Bob Russo traces the history of most of his art accurately and with pride: museums and public buildings hold his work. His portrayals of William Bartram, once displayed at an interpretive center at the Clarks Hill (now the Strom Thurmond) Dam in South Carolina, are an exception. This art had a journey that resembles William Bartram’s brief plantation disaster of 1766 more than his memorable treks of the following decade.

In 1985, Russo, who lives near Atlanta, won a commission to create works depicting the history of the Savannah River valley between South Carolina and Georgia. Most of the art was to be in the form of panels that showed, among others, scenes from Native American life, the American Revolution, and colonial life in Augusta. Standing alone, beside a table, was a statue shaped from an eight-inch wood plank. Painted on both sides, the life-size effigy showed William Bartram studying a rabbit that lay on the table. A nearby plaque, showing Bartram seated with his sketchbook beneath a tree, described the significance his explorations.

Bob says that he researched Bartram in Philadelphia, found a Billy look-alike in Peachtree City, and used a road-killed cottontail to get a correct rabbit. The images he has retained show Bartram as a serious, sensitive student of nature. Pictures of his other creations depict their scenes with a strong emphasis on their characters. The Indian family is laughing; one can almost hear the joke. “I wanted a humanity to come across,” says Bob, “so that visitors would see the art and say ‘that’s just like me.’”

When I met Bob last year, he told me that he had lost track of these works’ whereabouts. He knew that they had lasted in the interpretive center for about ten years. A new manager assigned to the center by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers removed the art, however, and made the display hall into a meeting room.

Bob contacted Annette Carter, who had worked for the Corps. Her sleuthing led her to the McCormick County History Center in Willington. In a last-minute rescue, the county historical commission had taken the pieces from the center and stored them in a defunct cotton gin where it hoped to start a museum, according to Sara Jungst, president of the historical society (not the commission). During
Return to Bartram’s Garden: the Golden Evening-Primrose, *Oenothera grandiflora*

By Joel T. Fry
Curator, Bartram’s Garden, Philadelphia

The 2007 Bartram Trail Conference biennial meeting in Spanish Fort, Alabama provided a unique opportunity to re-introduce one of William Bartram’s most beautiful plant discoveries to Bartram’s Garden in Philadelphia.

While en route to a day of canoeing on the Bartram Canoe Trail, BTC members discovered Bartram’s evening-primrose blooming on the road from Stockton to Rice Creek Landing. With the aid of a trenching tool, I collected a healthy plant and took it to Philadelphia where it was bedded down for winter in the garden in front of the Bartram House.

William Bartram introduced the large-flower evening-primrose, *Oenothera grandiflora* growing in rich old fields at Tensaw in early August 1775, on the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, in the vicinity of modern Stockton. In Travels, Bartram described the discovery as “a new species of the *Oenothera… perhaps the most pompous and brilliant herbaceous plant yet known to exist.***

William was clearly taken with this flower. He collected seeds for Dr. Forthgill, which he sent from Mobile in late November 1775. He returned to his father’s garden in Philadelphia in January 1777 with additional seeds of the plant. *Oenothera grandiflora* was one of William Bartram’s major botanic and horticultural triumphs. William Bartram may have even coined the scientific name, *Oenothera grandiflora*, but the seeds sent to Forthgill and the seeds William planted at Bartram’s Garden both produced flowering plants, and it appears that seeds from Forthgill’s plants were eventually spread across Europe. In 1779 the Bartrams also went to Mount Vernon for George Washington.

The third herbaceous plant William Bartram collected from the Gulf Coast that appear in later years was *Cleome gyandra; farkleberry, and others. These have been sown in sheltered locations at Bartram’s Garden for the last 150 years. It seem to have become a common garden plant in Europe as a pot herb and flavoring. This plant can now be identified as *Cleome grandiflora*, cat’s whiskers or African spiderwisp, a plant widely cultivated in Africa as a pot herb and flavoring. *Cleome grandiflora* was certainly brought to North America by enslaved Africans as part of the luminary herd of *Oenothera grandiflora* growing in rich old fields at Tensaw in early August 1775, on the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, in the vicinity of modern Stockton.

By the early 19th century *Oenothera grandiflora* had found its way back under cultivation at Bartram’s Garden, and it appears in the 1807 Catalogue of the garden. William’s pompous plant remained in the family garden until about 1850, when the last Bartram heirs, Ann and Robert Carr were forced to sell out. In spite of its beauty, *Oenothera grandiflora* does not seem to have become a common garden plant in the US, and it has not grown at Bartram’s Garden for the last 50 years. It is particularly fitting to obtain plant material from nearly the original type location of William Bartram’s discovery.

