

BICENTENNIAL BEES

Early Records of Honey Bees in the Eastern United States

Part II

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Maine

NO historical material on beekeeping was given by Dirks (1961) in his account of beekeeping in Maine. If honey bees were brought to Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, (see footnote for Eales in the Massachusetts account) they could have been brought into the Maine colony by boat or by land across what is now New Hampshire. Probably early settlers tried to maintain colonies, but without much success, partly as a result of long winters.

Day (1954) did not mention honey bees in his book, on the agriculture of Maine between 1604 and 1860, but he does note that candles were exported in 1820. There is a good chance that they were made of beeswax. However, Day (1963) reported that shortly before 1860 a resident of Westfield, Aroostook County, produced over 5,000 pounds of honey in a year. At that time buckwheat and clover seed were grown for sale. Farmers produced 315,000 pounds of honey in 1859, according to the 1860 census.

Vermont

Tompkins (1961) did not know when honey bees were first brought into Vermont, but by 1795 "considerable honey was produced in the state." Williams (1809), in an account written in 1794, says that honey bees live in hollow trees and in ". . . our artificial bee hives." He goes on to say that they winter well in the trees and have "plenty of honey." John Mosely Weeks, born in 1788, was active in beekeeping. He patented different hives in the 1830's and 1840's and wrote a small book on beekeeping in 1836 entitled "A Manual: Or an Easy Method of Managing Bees . . . by the Month." Another early beekeeping writer in Vermont was Foster A. Flanders; one of his books appeared in 1853 and the other in 1867. Late in the 1800's and

early in the 1900's J. E. Crane and A. E. Manum probably were the only commercial beekeepers in the state. I suppose that hives or swarms of bees from Massachusetts or Connecticut were in Vermont within a relatively few number of years after their introduction into this country because the distances are short.

Canada

There is a report in the Canadian Bee Journal, 1947, author's name not given, that six skeps of bees were brought to Canada from Scotland in 1776. Whether they survived was not known. Kalm, in 1749, according to Benson (1937), said that he was told that honey bees had been taken to Canada, but always died in the winter.

Massachusetts

I have not been able to learn when, where, or by whom honey bees were brought to Massachusetts. My guess is that at least one importation was made at some time between 1630 and 1663.⁶ Gates (1909) provided one historical sketch about beekeeping in Massachusetts, but the only firm date of introduction is 1670 at Boston, credited to Haydn (1904).⁷ In any event, beekeeping has been, and continues to be a minor commercial agricultural pursuit.

The first American bee book was *A Complete Guide for the Management of Bees Through the Year*, 1792, by "Farmer of Massachusetts," 46 pages, published in Worcester. A bee journal, "American Apiculturist," 1883-1895, was of importance for a brief time. L. L. Langstroth kept bees in the state for a few years. William W. Carey, 1815-1884, Henry Alley and E. L. Pratt made important contributions to the development of present-day commercial queen rearing. Alley wrote two books about his system of queen rearing; one in 1883 and the other in 1903. Pratt

advocated the use of baby nuclei for queen mating hives. The combs were only $4\frac{1}{4}$ by $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Connecticut

Beekeeping began early in the Connecticut colony, according to Hewitt (1961). He noted that hives of bees were listed as parts of estates in probate records as follows: three stocks of bees in 1644, four stocks in 1648, two others in 1648, and still another two stocks in 1648. Hewitt reported that Connecticut beekeeping seemed to go into a decline about 1800 because of the destruction caused by the wax moth, but a revival began about 1836. What is believed to be the third book on beekeeping in this country was published in 1804; written by Thaddeus B. Miner of this state. A small book about honey bees was written by William Hall in 1841. A Connecticut bee journal was first published in 1886 and then merged with the American Beekeeper in 1891. A course in apiculture was offered about 1890 by the then named Connecticut Agricultural College. The still active Connecticut Beekeepers' Association was formed in 1891.

