

# BICENTENNIAL BEES

## Early Records of Honey Bees in the Eastern United States

### Conclusion

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#### MISSOURI

A BEE tree was found April 6, 1809 a few days journey west of St. Louis by John Bradbury, according to Thwaites (1904). Bradbury also stated that there were no honey bees west of the Mississippi River prior to 1797. He made the statement that bees spread westward up the Missouri River 600 miles in 14 years.<sup>28</sup>

#### IOWA

The following items of beekeeping interest were taken from Paddock (1946): 1797 — honey bees were in bee trees along the Missouri River;<sup>29</sup> 1835 — John Huff visited the shores of Skunk River (in what is now Henry County) to gather honey from bee trees for sale in Illinois; 1850 — Beginning of apiculture as an agricultural pursuit; 1860 — Honey bees generally distributed throughout eastern third of state; 1869 — Beekeeping well established in the Council Bluff area; 1878 — Beekeeping well established in Northeastern part of state; 1878 — One man operated 500 colonies in Burlington. Most of the movable comb hives that were in use were the Langstroth 8-frame type; 1865 — Mrs. Ellen Tupper and Mrs. Annie Savory, Des Moines, began to sell Italian queen bees; 1866 — Ed. G. Kretchmer began to sell queen bees. He also manufactured and sold bee supplies. In 1919 his factory was sold to the A.I. Root Co.; 1873-1874 — Mrs. Tupper published the National Bee Journal. She was active in state and national beekeeping affairs; 1860-1900 — E. Gallup, O. O. Poppleton, the Rev. O. Clute and Eugene Secor promoted beekeeping through their enthusiastic articles in the bee journals, farm papers and at beekeepers' meetings; 1875-First state beekeepers' association organized. Reorganized later.

#### OHIO

The first settlements were made in Ohio about 1788. The state was admitted to the Union in 1803. "Wild (honey) bees were very numerous" when the state was first settled. Indians sold much honey. Later the bees became scarce for some unknown reason. Not many "tame" bees and . . . "honey is not often seen in the state," according to Atwater (1838). Possibly, the decline in the number of colonies was caused by wax moths. Thomas Affleck tried to stimulate the production of honey when he lived in Indiana and Ohio, see Oertel (1972). The little paper-covered publication "Bee Breeding in the West" was published by him in Cincinnati in 1841. The Rev. L. L. Langstroth lived in the state from 1858 until his death in 1895. For a number of years he reared and sold Italian queen bees. A.I. Root, founder of "Gleanings in Bee Culture" and the bee supply firm, The A.I. Root Company, of Medina, began his beekeeping by catching a swarm of bees in 1865. The firm has published the well known book, *ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture*, in many editions and thousands of copies. At one time or another the company has been concerned with all phases of beekeeping and has exerted a great deal of beneficial influence upon the industry. The Chas. F. Muth Company of Cincinnati was a well-known dealer in honey and bee supplies in the past century.

#### INDIANA

Honey bees must have been in the lower Wabash River area by 1793; near Tippecanoe by 1811 and in Franklin County in 1818, according to Stewart (1941).<sup>30</sup> While on the Tippecanoe Military Expedition in the fall of 1811, Tipton (1942) wrote in his diary ". . . found three bee trees in an hour . . . got 9 or 10 gallons of

honey." On several succeeding days he noted that his group found 1 or 2 bee trees each day. (note — I could not establish just where the expedition was on certain days.)

A letter by Charles Larrabee, written in 1811 while he was in the U.S. Army, reports that militia men in his outfit brought deer and honey into camp. Lindley (1916) says that in 1818, "Great quantities of honey have been found in the woods above Fort Harrison." An unnamed man found 12 bee trees in less than one half a day. Solon Robinson, in a letter written in 1834, reports that there were many "Honey trees" in the Grand Prairie country. Bee hives were seen in farmers' yards in 1835 near Andersonstown by a Mr. McAdam.<sup>31</sup> The bee journal, *The Beekeeper's Guide*, was published in the state from 1877-1893.

#### MICHIGAN

A Mr. Williams reported that Indians gave honey to his mother about 1818 or 1819, when the family settled at Silver Lake. Mrs. Mary E. Foster wrote that her father and mother found bee trees and honey in the Ann Arbor area in about 1826.<sup>32</sup> These two preceding reports show that honey bees were in the state early in the 19th century.

A. J. Cook,<sup>33</sup> Professor of Entomology at Michigan State Agricultural College, was an influential leader in apiculture. James Heddon, T. F. Bingham and W. Z. Hutchinson were others who attained some prominence in Michigan in the latter part of the 19th century; Heddon for his small, inexpensive hive, Bingham for his improved smoker and Hutchinson for his bee journal. *The Beekeeper's Review* was started in 1888 with Hutchinson as editor. It contains some excellent material.

