

# The Traveller

A Newsletter of the Bartram Trail Conference

Spring, 2015

## Bartram Trail Conference in Palatka, Florida, Oct 16–18, 2015

The Bartram Trail Conference biennial conference will be held in Palatka, Florida where Bartram aficionados are invited to paddle, hike and bike the same route traveled by William Bartram. The locals are proud of Bartram's description of Palatka's inhabitants, "They were civil and appeared happy in their situation."

The conference will celebrate the 250th anniversary of John and William Bartram's trip to the St. Johns River.

### Keynote speaker:

Dr. Judith Magee, Curator of the Bartram Exhibits for the Natural History Museum of London and author of *The Art And Science Of William Bartram*, will be the keynote speaker. The Conference begins Friday evening with a banquet featuring Magee, who assisted the Palatka group with their Bartram Trail project. The full list of presenters is impressive.

### The conference:

All meetings will be held at the Ravine Gardens State Park. The conference will feature four panels on Saturday discussing Bartram's St. Johns River travels. The first will be "The Art of William Bartram" moderated by Dorinda Dallmeyer with Judith Magee, Thomas Hallock, Denis Byrd, and Nancy Hoffmann. The next panel will be "The Science of William Bartram" moderated by Thomas Hallock and include Joel Fry, Bill Belleville and Dick Franz, a local natural historian. Kathryn Braund will moderate the third panel whose subject will be "Bartram and the slaves and Indians on the St. Johns



*Bartram Trail in Putname County kiosk located on the St. Johns River in downtown Palatka, Florida.*

River." Speakers will include Braund, Kathleen Deagan and Pat Wickman. Finally Chuck Spornick will moderate a discussion of "Bartram's Trail on the St. Johns River." The conference hopes to create a movement to connect the "string of pearls" that make up the Bartram trails throughout the United States. Included on the panel will be Dean Campbell, a local trail designer and river scientist, writer Brad Sanders, and a speaker from the North Carolina Bartram Trail Society. There will be time for discussion at the end of each panel. This is a most impressive gathering of Bartram scholars.

### The frolic:

And there will be fun too. After the meetings on Saturday the conference will "Frolic" on Palatka's riverfront featuring Billy Bartram and his favorite foods and beverages. There will be local entertainment and access to the new St. Johns River Educational Center. A moonlight cruise on the St. Johns is planned.

### Tours by foot, boat, bike or bus:

The Putnam Blueways and Trails Citizen Support Organization will offer tours of Bartram sites on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday that will take you to many of the

31 sites identified within the county. Visit the site of Spalding's Lower Store, see smoking alligators, climb Mt. Royal, see the 6-foot "trout" sculpture, and enjoy the "beautiful and delicate" blind mosquitoes just like William Bartram did on his adventures on the St. Johns River. You will be offered guided paddling trips, biking tours, boat tours, motor coach tours, and walking tours. Signups will be available before the conference from a link on the BTC website.

#### Registration:

Later in March registration for the conference will be available on the Bartram Trail Conference website, so stay tuned. Hotel information will be provided.

For local information you may contact the Bartram Trails in Putnam County at [bartramputnam@gmail.com](mailto:bartramputnam@gmail.com) or visit their website at <http://bartram.putnam-fl.com/>. They will be glad to send their brochure detailing the 80 miles of waterways and many miles of biking and hiking trails.

Sam Carr, BTC Director, Chair of the Bartram Trail in Putnam County Committee  
386-937-3901, [Scarr304@aol.com](mailto:Scarr304@aol.com)

# Bartram at the Museum of Alabama



*The Land of Alabama Exhibit*

By Terry Henderson

In 1775 and 1776, William Bartram journeyed through the Creek territory that was to become Alabama. That story became part of *Travels of William Bartram*, to be enjoyed by generations of those who love great literature, Southern nature, Native Americans, colonial history, and adventures. *Travels* continues to be an important resource in the study of the Southern colonial landscape, inhabitants of the colonial frontier, and the Southern Indians of historic times.

The Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH) recently revised and expanded its exhibition galleries, which now consist of The Land of Alabama, The First Alabamians, Alabama Voices, and Alabama Treasures, collectively known as the Museum of Alabama.

