

The Traveller

A Newsletter of the Bartram Trail Conference

Spring, 2008

Bartram Art: Lost in Carolina



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

continued on page 6

By Jim Kautz

Bob Russo traces the history of most of this 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 Au-

gusta. 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



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 discovered 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. Fothergill, 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*. The seeds sent to Fothergill and the seeds William planted at Bartram's Garden both produced flowering plants, and it appears that seeds from Fothergill's plants were eventually spread across Europe. In 1779 the Bartrams also sent both seeds and plants of the new plant to France. The original success with cultivation at Bartram's Garden was short-lived, and in 1788 William reported that the plants in Philadelphia "grew in equal

perfection in the open garden, sowing themselves as an indigenous Plant; but through inattention we have lost it."

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 150 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. As trees and shrubs were their major business, they are more often recorded in letters, plant lists and printed catalogues. But William Bartram observed a number of interesting herbaceous plants on his travels, and a few made it back to Philadelphia. *Oenothera grandiflora* is one of three interesting herbaceous plants from the Gulf Coast that appear in later years at Bartram's Garden.

William Bartram collected a "singularly beautiful" plant on Pearl Island that he called "Mimosa virgata" (now identified as *Desmanthus illinoensis*, prairie bundle-flower). William was probably the first botanist to observe the plant. The mimosa was brought back to Bartram's Garden in 1777. In 1792 a plant of "Mimosa virgata" went to Mount Vernon for George Washington.

The third herbaceous plant William Bartram collected from the Gulf Coast was actually an introduced plant under cultivation. "Near the mouth of the beautiful *Taensasapoa*" Bartram observed "a species of *Cleome*, (*Cleome lupinifolia*) this plant possesses a very strong scent, somewhat like Gum Assafetida, notwithstanding which



the inhabitants give it a place in soups and sauces." This plant can now be identified as *Cleome gyandra*, cat's whiskers or African spiderwisp, a plant widely cultivated in Africa as a pot herb and flavoring. *Cleome gyandra* was certainly brought to North America by enslaved Africans as part of their preferred diet, and at least in this part of Louisiana it flourished. Like the evening-primrose and mimosa, William Bartram brought seed of this new cleome back to Philadelphia where it remained in cultivation while the Bartram family garden lasted.

Late October proved to be a great time to gather seed in southern Alabama, and seeds of a number of Bartram plants were also gathered in a short time, all growing along D'Olive Creek, just behind the Hampton Inn in Daphne (where a large alligator also basked in the late October sun). These included yellow buckeye; Alabama supplejack; yaupon; odorless bayberry; wild olive; red bay; Carolina cherry laurel; farkleberry, and others. These have been sown in sheltered locations at Bartram's Garden. Some of these plants are marginally hardy as far north as Philadelphia.

As did the Bartrams, we will see what comes up. [At last look, the evening primrose has survived the winter unscathed.]



Still Travelling with Billy

When John Hall left his position at the University Of Alabama Museum Of Natural History, he was not leaving Billy 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 contributed 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 Mu-

seum 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 arboretum 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 announcement (of the lectures)," says Hall. "The slots filled up in about two weeks. I am taking the illustrated lecture to 13 Alabama organizations across the state. It is a pleasure to introduce Billy to groups who are for the most part interested, if unfamiliar with, the details of his life and journey to Alabama."

John Hall has attended five meetings of the Conference since the 1990s, allowing members of the Bartram Trail Conference to know him more intimately and to appreciate his knowledge and fervor as a teacher of Bartram. They have followed him around interpretive trails, listening to his vast knowledge of the flora and fauna of Alabama. For two recent meetings of the Conference, he has helped arrange flotillas of canoes for participants to trace Bartram's travels on waterways of the state.

Bartram continues to charge John Hall's curiosity. "I wish I could have seen the southeast with him, especially with my modern perspective of what things have been most changed or lost. I would like to have seen the Indians—particularly the Creeks, at the height of their powers. I would love to see the canebrakes, now a truly vanished landscape, and the Black Belt prairie, fully grassed and flowered. I would love to see the longleaf coastal forest and the big trees in Georgia and in the Mobile Delta. I want to be in his canoe in the Mobile Delta...I'll even paddle!"