## ILLINOIS

An account by John Wood of his first visit to Shawneetown, in 1820-1821, contains the statement, according to Thwaites (1904), that honey bees were numerous in the woods and that "honey is plentiful." He also noted that some bees were kept in hives. D. Thomas, according to Lindley (1916), while traveling through the Indiana Territory in 1815 was told by trappers that honey bees were first seen about 15 years earlier in Western Illinois. That would be about 1800.

The first annual report of the Illinois State Beekeepers' Association<sup>34</sup> contains a copy of the constitution, a list of officers, a list of members, 65 honey-crop reports for 1891, statistics for honey, several papers that were given at the meeting, a report of the seventh annual meeting of the National Beekeepers' Union and a list of members of that society. Most of the reporters had from 10 to 50 colonies; the Dadants had "about" 400, Dr. C. C. Miller had "perhaps" 75, but had had up to 400 and T. C. Stanley Boyleston had had about 1,000. The principal honey plants at that time were said to be: alsike, white and red clover, basswood, sweetclover, smartweed, Spanish needle, buckwheat, milkweed and fall flowers. The group estimated that there were about 10,000 beekeepers in the state in 1890. This association was organized in Springfield, Feb. 26, 1891.

The Dadant family has been prominent in beekeeping ever since Charles Dadant (1817-1902) came to Illinois from France in 1863. He, and later his son C. P. Dadant, advocated large hives and populous colonies at beekeepers' meetings and in the American and European bee journals. Dadant and Sons are rearers of interline hybrid queen bees, manufacturers of comb foundation and bee supplies, publishers of the American Bee Journal and of many revised editions of Langstroth's "The Hive and the Honey Bee." C. P. Dadant translated the observations of Francois Huber from French into English and published the result in 1926.

Dr. C. C. Miller, 1831-1920, was a well-known comb honey producer, a keen student of honey bees and a long-time contributor to the bee journals.<sup>35</sup> N. W. McLain was employed by the Bureau of Entomology, U.S. Department of Agriculture from 1885-1887 to study, among other things, the controlled mating of queen bees.

## WISCONSIN

E. A. Morgan of Arcadia reported that he had transferred 39 box hives into movable comb hives in 2 months in 1878. He had orders to transfer 97 more in May, 1879, for his neighbors.<sup>36</sup> These figures show that there were many box hives in the area at that time.

Adam Grimm, 1824-1876, should be considered the pioneer commercial beekeeper in the state. As best as I can learn, he began his beekeeping in the 1850's. His financial success, because of his large honey crops produced in movable comb hives, became known to readers of the then current bee journals. Mr. Grimm produced and sold Italian queen bees. He owned about 1,400 colonies of bees at one time in his life. They were located in southern Wisconsin. The G. B. Lewis Co., of Watertown, was an important part of the beekeeping industry. The firm was established in 1863 to make wooden containers. In about 1875 they began to manufacture bee supplies. These were sold mostly to factory dealers out of branch warehouses. The beeware inventory and the machinery were sold to Dadant and Sons in 1955.

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>32</sup>Bradbury does not give any explanation or verification for his statement. I would not be surprised to learn that bees had crossed the Mississippi River in the Natchez area by 1775. (See Hawkins' (1974) report in the Alabama discussion).

<sup>33</sup>Prof. Paddock neglected to give his source of reference material.

<sup>34</sup>I was unable to verify Stewart's (1941) statement that honey bees were seen by Marquette and Joliet in 1670 and on Black River in 1793.

<sup>35</sup>A compilation of travel accounts of Indiana, 1679-1961, by S. S. McCord, 1970, 331 p., Indiana Historical Bureau. (no publication address given.)

<sup>36</sup>These two reports were found in the reports of The Pioneer Society of the state of Michigan, vol. 2, pages 39 and 542, 1877.

<sup>37</sup>Prof. Cook 1882-1916, promoted the use of movable comb hives and scientific and practical beekeeping methods. He taught classes in beekeeping, wrote articles for the bee journals and conducted some experiments with honey bees. His book "The Bee-Keepers' Guide" was first published in 1878. This book was an outgrowth of his "Manual of the Apiary," first published in 1876, primarily for his students. Cook was deeply interested in nectar producing plants, according to Pellett (1938).

<sup>38</sup>First annual report of the Illinois State Bee-Keepers' Association. 183 p., 1892, Springfield, Illinois.

<sup>39</sup>See obituary in Gleanings in Bee Culture, 1920, vol. 68, no. 10, p. 604-605.

<sup>40</sup>Gleanings in Bee Culture, 1878, vol. 6, no. 11, p. 359.

<sup>41</sup>For more details about Mr. Grimm see Pellett (1938) and the American Bee Journal, 1975, vol. 115, no. 11, p. 428.

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