

# **MORE THAN A BOTANIST: WILLIAM BARTRAM'S IMPACT UPON THE HISTORY OF COLONIAL GEORGIA**

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This paper received the Hines Award. It was written for Dr. Shirley's Senior Seminar course.

Georgia's early history is full of remarkable individuals and events. Most people know of the founding of the colony by James Oglethorpe, Georgia's involvement in the Revolutionary War, and the drafting of the Constitution. There are many influential people in early Georgia history, however, that have gone relatively unnoticed. While much attention is devoted to politics, warfare, and religion in the study of Georgia history, very few historians have ventured into the realm of natural history in Georgia. As one of the first American naturalists, William Bartram traveled throughout much of Georgia, documenting his explorations and providing some of the earliest descriptions of flora and fauna, Native American life, and colonial Georgian life during the early Revolutionary period.

Bartram was not the first to study the land and wildlife of Georgia. The first to do so were the early explorers of the sixteenth century from Spain and France, such as Hernando de Soto and Jean Ribault.<sup>i</sup> As time progressed and Georgia became colonized and inhabited, exploration continued, especially into the backcountry.<sup>ii</sup> In the latter half of the seventeenth century, explorers such as Henry Woodard and James Moore traveled throughout Georgia exploring its rivers and tributaries.<sup>iii</sup> Most of these exploratory missions were cartographical, however, and many of the details of these early Georgian adventures were poorly recorded or have been lost.<sup>iv</sup> Thus, they are of very limited use in the study of Georgia's natural history.

Due to the fact that very few individuals had intentionally explored America with scientific purposes, naturalism was a relatively new field in the United States in the eighteenth century, and in early Georgia it was no different. One of the earliest naturalists of the Southeast was Mark Catesby, an English naturalist who focused his studies mainly in the Carolinas and in Florida. Nevertheless, Catesby did explore the Georgian coast in the 1720s, mainly focusing on avian life there. His work

*Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands*, is the first published account of the flora and fauna of the United States.<sup>v</sup> Another notable early naturalist of Georgia was Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck, a young German colonist who traveled to Georgia with a group of Salzburger pilgrims in 1736. Von Reck kept a detailed diary of his Georgian experience, especially noting Native American life and native flora and fauna. While von Reck focused primarily on Georgia, his 145 page work was lost for over two centuries, and only in the past thirty years was it rediscovered in the Royal Library of Copenhagen.<sup>vi</sup> Consequently, his mark on Georgia's natural history has remained relatively miniscule.<sup>vii</sup>

The next, and greatest, early Georgia naturalist was William Bartram, who explored Georgia in the 1770s. Bartram was born in 1739 in Kingsessing, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia. As the son of John Bartram, a noted botanist and horticulturalist, William was immersed in the study of nature and the outdoors. His father proved to be his greatest influence, even though their relationship was not always a warm one.<sup>viii</sup> As America's "first true naturalist"<sup>ix</sup> John provided William with the instruction and experience that would come to benefit him for the rest of his life. At an early age, William began sketching some of his father's specimens, and he showed great promise in the field.<sup>x</sup> William, however, was pressed by his father to pursue an education and to get into business, so that he would not be as limited in vocation as his father.<sup>xi</sup> In a letter to his good friend Peter Collinson, John Bartram expressed his worry that William was destined to the field of naturalism because "botany and drawing [are] his darling delight.... [I] am afraid that he can't settle to any business else."<sup>xii</sup> Although William attempted to work in several different fields of business, including warehouse clerk and printing press operator, he never felt comfortable doing such and decided upon naturalism as a profession.<sup>xiii</sup>

William's career as a naturalist began in 1765, when his father received a commission from King George III to be the royal botanist in the colonies. William accompanied his father on an expedition of the Southeast, visiting Charleston, Augusta, Savannah, and the St. John's River. During this southern expedition, William tried his hand at indigo farming, a venture which "drove his father to great straits" and ultimately ended in failure.<sup>xiv</sup> He also assisted surveyor William deBrahm in mapping the coast of Florida until they were shipwrecked.<sup>xv</sup> Despite

the disastrous outcomes, both of these exploits gave William the foundation he needed in both botany and travel to establish himself as a naturalist and explorer.

As a result of his skill in drawing, some of Bartram's sketches were passed on to Dr. John Fothergill of England, an established enthusiast of plants and their medicinal purposes, by the Bartram family's good friend Peter Collinson.<sup>xvi</sup> Fothergill was extremely impressed with the quality of Bartram's work, and upon receiving a request to finance a botanical expedition to Florida for Bartram, Fothergill obliged. The trip was planned and scheduled, thus launching William into his career of naturalism.

