

STAHLMAN BEEKEEPING

NOTES



Published by Dana Stahlman Raleigh, North Carolina Email: stahlmanapiaries@aol.com

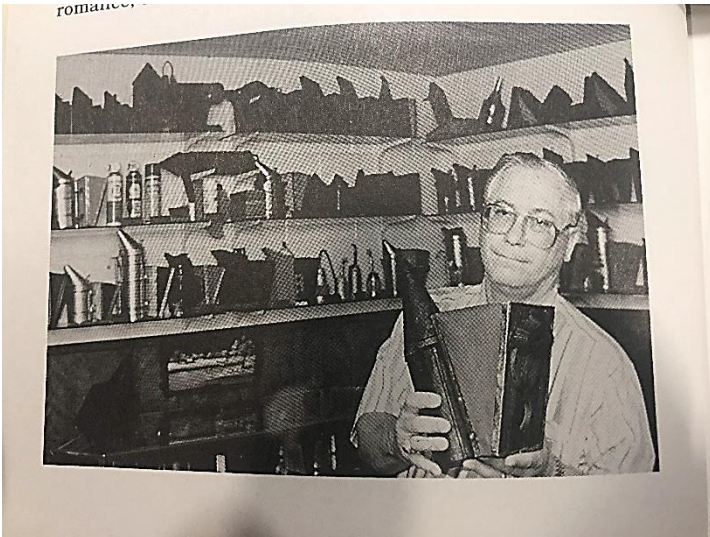
Published free as a public service to anyone interested in honeybees. Email me to be added to my mailing list. Published 12-12-24

The second in a series of History in Beekeeping

The history of beekeeping has always been interesting to me. On these cold winter days, I have a chance to reflect on beekeeping of past times.

This is a picture of an old bee veil worn by a beekeeper prior to the use of modern day smokers, and closeup of a round leather patch sewed to the protective netting worn when working bees. This was an opening for a pipe which was used to smoke bees away from the face. It is owned (as the last I knew) by Tom Rathburn in Ohio. It is the only one I have ever seen designed somewhat like a box to fit over the head with an opening for a pipe.

As many of you know, I like old stuff including old smokers. I don't have much room to keep "stuff" as I did years ago, but I still watch ebay to get an idea of what the current prices are for antique bee equipment. If your aim is to collect bee items, it is best to specialize in items that you can display in your home. At one time I was set to collect old bee smokers but the number of various designs just took up more room than I had available. I was fortunate to meet Paul Jackson from Texas at the 1995 EAS Meeting in Wooster, Ohio. He wrote a book called



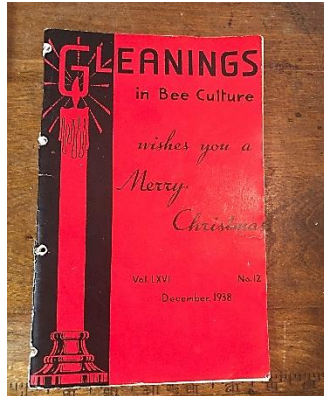
"Smoking Allowed", published in 1995 by A.I. Root Company.

This is a picture from his book, giving one an idea of the amount of room needed to devote to a collection, be it smokers, hive tools, books, or hive paraphernalia.

The history of beekeeping in the United States is filled with inventions and gadgets and many of the old items were rare by the time I was born. Beekeepers discarded and burned a lot of old bee equipment. A collector

today is challenged. If this topic is interesting to you, I would suggest you read articles by Dr. Wyatt A. Mangum who is recognized as an apicultural historian who has extensive collections of his own. He writes a monthly column in ABJ. If you live in Ohio, check with David Heilman

for information about the Ohio State Bee Museum in Wooster, Ohio. Also check out articles written by Jim Thompson in Bee Culture Magazine. I have had the pleasure to know both Jim and Dave from my Ohio days and they are by far the most informed on Ohio patents, and both have extensive bee collections of their own.



