

The Traveller

A Newsletter of the Bartram Trail Conference

Spring 2016

Bartram's Louisiana Trail Commemorated

by Peggy Davis Coates

Executive Director,
LSU Hilltop Arboretum

In cooperation with the Bartram Trail Conference, the Friends of Hilltop Arboretum commemorated the 240th anniversary of naturalist William Bartram's visit to Louisiana in 1775 with an opening reception and presentation, the dedication of five new historical markers, the re-dedication of a marker originally placed in 1975, and a special closing event at the East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library featuring *Founding Gardeners* author Andrea Wulf. William Bartram was America's first native-born naturalist artist and the first author in the modern genre of writers who portrayed nature through personal experience and scientific observation.

The project would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support of all our donors and partner organizations who supported us with money, time, effort, ideas and continued encouragement. A special thank you is also due the members of the Hilltop Bartram committee (Randy Harelson, Michele Deshotels, and Pam Sulzer) who worked tirelessly and passionately on the project for two years to keep it on track and on schedule.

More than 100 people attended the opening reception at the Old Governor's Mansion sponsored by the Foundation for Historical Louisiana (FHL) to hear the lecture "Bartram and Beyond: Baton Rouge's Historical Landscapes" presented by John Sykes, director of Magnolia



Bartram Dedication Downtown, from left: Ryan Clark, Davis Rhorer, Michele Deshotels, Metro Council member Tara Wicker, Erin Reynaud, Melanie Counce Montman, Whitney Cooper, Neal Novak.

Mound Plantation Museum. Myrna Bergeron organized the event for FHL and Margaret Tyler, along with other members of the John James Audubon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, provided the refreshments.

The five new historical markers were dedicated one marker at a time over a period of five days and followed, in order, the path Bartram traveled through the greater Baton Rouge area. Unique dedication ceremonies were held at each location.

The LSU Hilltop Arboretum sponsored a "Native Tree Stroll" led by Steve Shurtz, Baton Rouge's Director of Landscape and Forestry and an evening period dance performance in costume by the Louisiana

Vintage Dancers. Refreshments were provided by Heirloom Cuisine. Text for the Hilltop marker, funded by Friends of Hilltop Arboretum, recognizes Hilltop's magnificent native trees, including the State Co-Champion silverbell:

In 1775, Bartram saw near this site, *"a grand forest; the trees of the first order in magnitude and beauty."*

Burden Museum and Gardens featured a lecture about "Plant Discovery" given by Dan Gill, LSU Associate Professor of Consumer Horticulture, followed by a walk in the Burden Woods led by Dr. Jeff Kuehny, director of the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens at Burden. Refreshments were provided by Burden Horticulture Society. Text for the marker, funded



Burden Bartram Dedication: Dr. Jeff Kuehny, Sally Daigle, Polly Williams, and Charles Fryling.



Hilltop Bartram Dedication: Peggy Coates, Randy Harelson, Pam Sulzer, and Michele Deshotels.

by Burden Horticulture Society, pointed out new plants nearby in the Baton Rouge area noted by Bartram:

In 1775, Bartram noted an *"arborescent aromatic vine"* and *"a new and beautiful species of Verbena"* growing near here.

Downtown Baton Rouge hosted a talk by Ryan Clark, a research associate with the Water Institute of the Gulf, and a riverfront promenade led by author Randy Harelson. Additional remarks were made by Davis Rhorer, director of the Downtown Development District; Neal Novak, Beauregard Town Civic Association President, Baton Rouge Councilperson Tara Wicker and downtown resident and committee member Michele Deshotels. With umbrella in hand, over thirty people attended the downtown levee marker dedication despite pouring rain earlier in the day and a continuing steady drizzle. The downtown marker located on the South Boulevard trailhead for the Mississippi River Levee bicycle and walking path was a cooperative project, funded by the Beauregard Town Civic Association with the location, installation and permits being provided by Downtown Develop-



LSU Hilltop Arboretum

ment District. The marker recognizes Baton Rouge's early urban landscape: *Baton Rouge 1775: Arriving by boat, Bartram was a guest here at "a very delightful villa, with extensive plantations."*