John Hall (left) discusses the crown of a tree in the Weeks Bay Reserve in Alabama with Joel Fry.

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 South Carolina upland and then turned north along the Little Tennessee River to Cowee and the Jore (Nantahala) 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 stunning vistas and towering 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 botanical 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 rhapsodized 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 Philadelphian 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



Bartram exhibits in the Highlands Nature Center.

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.

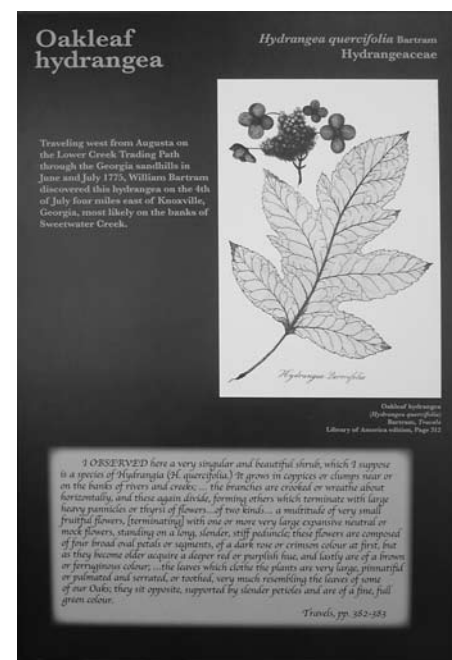
The HBS Bartram Trail begins at the Highlands Nature Center, located at 930 Horse Cove Road, just a half-mile from downtown Highlands, NC. In the Nature Center, visitors can view a small exhibit about William Bartram and his explorations in the area, and pick up an illustrated map and brochure of the HBS Bartram Trail. The map shows the way to a nice cross section of Bartram species, from those that occur locally, like Fraser's (or Mountain) magnolia, sweetshrub, flame azalea, and mountain camellia, to hardy lowland beauties like Chickasaw plum, large-flowered evening primrose, and golden St. Johnswort. There is even a coastal species — the venus fly trap. This North Carolina lowland endemic was first conveyed to Europe by John Bartram in

1763. The brochure provides detailed information on the Bartram connection of these plants and more, with passages from the *Travels* wherever appropriate.

Bartram enthusiasts are invited to come walk the HBS Bartram Trail at any time. The Station grounds are open to the public year-round, dawn to dusk. Persons planning a trip should note that the Highlands Nature Center museum is open seasonally, May through October. Next time you're hiking Section 1 of the NC Bartram Trail, take a detour east when you cross Highway 106: at that point you're just a few miles from Highlands and the Biological Station. Our "charming circle of mountain vegetable beauties" awaits you!

The Highlands Biological Station is an interinstitutional Center of the University of North Carolina perched on the Blue Ridge at an elevation of nearly 4,000 feet. As a research and educational center, the Highlands Biological Station offers a diversity of field-oriented courses and workshops in the summer months that Bartramites 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 Confer-

ence 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



Participants in the Bartram Trail Conference meeting, October 2007, study the plants of the Weeks Bay Reserve in Alabama.

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 Farmar, 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.

John Hall's lively discussion on botanical nomenclature explained why Bartram got credit for discovering some plants and why he may not have been credited with others that he discovered.

Joel Fry focused on Bartram's Evening Primrose, the *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. Escorted by Jeremy Doss, Conservation Enforcement Officer for the Tensaw Delta, the members paddled a portion of the Bartram Canoe Trail. On a falling tide, they 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 Braund, 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. ☞

Alligator Night

By Nancy Rohr

In the very early spring, the serenity of our campground in the lake country of Florida exploded late one Friday afternoon. Twenty-five Boy Scouts will do that. As the early evening progressed, it was clear the feckless male leaders had little control over their youthful charges. The boys complained there was nothing to see or do, not even a canoe to put into the nearby ponds or canals.

Supper appeared to go all right. Once the beans and franks were gulped down, marshmallows burning away on sticks appeared everywhere. Tents had been set up, but the boys decided they would sleep out under the stars. Bedrolls were laid out neatly in a tidy circle. No one was allowed within 12 inches of each other's space. At a late hour, we saw no sign of slowing, much less settling down. We oldsters were wearing out just watching from our site.