In the spring of 1773, Bartram set out from Philadelphia to explore the Southeast. Throughout his expeditions, he relied heavily upon his father's connections and acquaintances, which he had gained through his previous travels, for hospitality and assistance.<sup>xvii</sup> Bartram's travels began in Savannah, Georgia, and from there he moved south toward the St. John's River. After spending some time exploring the Georgian coast, Bartram turned northward to Augusta and explored some of central Georgia, including the Ocmulgee area. Bartram then returned to the coast, exploring the Altamaha River region, including St. Simon's Island and Fort Frederica. In addition to exploring Georgia and northern Florida, Bartram also traveled northward into the Carolinas and westward, eventually traveling all the way to the Mississippi River, where he contracted an unidentifiable illness.<sup>xviii</sup> After returning to Georgia in 1774 to further explore the Native American tribes of the Cherokee and Creek Indians, Bartram returned home in January of 1777, a few months before the death of his father.<sup>xix</sup>

Upon his return home, Bartram compiled his notes on his travels and searched for a publisher. In 1777, his journeys were published under the lengthy title *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws*. Bartram's *Travels* provides a rich account of his exploration of the Southeast, detailing his adventures vividly from location to location. The work rose in popularity, especially in the growing Romantic period of literature, and many Romantic writers looked to his *Travels* for inspiration for their own works.<sup>xx</sup> As a result of its popularity, *Travels* was widely published and was even trans-

lated into several languages, causing Bartram's work to have a very large influence upon the study of natural history, especially that of Georgia.<sup>xxi</sup> In particular, Bartram's journeys shed new light on the flora and fauna of Georgia, Native American life of the area, and colonial life during the Revolutionary period.

Although Bartram's work extends into the realms of anthropology and cartography, he was a naturalist by heart and by trade, and the study of flora and fauna remained his primary purpose throughout his extensive adventures. The chief reason for Bartram's expedition through Georgia was to investigate plant and animal life for his patron, Dr. John Fothergill. In a letter to Bartram in September 1773, Fothergill instructed him to "keep a little journal, marking the soil, situation, plants in general [,] remarkable animals, where found, and the several particulars relative to them as they cast up....Mark the places [the plants] grow in, under shade or in the open country."<sup>xxii</sup> Unfortunately for the modern world, all of Bartram's original journals have been lost, and only two of his manuscript volumes were published in 1943.<sup>xxiii</sup> Nevertheless, Bartram's *Travels* provide modernity with several detailed descriptions of the natural organisms of early Georgia.

Botany was Bartram's area of expertise, and he voluminously described countless species of plant life in Georgia and the Southeast. In addition to describing a vast variety of botanical life, Bartram was the first to discover several new species in the area, such as *Hydrangea quercifolia*. His description of this plant illustrates the exquisite and deliberate detail which he poured into all of his documentation:

I observed here a very singular and beautiful shrub, which I suppose is a species of Hydrangia (H. Quercifolia.) It grows in coppices or clumps near or on the banks of rivers and creeks; many stems usually arise from a root, spreading itself greatly on all sides by suckers or offsets; the stems grow five or six feet high, declining or diverging from each other, and are covered with several barks or rinds....The

branches are crooked or  
wreathe about horizontally and  
these again divide, forming oth-  
ers which terminate with large  
heavy panicles or thyrsi of flow-  
ers....The leaves which clothe  
the plants are very large, pin-  
natifid or palmated and serrat-  
ed, or toothed, very much  
resembling the leaves of some  
of our Oaks...<sup>xxiv</sup>

In addition to *Hydrangea quercifolia* Bartram described 357 other plant species in his *Travels*.<sup>xxv</sup> Of these descriptions, 130 have been classified as new discoveries at that time.<sup>xxvi</sup> One of his most influential plant discoveries was the Feverbark Tree (*Bignonia pinckneya*), which was later used in the Civil War for treatment of malaria.<sup>xxvii</sup>

While all of these species were not found in Georgia, Bartram's detailed descriptions of the early flora of Georgia are unparalleled by any of his contemporaries, and they provided the foundation for not only Southeastern botany, but for American botany for many years to come.<sup>xxviii</sup> His work influenced individuals such as Benjamin Smith Barton (1766-1815), considered by many to be the first academic botanist in America.<sup>xxix</sup> The French botanist Andre Michaux (1746-1802) also significantly relied upon Bartram's work, which resulted in many of Bartram's discoveries reaching the European continent.<sup>xxx</sup>

In addition to studying botany on his expedition through the Southeast, Bartram also heavily documented animal life. After a detailed examination of his writings, however, it is apparent that Bartram was not as skilled in zoology as he was in botany.<sup>xxxi</sup> Nevertheless, his writings and sketches provide some of the earliest descriptions of Georgian wildlife. In particular, Bartram focused on three main categories of animal life: birds, aquatic creatures, and reptiles.

