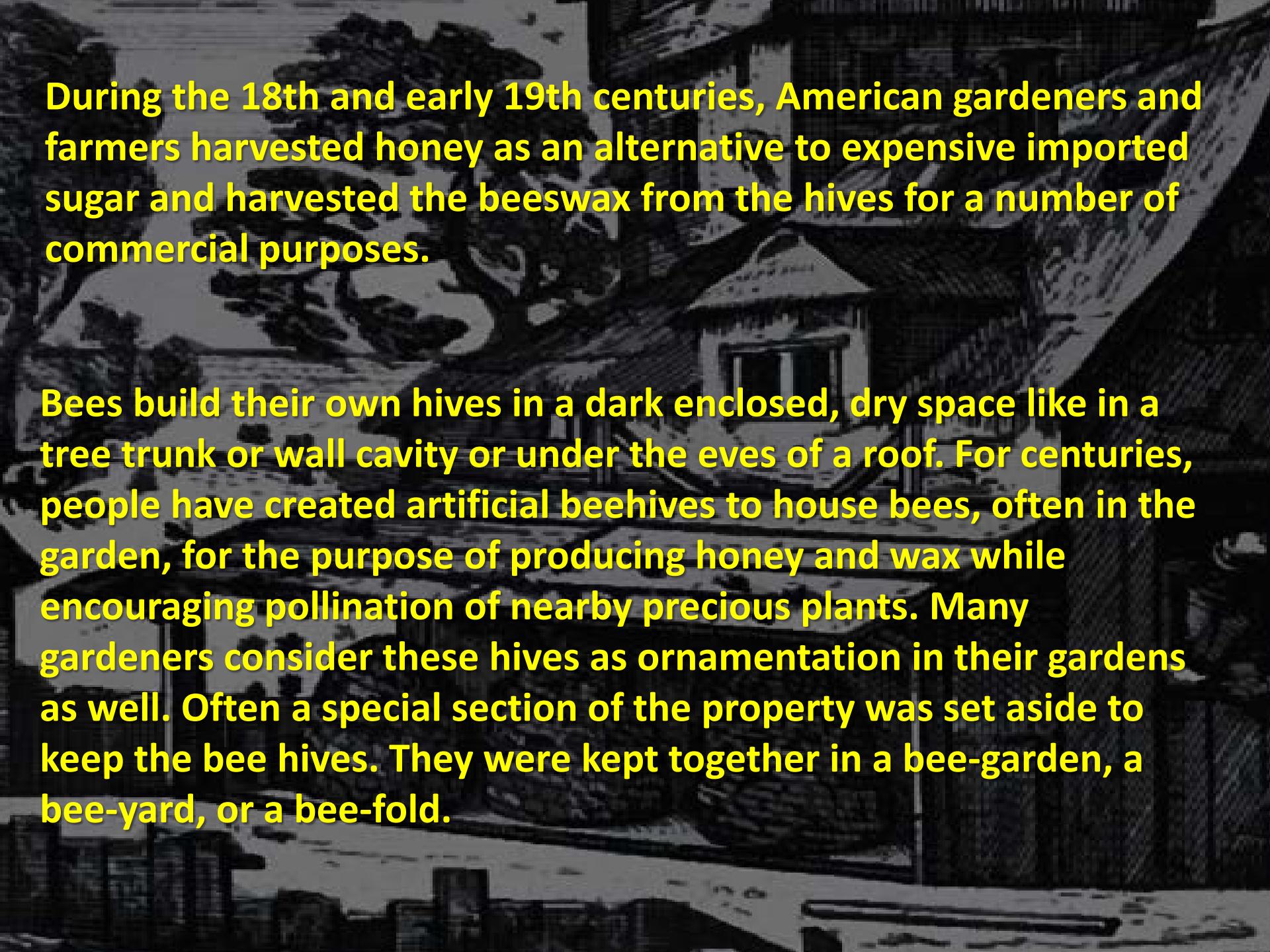


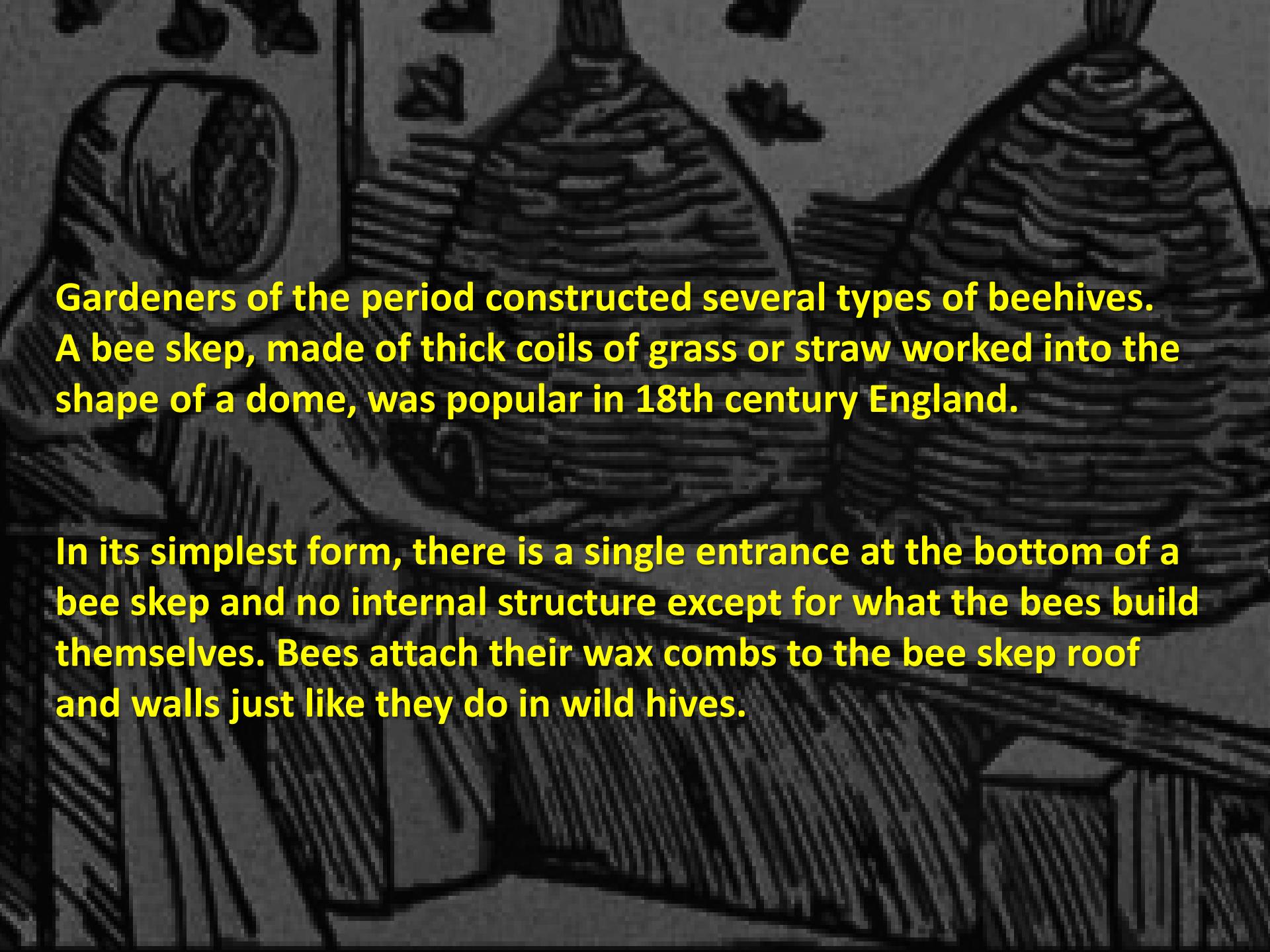


Bee Skep



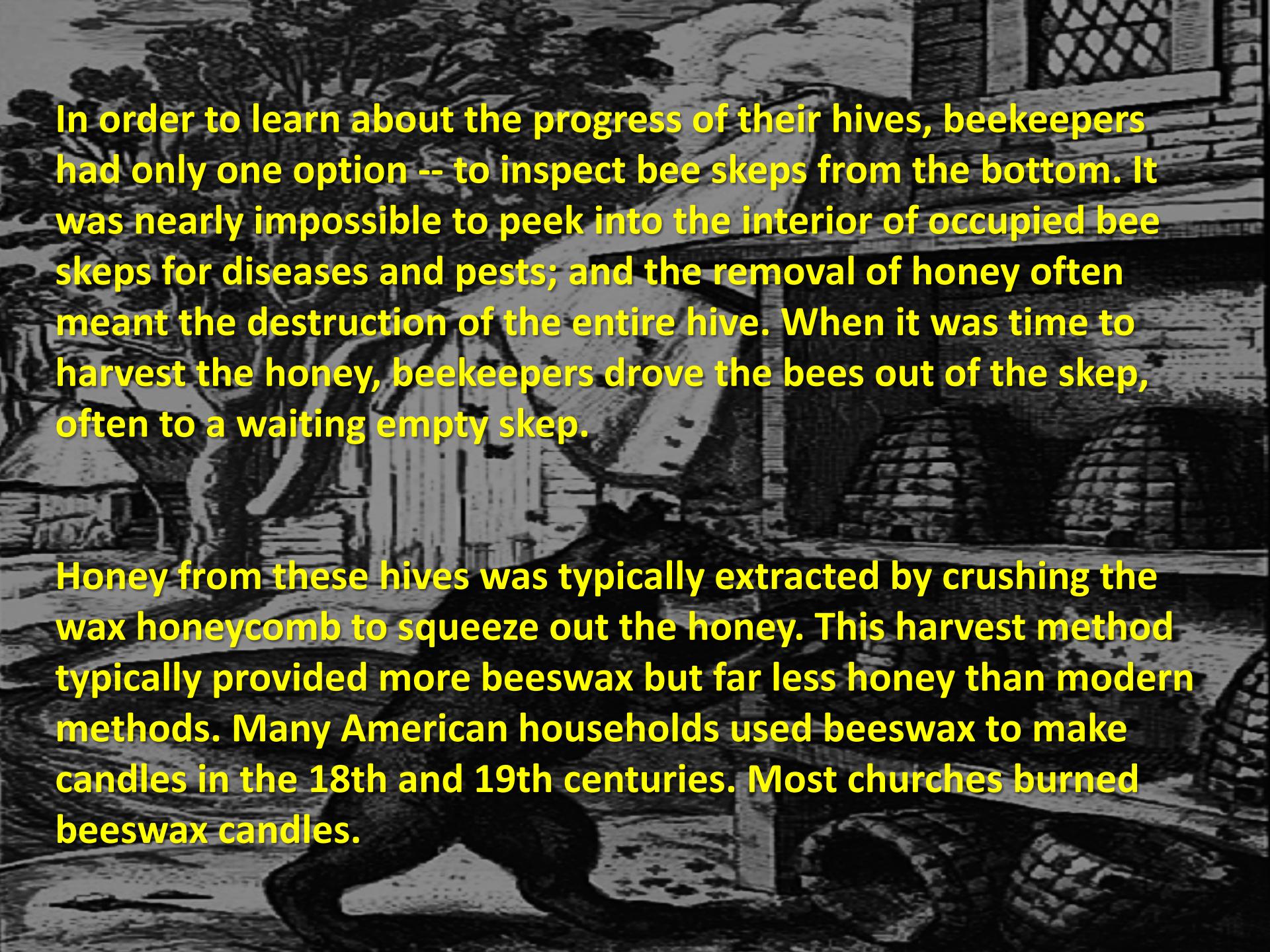
During the 18th and early 19th centuries, American gardeners and farmers harvested honey as an alternative to expensive imported sugar and harvested the beeswax from the hives for a number of commercial purposes.

Bees build their own hives in a dark enclosed, dry space like in a tree trunk or wall cavity or under the eves of a roof. For centuries, people have created artificial beehives to house bees, often in the garden, for the purpose of producing honey and wax while encouraging pollination of nearby precious plants. Many gardeners consider these hives as ornamentation in their gardens as well. Often a special section of the property was set aside to keep the bee hives. They were kept together in a bee-garden, a bee-yard, or a bee-fold.



