

TRAVELS OF JOHN AND WILLIAM BARTRAM

(MAPS P. 33)

Among the notable group of American botanists-naturalists of the eighteenth century—John Clayton, James Logan, Alexander Garden, and others—the Bartrams stand preeminent for the wide geographical scope of their in-

vestigation and collection of specimens. To depict their travels cartographically is to emphasize an appreciation of the wilderness as a source of new scientific knowledge, and of Indian life as an integral element in that setting. Here, in impressive fashion, geographical knowledge contributed to the history of science.

From his youth as a farm boy in the vicinity of Darby, now within the city of Philadelphia, John Bartram (1699–1777) had a passion for botany. He began planning

his famous botanical garden on the banks of the Schuylkill before he was thirty, and he was one of the original members of the American Philosophical Society in 1743.

A collector and distributor of specimens rather than a classifier of data, Bartram traveled widely, beginning with a trip in Virginia in 1738 and ranging from Lake Ontario to Pittsburgh and the Carolinas. In April 1765, through the good offices of Peter Collinson, fellow naturalist and Quaker, Bartram was appointed Botanist to the King at

£50 per year, thus supporting his ten-month trip in the Carolinas, Georgia, and East Florida during 1765–1766. At age sixty-six he was still an indefatigable collector and an occasional student of Indian life. His keen observations, recorded in untutored rhetoric, contributed toward “enriching the North American botanical nomenclature, as well as its natural history” (William Bartram, *Travels*, 1791, p. 473).

William Bartram (1739–1823), who obtained a classical education at the Philadelphia Academy, accompanied his father on expeditions into the wilderness. Early in his youth, William revealed a talent for drawing, a skill encouraged by one of his father’s long-time correspondents, Dr. John Fothergill, a friend of Collinson. Enthusiastic about William’s drawings, Fothergill commissioned him to pursue his art further and supported his extensive trips to gather data and specimens on the natural history of the southeastern colonies. William spent the greater part of four years, 1773–1776, on horseback, by small boat or canoe, sometimes alone, sometimes in the company of traders, acquiring first-hand knowledge of the Seminole, Creek, and Cherokee as well as of the flora and fauna. At age forty he had already achieved the objective “that I might be instrumental in discovering, and introducing into my native country, some original production of nature, which might become useful to society” (*Travels*, 1791, pp. 73–74). The literary quality of his *Travels* furthered his objective as the book was read in numerous editions, bringing him fame at home and abroad.

The manuscript Diary of John Bartram, 1765–1766, with a hiatus from 19 December to 12 February, is in the Hist. Soc. Pa., Philadelphia. The missing portion is not known to be extant, but John undoubtedly sent it to Collinson in London, where it was published in 1766 as the appendix to [William Stork], *An Account of East-Florida, with a Journal, Kept by John Bartram of Philadelphia, Botanist to His Majesty for the Floridas; upon a Journey from St. Augustine up the River St. John’s*. The entire diary has been carefully edited and annotated by Francis Harper, *Diary of a Journey through the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida from July 1, 1765, to April 10, 1766* (Amer. Phil. Soc., *Trans.*, new ser., 33, pt. 1 [Philadelphia, 1942]), with maps and illustrations. Likewise, William Bartram sent his journal of 1773–1774 to Dr. Fothergill, the first volume in 1774 and the second in 1775, presumably compiled from his long lost field notes, the “little journal” that Fothergill had advised him to keep (Fothergill, *Letters*, 402). The manuscript ultimately was acquired by the British Library (library of the Herbarium). From the photostat copy in the Hist. Soc. Pa., Francis Harper prepared his annotated edition, *Travels in Georgia and Florida, 1773–74; A Report to Dr. John Fothergill* (Amer. Phil. Soc., *Trans.*, new ser., 33, pt. 2 [Philadelphia, 1943]), with maps and illustrations.

As no manuscript journal of William Bartram's trips after 1774 is extant, the only source is his *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* . . . (Philadelphia, 1791), easily accessible in Mark Van Doren's edition, *The Travels of William Bartram* (New York, 1928); an attractive facsimile of the 1792 London edition, with a new introduction by Gordon DeWolf (Savannah, 1974), includes previously unpublished drawings by Bartram from the Amer. Phil. Soc. Most valuable, however, is the "naturalist's edition," with the same title, edited by Francis Harper (New Haven, Conn., 1958), with commentary, maps, illustrations, and annotated index. Bartram presumably composed this account from memory as well as from the journals in his possession. Since he had sent those for 1773-1774 to England, the *Travels* both supplements and complements the journals, though his geographical data leave much to be desired. In contrast with his practical father, William seems to have been little concerned with exact dates and time periods. Certain dates in the *Travels* are clearly erroneous, whether by fault of the author or the printer; others are in conflict in relation to the narrative. Did Bartram spend the winter of 1774-1775 in Charleston, a likely possibility? Harper's research has corrected the date "April 1776" to a year earlier, marking the beginning of his trip to the Cherokee towns. According to this revised chronology, by December 1775 Bartram was on his return trip from Mobile; he spent the spring and summer of 1776 in Georgia and East Florida (no journals extant), and returned to Philadelphia in January 1777, nine months before his father's death and the capture of the city by the British.

Two volumes of primary sources provide information on the motives and means for these naturalist journeys

and on preservation of the records. The classic compilation is William Darlington, ed., *Memorials of John Bartram and Humphry Marshall, with Notices of Their Botanical Contemporaries* (Philadelphia, 1849), supplemented by *Chain of Friendship: Selected Letters of Dr. John Fothergill of London, 1735-1780*, ed. Betsy C. Corner and Christopher C. Booth (Cambridge, Mass., 1971).

Francis Harper's editions of the diaries of John and William Bartram and of the latter's *Travels* have made possible the present maps. Although they are generalized to conform to space requirements of the *Atlas*, the amount of detail was dependent largely upon Harper's annotations, based on his field trips. His own black-and-white maps are helpful but poorly designed and, in some instances almost illegible. Concerning the maps in the present volume see Lester J. Cappon, "Retracing and Mapping the Bartrams' Southern Travels," *Amer. Phil. Soc., Proc.*, 118 (1974): 507-513. No full-scale biography of either Bartram has been published; a sketch of each appears in the *Dict. Amer. Biog.*

Identification and location of Indian villages were facilitated by John R. Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, Smithsonian Inst., Bur. Amer. Ethn. Bull. 145 (Washington, D.C., 1952), 104-105, 161-163, 216-217. William Gilbert, "The Eastern Cherokees," in Smithsonian Inst., Bur. Amer. Ethn. Bull. 133 (Washington, D.C., 1943), 169-413, includes a map of Cherokee settlements, p. 179. See also "Southern Indian Villages," p. 19.