Open house events were held at several historical sites in the Plains-Zachary area including the Zachary Archives, Buhler-Plains Cemetery, Annison Plantation, and the Plains Presbyterian Church. The openings were organized by local historian Betty Tucker and refreshments were provided by the Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation. The marker placed near the Plains Presbyterian Church was funded by The Foundation for Historical Louisiana through the Marguerite Harell Mills and David Pipe Mills Fund. It recognizes the particular reconnaissance made by Bartram to the Plains:

In 1775, Bartram made a special trip by horseback to *"White plains"* noting *"grassy fields of many miles extent."*

In Pointe Coupée Parish, Noelle Ewing led a tour of St. Francis Chapel noting its early 18th century furniture. Dedication remarks were made by committee member Randy Harelson, Pointe Coupée Sheriff Beauregard Torres, III, and historian and author Brian Costello. A Saturday Vigil Mass was held with Monsignor Robert Bergreen, celebrant. Refreshments were provided by the Catholic Daughters of the Americas from St. Ann Catholic Church, Morganza. The marker, funded by the Pointe Coupée Historical Soci-

ety with funds given in memory of Clint Harelson, recognizes the end of Bartram's travels west: In 1775, Bartram crossed the Mississippi to visit Pointe Coupée, the westernmost point reached in his travels.

The original 1975 marker was re-dedicated at its new home on the grounds of the EBR Parish Main Library. Spencer Watson, Library Director, and Mary Stein, Assistant Library Director, organized both the dedication program and the lecture by Andrea Wulf. The event also included music by the Lagniappe Dulcimer Society and an exhibit by The Photographic Society. Refreshments were provided by the Patrons of the Public Library. The text on this marker, though composed many years ago, appropriately celebrates both the Baton Rouge region and its new home:

Bartram wrote in Travels in 1776 on terrain, flora and fauna of area surrounding Baton Rouge.

Special guests at all the dedications were three members of the original 1976 Governor's Louisiana Bartram Trail Commission: Polly Williams, Sally Daigle and Charles Fryling. Additionally, Polly Williams served on the Bartram Trail Conference Board of Managers as its Western Vice-Chairman and Sally Daigle served on the same board as Louisiana's delegate.

The Louisiana William Bartram Trail partners include the East Baton Rouge Parish Library, LSU Hilltop Arboretum,

Friends of Hilltop Arboretum, Burden Horticulture Society, Burden Museum and Gardens, Beauregard Town Civic Association, Downtown Development District, The Foundation for Historical Louisiana, Zachary Historical Archives, Plains Presbyterian Church, Pointe Coupee Historical Society, and St. Francis Chapel of New Roads.

Ry'yan Clark, a student intern with the LSU Hilltop Arboretum, designed the event brochure that included a map of the sites and information about the six historical markers. The brochure printing was sponsored by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Louisiana, Baton Rouge and River Parishes Committee.

Louisiana's Bartram Trail Marker project has been an amazing success. So many individuals and organizations have contributed time, thought, money, effort and enthusiasm to this project over the last two years, that there is just not room to recognize everyone by name, but I do want to recognize the magnitude and complexity of getting this done. To the individuals and groups who met and said yes; to those who wrote checks; to those who wrote and edited news stories and press releases; to those who opened up fa-

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Philip Juras's Exhibit

The Wild Treasury of Nature: a Portrait of Little St. Simons Island

"In the wildest part of Little St. Simons Island, in the domain of rattlesnakes and oystercatchers, there is a view from a high dune that is unimaginable on the developed islands of the East Coast. Here at the southern edge of the Altamaha River delta, no sign of human endeavor can be seen, only sweeping views across marshes and tidal creeks, miles of shrublands and forests, and a wide, empty beach beside a limitless sea. For an artist under the spell of nature's design, it is intoxicating."

