



# **STAHLMAN**

## **BEEKEEPING NOTES**

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### **Combining Weak Hives – Buying Olde Bee Books**

**Hopefully you don't have weak hives but if you do, it is time to combine them with other colonies.**

Weak colonies are weak for a reason. It could be mismanagement of the bees such as not feeding a hive when necessary or not managing for varroa mites, but as I pointed out last week, queen failure is another reason.

The first point I want to make is colony numbers are not that important. Weak colonies require more effort to save. And after all the effort -- death of the colony happens. When colonies are combined, they can be split early the next season, often several times if hive numbers are important to the beekeeper.

The procedure I use is simple. I combine weak hives only with strong or stronger hives. Some beekeepers try to save weak hives by creating a five frame nuc. If the bee population fills a five frame nuc, I see that as an option.

Combining Hives:

Identify the hives that are strong. Most hobby beekeepers do not have many hives and the resources limit much of a selection process. But the process is easy:

- The weak hive is always placed above the strong hive.
- Frames from the weak hive may contain some brood and stored honey. This is fine because these are resources the strong hive can use.
- I place a newspaper above the strong hive before I add the weak hive above it. This provides the bees with some time to adjust to the change in their environment. It reduces fighting by giving bees a change to chew the paper away. It is always surprising to me how quickly the paper is removed. It can be seen at the entrance of the hive as bees carry small particles of paper out of the hive.
- It is possible to hold the old queen for a short time in a queen cage. Some worry that the queen in the strong colony might be killed by the bees in the weak hive. Don't worry.
- The loss of a queen is possible if combining two hives of equal strength.

- A follow up inspection a week later is important. Both sets of bees should be one set with a laying queen.

I am not sure how many of you are into collecting bee related “stuff.” I am guilty of having too much stuff. I have an office which is filled with stuff. In the closet is a complete collection of Bee Culture Magazines from 1900. 1905 is missing which is because it is priced out of my pocket book range. I am or have owned old smokers, hives, honey jars & skeps, different honey sources, hanging art objects, etc.

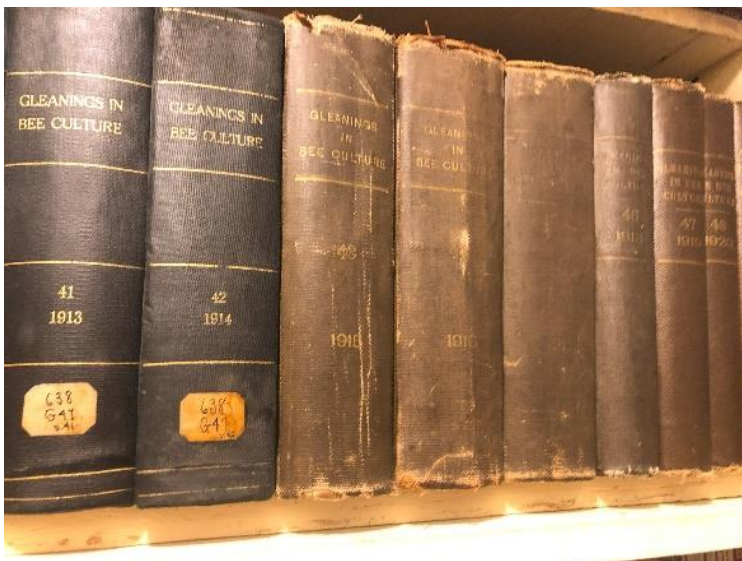
We had a visitor to the house this summer who commented to my wife - that she must like bee related things. She does support my whims and impulsive buying habits.

I find that most beekeepers find things related to beekeeping as interesting projects. Honey shows are getting a lot of attention right now because of county and state fairs. I remember those subjective days of judging honey. I really didn't know much about honey judging and soon refused to get involved. A lot of politics or may I say some politics involved. Today honey shows rely on better prepared judges than in days past. It all now comes down to finding perfect bottles – no blemishes – that could cost one a first place finish. And of course, checking your honey with a refractometer to check the moisture level and a polariscope to check for those things that our human eye can not detect. Honey for the most part is judged by the class of color. Taste counts for some points. If you are into showing honey, don't mind me, go for it.