Nothing seemed to interest the boys as their leaders tried to explain the plant and animal life of the great outdoors. "So what?" seemed their only reaction.

Out from the dark of the nearby lake came a bellow that defied the city boys' experiences. The first roar hardly got their attention, but after one retort was followed by more of the same, each louder than the first, a hush fell upon the boys.

An adult "just happened" to be passing. She "just happened" to have her copy of Bartram in hand and offered to give the leaders a break. (Mothers are undaunted by a band of bug-eyed, sticky-fingered, smeary-mouthed, shrieking boys.) All campers in Florida take their Peterson for birding, and some few know not to leave Bartram behind.

One single traveler, I explained to the boys, had experienced the very same sounds from this outback more than two hundred years ago. Palm trees and palmetto abounded along the St. Johns River even then. Hadn't the boys seen them today? The orange groves and live oaks were here, too, in between the swampy lands. William Bartram looked for the high



ground to make his camp. Had the boys chosen high ground? Although the boys had walked in, Bartram had arrived by himself in a small boat. His evening was cool and calm, too.

Bartram prepared his campfire and had a good amount of wood for the night. Had the boys gathered enough firewood to keep away the dark – and any other things? William Bartram had few supplies and realized he would need to go back out in his boat to fish for trout for his evening meal. He admired the flowering plants and shrubs and the laughing coots. Did the boys see many coots this evening?

Just as Bartram thought he would snare a trout, an enormous, greedy alligator appeared. In a flash, the monster's enormous body swelled. His tail sailed into the air, water poured from his open mouth, and smoke came from his nostrils. Now was the time to read--I had them.

The earth trembles with his thunder. When immediately from the opposite coast of the lagoon, emerges from the deep his rival champion. They suddenly dart upon each other. The boiling surface of the lake marks their rapid course, and a terrific conflict commences. They now sink to the bottom folded together...the water becomes thick and discolored. Again they rise, their jaws clap together, re-echoing through the deep surrounding forests.

That sound—was it not like the sounds they had just heard from the outback? I continued to read as the rival was vanquished and peace seemed to be restored.

As the sun was setting, however, more alligators appeared. William Bartram was attacked on all sides, several alligators trying to overturn his canoe. He had landed more than enough fish for dinner, but now to return to his campsite. *One old daring one, about twelve feet in length, kept close to me, and when I stepped on shore and turned about, in order to draw 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 now be 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 we passed the campsite to walk, there, all tangled and huddled together as close as they could get to one another, to us they looked like –what else – nestling baby alligators.

Nancy Rohr is a Bartram Trail Conference member who lives in Huntsville, Alabama. Her story is one of a series of stories of members' visits to Bartram sites. ❧

Readers are invited to send their stories to Jim Kautz at jrkautz@earthlink.net or 204 Weatherstone Pkwy. Marietta, GA 30068.

Lost in Carolina, continued from page 1 the two years of commission ownership, someone painted over some of the pieces, and water damaged others. The historical society then took over the remaining pieces and displayed them in its new museum.

Unfortunately, the painted wood panel of Bartram and the small plaque appear to be among the pieces that were lost. They remain only in prints filed in the artist's studio, and in the memories of those tourists who learned of Bartram at the interpretive center. ❧

Biography Carolyn Whitmer

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

Carolyn's association with William Bartram began in 1985, when she worked and traveled with Van Blanchard to conduct four "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 Philadelphia.

Moved by the "great legacy of the beauty of our land" that William Bartram provided through his writings and drawings, she became committed to encouraging others to know of his contributions.

Carolyn's environmental activism extends beyond gardens. She worked to save the Perdido Pitcher Plant Prairie near Pensacola. This effort resulted in the acquisition of about 4000 acres (including one of the last undeveloped bayous of the state) by the Florida State Park System. All of her four children are involved in environmental activities, some as professionals.

A registered nurse by profession, Carolyn joined a garden club in Cherry Point, North Carolina in 1966. When her husband 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 remains on the board. She has been Florida's Bartram Trails Marker 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 Corresponding Secretary of the Federation and has worked with its Youth Nature Camp at Wekiva Springs State Park.

Carolyn has attended four BTC meetings since 1987. ❧



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

Missed: Edward J. Cashin

By Kathryn Braund
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 doing research for a book.

Born in Augusta in 1927, Dr. Cashin devoted 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*.