Philip Juras

While so much of the southeastern seaboard has been transformed by rampant development it seems miraculous that such an experience can still be had. For this, we can partly thank the northern industrialists who bought and preserved many southeastern barrier islands as private retreats in the early twentieth century, a history of conservation that to this day has kept the bulldozers away. Of all the islands that enjoy this legacy, Little St. Simons Island on the coast of Georgia is one of the most pristine.

In April 2011, while Philip Juras's ex-

hibit *The Southern Frontier: Landscapes Inspired by Bartram's Travels*, was on view at the Telfair Museums in Savannah, he was invited to paint the natural environments of Little St. Simons—a natural fit as he continues to explore the pre-settlement south familiar to John and William Bartram. The 52 works in this exhibition and book depict a wide variety of the Island's natural landscapes. Through them Juras aims to share his passion for experiencing these gorgeous, fascinating environments, while at the same time underscoring the natural processes that formed them, the history that sustains them, and how they will continue to change into the future. It is in short, a portrait of the dynamic natural environments of the island.

The exhibition "The Wild Treasury of Nature: A Portrait of Little St. Simons Island," runs from February 20 to May 22, at the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta, Georgia, and then from July 9 to September 11, at the Marietta/Cobb Art Museum, Marietta, Georgia. The extensively illustrated exhibition catalog, which also contains essays by Philip Juras, art historian Janice Simon, and naturalist Dorinda G. Dallmeyer, is available from the University of Georgia Press. For more information, please see <http://www.philipjuras.com/exhibitions.htm>. ☼

2017 Bartram Trail Biennial Conference

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

March 24, 25, and 26, 2017

Hosted by Friends of Hilltop Arboretum

Tentative Program

Friday Night:

Magnolia Mound Plantation Reception

Saturday:

East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library

Panel Presentation

West Florida History

Natural History

Art and Literature

Bartram Trail Conference Heritage

Saturday Evening:

East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library

Banquet with Keynote Speaker (TBD)

Sunday Morning Tours:

LSU Hilltop Arboretum

Tree Stroll and Brunch

Also: Point Coupee, tour St. Francis Chapel and historic LeJeune Home

Also: LSU Rural Life Museum, Windrush Gardens, Burden Gardens

Reading Bartram: Another Pennsylvania Quaker's account of Pensacola

Kathryn H. Braund

In 1796, President George Washington appointed Andrew Ellicott, a native Pennsylvanian and a Quaker, as the American commissioner to locate and map the boundary between the United States and Spanish Florida. The thirty-first parallel of latitude had served as the official yet unmarked boundary between the Floridas and the United States since 1783. But uncertainty about the actual location of the boundary line resulted in confusion and frequent clashes over property rights. In 1795, Pinckney's Treaty (Treaty of San Lorenzo) reaffirmed the thirty-first parallel running between the Mississippi and Chattahoochee rivers as the international boundary and called for a survey to settle boundary disputes. Choctaw and Creek Indians, who were the actual owners of most of the territory bisected by the imaginary line, posed additional diplomatic problems for the survey team.

Ellicott was an obvious choice to lead the American survey team. He had been appointed as Surveyor General of the United States in 1792, and during his career, he had helped complete the surveys of the Mason-Dixon line, parts of the Northwest Territory, and the western border of Pennsylvania, and assisted in laying out the District of Columbia. Through those efforts, he met Benjamin Franklin and other members of the American Philosophical Society. Prior to his departure from Philadelphia for the southern expedition, he obtained medical supplies from Dr. Benjamin Rush. David Rittenhouse produced some of his surveying instruments. It is entirely possible that he consulted with Bartram prior to his heading south, although no records have been found to date to indicate such a connection. But it is obvious that he had read—and probably carried with him—a copy of Bartram's *Travels*.

Ellicott and his team worked with a



Ellicott Stone: The "Ellicott Stone," located on the western edge of the Tensaw delta, is the sole remaining marker established by the international boundary survey. It became the base point for all U. S. public land surveys in the region. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Spanish delegation to locate and mark the line. Moving eastward, the boundary commission finally got started on the survey in May 1798 in what is now Clarksville, Mississippi (on the eastern bank of the Mississippi). The survey commission briefly included William Dunbar, who had served as William Bartram's host during his visit to Manchac. Dunbar was part of the Spanish delegation, and his early presence was welcomed by Ellicott.