As a bird enthusiast, Bartram's enamor for aviary creatures is quite evident. Throughout his travels, Bartram identified over 215 species of Southeastern birds. Some of the most notable Georgian aviary species recorded were the Sandhill Crane, the Passenger Pigeon, several species of eagles, the Anhinga (also known as the "snake bird") and several other coastal birds, and

the Common Crow. Concerning the crow, Bartram showed such dedication to his study of birds that he actually reared a young crow from its hatching. In his description of raising and training this crow (which he called "Tom"), Bartram describes the bird as if it were a human, with character traits and intelligence:

This was a bird of happy temper and good disposition. He was tractable and benevolent, docile and humble, whilst his genius demonstrated extraordinary acuteness and lively sensations. All these good qualities were greatly in his favor, for they procured him friends and patrons, even among *men*, whose society and regard contributed to illustrate the powers of his understanding. But, what appeared most extraordinary, he seemed to have the wit to select and treasure up in his mind, and the sagacity to practice, that kind of knowledge which procured him the most advantage and profit.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Although unconventional, Bartram's methods of ornithology reaped great benefits. In addition to successfully studying flight patterns, nesting seasons, and mating rituals of several species of birds, Bartram had the rare opportunity to see several species which have since gone extinct, such as the Carolina Parakeet.<sup>xxxiii</sup> He also correctly identified the presence of the King Vulture, a species which until recently had been thought only to reside in Central and South America, in southern Georgia.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

While some of these birds are incorrectly identified or misnamed, this problem was to be expected in that era due to lack of advanced technology and identification procedures.<sup>xxxv</sup> Despite these errors, it is quite spectacular that Bartram was able to make as many identifications as he did without the aid of binoculars or any other optical enhancement, and his observations laid the groundwork for many of his successors, such as Alexander Wilson, known as the "Father of Ornithology."<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Bartram's *Travels* was so influential to the history of ornithology that Elliot Coues, an ornithologist of the late nineteenth century, identified Bartram's work as "the starting point of a distinctly American school of ornithology."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

While fascinated with ornithology, Bartram also documented aquatic life with great detail. This probably stems from the fact that much of his food supply during his journeys came through fishing. Much like his descriptions of birds, Bartram's nomenclature for fish and other aquatic creatures is sometimes inaccurate, and many of the names have come to signify a completely different species in contemporary times. For instance, when Bartram describes "trout" fishing in southern Georgia and northern Florida, he is in fact discussing the Large-mouth bass. In addition to the bass, Bartram gives magnificent descriptions of freshwater specimens such as the crayfish and the gold-fish (Bartram's Minnow), and he gives an excellent depiction of the Bream:

It is as large as a man's hand, nearly oval and thin, being compressed on each side; the tail is beautifully formed; the top of the head and back, of an olive green, besprinkled with russet specks; the sides of a sea green, inclining to azure....The belly is of a bright scarlet red, or vermillion, darting up rays of fiery streaks into the pearl on each side....They are a voracious fish, and are easily caught with a suitable bait.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

While most of Bartram's writings deal with freshwater species of aquatic life in Georgia, he also describes several coastal Georgian saltwater species, including the Red Drum, the Spotted Sea-Trout, the Black Drum, the Sheepshead, the Flounder, and several types of rays and skates.

In addition to birds and fish, Bartram also provided some of the earliest descriptions of Southeastern reptiles, including alligators, tortoises, and snakes. Concerning alligators, Bartram saw them throughout southeastern and coastal Georgia, particularly in the area of the Okefinokee Swamp, although he noted that they could not be found north of Augusta.<sup>xxxix</sup> His descrip-

tions of these creatures are quite magnificent, so much so, they are often discredited as being exaggerated. An account of alligator activity on the St. John's River gives an example of such depictions:

Behold [the alligator]....His enormous body swells. His plaited tail, brandished high, floats upon the lake. The waters like a cataract descend from his opening jaws. Clouds of smoke issue from his dilated nostrils. The earth trembles with his thunder....They suddenly dart upon each other. The boiling surface of the lake marks their rapid course...The water becomes thick and colored. Again they rise; their jaws clap together, re-echoing through the deep surrounding forests. The shores and forests resound [their] dreadful roar.<sup>xi</sup>

His depictions of the alligator also include numerous attacks on himself and his vessels. In more than one instance, Bartram describes himself as being surrounded by several of the creatures whose sole intent is devouring him. In typical Bartram fashion, these accounts are very dramatic, including one instance when he was only able to "dispatch him by lodging the contents of [his] gun in [the alligator's] head."<sup>xli</sup>

Such an incredible description of these creatures has caused many scholars to doubt the accuracy of the details of Bartram's accounts. His authenticity is further hampered by his consistent flaws in measurements as well as other descriptive errors. Furthermore, no such behavior has accurately been recorded in the present day, although some isolated accounts have been documented.<sup>xlii</sup> Nevertheless, some scholars credit Bartram's account of these reptiles as being very plausible. Naturalist Francis Harper writes that she has "seen the 'tail brandished high' and [has] fairly felt how 'the earth trembles with his thunder.' If [she has] missed the 'clouds of smoke' (poetic license for vapor) issuing from his nostrils, it may be because [her] observations have been far more limited than



Bartram's."<sup>xliii</sup> Harper also notes that there have been “well-authenticated accounts” of alligator attacks in the Okefinokee Swamp similar to the ones that Bartram describes even more than a hundred years after his expedition.<sup>xliv</sup>

