

27 Jul 2005

[Compiled by Ben Burroughs with comments added and enclosed in brackets.]

Travels Through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida,  
the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or  
Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws; Containing  
An Account of the Soil and Natural Productions of Those Regions,  
Together with Observations on the Manners of the Indians.  
*Embellished with Copper-Plates:*



**William Bartram**

**April 20 1739 – July 22, 1823**

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William Bartram  
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1773 - 1776

AFTER a few days residence in Charleston, I sat off on my return to my native land, crossed Cowper [Cooper] river, about nine miles above the city, where the water was a mile wide, and the ferry-house being on the opposite shore, I hoisted my travelling blanket on a pole for a signal, which being white, the people soon came to me and carried me safe over. In three days more easy travelling, I crossed Winyaw bay, just below Georgetown, and in two days more, got to the West end of Long bay [Surfside Beach area], where I lodged at a large Indigo plantation. Sat off early next morning, and after crossing over the sand ridges, which afford little else but *Quercus pomila*, *Myrica cerifera*, *Cassine*, *Sideroxylon* and *Andromeda* entangled with various species of *Smilax*, got on the bay, which is a hard sand beach, exposed for the distance of fifteen miles to the continual lash of the Atlantic ocean; at about low water mark, are cliffs of rocks [Hurl Rocks section of Myrtle Beach] of the helmintholithus, being a very firm concrete or petrification, consisting of various kinds of seashells, fine sand and pulverized shells; there is a reef of these rocks, thirty or forty yards farther out than low water mark, which lift their rugged backs above water, and brave the continual strokes of the waves, which, however, assisted by the constant friction of the sands, make continual inroads upon them, bore them into holes and cavities, when tempestuous seas rend them to pieces, scattering the fragments over the sandy shore. It is pleasant riding on this clean hard sand, paved with shells of various colours.

OBSERVED a number of persons coming up a head which I soon perceived to be a party of Negroes: I had every reason to dread the consequence; for this being a desolate place, and I was by this time several miles from any house or plantation, and had reason to apprehend this to be a predatory band of Negroes: people being frequently attacked, robbed, and sometimes murdered by them at this place; I was unarmed, alone, and my horse tired; thus situated every way in their power, I had no alternative but to be resigned and prepare to meet them, as soon as I saw them distinctly a mile or two off, I immediately alighted to rest, and give breath to my horse, intending to attempt my safety by slight, if upon near approach they should betray hostile designs, thus prepared, when we drew near to each other, I mounted and rode briskly up, and though armed with clubs, axes and hoes, they opened to right and left, and let me pass peaceably, their chief informed me whom they belonged to, and said they were going to man a new quarter at the West end of the bay, I however kept a sharp eye about me, apprehending that this might possibly have been an advanced division, and their intentions were to ambuscade and surround me, but they kept on quietly and I was no more alarmed by them. After noon, I crossed the swash at the east end of the bay [Singleton Swash], and in the evening got to good quarters. Next morning early I sat off again, and soon crossed Little River at the boundary [Boundary House]; which is on the line that separates North and South Carolina; in an old field, on the banks of this river, a little distance from the public house [Boundary House], stands a single tree of the *Magnolia grandiflora*, which is said to be the most northern settlement of that tree. Passed this day over expansive savannas, charmingly decorated with late autumnal flowers, as *Helianthus*, *Rudbeckia*, *Silphium*, *Solidago*, *Helenium*, *Serratula*, *Cacalia*, *Aster*, *Lillium Martagon*, *Gentiana caerulea*, *Chironia*, *Gentiana saponaria*, *Asclepias coccinea*, *Hypericum*, *Rhexia pulcherima*, &c. &c.

OBSERVED likewise in these Savannas abundance of the ludicrous *Dionea muscipula* (*Dioneae*, Ellis ad Linnaeum, *miraculum naturae*, *folia biloba*, *radicalia*, *ciliata*, *conduplicanda*, *sensibilia*, *isecta* *in carcerantia*. Syst. vegetab.

THIS wonderful plant seems to be distinguished in the creation, by the Author of nature, with faculties eminently superior to every other vegetable production; specimens of it were first communicated to the curious of the old world by John Bartram, the American botanist and traveller, who contributed as much if not more than any other man towards enriching the North American botanical nomenclature, as well as its natural history.

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AFTER traversing these ample savannas I gradually ascended sand hills to open Pine forests; at evening got to Old town near Brunswick, where I lodged. Brunswick is a sea-port town on the Clarendon, or Cape Fear river, about thirty miles above the capes; it is about thirty years since this was the seat of government, when Arthur Dobbs, Esq. was governor and commander in chief of the province of North Carolina. Continued up the West side of North West of Cape Fear river, and rested two or three days at the seat of F. Lucas, Esq. a few miles above Livingston's creek, a considerable branch of the North West. This creek heads in vast swamps, in the vicinity of the beautiful lake Wakamaw, which is the source of a fine river of that name, and runs a South course seventy or eighty miles, delivering its waters into Winyaw bay at George-town. The Wakamaw lake is twenty six miles in circuit, the lands on its Eastern shores are fertile and the situation delightful, gradually ascending from pleasing eminences; bounded on the North-West coast by vast rich swamps, fit for the production of Rice: the lake is twelve miles West from Esq. Moores, whose villa is on the banks of the North West.<sup>1</sup>

More on William Bartram:

Bartram was born in [Kingsessing, Pennsylvania](#). He accompanied his father on many of his travels, to the [Catskill Mountains](#) and [Florida](#), and was noted at a young age for the quality of the drawings he produced of botanical specimens his father had gathered. He also had an increasing role in the maintenance of his father's showcase garden, and added several rare species to it.

In 1773 he set off alone on a four-year journey through eight southern colonies. He made many drawings and took notes on the native flora and fauna, and the native American Indians. He found great cooperation from Ahaya the [Cowkeeper](#), chief of the Alachua band of the Seminole tribe. In 1774, he celebrated Bartram's visit to his principal village at [Cuskowilla](#) with a great feast. When Bartram explained to the Cowkeeper that he was interested in studying the local plants and animals, the chief was amused and began calling him "Puc-puggee," or "the flower hunter." But, he also gave him free reign to explore his territory on [Payne's Prairie](#).

Bartram went on another expedition through Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas extending through most of the 1780s. During this period he compiled the most complete list of American birds up to that time.



Frontispiece and title page of "Travels"

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Upon his return Bartram published his journal in 1791, under the title *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, etc.* which was considered at the time to be one of the foremost books on American natural history. In addition to its contributions to scientific knowledge, *Travels* is noted for its original descriptions of the American countryside, which in turn influenced many of the [Romantic](#) writers of the day. [William Wordsworth](#) and [Samuel Coleridge](#) are known to have read the book, and its influence can be seen in many of their works.

In 1802 Bartram met the school teacher [Alexander Wilson](#) and began to teach him the rudiments of [ornithology](#). Wilson's *American Ornithology* includes many references to Bartram and the area around Bartram's Gardens.

Bartram spent most of the final decades of his life in quiet work and study at his home and garden in Kingsessing, refusing several requests to teach botany and declining an invitation to accompany the [Lewis and Clark Expedition](#). He died at his home at the age of 84.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/bartram/bartram.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Bartram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Bartram)