The survey proceeded slowly due to both environmental and political conditions. By April 1799, Ellicott was in Pensacola. In June, he wrote to his wife: "This country is hot both day and night, and cursed with poverty, and muskittoes; —The inhabitants of this town have to import earth to make their gardens with. What Bartram has described as a Paradise appears to me like purgatory, but some-

what worse! A Principality would not induce me to stay in it one hour longer than I can possibly avoid it. — If it had not been for pride I would certainly have ran away from it six months ago. It might do for a place of Banishment." His complaints about Pensacola's heat, sand, and lack of development or "decrepitude" as he termed it, carried over into his official report to Secretary of State Timothy Pickering to whom he declared this "sandy country is intensely hot both night and day and was it not for the sea breezes... [it] would be altogether insupportable." Both men and beasts, he observed, "lose their vigour, and enterprize and become languid: and if they were not constantly goaded by the muskettoes, and flies, into motion would generally become lethargic." Noted the commissioner: "The beauties which Bartram and other travelers

have discovered are merely imaginary,—they have no existence in truth.”

Ellicott's prose makes it clear that both his wife and Secretary Pickering would have understood his reference to Bartram, marking them as fellow readers. No doubt Ellicott discussed the naturalist and his famous book with William Dunbar during their work together at the beginning of the survey. And certainly, Ellicott and the American Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins, who met Ellicott in Pensacola in preparation for meetings with the Creeks, compared notes on *Travels*, for Hawkins also owned a copy of the book.

At first glance, Ellicott's comments might seem a corrective to the Bartram's work which, according to some critics, overly romanticizes the southern landscape. But a close comparison of the two accounts reveal that is not entirely the case—especially when compared with his journal, which he published in 1803.

Unlike Ellicott's business trip, Bartram's visit to Pensacola was “merely accidental and undesigned” and very brief. Bartram arrived in September 1775 rather than June. Even so, like Ellicott, he battled “mosquitoes” as he camped on the beach and recorded his apparently successful effort to keep them at bay, noting he “collected a quantity of drift wood to keep up a light and smoke away the mosquitoes, and rested well on the clean sandy beach until the cool morning awoke us.”

In their writings, both men left descriptions of the town. Bartram noted that Pensacola was “delightfully situated (and commands some natural advantages, superior to any other port in this province, in point of naval commerce, and such as human art and strength can never supply) upon gentle rising ascents environing a spacious harbor, safe and capacious enough to shelter all the navies of Europe, and excellent ground for anchorage.” Ellicott's later description of Pensacola echoes Bartram's assessment. Ellicott wrote that the bay was “a beautiful body of water, well stored with a variety of fine fish, crabs and oysters, and is justly considered one of the best harbors on the whole coast.” The town, he noted, “stands on the west side of the bay, the situation is delightful, and the place remarkably healthy; but the water is shoal in the front of the city.”

Bartram deemed his description a “su-

perficial account,” but it is much fuller than that of Commissioner Ellicott's and details the main architectural features of the town. True to form, Bartram did not spend his limited time mucking about in people's gardens or hobnobbing with the local elite—whom he sought to avoid pleading lack of time. Instead, he headed for one the sandy region's wonders: the “level wet savannas” in order to view pitcher plants which, he correctly observed, were “a very great curiosity.”

In his journal, Ellicott concentrated more on his astronomical calculations and the troubling Indian negotiations that he and American Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins were embroiled with, although he failed to provide any significant details about the Indians or the negotiations, rendering his journal far more disappointing to the curious reader than Bartram's detailed account of Indian customs and rituals.