In addition to alligators, Bartram was also fascinated with a variety of species of snakes. He documented several varieties of serpents, including the Riband Snake, the Chicken Snake, the Bull Snake, the Coach-Whip Snake, and Glass Snake; however, Bartram seemed particularly intrigued by the American Rattlesnake. Throughout his exploits, he described several instances of close encounters with these creatures, giving accounts of their beauty and terror. Some of his depictions of the rattlesnake describe it as being upwards of six feet in length.<sup>xlv</sup> His descriptions of the rattlesnake provided a basis for the study of these creatures, noting their habitats, characteristics, and anatomical structure.<sup>xlvi</sup> Bartram was an avid protector of this species in the midst of a world which was terrified of these snakes, and he promised to never “be accessory to the death of a rattlesnake.”<sup>xlvii</sup> His example sparked the beginning of an early conservation movement to protect this indigenous creature of Georgia.<sup>xlviii</sup>

While Bartram's legacy deals primarily with flora and fauna and his impact upon the world of naturalism, he provides some of the earliest depictions of colonial life not only in Georgia, but also throughout the entire Southeast. This aspect of the documentation of his travels made such a significant mark upon the early history of Georgia, some scholars consider it the most valuable information Bartram left to his posterity. Historians Waselkov and Braund argue that “although it was not the original purpose of his travels, one can argue that William Bartram's greatest contribution was neither his botanical discoveries nor his graceful drawings, but his consummate portrait of the eighteenth-century Southeast and its inhabitants.”<sup>xlix</sup>

One of the primary reasons that Bartram's details of early Georgian life are so valuable is his impartiality in reporting. He was a complete outsider to the world of the Southeast, “neither government official nor deerskin trader, not southern colonist or land speculator—with no direct interest in the trade.”<sup>1</sup> Another cause for Bartram's objectivity in describing Georgian individuals was his background. As a naturalist, he viewed people as being objects of study, noting all of their characteristics,

both good and bad. Just like a deer was no better than a pine tree, neither was a colonial merchant better than a Cherokee Indian. At the same time, Bartram's Quaker background also affected his depictions of southern individuals. He tended to view people compassionately and with open eyes, much like God views humanity.<sup>li</sup>

Bartram's impartiality to humans greatly assisted him in his interpretation of colonial Georgian life. The first aspect of his notation of the Georgian people was his descriptions of the culture, mannerisms, and lifestyle of Georgia's coastal residents. Throughout his journeys, he made many acquaintances, almost all of whom were very agreeable in manner. In describing Georgia's inhabitants, it is important to note that Bartram never lost a connection between civilization and the nature in which it resided.<sup>lii</sup> For instance, he liked to describe individuals who coincided with nature, such as a fly-fisherman, or a farmer, noting their dependence upon the natural world for their existence and their way of life.<sup>liii</sup>

When portraying coastal Georgia's inhabitants, Bartram described most of the people whom he met as being quite kind, dignified, and very friendly, offering up their homes, food, and service to aid him in his journeys.<sup>liv</sup> Just south of St. Simon's Island, Bartram describes an encounter with a fisherman, who, despite Bartram's persistent urgings, compelled him to stay and dine with him, offering him local fare and hospitality.<sup>lv</sup>

Apart from the Georgia coast, Bartram also described the inhabitants of the Georgia backcountry, which mostly consisted of hunters, trappers, and traders. During his travels, Bartram often journeyed along with these individuals, who served both as guides and instructors in survival in the wilderness. These traders also served as liaisons between Bartram and the Indian tribes which he encountered throughout his journeys. In addition to noting the people's genuine nature, Bartram also described the layouts of cities and forts, briefly describing their histories and developments. Some of these places include Fort Frederica, Augusta, Darien, and Savannah.

Another important aspect of Bartram's depiction of colonial life was his interpretation of the American Revolution, an event which was in full swing during his Georgia travels. Bartram's Quaker background played a major part in determining his views on the impending war, and his devotion to peace and mercy are evident in his writings as he described himself as

being “of the Christian sect of the people called Quakers, and consequently am against War and violence, in any form or manner whatever.”<sup>lvi</sup> Bartram is noticeably quiet about the American Revolution in his *Travels*, and this is probably due to this fact. Secondly, the Battle of Lexington was not fought until two weeks after he departed on his tour of the Cherokee and Creek Indian country.<sup>lvii</sup> Consequently, due to the facts that news traveled very slowly during this time period and that Bartram was extremely isolated from the civilized world, he would have had no news regarding the military beginnings of the war for quite some time.

Although he was not outspoken toward the War by any means, many of Bartram’s friends were very polarized regarding the American Revolution. Three of his Georgian acquaintances, Benjamin Andrew of Midway, Lachlan McIntosh of Darien, and James Spalding of St. Simon’s Island, were all not only very vocal about the Revolution but also very involved. Andrew and McIntosh, both of whom served as Bartram’s hosts, were ardent patriots, serving in roles of council and support to the American cause.<sup>lviii</sup> Spalding, however, remained loyal to the British crown, and was eventually banished from the colony for being a Tory.<sup>lix</sup>

