



STAHLMAN

BEEKEEPING NOTES

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An Introduction to History of Honey Bees in America

As I look back many years and realize that I have seen 86 winters, I wonder what will be left of 2024, 50 years from now. We are living history as we get up each morning. Looking back at this year, I realized that much has changed and nothing is going to be the same in 2075. The biggest shock of my life came this summer when I returned to the 20th Anniversary of the COBA (Central Ohio Beekeepers Bee Yard on the OSU campus). It was not the fact that the Walter Rothenbuhler Lab built in 1985 was going to be torn down and replaced with a Welcome Center, or that the Rothenbuhler Cottage which was moved from the OSU campus to Wooster sits idle and unappreciated, it was something else. I tried to show my wife Judi some of the past when I lived in Blacklick, Ohio. I could not find the road leading to Mann Road where I lived. It was called Taylor Station Rd. I got off I- 270 on the Taylor Station Road exit as I always did for 25 years. Suddenly I was in strange territory. The road ended in a “T” intersection looking at a big hospital where Taylor Station Road had been. The area was no longer a road with small 1950 style homes. I was lost in an area I spent 25 years raising bees trying to locate something that looked familiar.



Honey bees still look the same, act the same, and for the most part are managed since the mid 1800’s in hives with frames they have adapted to. Prior to that, they were managed pretty much on what you will find in Quinby’s writings on keeping bees in box hives like the one shown here.

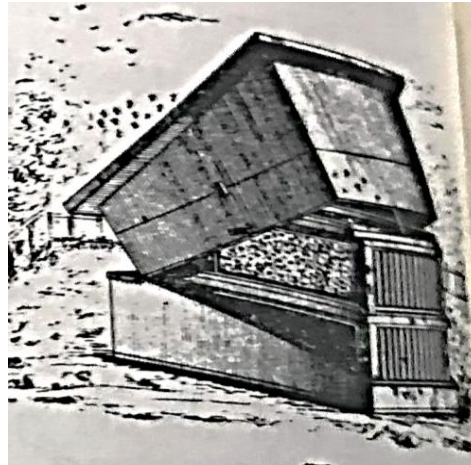
There has been an evolution in bee equipment and appliances. So much of what at one time was used to keep bees has been burned or forgotten in old barns. Once in a while an item is auctioned and buyers have no use or idea how the item fit into keeping bees or how it was used. In the United States we have A. U.S. Patent Office which issues patents to inventors. And beekeeping is blessed with those inventors who applied for patents to protect their inventions. Almost every item we buy today has a patent on it. In fact, the Langstroth hive was patented. Langstroth never got rich from his patent – which by

the way has an interesting story connected with law suits he took out against those who made copies of his hive. His original hive looks little like the hive we see today.

The term “hive” covers almost any enclosure in which bees make their home. The term “colony” refers to bees generally occupying a hive. We refer to bees occupying an area in a hive where brood is raised as a “brood chamber.” “Super” is a word used to describe hive bodies placed on a hive to collect honey. The term “standard hive” will refer to the hive adopted by a country and is used more than other hive types. Add something like top bar hive, long langstroth hive and others and the picture gets a bit crowded.



This is what the new improved Langstroth hive (1852) looked like (front and rear views).



It is interesting that comb honey sections were sold as pure honey because so many buyers of honey were sold adulterated liquid honey.

It was not until the extractor

was invented that liquid honey could be removed from frames and be separated from wax and brood. The practice then was to collect and squeeze honey comb some with brood in a press. Honey collected that way was often cloudy and often had a water content of more than 18.6%. Why is that important? Honey with a moisture content higher than that will ferment giving honey a sour taste. It was not until 1887 that food and food adulterants played an important roll in the creation of the Food and Drug Act of 1906. Studies by the government beginning in 1887 reported the shocking conditions of U.S. foods at that period of time. Honey was included in their findings.

The 1890 bulletin titled Sugar, Molasses, Sirups, Confectionery, Honey and Beeswx included this: Of 500 samples of open-market honey they found 37% of them grossly adulterated. This was added as a comment: The virtual impossibility of obtaining pure honey in the latter part of the nineteenth centure greatly retarded its use and indicated that honey was one of the foods that was used to bring about the passage of the Pure Food Act.

We all understand that the honey bee we know as *Apis mellifera* is not native to North America or South America. No known document exists that clearly indicates who or on what occasion honey bees were brought into North America. At one time I owned a copy of Frank Pellets book History of Americn Beekeeping.

