

NOTES ON SILK CULTURE IN AMERICA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

FROM THE LITERARY DIARY OF EZRA STILES, D.D., LL.D.¹ EDITED BY
FRANKLIN B. DEXTER, M.A. 1901

VOL. III, p. 320. "The spirit of Rais^g Mulberry Trees & Silk is vigorous in* North^{fd}—phps 30 families have Mulb^y Trees set out in that Parish. Mr. Williams has 5 or 6000 Silk Worms Skin^g the 3^d time—Mr. Rogers 8 or 10 Thous^d skin^g the last time—Capt. Foot has 85,000 in the last stage at home & 10,000 abroad. He has 400 sq^r feet of Silk Worms on 4 Shelves round the Chamber Walls & 108 Sq^r feet on Board Shelves in the Middle of the Room. I counted 2 or 3 Sq^r feet, by the foot, & found 150 & 160 Worms on a Single Square foot—so that he has 85 Thous^d Worms. These with 10,000 more were fed from 150 Mulb^y Trees, Set out at a year old five years ago, or now aet 6 y. very thrifty. Mrs. Foot made of the Silk raised 1786 twelve yards of Lutestring, three Qu^{rs} of a yard wide; and of the Silk she raised 1787 she had made Eight yards of black Sattin, three Qu^{rs} yard wide. In 1787 they raised five Bushels of Coccoons or Balls, from which they reeled off five Pounds of Raw Silk. This was raised from the 160 or rather 150 trees set out A.D. 1782."

VOL. III, p. 350. (Apl. 9, 1789).

"I am sending abroad about three Pints of Mulberry Seeds weighing twenty Ounces, or eno' for about 400 Thous^d Trees. A penny w^t contains near 20 Th. seeds. I send four dwt of about 4 Th. or 4100 to a Person—divid^g about one ounce to 4 psons. I send out to 80 Ministers in this State.² Desiring them by themselves or such psons as they may employ in their Parishes to sow each a Nursery in a parish of 4000 Trees,

¹Ezra Stiles was President of Yale College from 1778 to 1795. Born 1727—Died 1795.

²This was written in July, 1788. Northfield is a village in the town of North Branford.

on these Conditions viz., that at the end of 3 y. three Qu^{rs} of the Trees belong to the Planters, & one Qu^r to be distributed gratis by the Ministers each to about 30 families 20 or 30 Trees each in each of the 80 Parishes. There may be about 170 ministers in the State. I propose to collect more Seed this season & continue the Dissemin^g for plant^g Nurseries, until the State may be furnished with 4 or five Million Trees; which in 8 or 10 years may yield a Produce of Silk worth 100 Th. pounds Sterl^g p ann. to the State. Mr. Aspinwal went off yesterday for N. York & Pensylv^a with about seven Quarts of Mulb^y seeds to plant Nurseries in those States, phps. eno' for four Million Trees.

“He has already raised 150 Thous^d Trees & set up and sold them in this State.”

Ib. III, p. 398. (July 12, 1790).

“I rode round town[†] to visit the Silkworms the most of which are cocooned—Cocoons taking down and reeling. I found *twenty three* Families within this City, which raised this Season from 5 to 60 & seventy Thous^d Worms.”

Ib. III, 398.

“There have been about Three hundred Thous^d raised here this year: one raised 70 Th. & two others above 30 Thous^d. Last year and this I have been distributing Mulberry Seeds chiefly in this State, some up Mohawk R. & Vermont Towns on L. Champlain.

Last year 4000 seeds to a Nursery, this year 1500.

A. D. 1789	94 Nurseries
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1790	<u>173</u>
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267 Nurseries.

Above 50 families raised Silk this year in this City. I bought 1½ lb. raw silk raised this Season for 30/-”

VOL. III, p. 516. (Entry on Feb. 22, 1794)

“Mr. Whitney brot to my house & shewed me his Machine, by him invented for cleaning Cotton of its Seeds. He showed us the model which he has finished to lodge at Philadelphia in the Secretary of States Office when he takes out his Patent. This miniature Model is pfect, & will clean about a dozen pounds a day, or about 40^{lb} before cleang.

“He has completed Six large ones, Barrel phps five feet long to carry

‡Connecticut. †New Haven.

to Georgia. In one of these I saw about a *dozen pounds* of Cotton with seeds cleaned by one pson in about twenty minutes, from which was delivered about *three pounds* of Cotton purely cleansed of seed. It will clean 100 cw^t a day. A curious & very ingenious piece of Mechanism.”

Ib. p. 560. (Mar. 12, 1795).

“Yesterdy Mornng VIII^h Mr Whitney's Work Shop consumed with Fire, Loss 3000 Doll. about 10 finished Machines for seedg Cotton & 5 or 6 unfinished, & all the tools which no man can make but Mr Whitney the inventor, & w^c he has been 2 years in makg.”

(This building was in Wooster St., New Haven.)