Let me say that many beekeepers have an issue of a bee journal for the month of the year they were born. Magazines allow us to look back at our own life and look into issues at the time we were born. I was born in December of 1938 and this is the cover of the Gleanings in Bee Culture magazine published in December 1938. It puts into focus what prices were then: Honey was selling for 6 cents to 10 cents a pound in 5 pound pails. Queens were selling for 50 cents each. One ad listed 200 hives for sale at \$5.00 each and a years subscription for Gleanings was \$1.00 or 3 years for \$2.00.

Buy and Sell He
CLASSIFIED ADS

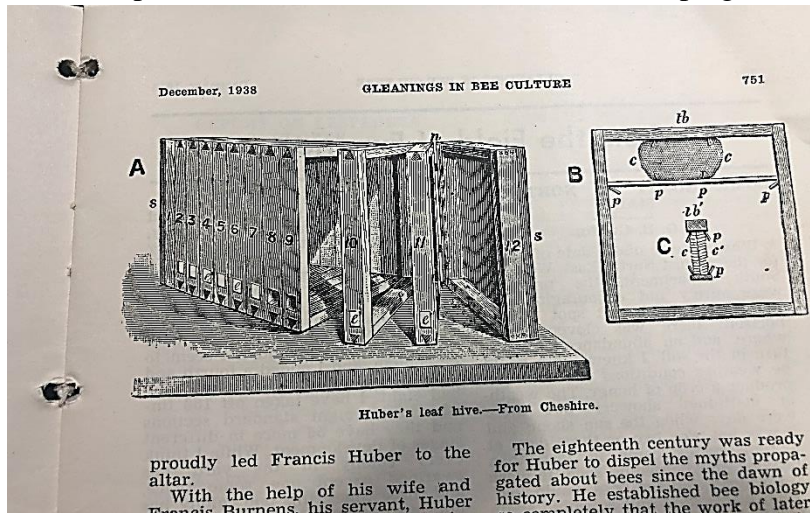
Only responsible advertisers and honest advertisements will be accepted. Each initial, each word in names and addresses, the longest word possible for the advertiser to use, as well as any figures in it, count as one word. Copy should be in the

HONEY FOR SALE	
COMB HONEY. Ida Guhl, Napoleon, Ohio, Rt. 2.	FINEST cans, 7c per
HONEY in new sixties. Walter Rink, Port Hope, Michigan.	NEW CL None finer.
CLOVER COMB also extracted in sixties. C. Holm, Genoa, Ill.	CHOICE New cans a
FINEST CLOVER, 6 1/2 c. J. L. Leonard, Scottsville, N. Y.	CHOICE \$7.20. San Mich.
CHOICE CLOVER honey in 60's, 6 1/2 c. John Bour, Tiffin, Ohio.	MICHIG honey in Mich.
HONEY—Clover and buckwheat, extracted. Geo. Sowarby, Cato, N. Y.	FOR S tracted h Iowa.
CLOVER HONEY for sale. Write for prices. Henry Price, Elizabeth, Ill.	NEW C P.O.B. R ple 15c.
HONEY in 50-gal. barrels. Sample, 10c. E. F. Hancock, Ft. Pierce, Fla.	ORAN new sixt
FANCY clover honey, case or quantity. J. Stahlman, Grover Hill, Ohio.	
FOR SALE—Extracted and comb honey.	

I can trace mention of my family back to these ads from the late 1890's.

I am going to begin my look back by starting with Francis Huber.

Science is based on facts. His contribution to modern day beekeeping is recognized but often overlooked. He devised a leaf hive making it possible to study honey bees. He undertook experiments and with the help of an assistant dispelled most of the myths about honey bees from the dawn of history. Thus the name Huber shows up in almost all of the literature published in the United State about beekeeping.



Up to Huber's investigations, bees could be observed in hives with glass windows. The leaf frame hive of Huber allowed him and Francis Burnens to determine facts that could be replicated and proven as true statements. Much of the early American experience with honey bees had depended upon authors working with skeps to manage bees or followed the practice of gathering honey from bee trees.