New York

Honey bees were brought into Western New York a few years prior to 1790, according to Barton (1793). Probably they were present in the eastern part of the state in the latter part of the 17th century since they were reported to be in Connecticut by 1644. By 1828 there was a rapid decline in the number of colonies because wax moths were not controlled, according to Goodrich.⁸ The New York State Beekeepers' Association was founded by Moses Quinby in 1868. After several name changes the association is now called the Empire State Honey Producers' Association.⁹ At least three bee

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journals have been published in the state: "The American Beekeeper," in 1891, "The Beekeepers' Magazine" in 1872, and "The Beekeepers' Exchange," in 1879, according to Pellett (1938). These publications lasted only a few years. Moses Quinby, G. M. Doolittle, J. E. Hetherington, Julius Hoffman and L. C. Root were nationally known beekeepers in the last century.¹⁰

Delaware

The early records of the Swedish settlements do not mention honey bees except to say that they were to be imported into the colony in 1654 and 1655, according to Johnson (1969). Later records do not disclose whether or not bees were imported. Probably not, for the colony was captured by English troops from New York. The candles that the Swedish settlers used were made of tallow; this suggests the absence of beeswax.

Pennsylvania

Honey bees and honey were important in Colonial Pennsylvania, according to Woodward (1941). During the period from 1715 to 1774 the number of swarms increased rapidly so that honey and beeswax were important articles of commerce. By the start of the Revolutionary War most farmers had a few hives of bees. Anbury (1791) reported that a British army officer had noticed that there were only a few hives of bees in New England, but many in Pennsylvania. (Note — I have not been able to learn when, where, or by whom the first hives of bees were brought into the state.) Read, as reported by Woodward (1941), included some notes on honeybee biology written by a Richard Bradley, about 1717, London, but does not say that he (Read) had bees of his own. Read also included recipes for making mead and metheglin by the barrel. The second bee book published in this country, a booklet entitled "The Rural Economic Assistant in the Management of Bees," was written by Davis Souder to aid the beekeepers of the state.¹¹ It was published in 1807.

The Rev. L. L. Langstroth, 1810-1895, inventor of the movable frame hive and author of the original *The Hive and Honey Bee*, is the best known man in Pennsylvania beekeeping. The Harbison brothers, W. C. and J. S., wrote about beekeeping and were active in the shipment of hives of bees to California in the late 1850's.¹² Samuel Wagner should be included here be-

cause he was the editor and publisher of the *American Bee Journal*, first published in 1861. E. L. Pratt moved to the state from Massachusetts and continued to rear queens.

(Continued in next month's Journal.)

FOOTNOTES

⁵ Williams mistakenly thought that honey bees are native to America.

⁶ A John Eales was employed by the municipality of Newbury in 1644 to build bee hives, according to George W. Adams, *The American Bee-Keeper*, XVI:9, 1906.

⁷ Haydn said that bees were introduced into Boston in 1670 and have since spread over the continent, but does not provide any detail. Perhaps a new search of the Massachusetts archives would provide accurate information about the introduction of honey bees into the colony.

⁸ *The Farmer's Manual*, including a treatise on the management of bees, 1828. Reviewed by S. G. Goodrich, *North American Review*, vol. 27, n.s., p. 338-359.

⁹ R. A. Morse, *A Short History of the Empire State Honey Producers Association*, 1967, 75 p., mimeographed.

¹⁰ For an early, personal account of queen rearing written in 1870, see *Scientific Queen Rearing* by G. M. Doolittle, 126 p., no date Hamilton, Ill.

¹¹ Reviewed in the *American Quarterly Review*, III, 1828. The material in the booklet is based partly upon a book written by the Rev. J. L. Christ, Zelle, Germany.

¹² For information about J. S. Harbison see L. H. Watkins, *The John S. Harbison Manuscript Collection*, *American Bee Journal*, 1911, p. 256.

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