Bartram Trail Conference (BTC) member Dr. John Hall led the design effort for the gallery's telling the story of the "Land of Alabama," and is the narrator for the 10-minute video included in

the exhibit. Though Bartram is not mentioned in the display, Hall says that Bartram, through *Travels*, is a heavy hand of influence in this gallery, as in all of Hall's work. This exhibit showcases Alabama's geology, geography, and biodiversity.

The new Museum of Alabama features "Alabama Voices," a completely new exhibit that opened in February 2014. According to the museum's brochure, the exhibit "covers the dramatic unfolding of Alabama history from the dawn of the 1700s to the beginning of the 21st century. Voices of Alabama taken from diaries, letters, speeches, songs, and other sources tell the story of the struggles over the land, the rise of a cotton economy, the Civil War, industrialization, world wars, civil rights, the race to the moon, and more." One of those voices is that of William Bartram whose descriptions of the Creek Indians, the culture, and their towns are central to the exhibition on the Creek Indians.

Auburn University Professor of History and former BTC President Kathryn



*Bartram mentions the spiral fire on the floor of a Creek town's rotunda, represented through this image on the floor.*

Braund, retired Auburn University Montgomery professor of Anthropology Craig Sheldon, University of South Alabama professor Greg Waselkov, and the team at AHAD used an array of archaeological and historical sources, including narratives and sketches by Bernard Romans, Benjamin Hawkins, and particularly William Bartram to create displays highlighting Creek Indian history. The Native American exhibits were well researched and provide very precise, detailed information through handsome displays.

The first thing one sees upon entering the Alabama Voices Gallery is a dugout canoe pulled up on the bank of some imaginary Alabama stream against a backdrop of river cane, as if Bartram has just left it to check out a mound or an old town site. Nearby is a diorama of a typical Creek town, largely based on Bartram's writing and drawings of characteristic Creek towns. Quotations from his works are also featured in the exhibit. A pattern in the floor centered in a sitting area represents the spiral fire of the rotunda structure of the town. On display is one of the French four-pounder cannon that Bartram observed at the old Fort Toulouse, along with the kinds of household utensils, trade goods, and tools of daily life that Bartram would have seen in a Creek town of this era.

Time rolls on in the exhibit through the American Revolution and then the White influx into Alabama and the associated turmoil between Whites and Creeks, including the Creek War and Indian Removal, and finally, one looks over exhibits depicting events within recent memory.

Braund says of the exhibit: "Bartram's



*Ordnance abandoned at Fort Toulouse by the French, observed by Bartram*



*Diorama of Typical Creek Town*

writings are incredibly valuable for their wide range of topics as well as the minute details about ordinary things. We consulted Bartram for specifics about clothing, foodways, architecture—you name it—throughout the long planning phase. His work was particularly helpful for the diorama, when his precise descriptions, supplemented by his drawings, were used along with archaeological findings as well as the testimony of other first-hand observers to produce a fine visual representation of a Creek town that Bartram would immediately recognize."

Sheldon says of Bartram: "Bartram was not only one of our best observers of 18th century Creek culture, but he populated the towns with actual people going about

their daily lives."

One interesting Bartram connection not on display, but residing in storage along with other treasures of Alabama's past, is an oak tree stump thought to be from the council oak at the important Creek town of Tookabatchee, a town Bartram visited. Possibly this oak provided brief shade for him.

The Museum of Alabama is housed in the Alabama Department of Archives and History, right across the street from Alabama's capitol, at 624 Washington Avenue. Admission is free. The Museum of Alabama is an all-day destination. In the calendar year 2014 the museum counted more than 40,000 visitors and hosted approximately 525 school groups. ☼

# William Bartram and the Uncertainty of Geography

By J. Anthony Abbott

As Bartram Trail Conference members are well aware, historical markers referencing William Bartram's passage dapple southern environs. Indeed, there are several texts that rely on Bartram's trace to invite discovery of the parklands and scenic byways throughout the southeast. While his mark on American natural history is indelible, it is worth noting the historical context for Bartram's *Travels*. As a result of the Seven Years' War and the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Britain acquired territories east of the Mississippi River, including Florida. Georgia and regions west were very much Indian Territory, and Florida, though some parts were settled by the Spanish, was essentially unknown to the British at the time. In short, from the Western European perspective, the regions Bartram travelled were *terra incognitae*.