Queen rearing is also closing down for the season. A number of beekeepers have begun to raise queens. If you have not tried raising a queen – don't worry, the bees do all the work. You just have to manage them so they will raise queens. The North Carolina State Beekeepers Association offers classes for those who want to try it. Sign up for a class or get your club involved in teaching such a class.

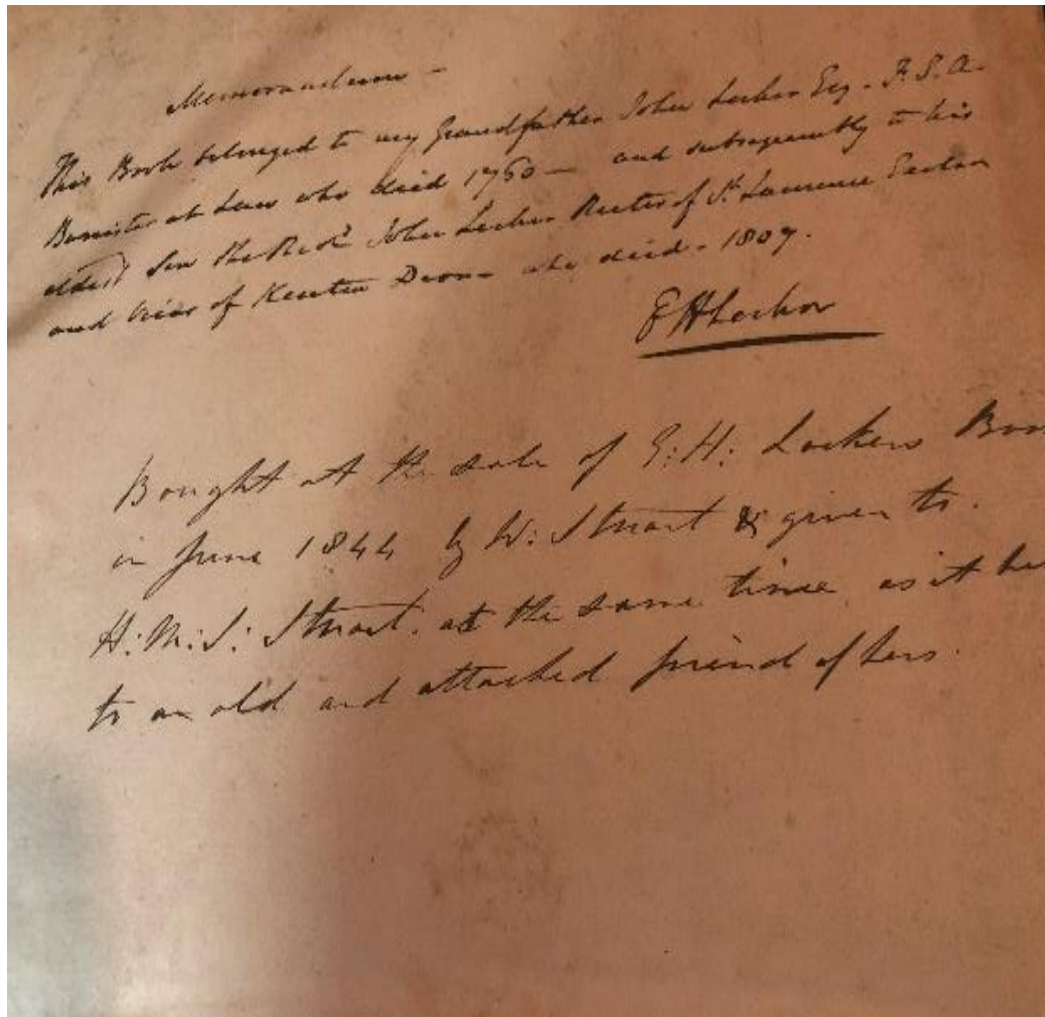
I have a number of hobbies but I am addicted to buying bee books. Not a week goes by when I do not check used books for sale. I would



like to share some of my techniques.

