

# Early Insecticide Controversies and Beekeeper Advocacy in the Great Lakes Region

This paper examines the debates that surrounded incidents of honey bee poisoning in the southern Great Lakes Region in the 1880s and 90s. Drawing upon the records of beekeepers and allied entomologists from Ontario and neighbouring states, it documents the efforts of beekeepers to press for prudent insecticide use and “bee-friendly” horticultural practices more than half a century before the more familiar insecticide controversies of the post-war period. Their

contributions to legislation, education, and advocacy work on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border mark them as early advocates for environmental protection, and an important and largely overlooked collective voice in the history of insecticide controversies. The intersections between beekeepers, honey bees, and the changing environments they worked within presents an early example of the effects of agricultural industrialization on minority producers and the animals they kept.

with **Dr. Jennifer Bonnell**  
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Farm workers spraying fruit trees with a horse-powered pump at an orchard in Pennsylvania, ca.1905. Credit: Reproduced with permission from the Pennsylvania State Archives.