*Travels* is a particularly curious document with regard to geographical knowledge. Indeed, it is well documented that *Travels* does not accurately follow Bartram's true trajectory and timeline. Why he would have written so is subject to informed speculation, many believing the vagueness is a product of something other than scattered notes or uncertainty accruing through the fifteen years that passed between the travels and the *Travels*' publication. What is certain is that historians and enthusiasts work diligently to locate Bartram in the landscape. Those familiar with Louis De Vorse may recall his decades-long project, culminating in 2001, to accurately locate Bartram's "Buffalo Lick" (20 miles southeast of Athens, between Lexington and Philomath). Because Bartram's narrative is geographically enigmatic—his observations at local scale richly detailed yet somehow defying specific location—people are compelled to seek his path.

The volume's only map, a coastal survey of East Florida from present day Jacksonville to Cape Canaveral, perpetuates Bartram's geographic uncertainty. The areas portrayed are scarcely addressed in *Travels*, his excursions in Florida occurring inland along the St Johns River and

on the gulf coast. Despite his obvious facility with cartography, and a wide variety of maps that would have been available to him by the time of *The Travels* publication, he does not provide any maps of the interior lands where he spent much of his time. His two charts of the Alachua Savannah were not included in his popular work.

Francis Harper in 1958 made a great effort to document Bartram's trace in



A Map of the Coast of East Florida by William Bartram

his annotated version of *Travels*, but did not engage a cartographer or create a map himself. Lester Cappon and Barbara Petchenik were the first to take on the challenge for the *Atlas of Early American History*. The *Atlas* was made for the bicentennial and Cappon felt that inclusion of the Bartram maps was necessary to demonstrate the ferment for American scientific enquiry as a foil to the numerous maps of military campaigns and other historical mainstays of the American Revolution. On page 33 of the atlas we find two maps, one documenting the journey of John and William in 1765–1766 and another documenting William's *Travels*. Cappon describes relying on Harper's work as the primary

source for his maps and letters regarding their production reveal the reliance on local experts (such as Louis De Vorse and Bill Bedford in Georgia). The map of William Bartram's journey proved to be the Atlas's most expensive to produce. Its cartography is troubled by confusing symbols, the inexplicable inclusion of modern state boundaries in place of historical colonial boundaries, and the absence of Native populations or topography. Despite its shortcomings, the Cappon and Petchenik map became the base map for modern Bartram studies. Modified versions of this map adorn the endpapers of many books about Bartram. Some simply changed the maps aesthetically, some replaced boundaries for modern states with historically accurate boundaries, and others include general territories occupied by Creek, Choctaw, Seminole, and Cherokee. The Bartram Trail Conference, in its *Bartram Heritage* report, echoes Cappon and Petchenik's reliance on Harper to create larger scale maps in their efforts to establish Bartram park areas.

An exploration of cartographic knowledge at the time of Bartram may illuminate his geographic uncertainties. Three factors seem to be relevant, the information that Bartram would have had available at his home in Philadelphia, the formal cartography and survey knowledge available to him in the regions he visited, and the informal knowledge held by his travel companions and guides.

What maps would Bartram have viewed before venturing south? Representations of places were found in maps, atlases, geographies, and travel accounts of the time. Famous British cartographers of the period include John Mitchell, Emanuel Bowen, Patrick Gordon, John Senex, Thomas Jefferys, and Thomas Kitchin. Many of these based their work on the earlier maps of Herman Moll. Their maps would have provided a general overview of the region, but there were great inaccuracies regarding the placement of physical features. The Appalachian Mountains stretch through Georgia to St Augustine in maps by Moll, or to the Apalachee Bay in maps by Jefferys. Senex (adapted from the maps of Guillaume Delisle) has the

mountains running east to west through "Carolina" with a north-south spur running through what are now Atlanta and Albany, Georgia. Regarding water, Florida's case is illustrative. Bowen depicts the St. John's River running straight through to the Everglades, while Jefferys depicts Florida as dissected by braided channels that would link every modern city in Florida today. Of the maps that would have been available to the public—consider that the most accurate cartography would have been regarded as military intelligence at the time—John Mitchell's "Map of British and French Dominions of North America" provided the greatest detail with roads, trading trails, and relatively reliable physiography. Travel accounts and natural histories by John Lawson, William Roberts, and George Edwards were also available, and according to Slaughter, many of these would also have been found in John Bartram's library.