Dr. Martha Condray Searcy passed away in August 2007. Dr. Searcy held the Ph.D. in history from Tulane University and spent much of her professional career at the University of Alabama, Huntsville. She is best-known for her ground-breaking study, *The Georgia-*

BTC members will fondly remember Dr. Cashin and his wife Mary Ann as the organizers and hosts of the 2005 BTC conference in Augusta. A long-time member and supporter of the BTC, he once quipped, "I would do anything for Bartram." Indeed, he would do anything to support the study and preservation of early Georgia history and lent assistance to anyone who asked. At the BTC meeting in 2005, Dr. Cashin's work on behalf of Bartram and Augusta's history, as well as his encouragement of historic preservation, was evident at every event.

Ed Cashin was an accomplished scholar with many awards and honors to his credit. He was a gracious gentleman whose infectious enthusiasm and dedication to history leaves a solid legacy to his beloved community of Augusta as well as all of us who value early southern history. ❧

Florida Contest in the American Revolution, 1776-1778, published in 1985. She was passionate about her subject and a charming lady whose knowledge of the southern backcountry was formidable. Dr. Searcy, a long-time BTC member, was retired and living in Mobile at the time of her death.

Book Review

Judith Magee, *The Art and Science of William Bartram*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA, in association with the Natural History Museum, London, 2007, 264 pages, color illustrations.

Joel T. Fry, Curator, Bartram's Garden, Philadelphia

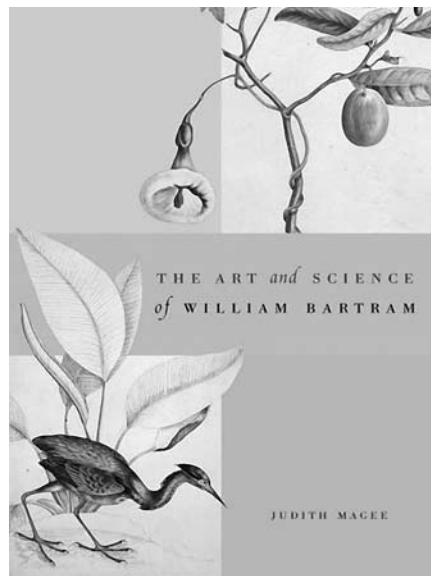
Judith Magee's long-awaited publication on the collection of William Bartram's artwork at the Natural History Museum in London is finally available. Magee, a long-time botany librarian at the Natural History Museum and currently Collections Development Manager in the library, is intimately familiar with the 68 original drawings by William Bartram housed at the museum. The bulk of these drawings were once owned by William's patron, Dr. John Fothergill, and forty-three of them were completed during William's travels in the South.

Most of this collection was previously published by Joseph Ewan in his classic folio edition, *William Bartram Botanical and Zoological Drawings, 1756-1788* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968). Ewan's edition was a landmark in Bartram scholarship, and remains a fundamental reference for anyone researching the botanic careers of John and William Bartram, or their garden in Philadelphia. Magee's book, *The Art and Science of William Bartram*, cannot compare with Ewan's work, but that does not mean it is without merits of its own. Magee provides a light, but readable, narrative of William Bartram's life, highlighted with state-of-the-art color reproductions of William's art. This book will certainly satisfy readers who want to be immersed in William Bartram's skill in depicting nature, and it will also raise public awareness of this still too-neglected American artist.

Magee's biographical narrative breaks no new ground, however. It depends on earlier biographical treatments, backed with a rather standard account of the rise of the natural sciences in England and Europe in the 18th century.

As a survey of William's life as an artist, the book provides a view of only the Bartram collection at the Natural History

Museum. It fails to mention the sizable collections of William Bartram's art in the libraries of the Earl of Derby at Knowsley Hall in the UK, and the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. Bartram produced the materials at the Natural History Museum in a relatively short time (ca. 1768-1776), with four additional drawings prepared for Robert Barclay in 1788. This was a very productive time in William Bartram's life as an artist, but hardly represents the important



productions of his long career.

Magee provides little that is new or different in assessing William's life. Her primary contribution is the discovery and publication of three long-lost drawings that were sent by Bartram to Barclay in the fall of 1788. These finely finished drawings illustrate some of Bartram's major southern discoveries—Oakleaf Hydrangea, Fever Bark, and Evening Primrose. They accompanied William's much-reproduced masterwork, the 1788 drawing of Franklinia.