- First, I determine how much I want to spend on books.
- Second, I look for bargains.
- Third, I check a list of authors and books I would like to buy.

Books and magazines take up a lot of room. At one time I sold bee books and had quite a collection. Some of the very valuable books were digitized – about 50 of them.



I have sold an original 1852 Langstroth *Hive and Honey Bee*, a Charles Butler 1623 copy of the *Feminine Monarchy*, and a number of other books. It is nice to see a book case full of books, but I just don't have room for them. At least when winter comes I have something to read - a lot of something to read.

I went to Scotland last year with a book published in 1640. That book paid for some of my trip over and back. I had it setting on a shelf here in Raleigh, and when I delivered the book to a book dealer in Inverness, Scotland, he handled it with gloves.

The computer makes it so much easier than when I started collecting books about 40 years ago. I stopped at flea markets and checked out the books for sale, Maybe someone would list books in the classified ads of the bee journals. This picture shows some of my "bee fever" collection. The oldest book in my collection is from 1721 written in both old English and Latin. It provides me with a lot of biographical information regarding Charles Butler who wrote one of the most important bee books in history called the *The Feminine Monarchie* in 1609 and refined into several later editions. It also contains the history of those who owned this book with writing on the inside cover. Note the dates of entries on the fly sheet in this book. It is older than the United States of America!

Most beekeeping books are out of print within a short time. Each year new books about bees appear for sale. Old bee books are valuable. The Feminine Monarchies (Old Copies) of almost any publication date sell for thousands of dollars. More recent books of 100 years old are selling for well over \$100.00 to \$1000.00. The price for a book asked for by dealers depend upon how much they know about the book. I have run across some real deals on sites such as Ebay.com and Thrift Books. Com. I recently bought a copy of *The Honey Bee* published by Dadant in 1889. It is a 1st edition published by Dadant after he was given the rights to use the tile

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Langstroth on the Hive and Honey Bee-Dadant 1889

\$14.00



“Langstroth on the Honey-Bee and the design of the skep used by Langstroth.” This book in good condition is selling on the used bee book market for over \$300.00. I bought this copy last week for \$21.45.

I am not trying to brag about my collection, but if one started collecting old bee books now, that could be a great investment for one to make by buying original hard cover inexpensive books like I just did the other day.

In fact, I find the duel between Root and Dadant interesting. Examples: Queen Rearing, Honey Plants, First Lessons in Beekeeping (Dadant) and Starting Right with Bees (Root). Many pamphlets with the same topics were published over the years. The books published in the 1920’s to the 1950’s had embossed covers making the books handsome and desirable. From a historical point of view these books are all collectable. In fact, sales catalogs are collectable and the older some items are, the more expensive they will be.

I am going to share some tips on buying these old books.

**Know what you’re buying before you commit to buy.** First, know the importance of the author and the books they wrote. Current authors such as Kim Flottum, Jim Tew, Dewey Caron, Clarence Collison, Richard Bonney, Larry Connors, Tom Seeley and Mark Winson will at some point in time be out of print and presently the books they have published sell for very little on used book sites. Books published in limited editions will actually gain more value and examples would include authors: Sue Colby, Norman Gary, and M. Rajeswary. Rajeswary has written a book called **Beekeeping: An essential guide to apiculture.** **Check it out on Amazon.**

A few older books can be found on book searches. Authors such as King, Langstroth, Quinby, Doolittle, A.J. Cook, Anna Comstock, Simmins, Cowan, Newman, Maeterlinck, Morley, Roger Morse, Richard Taylor, Edwards, Sladen, Dzierzon, and Dadant already are selling for far more than just 20 years ago. And they only get older and more fragile. If you have a few minutes to spare, just do a google search on any of these names or search used book locations. The condition of the book is important to collectors. But any old books will have aging issues.