What formal geographic knowledge would have been available *in situ* to Bartram as he traveled the south? At this point we must introduce John William Gerard de Brahm. Born in Germany, he came to the southern colonies and quickly developed a reputation as a skilled, but perhaps too quarrelsome, builder of forts, surveyor, and cartographer. For his talent he was appointed British Surveyor General for Georgia (1754–1764) and later East Florida and the Southern District (1764–1777); as such he was the authority on southeastern cartography. His work exhibits unusual accuracy for the period and, during his tenure as Surveyor General, de Brahm compiled detailed surveys for colonial Georgia and East Florida well before Bartram's journey. In 1770 de Brahm provided King George III a map of Eastern Florida with accurate coastal soundings, a detailed chart of the St. Johns, and general topography between the river and coast. Given William Bartram's employ to de Brahm prior to his travels, as a draftsman and survey assistant in Florida, it is likely that he participated in creating this map.

Perhaps most relevant to Bartram as he was on the path would have been *in situ* informal geographic knowledge. I am speaking here of the mental maps, verbal information, and sketches in the sand shared by travelers in their day-to-day

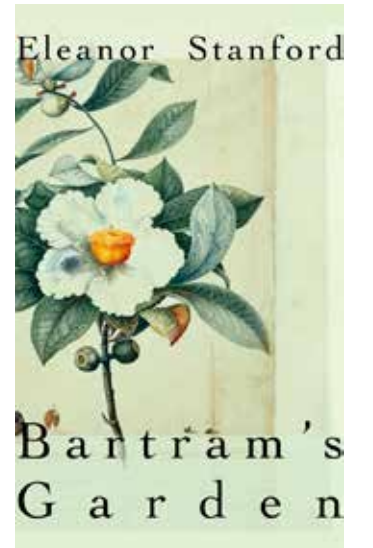
## Book of Interest

Eleanor Stanford, *Bartram's Garden*. Carnegie Mellon Press, 2015. This is part one of a three-part poem called "Bartram's Garden."

I.  
What appears untidy and lacking  
in design is in fact intentional:  
quiet milkweed beside the conflagration  
of red fireweed; the brackish  
Schuylkill feeding stately oaks. John knew the author  
lays his borders, then steps back. General  
Washington, strolling the overgrown river trail,  
pursed his lips; what sort of father  
lets his seed run wild, allows entanglements  
between sweetspire and the common daisy?  
What man sends his son into the mazy  
swamps of Georgia with no instruments  
but a magnifying glass and quill,  
to gather specimens of sweet gum, ash, and jonquil?

Eleanor Stanford is the author of one other poetry collection, *The Book of Sheep*, and a memoir *História, História: Two Years in the Cape Verde Islands*.

Eleanor Stanford, "Bartram's Garden," from *Bartram's Garden*. Copyright © 2015 by Eleanor Stanford. Used by permission of Carnegie Mellon University Press.



encounters. Throughout his account Bartram describes travelling with surveyors, Native Americans, and traders, people who would have had intimate geographic knowledge and well-developed conceptions of space and place. Nevertheless, Bartram's descriptions of his progress resemble more what Robert Paulett describes as a "relational and processional geography," noting the names of rivers and towns in the order they are encountered. Traders saw themselves as holders of proprietary knowledge of place, and would have been reluctant to share information because they stood to lose economic advantage by precisely fixing the locations of trading partners and trading routes. Perhaps Bartram respected this intellectual property and intentionally kept it from his account as a courtesy to those who provided safe passage on many occasions.

Geographic knowledge of the southeast came in many forms in the eighteenth century. Maps produced for popular production that portrayed large areas provide

the least geographic detail. At the regional scale, as for de Brahm's surveys for the crown, we can see fairly good detail, and these may or not have been accessible to Bartram. At the local scale, on the ground so to speak, Bartram would have shared with the people he encountered information about location in more ephemeral formats. His narrative certainly reflects the latter more than the former.