In general, more is known about the woody plants grown by the Bartram family garden until about 1850, when the last Bartram heirs, Ann and Robert Carr were forced to sell out. In spite of its beauty, *Oenothera grandiflora* does not seem to have become a common garden plant in the US, and it has not grown at Bartram’s Garden for the last 50 years. It is particularly fitting to obtain plant material from nearly the original type location of William Bartram’s discovery.

"When John Hall left his position at the University of Alabama Museum Of Natural History, he was not leaving Bartram. Indeed, Hall, who has epitomized Bartram in scores of personal appearances and lectures, was on his way to an even richer involvement with the ‘traveller.’ A lifelong teacher who has logged three decades of service to Alabama’s citizens through his leadership in two museums, John Hall has become known for his personal reenactment of William Bartram. Garbed in the clothes of a Colonial explorer, he has carted chests, sacks, and baskets into dozens of classrooms and lecture halls to display key findings of the 18th century explorer and explain their significance.

It was at the Moundville Indian festival in the early 1980s where he first met reenactors. ‘We all became interested in the living history approach—a very effective and powerful teaching strategy,’ says Hall. ‘John started out impersonating one of Hernando de Soto’s soldiers. His wife Rosa [who then was one of his colleagues at the museum] later adopted the persona of a late 18th-century Creek woman complete with an authentic camp.

After a few years, John took an interest in Bartram and began impersonating him. ‘I had read [Bartram] some years before without realizing his charm or importance. Since I knew some of the same natural history stuff, I figured he would be easy to research. He turned out, of course, to be wonderfully interesting and complex and I have been following him around for years.’

John’s activities have hardly been limited the Bartram or the Colonial period, however. He has led excavations which have introduced scores of students to the methods and importance of archaeology. In addition, he has written master exhibit plans for Museum of Natural History. His work included the master interpretive plan for the site of Moundville, a major center of the Mississippian culture on the Black Warrior River in central Alabama. At that park, he constructed a detailed design of museum exhibits, Indian dioramas and more than a mile of nature trails.

In 2004, he assumed the position of the Director of the Black Belt Regional Museum at the University of West Alabama. Here he is organizing and opening a regional museum relating to the arts, culture and natural history of the Black Belt. His projects include the establishment of a Black Belt Garden—an arboratum and greenhouse devoted to the flora of the Black Belt.

John is also extending his role as a teacher. Under the sponsorship of the Pebble Hill Humanities Initiative of Auburn University, he presents a William Bartram lecture at multiple venues across the state.

We were amazed at the response to the Bartram activities. In 2007, John was asked to give a talk at Hampton Inn in Daphne (where a large Bartram sign is displayed) later adopted the persona of a late 18th-century Creek woman complete with an authentic camp.

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William Bartram in Highlands, North Carolina

By James T. Costa, Executive Director, Highlands Biological Station

William Bartram has come to Highlands, North Carolina at last...in spirit, at least. Bartram never ascended the Blue Ridge Escarpment on his celebrated trek into the southern mountains. He passed to the south through the Carolina upland and then turned north along the Little Tennessee River to Cowee and the Jore (Nantahal) mountains, not far from present-day Franklin, North Carolina. Other explorers of the day, like André Michaux, got a bit closer (notably, Michaux found mountain pepperbush, Clethra acuminata, between Cashiers and Highlands, NC). Bartram would have relished the opening up of the forests of the Highlands plateau, a landscape that recalls many memorable passages from Travels.

Visitors to Highlands now revel in the spirit of William Bartram by walking a trail that allows them to enjoy an array of botanic treasures assembled on the campus of the Highlands Biological Station. In his hundreds of miles of exploration in the southeast, Bartram discovered, described, and often rhymed over many lovely native plant species. Devotees of the Travels eager to see many of Bartram's "vegetable beauties" would ordinarily have to cover nearly as much ground as the Philadelphia himself to do so. Now they can visit the Highlands Biological Station and see thirty native species with a significant connection to William Bartram and/or his father John. Upland plants mix with piedmont species on this "Bartram Trail" that meanders throughout the grounds of the Station. The trail weaves in and out of the several native plant gardens on the campus, including the Highlands Botanical Garden, an approximately 11-acre garden featuring over 500 labeled native plants in a diversity of natural habitats, from upland woods to wetlands. Other plants on the trail are found in the Station's Cherokee garden, a fitting intersection of William Bartram with select plants of significance to the native people he befriended on his journey.