HISTORY OF AMERICAN BEEKEEPING

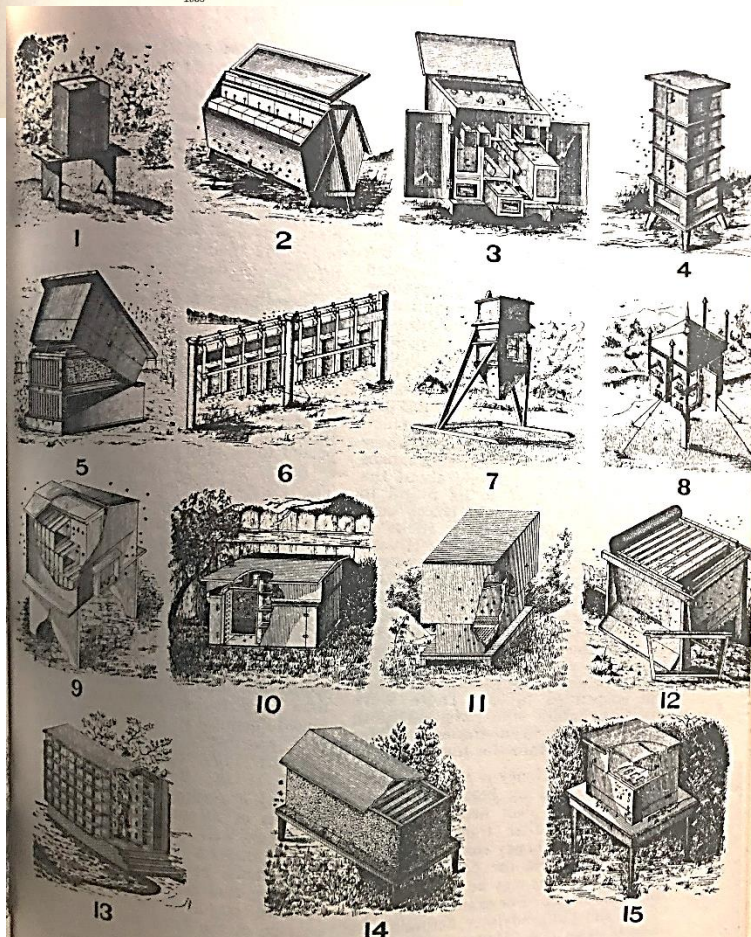
BY FRANK CHAPMAN PELLETT
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American Honey Plants
Productive Beekeeping
Practical Queen Rearing
Romance of the Hive

Frank Pellett
Dec. 12-1938



COLLEGIATE PRESS, INC.
AMES, IOWA
1938



He wrote that all evidence indicates it came from Europe and up until 1859, the bee as it was known belonged to the common black bee of Europe. His research based on early records and writings clearly point out that by 1638 bees were in New England and records gave credit to the English. I found another reference from the ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture published in 1975 with a report indicating that on December 5, 1621 beehives were landed by the Virginia Company in the colony of Virginia. Records also indicate that by 1650 beeswax and honey were abundant in Virginia.

Honey bees were also known to have been in Florida very early as well. Bees from Florida were sent to Cuba in 1764. Thomas Jefferson's Notes on Virginia indicated that bees had generally extended themselves into the country a little in advance of settlers by commenting "the Indians call them white man's fly, and consider their appearance as indicating the approach of the settlement of the whites"

This is a page taken from ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture that I mentioned earlier.

It seems that the skeps of England did not catch on as much as "bee gums". And "bee gums" were nothing more than a section cut from a tree that contained a colony of bees.

Every hive shown in this picture was a patent hive. These are some of the many hives patented and sold in the U.S. from the 1820's to 1884. #5 was the Langstroth hive patented in 1852.

