I spent my first twelve years living in Newark, New Jersey — first in the Ironbound Section and then in the Weequahic Section. Neither part of Newark was particularly rich in butterfly diversity in retrospect, although that did not stop me from tramping miles up and down the Lehigh Valley Railroad tracks (in neighboring Irvington actually) and looking. I have vivid recollections of many butterfly encounters from those days: Zabulon Skippers flashing in the late afternoon sunlight on Leslie Street while my older brother Larry played stickball, Common Sootywings in the overgrown backyard of our Hobson Street friend, Richie Roberts, and Question Marks dashing back and forth high over the roof of our two story home as if it was a hilltop.

The only hairstreaks I ever saw in Newark were Gray Hairstreaks and I remember them favoring the blossoms of Rose-of-Sharon in my friend Peter’s yard on Wainwright Street. All of these memories span the late 1950s to 1965 when my family moved to suburban Iselin, NJ. Only then did I see species of hairstreaks other than Gray. In Iselin, on the dogbane and Common Milkweed blossoms in the fields and wood edges across from our house were Banded Hairstreaks (Satyrium calanus), Hickory Hairstreaks (Satyrium caryaevorum), Striped Hairstreaks (Satyrium liparops) and Coral Hairstreaks (Satyrium titus). Those fields and woods have long since vanished and the hairstreaks with them.

The genus Satyrium was created by Samuel Scudder in 1876 and for many years Satyrium was understood to contain only New World species. In 1961, Harry Kendon Clench recognized that many Old World species of hairstreaks also belong in this genus, although many books on European butterflies did not reflect this classification until much later. Satyrium, of course, was chosen by Scudder to reflect the woodland habitat of most species, as satyrs were mythological woodland beings apparently beloved by early lepidopterists who saw satyrs and nymphs in every flitting wing in the forest.

NABA’s Checklist & English Names of North American Butterflies (Second Edition) has 17 species in the genus Satyrium, and, with one or two exceptions, the origins of the specific names are easy to ascertain although, as in many cases, why those names were chosen is often a mystery.

Six Satyrium hairstreaks are named for people. Coral Hairstreak, (Satyrium titus) was named for the Roman Emperor Titus, as I recently noted in “Hail Caesar.” (American Butterflies: Vol.19 Nos.2/3/4). Banded Hairstreak (Satyrium calanus) was named for the gymnosophist Calanus of India who was a contemporary of Alexander the Great and met with Alexander during the Greek invasion of India. (Gymnosophist is Greek for “naked philosopher” and Calanus is said to have ordered Alexander to strip as well before he would speak with him.)

Behr’s Hairstreak (Satyrium behrii), Edward’s Hairstreak (Satyrium edwardsii), King’s Hairstreak (Satyrium kingi), and Poling’s Hairstreak (Satyrium polingi), were all named for lepidopterists. I have written about Behr and W.H. Edwards in this column before, but, briefly, Herman Behr was a German-born lepidopterist who was resident in California in the late 1800s. Sierra Sulphur (Colias behrii) also bears his name and it was Behr who, in 1875, lamented the plight of Xerces Blue in San Francisco. W.H. Edwards was one of the greatest of nineteenth century lepidopterists. I wrote about him in “W.H. Edwards: The Man Behind the Hairstreak.” (American Butterflies: Volume 12 No.2)

King’s Hairstreak was named for H.L. King of Georgia who encountered this species, which was described in 1952 by A.B. Klots and H.K. Clench, in Savannah, Georgia. For a number of years, by the way, Coral Hairstreak was placed in the genus Harcencleansus which was based on Clench’s name, Harry Kendon Clench. (As a fellow Harry, I am sorry to see that name sunk in the synonymy.) Poling’s Hairstreak was named for O.C. Poling, who spent the early part of the 20th century searching for little-known species out west and had a number of butterfly and moth taxa named after him. I have yet to see either King’s or Poling’s Hairstreak, mainly because they both fly during a limited window in special habitats. I have seen Behr’s Hairstreak commonly out west and Edward’s Hairstreak still persists within a short drive from my home in Westchester County, New York, but it appears to become scarcer with each passing season.

Five hairstreaks in this genus are named for the places or habitats in which they occur. California Hairstreak (Satyrium californica) is common in that state although it lives in most states west of the Rockies and the first ones I saw were near Colorado Springs flying in the company of Colorado Hairstreaks (Hypaurotis crysalus). Acadian Hairstreak (Satyrium acadica) is named for the old French colony that included parts of Quebec, the Maritime provinces and northern Maine. (The people who lived in Acadia were forced to relocate to Louisiana after the French and Indian war and “Acadians” was corrupted to “Cajuns.”) Acadian Hairstreaks are found in Maine but their range is certainly not limited to old Acadia. They, too, still occur near my home in Westchester County, although they are also declining. Sylvan Hairstreak (Satyrium sylvinus) is simply named for the Latin word for “woods” as in Pennsylvania