On his last night in Pensacola, Bartram again slept on the beach, poetically remembered by him as a “hard sandy sea-beaten couch.” In contrast to his initial evening on the beach, smoky driftwood failed to banish unwelcome guests and he was “disturbed the whole night by the troublesome mosquitoes.” But Bartram did not allow his personal discomfort to overpower his wit, descriptive powers, or good nature. Perhaps a longer stay and bit more heat might have resulted in a harsher account by Bartram. On the other hand, Andrew Ellicott praised the “elegant, and convenient lodgings” that he enjoyed during his stay in Pensacola, courtesy of the Indian trading firm of Panton, Leslie, and Company. And yet, his accommodations neither improved his mood or explain the contradictory assessments of the town that appear in his correspondence and published journal. Perhaps his initial curt remarks about the town were tempered by even worse conditions he faced as he pushed east toward the Chattahoochee River and an attempt to polish his candid thoughts for the reading public.

His journal and letters remain valuable to historians, but his best-known legacy is his survey of America's boundary with Spain. The thirty-first parallel, as surveyed by Ellicott's team, continues to serve as the part of the southern boundaries of the states of Mississippi and Alabama.

Although he disagreed with Bartram's assessment of Pensacola, it is obvious he was an admirer of Bartram and consulted *Travels* while composing some of his botanical observations. Indeed, in his published journal, he recommended to his readers the “perusal of Bartram's *Travels*, a work which contains much valuable botanical knowledge; but from some circumstances, unconnected with its real merit and design, has not met with that attention from the public, to which it is justly entitled.”

Sources: For Bartram's account of his Pensacola adventures, see Harper ed., *Travels*, 262-264. Quotations from Ellicott's letters to his wife and the Secretary of State can be found in Jack D. L. Holmes, “The Southern Boundary Commission, The Chattahoochee River, and the Florida Seminoles,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 44 (April 1966): 313-341. For Ellicott's account of his survey (and material quoted here), see *The Journal of Andrew Ellicott* (Philadelphia, 1803; rpt. ed. Chicago, 1962). ❀

Louisiana, continued from page 3

cilities and resources; cleaned and tidied, decorated and made flowers arrangements; provided and set up tents; to those who put out chairs and picked them up; set up sound and audiovisual equipment; to those who cooked, baked and prepared tasty and elegant refreshments; to those who presented, led tours and walks, discussions and answered questions; to those who played music, sang and danced; to those who figured out exactly where a marker should go and maybe most importantly, to those who dug the holes and set the markers up: thank you. ❀

Bartram Trail Conference Board 2016-2018

President, T. R. Henderson

Vice President, Sam Carr

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Brad Sanders (*Membership Chair*),

Dorinda Dallmeyer (*Newsletter*

Editor), Joel Fry, Kathryn Braund.

2015 Bartram Trail Conference, Palatka, Florida

The Bartram Trail in Putnam County group hosted the October 16th, 17th and 18th 2015 BTC Conference in the lovely town of Palatka, FL, on the beautiful St. John's River. Putnam County Commissioner Nancy Harris and Palatka Mayor Terrill Hill welcomed the conference, and that welcome was seconded by BTC board member Sam Carr, who is also chair of the Putnam County Bartram Trail Committee. Dorinda Dallmeyer presided over the conference as President of BTC.

Noted British author Andrea Wulf served as keynote speaker for the Friday night banquet. Andrea presented on *The Brother Gardeners: Botany, Empire, and the Birth of an Obsession*.

External funding sources included corporate sponsors Georgia Pacific and Seminole Electric, and a Putnam County

Tourist development Council Cultural Arts grant

Total Attendance was 146, with locals well represented.

The conference venue was Ravine Gardens State Park, which included a spacious conference center with surrounding gardens and walking paths.

The Saturday evening event was a riverfront frolic at the Palatka Riverfront Park and St. Johns River Center. Entertainment included a visit from William Bartram, and local folk music.

The local garden club hosted a book-signing reception on Friday afternoon, before the banquet.

The conference was arranged into four panels. The topics were centered around Bartram on the St. Johns River—his art, his science, Indians and slaves and his travels.