Throughout the book William Bartram's drawings are not presented in chronological sequence, or in the original sets as prepared by Bartram. They are of-

ten randomly scattered through text, only rarely illustrating points in the biographical narrative. To a large extent the text and illustrations of this book are mutually exclusive, and perhaps this is more the fault of the design and editing of the volume than the author's.

The book is riddled with rather obvious errors in fact and spelling. For example, page 27 records John Bartram meeting "John Byrd" in 1738, a member of the Royal Society of London, living in Virginia. This is apparently a combination of William Byrd and John Custis, both of whom Bartram met in Williamsburg in the fall of 1738. Louisa Ulrika Drotting was the Queen of Sweden, not the Queen of Holland. William Bartram attended the Philadelphia Academy from January 1752 though July 1755, not 1754-1756. Bartram family dates and genealogical references are often incorrect.

A number of biographical errors in *The Art and Science of William Bartram* can be attributed to a too strict dependence on prior authors and secondary sources, particularly Joseph Ewan and Thomas Slaughter. Magee unfortunately continues the trend of highly fictionalized, psychological biography for William Bartram begun by Marjory Sanger in *Billy Bartram and His Green World* in 1972, and continued by Slaughter in *The Natures of John and William Bartram* in 1996. As an example Magee repeats the myth perpetrated by Slaughter that William Bartram gave away his own personal, "special copy" of *Travels* to William Hamilton of The Woodlands in 1799. It is true that Bartram gave Hamilton a copy of his book with 8 extra, large-sized engraved illustrations and a hand-written errata at the rear, but this is not the only "special copy" of *Travels* that is known.

Magee is led astray by Joseph Ewan when she repeats the claim that B. S. Barton's *Collections for an essay towards a Materia Medica* of 1798 was based on William Bartram's manuscript "Pharmacopoeia." There is absolutely no connection between Barton's *Collections* and Bartram's "Pharmacopoeia."

Magee attempts to say something on the attitudes of John and William Bartram towards slavery, but does not include much in the way of primary documents to aid her discussion and winds up with

rather vague assumptions and speculations. She asserts: "John Bartram never recorded his views on slavery" (p. 73) and "in the mid-1760s, when John Bartram was purchasing slaves for William, he may not have been exposed to the anti-slavery sentiments that were to become so widespread a decade later." (p. 74) Neither of these statements is entirely true. Magee includes a number of quotes from William Bartram's "Commonplace Book" (pp. 72, 89, 91, 202, 212, etc), but clearly never examined the original manuscript. The quotes are all taken secondhand from some of Slaughter's most egregious fabrications in *The Natures of John and William Bartram*. Regrettably, Magee returns again and again to quote Slaughter's fiction. William Bartram deserves a factual and authentic biography based on his actual life, but it may already be too late to prune away the mythology that has grown up around him.

Fundamentally, *The Art and Science of William Bartram* is a coffee table book, but it is flawed even in this role. Rarely are the illustrations reproduced at better than half-page size and, as the book design uses very generous margins, the art is often lost on the page. With minor redesign, most of the illustrations could have been enlarged 25 percent or more without increasing the overall size of the volume. The book also includes examples from a variety of other 18th- and 19th-century natural history artists including Mark Catesby, Georg Ehret, John James Audubon, and Titian Ramsay Peale (all from the collections of the Natural History Museum). These are good both for background and comparison to Bartram's art, and perhaps a third of the illustrations in the book are by other artists. These pieces from other artists are not particularly well distinguished from the pieces by William Bartram, and many are reproduced as large as or larger than Bartram's art, and used in section breaks, chapter heads, etc. A casual reader might assume all the works are by William. It is not obvious that the designers of the volume realized William Bartram was the main subject of the book. In the end it seems a wonder that a book entitled *The Art and Science of William Bartram* could devote such little space to his art. ☞

President's Notes

WHAT GREAT FUN! I think that was the general impression from everyone who traveled down to "the Tensaw." Many thanks again to Hank Burch and the Five Rivers staff, John Jackson and the Baldwin County Archives and History, and the Baldwin County Commission for their gracious welcome and wonderful support. And thanks again to Randy Mecredy and the Alabama Museum of Natural History for the canoes, and to Beth Motherwell of the University of Alabama Press for the fantastic book display.

