

The Development of American Odonatology

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The first reference to dragonflies from America which has been found is in a letter from James Petiver to the collector, Hugh Jones, in Maryland, dated October 6, 1698, acknowledging receipt of a shipment of insects including *Libella*. Jones had come to this country as the personal chaplain to a newly appointed governor of Maryland, but his selection for this position was due more to his potential as a collector of natural history specimens than to any ecclesiastical qualities he may have had.

Petiver and Henry Compton, the Bishop of London, were members of the Temple Coffee House botanical "club." Members of this club had been the recipients of many natural history specimens sent by John Banister from Virginia. When Banister was killed in an accident in 1692 they were very eager to find someone to continue the collecting in America. Such an opportunity appeared when Francis Nicholson, himself a dilettante in natural history was appointed governor of Maryland in 1694 and was in need of a chaplain. Edward Lhuyd of Oxford, a friend of Petiver recommended Jones, who although he had "little skill" in botany, had "some little smattering in other parts of Nat. History" and could be made "a fit man to succeed Mr. Banister." He was still an undergraduate and was hardly prepared for holy orders, but his promise as a collector caused any deficiency in ministerial qualities to be overlooked. He was ordained and appointed a representative of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel on recommendation of the Bishop, daily treated and complimented by Petiver, well supplied with directions and apparatus for collecting by the members of the "club," and dispatched to Maryland in the spring of 1696. Although several shipments of insects and other organisms were sent to Petiver and others, the latter wrote Jones repeatedly asking for more. Jones was unhappy in the New World, became seriously ill in 1700 and died in January, 1701/1702.

The endeavors of the members of the "botanical club" to obtain material from America was typical of the natural history of this country for a long period and in Odonatology this "colonial" condition of the art continued for at least a century and a half. It reached a climax in 1790 when John Abbott, an indefatigable collector and a skilled painter of insects, plants, etc., was sent to America by three or four of the leading entomologists of England to collect specimens for their cabinets. After visiting several localities in many parts of the Union he settled in Scriven County, Georgia. For the next 20 years or more he sent innumerable specimens and hundreds of plates of paintings to Europe, chiefly to John Francillon, a silversmith of London. Francillon purchased them from Abbott for 3d per specimen and sold them for 6d or more. Although thousands of specimens and drawings were thus dis-

tributed to collectors and museums throughout Europe, Francillon for obvious reasons did not often, if ever, reveal the source of the material. However, these specimens were described in all the principal entomological publications of the period. Thus, the basis of American systematic entomology, both specimens and publications, were located in Europe.

The first paper on the Odonata by an American author was an article by John Bartram of Philadelphia in the *Philosophical Transactions of London* in 1750/1751. The first discussion of the group to appear in America was written by Thomas Say, a great grandson of John Bartram, probably about 1833 in New Harmony, Indiana, and read before the Academy of natural Science of Philadelphia in 1834, but for some unknown reason, not published until 1839. Only three other American authors even mentioned the group before 1861. In that year an extensive treatment of the order appeared as part of the *Synopsis of Neuroptera of North America* prepared for the Smithsonian Institution by the German entomologist H. A. Hagen, one of the two world authorities on the group at that time.

For the remainder of the 19th century only a very few papers devoted exclusively to the Odonata appeared and these were written by authors interested in the general field of entomology.

Odonatology in America may be said to have reached full development a few years before 1900. The following 40 years is the "classical period" of the science. During this period the first group of writers to devote their major or sole activities in entomology to the Odonata were active; a few of them had been writing about dragonflies somewhat earlier and many continued to write later. They included: P. P. Calvert, Francis Harvey, A. P. Morse, James G. Needham, E. B. Williamson, James S. Hine, Thomas W. Fyles, Clement S. Brimley, C. H. Kennedy, E. M. Walker and R. A. Muttkowski.