

IN OUR COLLECTION



In Our Collection shares the pieces acquired by Ramsey County Historical Society.

The collection contains tens of thousands of pieces, including archives, books, objects, and photographs, which are maintained by Director of Collections and Exhibitions, Mollie Spillman, in downtown St. Paul.

**NO. 5 NOVICE'S HONEY EXTRACTOR
DONATED BY: OAKLEY SURINE
ACQUIRED: 1997
RCHS COLLECTION: 1997.13.1**

Donated by Oakley Surine, a longtime 3M employee, this faded, bluish-green, barrel-shaped honey extractor was added to the Ramsey County Historical Society's collection in 1997. On the front of the barrel, painted in white lettering and topped with a scroll design, is written "No. 5 NOVICE'S HONEY EXTRACTOR," and just below is the manufacturer's painted label: "THE A.I./AIR/ROOT CO./MEDINA/OHIO./U.S.A."

At the center of the barrel is a three-leaf clover, each leaf painted with a letter, while above it, a bee appears in flight against the glow of a rising or setting sun. The barrel itself is supported by three metal braces bolted to its sides, each curving downward at the base to form sturdy feet.

The extractor's mechanism is hand-powered, using a wooden crank connected to a gear system that turns a single rectangular basket. The basket, covered on two sides with wire mesh, holds a honeycomb in place. Beekeepers would place filled combs into the holder inside the extractor. As they turned the crank, the basket would spin rapidly, and centrifugal force would draw the honey from the comb onto the inner walls of the machine. The honey then flowed downward to a collection spout, emerging as pure, wax-free honey.



THE A.I. ROOT HONEY EXTRACTOR

The A.I. Root honey extractor transformed the way honey was harvested, as this efficient and elegant solution allowed beekeepers to harvest honey without damaging the wax. Extractors were also manufactured in much larger sizes—some reaching seventy-two inches in diameter or more—for commercial honey production.

The extractor is the result of the ingenuity of Amos Ives Root, born in 1839 in Medina, Ohio. Originally a jeweler, Root's life changed one day when a massive swarm of bees covered the window of his shop, darkening the room and sparking his curiosity. This moment led him to beekeeping and innovation.

In 1869, Root began manufacturing a revolutionary beehive that allowed honey to be extracted without killing the bees. His success led to the founding of the A.I. Root Company in 1878, after he purchased the Medina County Fairgrounds and established his manufacturing operation there. The company later expanded into beeswax candle production in the 1920s, a tradition that continued even after Root's death in 1923.