The HBS Bartram Trail begins at the Highlands Nature Center, located at 930 Horse Cove Road, just a half-mile from downtown Highlands, NC. In the Nature Center, visitors can view a small exhibit about William Bartram and his explorations in the area, and pick up an illustrated map and brochure of the HBS Bartram Trail. The new exhibit is a nice cross section of Bartram's diversity of field-oriented courses and workshops in the summer months that Bartramiotes might find of interest; see www.wcu.edu/hbs for this year's offerings and application information. See www.wcu.edu/hbs/Naturecenter.htm for hours of operation of the nature center.

An abbreviated PDF version of its Bartram Trail map is available at www.wcu.edu/hbs/Bartram.htm.

Bartram Trail Conference

2007 Biennial Meeting in Spanish Fort, Alabama
October 26–28, 2007

Lights appeared in the buildings of Mobile, less than ten miles across the bay from the Five Rivers Center in Spanish Fort, Alabama. On the waterside deck, clusters of Bartram followers cast a parting look at the full moon breaking over the pines that border the marsh and strolled into the dining room. Cheerful conversations began over seafood-laden plates. Old friends and newcomers dipped gumbo from their bowls and exchanged greetings and pleasantries.

Great to see you again.

How did you get interested in Bartram?

You are from Huntsville, I see.

I grew up right on the Bartram Trail. But I didn't know about him until I was in college.

Long drive from St. Augustine.

This is my first meeting.

When they had filled themselves, the members of the Bartram Trail Conference and their guests sat back to listen to Dr. Robin Fabel, Professor Emeritus of History at Auburn University and the leading authority on British West Florida. Dr. Fabel described life in the colony that William Bartram explored during his 1775 journey through Alabama and Louisiana. The British crown had taken over the colony from the French just twelve years earlier. The six thousand Europeans and Africans living there were outnumbered by Indians. "It was a rough place to live," said Fabel. "No place for aristocrats." Planters were largely men who had served in the French and Indian War. Many were absentee recipients of land grants who sent surrogates to grow indigo and tobacco and to harvest timber, turpentine and pitch for ship stores. Houses were modest; many had dirt floors. There were no plantation mansions. Not a single church was built in the eighteen years of British rule. Disease ran rampant, killing almost half of a regiment stationed in Mobile. On the following morning, participants assembled in the center's theater, where they heard a series of speakers. Dr. Greg Waselkov (University of South Alabama) portrayed the maps of the Colony of West Florida. He noted that the British allowed no legal settlements north of the plantation of Major Farman, not far upstream from Mobile.

Tom Hallock (University of South Florida, St. Petersburg) spoke about "William Bartram: A Life in Letters." In his letters, said Hallock, Bartram discussed topics of botany and public affairs and gave a chronology of his activity, but his writing was not intimate. We get an idea of his "behind-the-scenes" influence, but no real insight into his psyche.

Joel Fry focused on Bartram's Evening Primrose, Oenothera grandiflora, which Bartram discovered on his trip up the Tensaw Delta. Jim Kautz closed the morning's session by discussing "What I Learned by Following William Bartram across the South and into the Tensaw." A bus waiting in the parking lot carried the group to the Weeks Bay Estuarine Research Reserve, where a stroll on the boardwalk took them into a wetland forest on the edge of Mobile Bay before they rode farther south to the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. On their return trip, they enjoyed an evening walk through the Weeks Bay pitcher plant bog.

Canoes waited at the Rice Creek landing on Sunday morning to be launched by Je- remy Doss, Conservation Enforcement Officer for the Tensaw Delta, the members paddled a portion of the Bartram Canoe Trail. The two trails made their way into a shallow creek in the heart of the delta where they waded through ankle-deep water to view the largest bald cypress in the state.