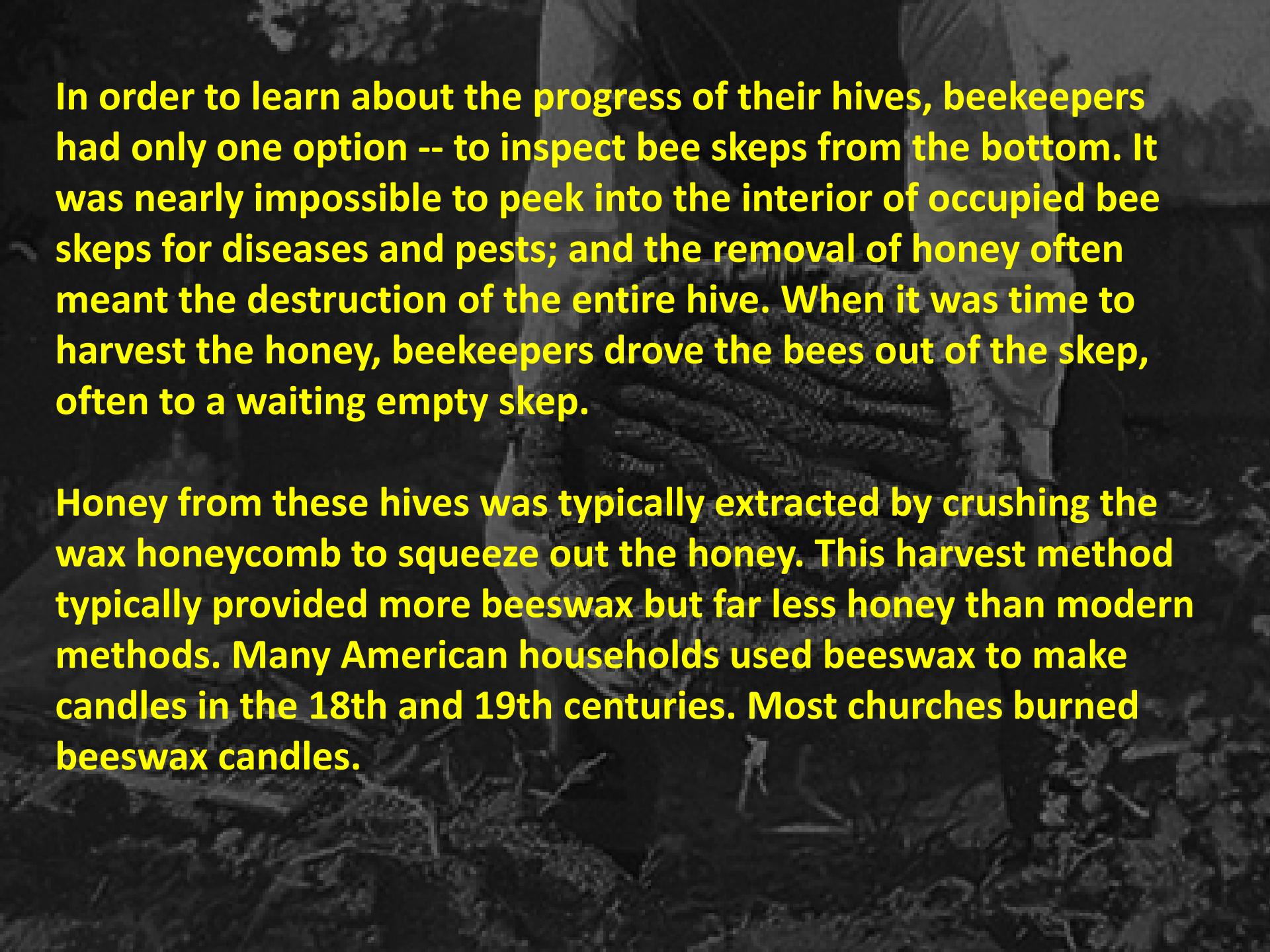
Gardeners of the period constructed several types of beehives. A bee skep, made of thick coils of grass or straw worked into the shape of a dome, was popular in 18th century England.

In its simplest form, there is a single entrance at the bottom of a bee skep and no internal structure except for what the bees build themselves. Bees attach their wax combs to the bee skep roof and walls just like they do in wild hives.