Because of the fact that most of Bartram’s close associates were involved in some way with the American Revolution, he could scarcely uphold the position of neutrality which he so passionately preached. In fact, while Bartram publicly denounced the War and the Revolution, most scholars agree that Bartram quietly supported the Americans in their revolt from the British Empire in his private collections. In his journals he ascribed Charles Thomson, one of his tutors and mentors, as instilling into his mind “republican principles.”<sup>lx</sup> Similarly, he also dedicated one of his books to Thomas Mifflin, one of the Revolution’s leaders.<sup>lxi</sup> After Bartram’s return to Philadelphia in 1777, he and the rest of the Bartram family actively supported the Revolution, voluntarily taking the “Affirmation of Allegiance and Fidelity” for Pennsylvania’s Revolutionary General Assembly in August 1778.<sup>lxii</sup>

Despite his hesitancy to publicly support the Revolution during his *Travels*, Bartram’s backing of the rebel cause reportedly resulted in his service in a small rebel regiment in southern Georgia in early 1776. Bartram’s friend Lachlan McIntosh was now leading the rebel military forces in this area, and an invita-

tion was extended to Bartram to help repel a British invasion from St. Augustine. Bartram reportedly accepted this position, according to George Ord, one of Bartram's biographers:

In 1776, just at the commencement of the Revolutionary War, and while on his return from Florida to Georgia, Mr. Bartram volunteered and joined a detachment of men, raised by Gen. Lochlan [sic] McIntosh, to repel a supposed invasion of that state from St. Augustine by the British; he was offered a lieutenant's commission if he would remain, but the report which led him to volunteer his services having proved false, the detachment was disbanded, and Mr. Bartram resumed his travels.<sup>lxiii</sup>

According to most historians, while this account does not seem to line up with his Quaker, pacifist views, "there seems to be no good reason for questioning the trustworthiness of this statement."<sup>lxiv</sup> This is evident in his refusal to enlist in the Continental Army. He could justify "volunteering to oppose a threat to his friends, but His Quaker conscience would not let him become a professional in the business of war."<sup>lxv</sup> Thus, Bartram's direct involvement with the American Revolutionary War came to an end.

In addition to examining flora and fauna and colonial life throughout Georgia and the Southeast, Bartram was fascinated with Native American culture and recorded a multitude of descriptions of the native Georgian people. Whether or not his patron, John Fothergill, had intended it, "Bartram made the study of the southern Indians one of his primary goals and quickly progressed far beyond his patron's inaccurate views of Native Americans."<sup>lxvi</sup> While Bartram was not the first or primary observer of Southern Indians, his studies of them have greatly assisted researchers in better understanding these Native Americans during the late colonial period.<sup>lxvii</sup>

His examination of Georgian Native Americans is quite valuable for several reasons. First of all, Bartram's impartiality

plays a major part in the accuracy of his descriptions. While Bartram viewed Native Americans in the same manner as British colonials, many of his contemporaries, “due to ignorance and prejudice—held Native American societies in low repute.”<sup>lxxviii</sup> Even John Bartram had a negative view toward the Indian peoples, arguing that the best way of establishing peace with the “barbarous Indians is to bang them stoutly and make them sensible that we are men whom they for many years despised as women.”<sup>lxxix</sup> This is probably due to the fact that William’s grandfather had been killed by a Native American.<sup>lxxx</sup> Unlike most of his contemporaries, however, Bartram did not “simply presume that the Indians were inferior intellectually or morally.”<sup>lxxxi</sup> This sense of neutral observation that makes his descriptions so valuable is quite remarkable given the fact that he was immersed in a world full of anti-Native sentiments.

Secondly, he was willing to be a part of their culture, living and interacting with the Natives on a daily basis, not merely observing them from afar. For almost 10 years, Bartram interacted with the southern Indians, and they held him in high esteem, welcoming him in to their cultures and ceremonies. He was so closely involved with the Seminole Indians of Florida, their chief, Cowkeeper of Alachua, gave him the honorary title of “Puc-Puggy,” or the “Flower Hunter.”<sup>lxxxii</sup> This relationship was not merely limited to the Seminoles, however, and Bartram enjoyed such close association with all the Indian tribes he encountered, providing him with an insider’s view of Native American life.

The first category of Bartram’s observations of Native Americans is their interactions with the colonists. Throughout his years of travel, Bartram was witness to many exchanges between Indians and white people, some of which were peaceful while others ended in bloodshed. One of the most important interactions between Native Americans and Georgian colonists on which Bartram reported was the New Purchase Cession in May 1773, and he is the chief primary source regarding this event.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> This agreement between the Creeks, Cherokees, and the colony of Georgia ceded over two million acres of Native American land to the colony in exchange for a cancellation of the Indians trade debts.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> As was the case in many instances, the white men used deceit, goods, and money to convince the Indians to cede their land. Bartram gives an example of this method in his account of the Congress:

The Creeks, on the other hand, being a powerful and proud spirited people, their young warriors were unwilling to submit to so large a demand, and their conduct evidently betrayed a disposition to dispute the ground by force of arms, and they could not at first be brought to listen to reason and amicable terms; however, at length, the cool and deliberate counsels of the ancient venerable chiefs, enforced by liberal presents of suitable goods, were too powerful inducements for them any longer to resist, and finally prevailed. The treaty concluded in unanimity, peace, and good order....The presents being distributed amongst the Indians, they departed, returning home to their towns.<sup>lxxv</sup>

