

TAXONOMISTS
 by
 JUST WANTNA
 HAVEFUN
 Harry Zirlin

Henry Edwards

Perhaps one of the more surprising characters to grace the study of our butterfly fauna came to the United States from England, by way of Australia, Peru, Panama and Mexico, in 1865. The actor, writer and lepidopterist, Henry Edwards (1830-1891) is not to be confused with his contemporary William Henry Edwards (1822-1909) of whom I previously wrote (William Henry Edwards: The Man Behind the Hairstreak (*American Butterflies* Fall, 2004)). The two were not related by family.

When the scientific name of a species is written out in full, it is standard practice that the person who described the species (known as the “author” in taxonomic circles) has his or her name follow the name of the species along with the date of its description. So, for example, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail’s scientific name will often appear as *Papilio glaucus* Linnaeus, 1758 to indicate that the species was first described by the great Swede himself. Linnaeus described so many species that, by

convention, his authorship is usually simply indicated by “L.” In many cases, the author of a species placed the species in a genus wherein it no longer resides. In such a case, the author’s name appears in parenthesis as follows: *Urbanus proteus* (L., 1758). From this, it is apparent that Linnaeus described Long-tailed Skipper but did not place it in the genus *Urbanus*. In fact, he placed it in the genus *Papilio* where he put all butterflies.

Although many field guides and other books no longer follow the convention of including the author’s name as part of the species name, most scientific journals that I am aware of require that the author and date be included as part of the scientific name, at least the first time it is mentioned in an article. I include this explanation here because the existence of two authors with the surname Edwards (both of whom described butterflies) has required that they be distinguished somehow when either’s name follows the name of a species. Thus,

William Henry Edwards comes down to us as “W.H. Edwards” or “W.H. Edw.” and Henry Edwards is noted as “Hy. Edwards” or simply “Hy. Edw.” The “Hy. Edwards” notation is far more familiar to students of our moth fauna than our butterflies, because Henry Edwards described many more moths than butterflies.

Henry Edwards was born in Ross, Herefordshire, England in 1830. Although his father wanted him to be a lawyer, the theatre beckoned, and at the age of 25 he left England to tour Australia as an actor. He acquired his interest in butterflies, moths and other insects at an early age, but it is difficult to track down information on his childhood. There are some hints of these early years in his book “A Mingled Yarn” which was published in 1883. Although the book is not an autobiography, but rather a collection of essays on various

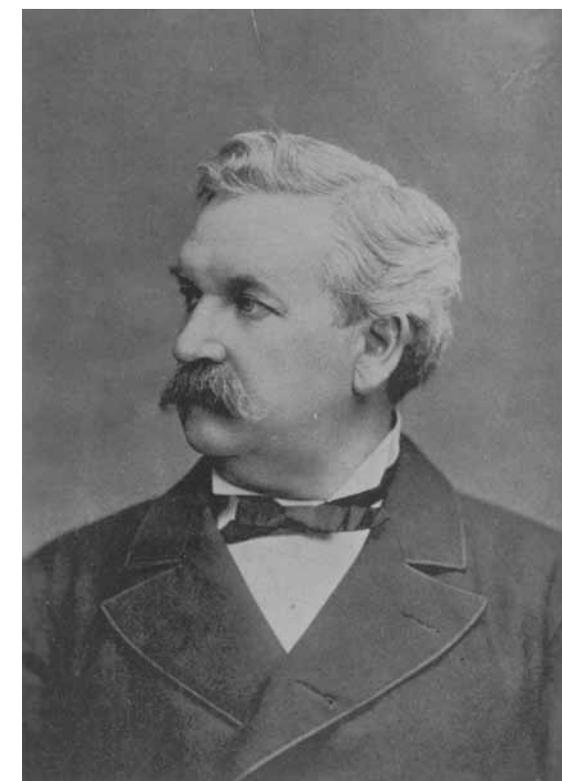
topics, in one of the essays he mentions that when he was a child he roamed the Forest of Dean where he found insects that occurred nowhere else in England. Before leaving London, Edwards had already begun collecting and studying insects, particularly butterflies and moths, under the tutelage of the entomologist Edward Doubleday (1811-1849).

After spending close to ten years in Australia, Edwards arrived in San Francisco in 1865 and was associated with the San Francisco theatre for the next dozen years. But he spent much of his time away from the theatre at the California Academy of Natural Sciences with Hans Herman Behr (for whom Sierra Sulphur, *Colias behrii*, was named by W.H. Edwards in 1866, the year after Henry’s arrival in San Francisco.) In addition to his association with the California Academy



Jeffrey Glassberg

Henry Edwards named Moss’ Elfin — presumably for Dr. Edward Lawton Moss of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. This individual was at Spike Buck Meadow, Humboldt Co., CA on June 23, 1999.



An old photo of Henry Edwards. This photo was published in the January 1948 issue of Lepidopterists’ News and was kindly found and forwarded to us by Larry Gall of Yale.