



SINCE

1841

WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM

May is National Inventors Month

John H. Balsley and Lorenzo L. Langstroth



John H. Balsley

John Balsley was a master carpenter who invented a practical folding wooden stepladder and received the first U.S. patent issued for a safety stepladder. The name “step ladder” arose from the fact that the ladder used flat steps to stand on, in place of large, round rungs.



Lorenzo L. Langstroth

Beekeeping came to America as soon as the first settlers could set up a stand of beehives. And although patents for beehives were granted as early as 1811, it was Lorenzo Langstroth’s idea of bee space that made a lasting impression.

Additionally, Balsley's ladder had a hinge at the top of the back brace so that it had the ability to be folded. Balsley was granted patent #34,100 for his innovative invention on January 7, 1862.

Balsley was awarded additional patents for an adjustable table leg in 1875 and a paper bag machine in 1876. In 1882, John became a real estate investor after selling his step ladder company.

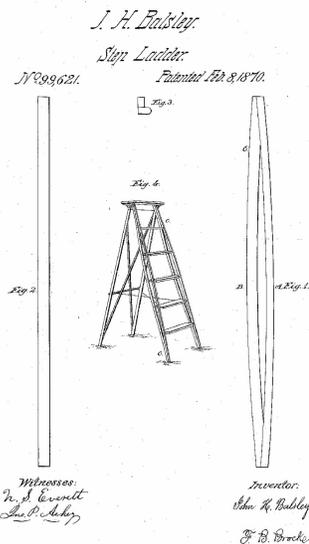
He was born in Connellsville, Fayette County, Pennsylvania to George H. and Sarah (Shallenberger) Balsley. His father was also a carpenter.

An odd coincidence is that in the borough of Connellsville in 1825, a new borough office was created: Keeper of Ladders. The title of Ladder Keeper does not appear after 1831 (although there is a gap in records from 1835-1856).

William Balsley, an uncle, was on the town council at the time the office was created. Although none of his family seems to have held this new office, one can only speculate whether it somehow stimulated an interest in ladders on the part of young John.

John H. Balsley migrated to Dayton, Ohio before 1850.

The Balsley home, built about 1877, was located in the Oregon Historic District at 419 East Sixth Street and still stands today, a reminder of his success. He was also a Trustee of the City of Dayton Water Works for a year in the early 1870s, his only known public service.



In 1836, Lorenzo was a pastor of the South Congregational Church in Andover, MA and here he became interested in beekeeping. In 1852, he moved to Oxford, Ohio and began working on the concept of a moveable-frame beehive based on his discovery of bee space.

He found that if a space was left open between the hive and the frame and the frame themselves, the bees would not fill the space with combs. This would enable the frames to be removed from the hive rather than destroying the whole hive to remove the honey.

Langstroth was granted a patent on his beehive and in 1853 he published a book titled Langstroth On the Hive and the Honeybee. It proved to be a mistake on his part.

Soon the Patent Office was overrun with applications for new and improved beehives. Of course, there were imitators too. He did not have the means to fight the patent battles in court. His physical and mental health suffered. Fortunately, Langstroth recovered and lived long enough to be recognized for his innovative idea.

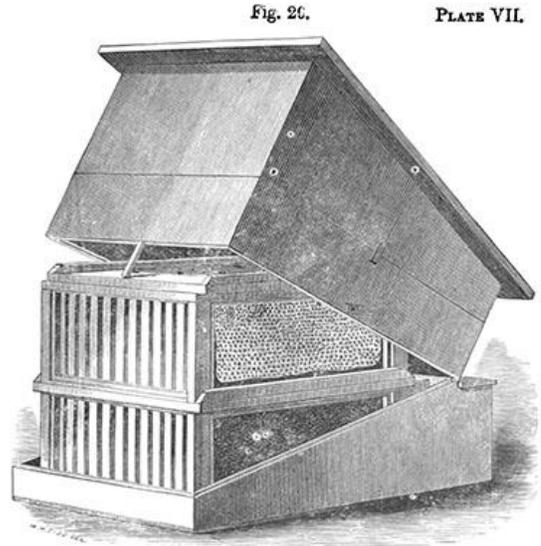
After 1858 Langstroth made Oxford, Ohio his residence and devoted his time to beekeeping. The 10 acre site was an ideal place to keep bees. Langstroth planted a row of linden trees along the street and apple trees throughout his property. He sowed buckwheat and clover seed, using 1-acre of ground for a formal garden, filled with the flowers that bees like best, calling it his honey garden.

In 1887, he moved with his daughter, Mrs. H. C. Cowan, and her family to Dayton, Ohio. Langstroth died in the pulpit of the Wayne Avenue Presbyterian Church in Dayton on October 6, 1895, just as he was beginning a sermon on the love of God.

His epitaph reads as follows: Inscribed to the memory of Rev. L.L. Langstroth, "Father of American beekeeping," by his affectionate beneficiaries who, in the remembrance of the service rendered by his persistent and painstaking observations and experiments with the honey bee, his improvements in the hive, and the literary ability shown in the first scientific and popular book on the subject of beekeeping in the United States, gratefully erect this monument.



John Balsley was born May 29, 1823 and died March 12, 1895. He is located in Woodland Cemetery in section 52 Lot 1658.

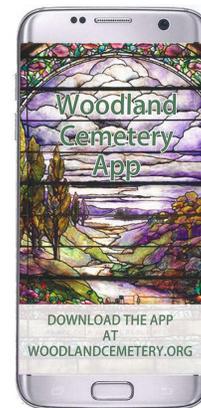


Rev. Lorenzo Lorraine Langstroth was born December 25, 1810 and died October 6, 1895. He is located in Woodland Cemetery in Section 103 Lot 2634.

You can take your own walking tour at the cemetery or a virtual tour from the comfort of your couch by visiting our website at: woodlandcemetery.org/tours.

From your phone you will be prompted to download our app. Take one of 12 walking tours we have available for your enjoyment at the cemetery. If you are on your desktop, laptop or tablet, you can take the tour right from the tour page. We will be adding more tours so come back often to learn about the men and women who made it Great in Dayton.

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Using our app, you can:

- Navigate to your relative or friend's grave using our GPS-based system
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Your loved one's memorial page is automatically created when you make cemetery arrangements with our office. You may also share and upload information by using our burial database via our website (woodlandcemetery.org). (please contact our office if you need assistance)



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