Bartram then joined the survey party in their expedition to demarcate the boundary of the northern portion of the ceded territory. The Native American's displeasure at the Cession was soon displayed again, as they disputed the demarcation line set by the surveyor:

The surveyor having fixed his compass on the staff, and about to ascertain the course from our place of departure...just as he had determined upon the point, the Indian Chief came up, and observing the course he had fixed upon, spoke, and said it was not right; but that the course to the place was so and so, holding up his hand, and pointing. The surveyor replied, that he himself was certainly right, adding, that that little

instrument (pointing to the compass) told him so, which, he said, could not err. The Indian answered, he knew better, and that the little wicked instrument was a liar; and he would not acquiesce in its decisions, since it would wrong the Indians out of their land. This mistake (the surveyor proving to be in the wrong) displeased the Indians; the dispute arose to that height, that the Chief and his party had determined to break up the business, and return the shortest way home, and forbid the surveyors to proceed any farther: however, after some delay...the Chief became reconciled, upon condition that the compass should be discarded, and rendered incapable of serving on this business; that the Chief himself should lead the survey; and, moreover, receive an order for a very considerable quantity of goods.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

This instance was very typical of the times in terms of land disputes between whites and Natives, with the Indians often calling into question the measurements of the white surveyors and being quieted with goods and money.<sup>lxxvii</sup> In some instances, however, these disputes did end in bloodshed.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

Not only did Bartram study the Southern Indians' dealings with white people, but he also researched their cultures and mannerisms. While his *Travels* deals with the subject of the Native Americans of Georgia and the Southeast in great detail, much of the greatest detail regarding the Creeks and Cherokees can be found in Bartram's "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians," a series of questions and answers between himself and aspiring Philadelphia physician, Benjamin Smith Barton, who eventually became one of Bartram's successors in the field of natural history and anthropology.<sup>lxxix</sup>

While some Seminole influence could be seen in the southernmost extremities of Georgia, the Creeks and Cherokees were the two resident tribes of the state during the colonial period.<sup>lxxx</sup> From his first moments in the Southeast in 1773, Bartram documented the lives of these two tribes; however, most of his work concerning the Creeks and Cherokees was done in 1775-1776, after an agreement was made between warring Indian tribes, making it safe for him to travel throughout the area.<sup>lxxxi</sup> In his journals and diaries, Bartram describes every facet of the lives of the Creeks and Cherokees, including government, religion, architecture, entertainment, food and drink, and health issues.

Bartram describes the Cherokees as being some of the most ancient people in the region.<sup>lxxxii</sup> He also describes them as being the most advanced in terms of imitating the manners and customs of the white people.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Bartram notes that they were taller, fairer, and more robust than the Creeks, and were "by far the largest race of men [he had ever] seen."<sup>lxxxiv</sup> They are also described as being grave, steady, and deliberate in their thoughts and actions.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

On the contrary, the Creeks are a more recent race. Unlike the Cherokees, they are depicted as a harsher and more violent people. Bartram describes them as being "a proud, haughty, and arrogant race of men; they are however, brave and valiant in war, ambitious of conquest, restless and perpetually exercising their arms."<sup>lxxxvi</sup> As a result of their domineering manner, the Creeks controlled the Cherokee people, much to the dislike of the Cherokees who "do homage to the Muscogulges [Creeks] with reluctance, and are impatient under that galling yoke."<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

Through his studies of the Creek and Cherokee people, Bartram laid a firm foundation for the study of Georgian Native American history. Not only was he able to describe in detail the cultures of these two nations, but he also noted extensively on the ancient Indians, who built many mounds throughout Georgia, many of which Bartram visited, described, and marked their location.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> His views of the Indian, however, was so radical for his time, "his image of the Indian was too advanced for ready comprehension in 1791. Not until much later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did American readers begin to accept his version of the Indian."<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Overall, William Bartram made an incredible impact upon the history of colonial Georgia during the Revolutionary period



through his studies of flora and fauna, colonial life, and the Native Americans of the region. His writings and descriptions formed the basis for scholarship in these areas for years to come, laying the foundations for some of the “father figures” of these fields of study. Even in modern scholarship, Bartram’s writings are a cornerstone in the study of the Southeast. Not only is his work immensely useful; it is also fascinating. N. Bryllion Fagin describes Bartram’s work as a “genuine piece of literature...one of the important events in botanical history....in literary history,...[and in] nature description.”<sup>XC</sup> He provides a rich, full, and impartial view of life in Georgia as it was lived out: a picture of man and nature living together. The vision that he portrays of the state in the 1770s is clear, precise, and full of vivid detail, of which Bartram made a concentrated effort not to taint with presupposed ideas and notions. While he was not the first, nor the last, to comment on such subjects, William Bartram’s depictions of the people, plants, and animals of Revolutionary Georgia firmly place him in the company of Georgia’s chief early historians.

