

Boone Hodgson Wilkinson Trust Fund

Part One -

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and Doug McCutcheon

It was 1965 and the Provincial Apiarist John Corner and several beekeeping leaders thought the time seemed right to start a new initiative. This was to be a trust fund to provide an opportunity for the study of Apiculture at a university or college in British Columbia.

Previously the first university affiliated undertaking in B.C. for the study of honeybees was in 1955. Then, the Beemaster's Course was sponsored jointly by the B.C. Department of Agriculture and the University of B.C. Extension Department. Beemaster's certificates had been awarded from time to time since 1933. Instruction and examinations were undertaken through the B.C. Honey Producers Association (BCHPA) and the Department of Agriculture.

At the 1965 Annual General Meeting of the BCHPA John Corner proposed a trust fund to aid in the establishment of facilities for the study of Apiculture. He donated \$50.00 and suggested the fund bear the names of three dedicated and well respected members of the BCHPA, Harvey Boone, Percy Hodgson and George Wilkinson.

This proposal was approved. After some time and much discussion it was decided the BHW Trust Fund would have the following objectives:

- 1) To establish an undergraduate course in beekeeping at a recognized university in B.C.
- 2) To provide a bursary or scholarship for a member of a 4-H Honeybee Club to attend university, or
- 3) For an undergraduate from B.C. specializing in Apiculture at a Canadian or foreign university.

There have been refinements since 1965 as situations change. The current Constitution will be summarized in Part II.



Harvey Boone at P.N.E. after
judging honey - 1950's

The initial trustees of the fund were Messrs. Boone, Hodgson, Wilkinson and Leo Fuhr, with John Corner ex officio. Harvey Boone was appointed secretary-treasurer and when he passed away in 1969 the duties were taken over by George Wilkinson. Ill health forced him to relinquish the job in 1971 when it was taken over by Gordon Robb.

The following is a brief look at the lives and contributions to beekeeping of Harvey Boone, Percy Hodgson and George Wilkinson.

Harvey Boone was born in 1892 in the state of Washington, USA, and at age four entered Canada with his parents and five siblings as a pioneering family in the south Okanagan. They settled in Fairview near present day Oliver. Harvey acquired carpentry skills from his father (who also introduced him to bees) and built many of the original commercial and residential buildings in Oliver.

He was among the original orchardists in the south Okanagan. He kept bees and registered his first apiary in 1929. Over the years his knowledge of bees became recognized. He was awarded a Beemaster's Certificate in 1948 and in the same year was hired by W.H. Turnbull, Provincial Apiarist, as a part-time bee inspector. He continued bee inspection work after John Corner took over from Mr.

Turnbull, and remained on the staff for another twenty years, working in all areas of the B.C. interior.

He was secretary of the South Okanagan Division of the BCHPA and their delegate to the central executive for many years. He was honoured for his dedication with a Life Membership in the BCHPA.

Harvey assisted beekeepers in many ways and one was by placing orders for packaged bees for them, obtaining the bees from Banta in California. The bees were sent by train to Oroville, Washington and Harvey would pick them up and bring them through customs into Canada.

One year Banta sent an extra three packages with the fifty ordered and recorded on the manifest. When Harvey arrived at the border he was alarmed to find "a new man" on duty, and feared there would be trouble with the discrepancy between the actual number of packages and the number on the manifest. Harvey thought fast and as the customs agent approached the trailer loaded with bees, Harvey gave him warm reassurance that the "hitch-hikers" on the outside of the cages were friendly and he need not be concerned about them. That was enough for the agent to turn heel and process the papers in the safety of the customs house.

Another item of interest is that Harvey introduced mead to the BCHPA Annual General Meeting in 1950. Harvey and Lew Truscott were asked to investigate the possibility of pursuing this commercially, but after their investigation they concluded it was not feasible at that time.

Harvey Boone died in 1969.

Percy Hodgson was born in Ontario in 1893, lived in Manitoba for a period of time, then came to B.C. with his family in 1920. During this time he served with the R.C.A.F. in WWI. In New Westminster, Percy's father started manufacturing bee sup-

plies and boasted the capacity to produce fifty “hives” per day! In 1923 Percy joined the business and subsequently took it over. It became known as Hodgson Bee Supplies and expanded to manufacture all manner of beekeeping equipment from wax foundation to honey extractors.

Although he was not a beekeeper, Percy regularly attended beekeeper meetings as well as field days, was a keen observer, and with his innovative skills he relished in the produc-



Percy Hodgson with Bee Cee Honey, 1960's

tion of equipment that met the needs of beekeepers. He was recognized for producing top quality equipment at a fair price and was credited with being a major factor in the build-up of beekeeping in B.C. and western Canada. He also shipped equipment as far afield as the U.S., South America and New Zealand. In the 1950s the business expanded to include a modern honey packing plant with the product sold by the trade name Bee Cee Honey.

On a personal note, one of the authors of this article (JB) stayed with the Hodgsons in the summer of 1959. Percy was very fond of honey and liked to have a good breakfast. He was a gentle man and as breakfast was finishing, he would exclaim with a twinkle in his eye (and some disapproval from Mrs. Hodgson), “My goodness, I seem to have taken too much honey – I’ll have to have another piece of toast!”

Percy Hodgson died in 1969.

George Wilkinson was born in 1886. He moved from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, to Prince Rupert, B.C. in 1919. Within a few years he introduced honeybees to Prince Rupert but had limited success with them due to the long and wet winters. It was later, after moving to Victoria, that his beekeeping began in earnest. He lived in the Gordon Head area and in addition to honey production, he provided honeybee pollination for the expanding greenhouse industry.

He was among those who attended the first Beemaster’s Course that was held at U.B.C. in 1955 and became well recognized as a Master Beekeeper. He joined the staff of the Apiary Branch as a Bee Inspector



George Wilkinson in conversation at Beekeeping Short Course, 1953

covering Vancouver Island, a position he held for many years. His work was highly valued by John Corner who could always depend upon George for good judgment in dealing with disease and for providing sound advice to beekeepers.

He was active in the BCHPA and was made a Life Member. He had taken various positions of responsibility in the BCHPA, including being the 1957 representative to the Canadian Beekeepers Council that had been formed in 1940 (now the Canadian Honey Council). He was also made an Honorary Life Member of the B.C. Commercial Beekeepers Association, an organization that was in existence from 1962 to 1980.

George introduced his “Beekeepers Blessing” to the Vancouver Island Division of BCHPA and its use spread to beekeeping banquets across Canada:

For the bees and the flowers
For the sun and the showers
For the friends that we meet
And the food that we eat
Lord, we thank you.

George Wilkinson died in 1984, having become quite frail in the last years of his life.

The history of the fund was recorded by its great supporter J.N. (Robbie) Robertson in 1979 and more will be said about the administration of the BHW Trust Fund in Part II of this article. We will also summarize disbursements from the BHW Trust Fund since the initial support of the first project in 1977, relating to queen bee rearing. ❁

BOONE HODGSON WILKINSON FUND

*Funding the Study of Apiculture in
British Columbia Since 1965*

Applications are processed during the winter months. For further information please contact:

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