Many American beekeepers of that time depended upon an item called a lining box. This is one of those old items that beekeepers used to find bee trees. I bought one on Ebay not too long ago in great condition. It's use and design go back to long ago when beekeepers looking for bee trees used a section of comb set on a rock. Bees would find the comb with honey, collect some honey and return to their nest. As we know, bees can communicate and soon many bees would

be visiting the rock. The rest of the story is that techniques were learned helping beekeepers find bee trees. Lining boxes were designed to allow a person to release bees a few at a time so they could be followed.



The lining box on the right is the one I bought on ebay. The other box on the left was also sold on ebay.

My box is a single unit while the box on the left has two sections.

Many individuals looking at items like this have no idea how they were used

and often no idea what they were called.

Looking back is going to begin in the period of American beekeeping when the first books about managing bees were written by American authors. There was only one race of what we call honey bees in America at that time – *Apis mellifica* which today is correctly spelled *Apis mellifera* and specifically *A.mellifera mellifera* [called the “German or Dutch Black Bee.”]

- The authors were Samuel Thomson “Cultivation of Bees”, Frederick Butler “A Practical Treatise on Bees”, James Thacher “A Practical Treatise on the Management of Bees; And The Establishment of Apiaries with the Best Method of Destroying and Preventing the Depredation of the Bee Moth” ,V.C. Smith “An Essay of the Practicability of Cultivating the Honey Bee in Maritime Towns and Cities, As a Source of Domestic Economy and Profit” and John Weeks “A Manual, or an Easy Method of Managing Bees, in the most Profitable Manner to the Owner, with Infallible Rules to Prevent their Destruction by the Moth.”
- This was a period to save bees from being killed to get their honey. Thus, hives were being designed to allow bees to survive by developing various ways to take honey from the bees
- Briefly management for the seasons could be broken down this way:
 - Spring – Making increases using swarms and in some cases dividing hives. Add boxes above the brood nest or in collateral fashion. Beekeepers looked for signs of swarming – like the appearance of drones, clustering outside the hive entrance, and watching the activities of bees such as bees returning to the hive without pollen and honey. Beekeepers could put their ear up to the hive to listen to the sounds made such as tolling and calling by the queen. Tolling was defined as humming or buzzing within hive and that temperatures within the hive increased.
 - Summer – Nothing was more important than to have large strong swarms in hives. Watching colonies was required to capture swarms as soon as they started leaving the hive. Beekeepers were well aware of robbing and advised to reduce entrances to hives. Weak hives were combined and it was important to have hives with brood. Windows were added to some hives so visual checks of what was going

on inside the hive could be observed. Various terms such as divider, driving and uniting were part of the work required to keep bees.

- Winter -- It was reported that a good swarm in a favorable season would collect from fifty to one hundred pounds of honey plus twenty five to thirty pounds left to help the hive survive. Hives must contain a sufficient number of bees to maintain a certain degree of warmth, a plentiful store of honey, and be secluded from the inclemency of snow and rain.
- Finally, beekeeping was mostly confined to the location where bees were kept. Horses and livestock were on occasion attacked by bees and the beekeeper was held accountable for the damage caused especially if a horse was tied to a hitching post.

Let me conclude this short look at beekeeping during that time with a statement made by Mrs. Mary Griffith of New-Brunswick, New Jersey in 1828. *“If we could see the interior of a hive whenever it suited our convenience, we should not be so lost in conjecture; but the irritability of those little insects, prevents a constant and minute internal inspection. It is part of their instinct to know that light, heat, cold and moisture, in an undue and unaccustomed degree, are prejudicial to the formation of wax, to the consistence of the honey, and to the health of the brood. They therefore use all the little arts and advantages they possess, to prevent any one from exposing them to the injurious influence of those active powers.”*

I will follow this period up with some actual information given to beekeepers of that day. Within 35 – 40 years of this type of advice, a fellow named Langstroth changed the way bees were kept and gave Mary Griffith an opportunity to open a hive of bees that would not cause their irritability.