(These are preliminary observations for a forthcoming chapter in *Mapping Nature across the Americas*) ☘

### Bartram Trail Conference Board 2014–2016

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# William Bartram, Naturalist and Traveller

By Stephen Goldfarb

The enduring interest in and the importance of the life and work of William Bartram (1739–1823) can be found in the recently published *The Golden Age of Botanical Art* (University of Chicago Press, 2013) by Martyn Rix. In this beautiful volume, Bartram receives only a single page on which there is a reproduction of a lovely watercolor of sugar maple leaves and seeds he painted. This artwork is dated 1755, when Bartram was still an adolescent.

One of numerous children, young Billy, as he was known to his family and friends, spent the first decade of his adult life failing at several mercantile ventures and as a plantation owner in Florida. By the age of thirty, Billy had few prospects and a lot of debt. Bartram was, however, not without talent, most notably as a draftsman and painter (as evidenced in his watercolor of the sugar maple), which led to a career-changing turn of events.

Bartram's father John had sent several of his son's artworks to England, where they came to the attention of John Fothergill, a wealthy physician who was interested in botany. Fothergill financed William Bartram's research and travels so that previously unknown plants could be added to his private garden, second in size only to the garden at Kew. Research trips were not new to William, as he had traveled extensively with his father in search of new botanical specimens, including a journey to Florida in the mid-1760s.

Bartram's travels, which began in the spring of 1773 and ended in January 1777, resulted in his *Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida*, though it would be over a decade before the book was published. The volume was first published in Philadelphia in 1791 and then in London in 1792. Although sales in the United States lagged, *Travels* received a warm reception in England and in the rest of Europe, and translations appeared before the end of the decade. Among the English readers were Coleridge and Wordsworth, whose poetry is said to have been influenced by Bartram's descriptions of the American

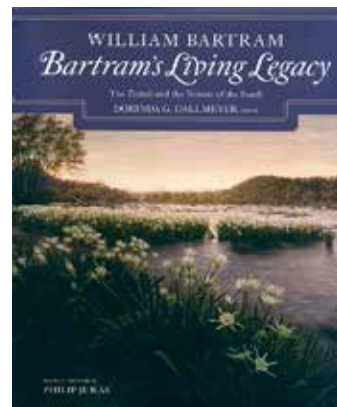
southeast and its native inhabitants.

Two recent collections of essays on Bartram emphasize the continued interest in Bartram and his *Travels*. The more scholarly *Fields of Vision: Essays on the Travels of William Bartram* (University of Alabama Press, 2010), edited by Kathryn E. Holland Braund and Charlotte M. Porter, focuses on the *Travels* both as a historical document and a work of literature and science. Especially valuable are several essays on how the Bartrams (both William and John) laid the groundwork for later archeological discoveries near the St. Johns River in northern Florida and along the Tallapoosa River in central Alabama.

What makes Bartram's writings so important is that the civilization he depicted

lasted only another two generations, after which its residents were uprooted and removed to Oklahoma. The Indian towns he described are gone, due in large part to the humid climate in which the mostly wooden structures decayed. Subsequent archeological excavations have verified the accuracy of Bartram's descriptions, as found in his *Travels*. And some of these structures were not associated with Bartram's contemporaries but with an earlier people, about whom the present residents could supply little information, even though Bartram quizzed them extensively about what he thought might be their ancestors.

There are also essays on Bartram's botanizing; the one on his discovery of the large flower evening primrose (*Oenothera*



A first edition of Bartram's *Travels*, published in 1791. (A. S. Williams III Americana Collection, The University of Alabama)



*grandiflora*), which he described as “perhaps the most pompous and brilliant herbaceous plant yet known to exist,” is especially engaging. An image of this plant rendered by Bartram graces the cover of this book.

The second collection of essays, *Bartram's Living Legacy: The Travels and the Nature of the South* (Mercer University Press, 2010), edited by Dorinda Dallmeyer, is a very different book, but one that is no less interesting. These essays are in the main by those who are carrying on Bartram's legacy of discovery and conservation, and they tend to be more personal.