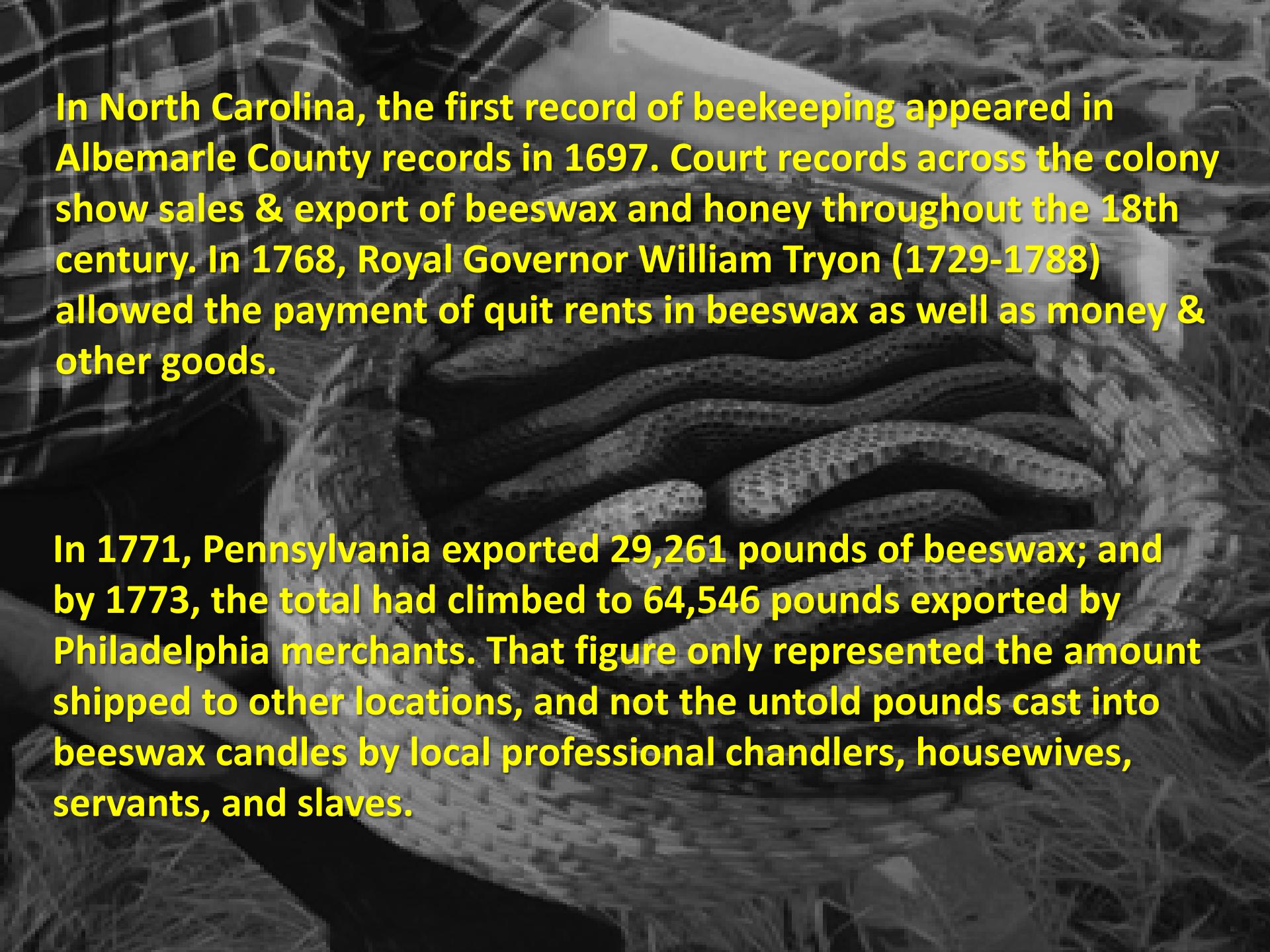
In order to learn about the progress of their hives, beekeepers had only one option -- to inspect bee skeps from the bottom. It was nearly impossible to peek into the interior of occupied bee skeps for diseases and pests; and the removal of honey often meant the destruction of the entire hive. When it was time to harvest the honey, beekeepers drove the bees out of the skep, often to a waiting empty skep.

Honey from these hives was typically extracted by crushing the wax honeycomb to squeeze out the honey. This harvest method typically provided more beeswax but far less honey than modern methods. Many American households used beeswax to make candles in the 18th and 19th centuries. Most churches burned beeswax candles.



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In North Carolina, the first record of beekeeping appeared in Albemarle County records in 1697. Court records across the colony show sales & export of beeswax and honey throughout the 18th century. In 1768, Royal Governor William Tryon (1729-1788) allowed the payment of quit rents in beeswax as well as money & other goods.

In 1771, Pennsylvania exported 29,261 pounds of beeswax; and by 1773, the total had climbed to 64,546 pounds exported by Philadelphia merchants. That figure only represented the amount shipped to other locations, and not the untold pounds cast into beeswax candles by local professional chandlers, housewives, servants, and slaves.

In 1791, the shop of George Meade on Philadelphia's Walnut Street Wharf announced that it had hogsheads of Madeira Wine, Irish Linens, and Pork of prime quality that could be purchased with payments of, among other things, quantities of raw beeswax.

Philadelphia druggist George Hunter noted that his shop offered medicines, paints, brushes and dye stuffs that could be purchased by cash, Jersey State or Pennsylvania, or "*bees wax*."