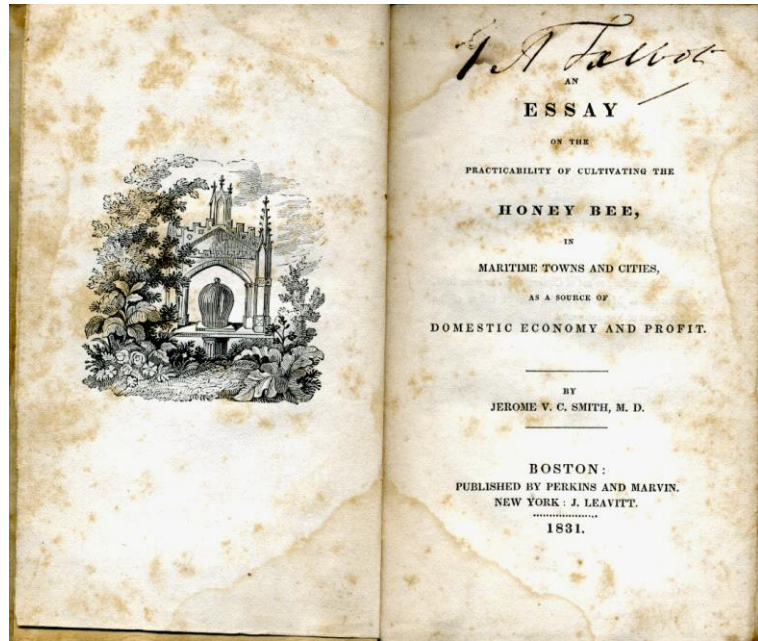
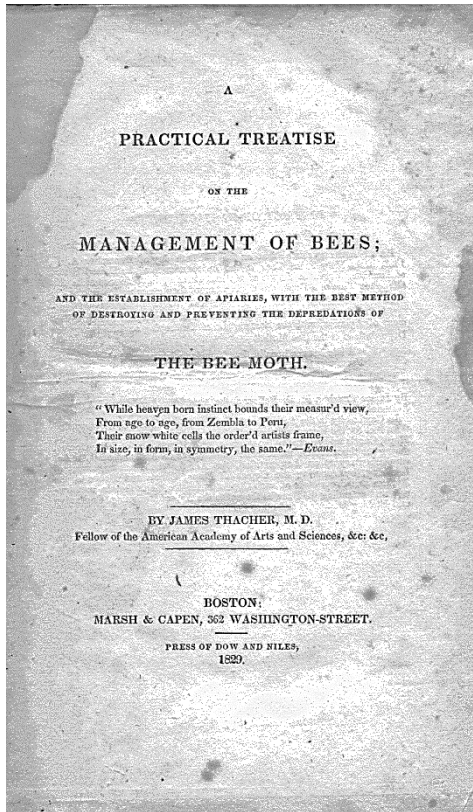
Most beekeeping books sold in the U.S. during the early 1800's were of English origin.

It was common for many farm related magazines to have articles about bees in the early 1800's.

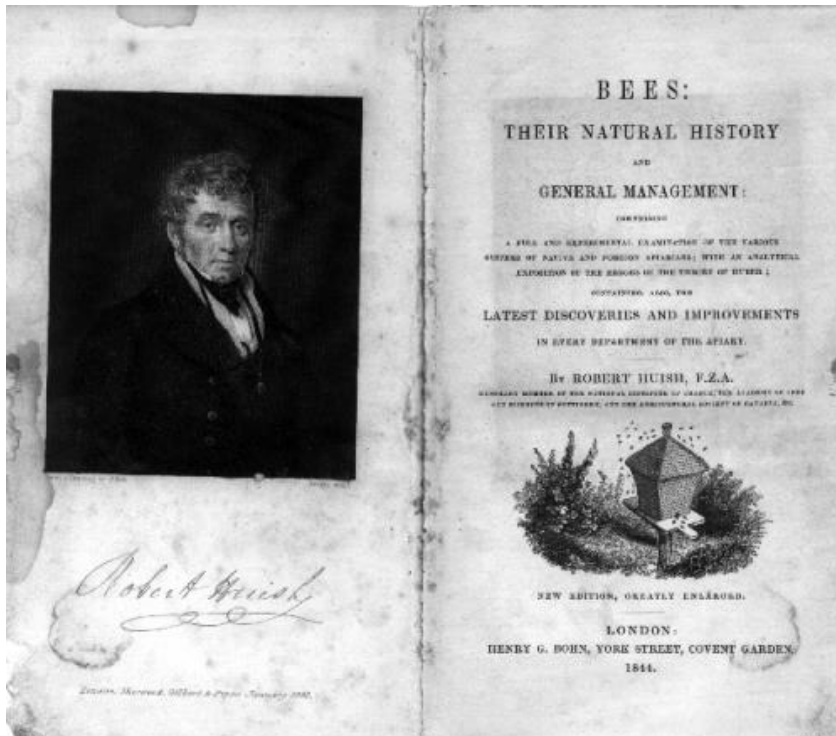
One of the early Americans to write about bees was Frederick Butler who in 1821 published a book that

included a section on bees. Up until then most books about bees were written by English authors.

The first book I could find written entirely about bees was written in 1829 by James Thacher titled “A Practical Treatise on the Management of Bees” published in 1829 and Jerome Smith with “An Essay on the Practicability of Cultivating the Honey Bee in Maritime Towns and Cities” in 1831.



Most of the material in these books were based on an English author Robert Huish.



Both were aware of the work of Huber and other English authors.

This was quickly followed by a few authors which included Weeks, and Miner prior to 1850.

This series will continue with the introduction to beliefs, practices, and hive designs in the public mind of that time.