In one essay Kathryn Braund makes an important though often forgotten point as she draws attention to the comparison between the landscape that Bartram traversed and that of today's Southeast—a land of cities, suburbs, highways, shopping centers, and rural areas that have been logged and are still extensively farmed. Braund points out that the environment Bartram traveled through was hardly forest primeval, as European intrusion had caused vast modifications to the environment since De Soto's explorations of the sixteenth century, more than two centu-

ries before Bartram. Not only had Europeans introduced new plants, animals, and technology, but they also brought new attitudes toward the land and its resources.

This volume also contains a reprint of Bartram's *Travels*. There is a temptation to leap in and begin reading. However, the twenty-first-century reader is likely to find Bartram's late eighteenth-century prose tough going. A better plan might be to read through the essays in these two volumes before setting out on what may be a longish journey through the American Southeast in the era of the American Revolution. The four well-designed maps in this volume will be a welcome guide to Bartram's (and the reader's) perambulations.

These books are a testament to the continued interest in and influence of Bartram on contemporary historians and environmentalists. If reading Bartram's *Travels* has piqued the reader's interest, he or she may visit the website of the Bartram Trail Conference at [bartramtrail.org](http://bartramtrail.org).

Stephen Goldfarb holds a PhD in the history of science and technology. He retired from a public library in 2003. ☼

## Fothergill Research Award

The Bartram Trail Conference is now accepting applications for its **Fothergill Research Award**. One or more fellowships of \$500 are awarded annually to an advanced graduate student or recent PhD whose research promises to lead to publication—book, article, dissertation, or other substantive product in studies related to William Bartram. Appropriate areas of scholarship include but are not limited to the natural sciences, history of science, literary studies, journalism, history, biography, archaeology, art, photography, and ethnohistory. Recipients are asked to make an informal report on work to be published in the BTC newsletter, *The Traveller*, and/or a presentation at the biennial meeting of the BTC (at the discretion of the program committee). Deadline for receipt of applications is March 29, 2015, with the announcement of the award on April 6, 2015. The award is for use in 2015–2016. For more information and to receive an application form, please contact Dorinda G. Dallmeyer, [dorindad@uga.edu](mailto:dorindad@uga.edu), 706–542–0935. ☼

## Bartram Trail Conference Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Areas of Interest in the Bartram Trail:**(try to be specific about geographic locations and activities, i.e., specific Bartram sites, and whether or not you like to hike, read, garden, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Your dues support our newsletter, web site, Fothergill Fellowship Awards and other Bartram Trail Conference projects.

You may also join online at:

<https://bartramtrailconference.wildapricot.org/page-1655351>

All you need is a PayPal account!

Annual Member Dues

Please check one.

- Individual \$25
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- Sponsor \$250
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Please check one of the choices:

- I am a new member.
- I am renewing my membership.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send payment to:  
 Bartram Trail Conference  
 c/o 168 N Crest Road  
 Chattanooga, TN 37404

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

# From the President

As the weather warms, we think of William Bartram leaving his winter quarters to set out for another collecting season in the South. I cannot imagine his excitement at seeing new plants, animals, landscapes, and cultures for the first time. What about you? Have the familiar scenes around you become just a backdrop for your life?

Here at the University of Georgia, I often take visiting scholars on a campus tour designed with them in mind—a great way to see things with fresh eyes. Your visitor doesn't even have to be alive. Several years ago our community celebrated the life and work of American conservationist Aldo Leopold. I thought "Where would I take Aldo on campus?" I opened my dog-eared copy of a "Sand County Almanac" looking for inspiration although fearful that the book's focus on the Gila National Forest and Wisconsin would make for slim pick-

ings. Was I wrong! When I finished reading it again, my book bristled with sticky notes marking Leopold's words that speak directly to my homeplace here in Georgia's Piedmont.

Where would you take William Bartram if he were still among us? Thumb through your copy of the "Travels" and think about the special places you would want William to know as well as you do. Maybe it's a site he visited that still looks as he described it. Maybe it's a place that has changed as dramatically as the view he had looking west over the Oconee River at what would become Athens. The forested granite promontory where he stood on the east side of the river now sports a massive student apartment complex. On the river's west bank, I imagine he would be astonished to see a major university crowning the hill where only Indian territory lay in 1773.



William Bartram's words have led so many of us back into the landscape of the 1770s. Now it's your turn to lead him into the 21st century on your trail.

See you in Palatka!

*Dorinda G. Dallmeyer*