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FOOTNOTES

- ii Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, *Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States, 1528-1543* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), 21
- iii Here the term "backcountry" refers to the wilderness area of Georgia, west of the coastal civilizations. The "backcountry" was home to few white settlers and was composed of several Native American tribes as well as a vast array of wildlife.
- iiii Jayme A. Sokalow, *The Great Encounter: Native Peoples and European Settlers in the Americas, 1492-1800* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 174.
- iiV Martin Melosi, Ed., "Introduction," *The New Georgia Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, Volume 8: Environment* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 5.
- V George Frick, "Introduction," *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands*, Mark Catesby (Savannah, Beehive Press: 1974), 2.
- vi Kristian Hvidt, "Introduction," *Von Reck's Voyage: Drawings and Journal of Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck*, Kristian Hvidt, Ed. (Savannah, Beehive Press: 1980), 4.
- vii The impact of Von Reck's documentary of Georgia has yet to be fully realized. While preliminary investigations of his work show less detail and depth than Bartram, Von Reck's work will further solidify the study of naturalism in Southeastern American history.
- viii Robert M. Peck, "John Bartram, Botanist," *Bartram Heritage*

- Report*, Bartram Trail Conference, 1975. <http://www.bartramtrail.org/pages/frame2.html>.
- ix Helen Gere Cruickshank, Ed. *John and William Bartram's America: Selections from the Writings of the Philadelphia Naturalists* (New York: The Deven-Adair Company, 1957), 5, from *Pioneers of Science in America*, edited and revised by William Jay Youmans (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896).
- x Francis Harper, "Introduction," *The Travels of William Bartram: Naturalist Edition*, Francis Harper, Ed. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), xvii.
- xi Letter from John Bartram to Peter Collinson (1755) in Cruickshank, 11.
- xii *Ibid.*, 11.
- xiii Edward J. Cashin, "William Bartram in Georgia." *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*. Georgia Humanities Council and the University of Georgia Press, 2004. <http://galfe2.gsu.edu/cgi-bin/homepage.cgi?style=&id=a81bf9f9-1205725317-0300&cc=1>
- xiv Letter from John Bartram to Peter Collinson (June 1766). in Cruickshank, 12.
- xv Harper, *Travels*, xviii. Information regarding Bartram's Florida expedition is rare, and the details of the shipwreck and its aftermath were either not recorded or have been lost.
- xvi *Ibid.*, xix.
- xvii Edward J. Cashin, "William Bartram in Georgia." *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*. Georgia Humanities Council and the University of Georgia Press, 2004. <http://galfe2.gsu.edu/cgi-bin/homepage.cgi?style=&id=a81bf9f9-1205725317-0300&cc=1>
- xviii Peck, "William Bartram," *Bartram Heritage Report*, <http://www.bartramtrail.org/pages/frame2.html>. Bartram's exact illness is not known, although most scholars have attributed it to scarlet fever. Regardless of the nature of the disease, Bartram suffered terribly, including losing his sight periodically.
- xix *Ibid.*
- xx Harper, *Travels*, xxiii.
- xxi *Ibid.*, xxiii.
- xxii Letter from John Fothergill to William Bartram, September 4, 1773, *Bartram Papers*, 4:27.
- xxiii Harper, *Travels*, xx.

- xxiv William Bartram, *The Travels of William Bartram: Naturalist Edition*, Francis Harper, Ed. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 241-242.
- xxv David H. Rembert, Jr., "The Botanical Explorations of William Bartram in the Southeast," Bartram Trail Conference,  
<http://www.bartramtrail.org/pages/explor.html>.
- xxvi Ibid.
- xxvii Ibid.
- xxviii Cruickshank, 15.
- xxix Peck, "Advisor to Naturalists,"  
<http://www.bartramtrail.org/pages/frame2.html>.
- xxx Ibid.
- xxxi Harper, *Travels*, 379.
- xxxii Bartram, "Anecdotes of an American Crow," *Times*, 34:5230 (April 25, 1817), 2. In *America's Historical Newspapers, Archive of Americana* [database on-line] (American Antiquarian Society, 2004).  
[http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/HistArchive?p\\_action=doc&p\\_product=EANX&p\\_theme=ahnp&p\\_queryname=2999994&p\\_docid=11CAD65DB40E7638&p\\_docnum=2&p\\_nbid=G61S53POMTlwODQ5MDQ1Ny4zNzU0OTk6MT0xMzo2Ni4xMTAuMjEzLjcx&d\\_article\\_id=11CAD65DB40E7638&d\\_issue\\_id=11CAD65D894060B0&d\\_release=release\\_0204&d\\_db=EAN-LIVE](http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/HistArchive?p_action=doc&p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_queryname=2999994&p_docid=11CAD65DB40E7638&p_docnum=2&p_nbid=G61S53POMTlwODQ5MDQ1Ny4zNzU0OTk6MT0xMzo2Ni4xMTAuMjEzLjcx&d_article_id=11CAD65DB40E7638&d_issue_id=11CAD65D894060B0&d_release=release_0204&d_db=EAN-LIVE)
- xxxiii *Travels*, 92.
- xxxiv Cruickshank, 288.
- xxxv Peck, "Animal Life,"  
[http://www.bartramtrail.org/pages/Bartram\\_Trail/frame5.html](http://www.bartramtrail.org/pages/Bartram_Trail/frame5.html).
- xxxvi "Advisor to Naturalists,"  
<http://www.bartramtrail.org/pages/frame2.html>.
- xxxvii Elliott Coues, *Key to North American Birds* (New York: Estes and Lauriat, 1894), 20.
- xxxviii Bartram, *Travels*, 8.
- xxxix Ibid., 46.
- xl Ibid., 118.
- xli Ibid., 121.
- xlii Harper, *Travels*, 355.
- xliii Ibid., 355.

