case it may have indicated he was neutered as this is the Latin word for a castrated animal or person. If he was neutered then it is possible the procedure was already accomplished when Lee acquired him as it is a strange name to give an intact puppy. Spado is also an archaic term for a spade or shovel

and also a 16th century side sword in the Iberian peninsula.

Any source arising from Abigail Adam's observations tends to refer to Lee's dog as Spada not Spado, sometimes she called him Mr Spada. Could this reflect Mrs Adams's accent and she wrote the name phonetically.

A Victorian author noted how in 1775 Lee, on a ride about town with 'his Pomeranian dog', took a liking to the Royall mansion in Medford, Mass. He requisitioned it for his personal use. Lee renamed it Hobgoblin Hall as it was a little eerie. In a bid to interest potential dinner guests on one occasion he went to Brattle Hall with his Pom. Mrs Adams left a detailed account of this visit. ' The general determined that I should not be acquainted with him, but his companions too; and therefore placed a chair before me, into which he ordered Mr Spada (his dog) to mount, and present his paw to me for a better acquaintance. I could not do otherwise than accept it. "That, Madam" says he " is the dog that Mr__ has rendered famous". Another visitor John Morgan noted that 'everyone was so taken with the tricks of General Lee's pet dog Mr Spada, that she (Mrs Adams) had no chance'. There is no record of the name of the man who made Spado famous.

left - Hobgoblin Hall (also known as the Isaac Royall House) where Lee stayed with Spado in 1775.

Mr Gilman noted that Spada 'shared his quarters at Hobgoblin Hall, went with him to dinner parties, and was formally presented to his guests and friends'. Dr Belknap said

Spada was 'constantly at his master's heels and accompanied him in whatever company he might keep'.

Spado accompanied his master on military campaigns and it is noted by Mr Rankin, when Lee was in Halifax, Virginia ' the general will not suffer Spado (his dog) to eat bacon for breakfast lest it make him stupid'.

Early writers mention that Pomeranians were sometimes black but this was unusual. The earliest black in English art was painted in 1791 and is similar to Spado except in full coat. Another interesting aspect is that William Finnie mentioned the 'Pomerania breed' and this implies that the average reader would know of the breed and what to look for – so there were probably more Pomeranians in America at this time.

From the caricature it can be seen Spado was not a big dog but by Victorian times there are a couple of writers who call him a 'great dog' and liken him to a bear! Possibly some of Lee's other dogs were large and these writers were confused.

The amount of the substantial reward (a lot for this era) also confirms the importance and value placed on Spado – he truly was ' a very remarkable dog' as Finnie noted.



HOW SPADO CAME TO BE LOST OR STOLEN

Lee was captured at White's Tavern in Baskingridge, he elected to stay there overnight with some soldiers and not near the main army. He had just penned one of his infamous letters berating Washington's abilities when some English soldiers besieged the tavern and captured him. There is a description of the incident but no dog is mentioned. Ironically one of the English, Lt Colonel William Harcourt, was the brother of the very man who had accompanied Queen Charlotte over to England, his family later (1767) received her gift of Mercury and Phebe – two Pomeranian dogs. The capture of Lee is commemorated on the Harcourt Memorial at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

It is possible that Spado was with Lee when he was captured. In the papers of General Nathaneal Greene it noted that after Lee's capture, Lee's servant and dog were sent down the lines. Mr Gilman wrote ' when General Lee was a prisoner, his dog was sent down the lines by General Greene under passport'. Lee's long time servant was the Italian Guisippi Minghini who outlived Lee being a benefactor in his Will. Spado was apparently entrusted to another man named Joseph Block for this mission to return him to Lee's estate in Berkeley for safe -keeping. Initially it was feared Lee would be deported to England on charges of treason. However, he was eventually exchanged for a high -ranking English prisoner held hostage by George Washington and continued fighting against the British.