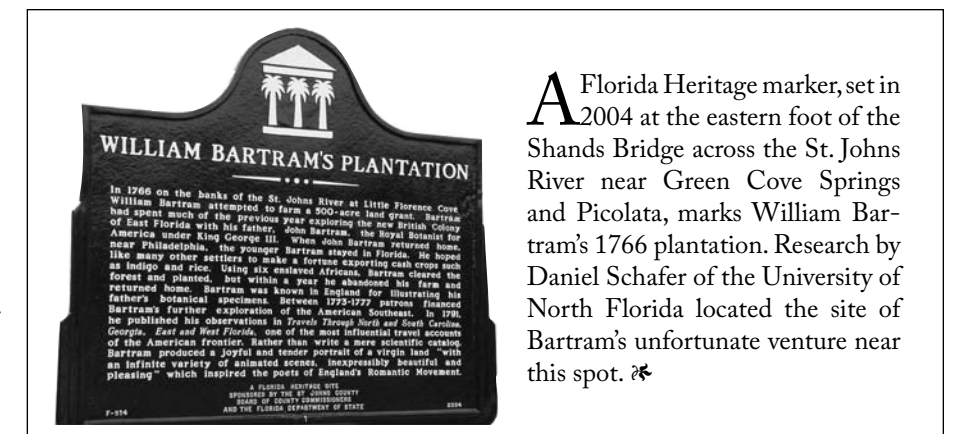
It was a special pleasure to see longtime Bartram Trail supporters like Shirley and Pierre Thompson (St. Augustine, Florida), Louis and Rosalyn De Vorsey (Athens, Georgia) and Davida Hastie (Stockton, Alabama). And to visit with the folks who had stepped up over the past few years to strengthen the organization and renew our collective commitment to preserving the "Bartram heritage" of celebration and stewardship. It was equally pleasing to see new converts too—more than I can name in this short space.

As we were driving home, I tried to decide what had been "THE BEST" thing about the conference. My first thought was the canoe ride (or race if you were in the canoe with my husband). It was wonderful to watch everyone—from the most experienced canoeist to the novices—master the art of enjoying the water without a motor. I doubt that there was ever a more beautiful day for a canoe float on the Tensaw—just a glorious day with good fellowship and nature's beauty enveloping our convivial band of fluvial travelers.

And then I thought of the pitcher plant bog and the majesty of nature there—so different from the wide-open vista of the Tensaw and yet complex and mysterious and beautiful in that wondrous way that Bartram understood so well. And then, there was the absolute delight of hearing shouts from John and Rosa Hall to "PULL OVER" as we were on route to the canoe launch. And what a reason to pull off the road! There, still glorious in the autumn morning, was a clump of evening primrose. I know that the Franklinia gets all the attention. But boy, that little flower from south Alabama has got to be one of the most beautiful wildflowers in the entire region—and certainly remains one of Bartram's most famous botanical discoveries. And we saw it growing practically on the same site Bartram found it—how great is that? But discussing the primrose sighting, I started to think back on the wonderful papers we heard on topics ranging from eighteenth-century West Florida and cartography to science to Bartram's literary impact. How to choose what was "THE BEST" part of it?

And then I knew --- it was the "WHOLE THING." Friends and fellowship, plants and snakes and birds and giant cypress trees and sun on the water and seeing the site of early colonial settlements. It was traveling together with laughter and joy in commemoration of William Bartram's journey. Our Tensaw adventure was really a testament that our commitment to the Bartram heritage concept --- preservation of our natural world and celebration of our historical legacy --- is indeed worthwhile and worth a little travel. And that is the "BEST THING" for any Bartram devotee. ☞

Kathryn H. Braund, President



A Florida Heritage marker, set in 2004 at the eastern foot of the Shands Bridge across the St. Johns River near Green Cove Springs and Picolata, marks William Bartram's 1766 plantation. Research by Daniel Schafer of the University of North Florida located the site of Bartram's unfortunate venture near this spot. ☞

The Traveller
c/o Anne Hurst
138 N Chaparral Dr
Hull, GA 30646