- xliv Ibid., 355.
- xlv Cruickshank, 245.
- xlvi Bartram drew several illustrations of the rattlesnake, and his drawings were used in the study of these reptiles for many years to come.
- xlvii Ibid., 248.
- xlviii Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Natures of John And William Bartram* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 142.
- xlx Waselkov and Braund, 23.
- l Ibid., 13.
- li Kerry S. Walters, "The 'Peaceable Disposition of Animals: William Bartram on the Moral Sensibility of Brute Creation,'" *Pennsylvania History* 56 (1989), 157-76.
- lii Peck, "The Travels: Two Bartram Themes, Nature and Civilization," *Bartram Heritage Report*, <http://www.bartramtrail.org/pages/Travels/frame3.html>.
- liii Ibid.
- liv Bartram, *Travels*, 15.
- lv Ibid., 62. This interaction occurred on the northernmost point of present-day Jekyll Island and is typical of the many exchanges Bartram held with locals throughout Georgia.
- lvi Francis Harper, "William Bartram and the American Revolution," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 97 (1953): 571.
- lvii *Travels*, 415.
- lviii Ibid., 416.
- lix Edward J. Cashin, *William Bartram and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 230.
- lx Slaughter, 196.
- lxi Ibid., 196.
- lxii Waselkov and Braund, 19.
- lxiii George Ord, *Biographical Sketch of William Bartram*. In J. and T. Doughty, *Cabinet of Natural History and American Rural Sports 2* (Philadelphia, 1832), i-vii.
- lxiv Harper, *Travels*, 416. It must be mentioned that controversy still abounds regarding the exact reasons for Bartram's service, its nature, and its duration. Some contend that Bartram's service merely consisted of scouting and directing the military expedition through the wilderness due to his experience in this area. Conversely, others, such as Cashin, argue that Bartram was actively involved in some type of skirmish. Regardless, evi-

dence shows that Bartram was involved in some sort of military expedition to aid Revolutionary forces.

lxv Cashin, 233.

lxvi Waselkov and Braund, 12.

lxvii The greatest observer of the Southern Indians was James Adair, an Indian trader. While his book, *History of the American Indians*, contains valuable information regarding the Native Americans of the South, Adair's interests as a deerskin trader can be noted throughout his work. Thus, Bartram's neutral position sometimes lends more accuracy to descriptions of these people. For more information on this debate, see Waselkov and Braund, 224.

lxviii Ibid., 16.

lxix Letter from John Bartram to Peter Collinson, October 23, 1763 in *Bartram Correspondence*, p. 611-12.

lxx Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *The Life and Travels of John Bartram: From Lake Ontario to the River St. John* (Gainesville, FL: University Presses of Florida, 1982), 7-8.

lxxi Waselkov and Braund, 12.

lxxii Bartram, *Travels*, 185.

lxxiii Harper, *Travels*, 372.

lxxiv Ibid., 33.

lxxv Ibid., 33.

lxxvi Ibid., 39-40.

lxxvii Waselkov and Braund, 39.

lxxviii Harper, *Travels*, 138. It should be noted that as a result of the Native Americans' displeasure with the New Purchase Cession, a group of Creek warriors invaded the newly ceded lands on Christmas Day 1773, murdering several white settlers in their raid.

lxxix Waselkov and Braund, 133. While some of the information in "Observations" overlaps with *Travels*, many of Bartram's descriptions of Southern Native Americans can only be found in this source. Interestingly enough, these "Observations" were lost for almost 50 years before they were found in Philadelphia; however, the original manuscripts have since been lost, and only two extant copies remain today.

lxxx It should be recognized that Bartram was one of the first researchers to show that the Seminoles were actually variants of the Lower Creek tribe of southern Georgia, who had been cast out of the Creek tribe in preceding years due to unruly behavior.



naturalists drew on William Bartram less for poetic inspiration than for his detailed and accurate natural history observations. Charles Darwin was foremost among them. Darwin became convinced of evolution, or transmutation, in the parlance of the day, just 14 years after. On Charles Darwin's reading of William Bartram's Travels. James T. Costa. Highlands Biological Station, 265 N. Sixth Street, Highlands, NC 28741 USA and. Department of Biology, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC 28723 USA. Sequoia Club. 2! At the end of the C Notebook (one. John and William Bartram, father and son botanists, had distinguished themselves as two of the most prominent men in the country. Their relationships with some of the most noted historical figures of the 18th century included Franklin, Jefferson, and Washington. These two men contributed to documenting the territory from New York to Florida as well as gathering some of the most unique species of plant life the country had to offer during this time. John and William's influence upon horticultural life spread from their own garden in Philadelphia all the way to England. In exploring the lives of