Congratulations and heartfelt thanks go to Kathryn Braun, planner of the biennial meeting of the Bartram Trail Conference, for a most memorable and successful event. Our thanks also go to the Alabama Five Rivers Conference Center for hosting us.
By Nancy Rohr

William Bartram looked for the high here, too, in between the swampy lands. The orange groves and live oaks were metto abounded along the St. Johns River hundred years ago. Palm trees and palmsmeary-mouthed, shrieking boys.) All by a band of bug-eyed, sticky-fingered, leaders a break. (Mothers are undaunted She “just happened” to have her copy of attention, but after one retort was dissolved and peace seemed to be restored. Nothing seemed to interest the boys nothing?  William Bartram had few suppers trying to overturn his canoe. He had alligators appeared. William Bartram was attacked on all sides, several alligators trying to overturn his canoe. He had landed many enough fish for dinner, but now to return to his campsite. One old darning one, about twelve feet in length, kept close to me, and when I stepped on shore and turned about in order to drive him up my canoe, he rushed up near my feet. Maybe it was a good thing the boys didn’t have canoes after all, I mentioned.

The reading continued through the alligator feeding frenzy and the bears. Yet in the morning Bartram awoke to perfect peace. After their reader suggested it might be now a good time to move their sleeping bags a little closer together, the boys, avoiding looking out into the gathering darkness, went to bed, but perhaps not to sleep, right away. We also awoke to perfect peace. Those boys made the acquaintance of William Bartram and the real backwoods of Florida that night. In the morning as usual the boys passed the campsite, we walked, all tangled and huddled together as close as they could get to one another, to us they looked like—what else—nestling baby alligators in their deaths, Nancy Rohr is a Bartram Trail Confer- ence member who lives in Huntsville, Al- abama. Her story is one of a series of sto- ries of members’ visits to Bartram sites. *Readers are invited to send their stories turned in Pensacola. As their involvement in club activities and environmental activities, some as profes- sionals. A registered nurse by profession, Caro- lyn joined a garden club in Cherry Point, North Carolina in 1966. When her husband’s band deployed to Viet Nam in 1968, she moved back to her birth state of Florida and joined the garden club in Pensacola. As her involvement in club activities and her reputation as an activist grew, she was elected to the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs State Board of Directors in 1985, and served as its member and the Florida State Park System. All of her four children are involved in environmental activities, some as profes- sionals.

Lost in Carolina, continued from page 1 the two years of commission ownership, sponsorship, and protection. The florida Gardener is supported by the Garden Fund, and water damaged others. The histori- cal society then took over the remaining pieces and displayed them in its new muse- um. Unfortunately, the painted wood panel of Bartram and the small plaque appear to be missing. The only piece left is the board. She has been Florida’s Bartram Trails Chairman for more than fifteen years. A writer, photographer and painter, she has edited The Florida Gardener, working for 12 years as Assistant Editor and 6 years as Editor. Presently, she is Corre- sponding Secretary of the Federation and has worked with its Youth Nature Camp at Wekiva Springs State Park. Carolyn has attended four BTC meet- ings since 1987.

Garden club members have led and supported the Bartram Trail Conference. Carolyn Whitmer of Pensacola, Florida epitomizes her connection and importance.

Carolyn’s association with William Bartram began in 1985, when she worked and traveled with Van Blanchard to conduct “Bartram Footprints” tours sponsored by the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs. These tours, one every two years, spanned the extent of William Bartram’s journeys from Florida to North Carolina and as far as the Mississippi River. They included a trip to Bartram’s Garden in Perdido Key, Florida.

Moved by the “great legacy of the beauty of our land” that William Bartram provided through his writings and draw- ings, she became committed to encourag- ing others to know of his contributions. Carolyn’s environmental activism ex- tends beyond gardens. She is elected to save the Perdido Key (Bear) Prairie near Pensacola. This effort resulted in the ac- quisition of about 4000 acres (including one of the prairies developed by the state) by the Florida State Park System. All of her four children are involved in environmental activities, some as profes- sionals.

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By Kathryn Brandt President, Bartram Trail Conference

In September 2007, the Bartram Trail Conference lost a loyal friend with the death of Dr. Edward Joseph Cashin, Jr. Dr. Cashin died suddenly in Atlanta while do- ing research for a book. Born in Augusta in 1927, Dr. Cashin spent his life to the study of Georgia history. He joined the faculty of Augusta State University (then Augusta College) in 1969. He retired in 1996 and then served as the founding director of the Center for the Study of Georgia History.

An outstanding teacher and a productive and highly respected scholar, Dr. Cashin was the author of numerous books, including William Bartram and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier. He also provided the entry on William Bartram for the on-line New Georgia Encyclopedia.

Ed Cashin with Dot Jones in Westborough during the 2005 Bartram Trail Biennial Conference.

Biography

Carolyn Whitmer

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