The first panel *The Art of William Bartram on the St. John's River*, was moderated by Dorinda G. Dallmeyer, and included presentations by Nancy Hoffman: *A 2014 Census of William Bartram's Travels (1791)*; Thomas Hallock: *River to Text, Text to River: A Bartram Edition on the St. John's River*; Bill Belleville: *What is the "Art" of William Bartram?*; Denis Byrd: *Bartram's Trail as Artistic Inspiration and a Resource for Interdisciplinary Education*.

The second panel, *The Science of William Bartram on the St. Johns River* was moderated by Thomas Hallock, and included presentations by Joel Fry: *The "White Tail'd Buzzard": New Evidence for William Bartram's Painted vulture from Florida*; Richard Franz: *Road-Cruising for Bartram's Pawpaws*; Kent Vliet: *The Science of Bartram's Observations of Alligators*.

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Cultivating The Wild: William Bartram's *Travels* a documentary film for television

More than two centuries have passed since the publication, in 1791, of botanist William Bartram's *Travels*. Many consider the book the first great example of American literature. *Travels* fostered the development of a truly American strain of natural history, transcending scientific boundaries to deeply influence the writers and intellectuals of the time. Bartram's text continues to ignite the imaginations of those who love nature and the thrill of discovering its character and mystery. *Travels* also contains some of the earliest descriptions of the culture of both the Cherokee and Creek Indians. A moral visionary, he wrote on the lives of the south's Native Americans, countering the notion of the "savage" in need of civilization.

The documentary film *Cultivating The Wild: William Bartram's Travels* is both a scholarly examination of the scientist's life and work as well as a meditation on what has come to pass in the more than two hundred and twenty years since *Travels* was written. Today, the south's natural resources suffer mightily from neglect and exploitation. The film, by focusing on both Bartram and select "modern day Bartrams"—the people today who continue his work and philosophies—will make a committed stand for our living but vanishing natural world.

The producers are currently seeking financial support for the film. Contributions are tax-deductible, and producer credits, broadcast sponsor messages and other in-

centives are available.

For further information contact:

Eric Breitenbach, Sr. Professor
Daytona State College
1200 Int'l Speedway Blvd.
Daytona Beach, FL 32114
breitee@daytonastate.edu
386-506-3542

and/or

Dorinda G. Dallmeyer, Director
Environmental Ethics Certificate Program
University of Georgia
285 S. Jackson St.
Athens, GA 30602
dorindad@uga.edu
706-542-0935



Andrea Wulf

The third panel, *William Bartram's Relationships with Indians and Slaves on the St. Johns River*, moderated by Charlotte Porter, included Kathryn Braund: *The Congress of Picolata, 1765: Economy and Politics in British East Florida*; Patricia Wickman: *Cultural Sovereignty in the Midst of War: Indians and Blacks in the Bartram Era*; Stephen Hale: *Cowkeeper and the Long Warrior: Their arrival in Florida, their cattle industry, and their fate as the British returned control to the Spanish*.

The fourth panel, *Bartram's Trail on the St. Johns River and Throughout the Southeast* was moderated by Chuck Spornick and included Brad Sanders, Dean Campbell, and Walter Wingfield: *An Itinerary of Discovery: Tracing the Bartrams Across the South*; Dorinda G. Dallmeyer: *Where Do We Go From Here? Completing the Work of the Bartram Trail Conference Founders*.

Participating in field trips were 95 individuals for kayak, pontoon boat and motor coach tours..

The conference presentations were recorded, and are available on YouTube.

Part 1: <https://youtu.be/4ZhvHm25CUQ>

Part 2: <https://youtu.be/lkMNJWW1dBI>



A visit to Satsuma Springs was just one of many field trips offered by Putnam Blueways and Trails.



Members of the Bartram Trail Conference enjoyed a paddle to historic Stokes Landing during the gathering in Palatka



Mico Chluccho and William Bartram as portrayed by Wago (Mauricio Mendez) (L) and Mike Adams (R).



Left to Right: Commissioner Nancy Harris, Sam Carr, Dorinda Dallmeyer, Andrea Wulf, and Commissioner Karl Flagg.



William Bartram mural in downtown Palatka.

The Traveller
c/o Brad Sanders
189 Hidden Hills Lane
Athens, GA 30605