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WILLIAM BARTRAM'S TRAVELS IN THE INDIAN NATIONS

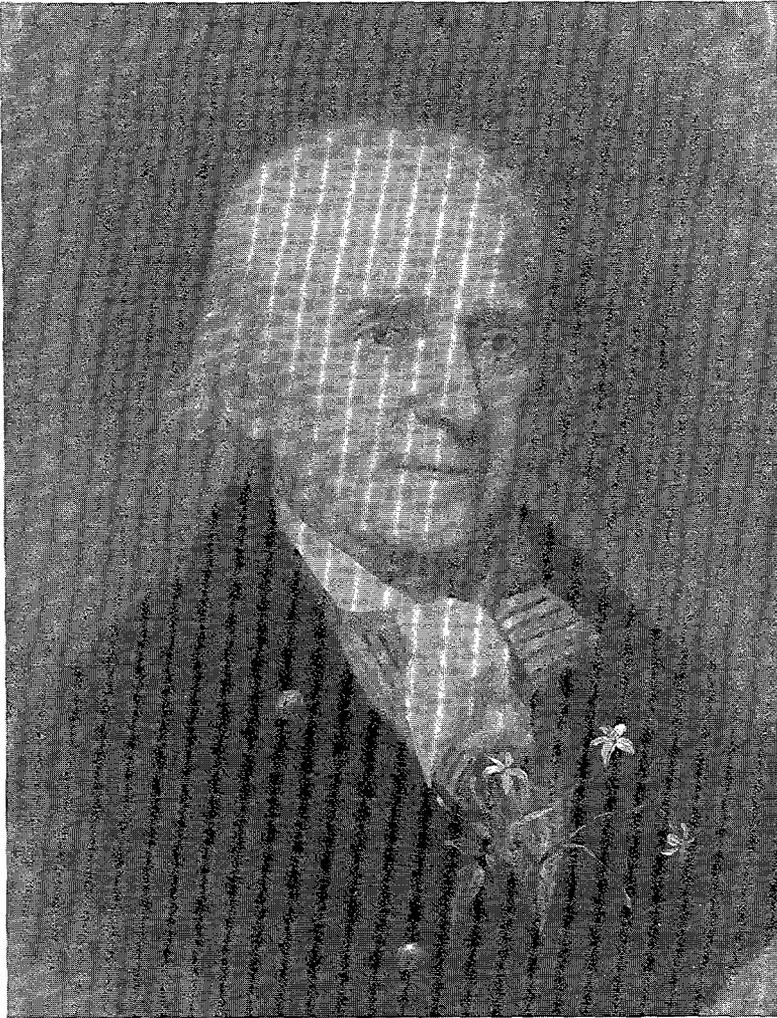
by CHARLOTTE M. PORTER

IN 1773, the famous American naturalist William Bartram returned to the southeast portion of what is now the United States. The region was a more dangerous place than he realized. American "patriots" from Georgia were making troublesome border raids into East Florida. Many of the English plantations were owned in absentia, and the lives of the resident managers were, as Bartram knew from personal experience, isolated. Indian groups far outnumbered white residents in the Floridas, and they were becoming increasingly hostile. With an estimated 4,500 warriors, the Lower Creeks seriously impeded any colonial presence in the East Florida interior. In West Florida, the Confederacy of Muscogulges, the dominant force within the Upper Creeks, controlled the wide area from eastern Georgia to central Alabama. These bands of Creeks, feeling the pressures of European slavers, frontiersmen, and colonists, moved south to occupy the vacated territories of the Apalachee, Timucua, and other decimated north Florida cultures.¹ As Bartram noted, these newly arrived Florida residents sometimes farmed sites occupied by earlier groups that were victims of European disease and slavery.² Often they founded new towns proximal to the ancient earthworks of previous inhabitants.

British trade with these Indian towns made Bartram's excursions into the Floridas possible. Early in 1774, James Spalding,

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1. For a discussion of Indian displacement, see Charles M. Hudson *The Southeastern Indians*, 2nd ed. (Knoxville, 1984), 429-45; see also John H. Hann, "Demographic Patterns and Changes in Mid-Seventeenth Century Timucua and Apalachee," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 64 (April 1986), 371-92.
2. The edition cited throughout is William Bartram, *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy and the Country of the Chactaws*, Mark van Doren, ed. (New York, 1955). See page 314.



William Bartram, 1739-1823. *Courtesy Independence National Historical Park Collection, Philadelphia, PA.*

senior partner in a firm that handled Indian goods dispatched to Savannah, supplied Bartram with letters instructing his agents to assist the naturalist. In the uncharted Indian interior, guides and pack horses were necessary to the success of Bartram's endeavor. After he left Spalding, Bartram sailed from St. Simons

Island, Georgia, to the mouth of the St. Johns River. He was now in East Florida. Having forwarded his supplies with Spalding's agents, Bartram set out for Spalding's Lower Store, a trading post managed by Charles McLatchy. The Lower Store, near present-day Stokes Landing on the St. Johns River, outfitted the Upper Store at present-day Astor and inland trading houses at Alachua and Talahasochte.³ Near Cumberland Island the ship on which Bartram had passage met a trading schooner sailing from stores on the St. Johns. Passengers told of recent Indian raids, so the captain of Bartram's vessel decided to turn back. Eager to proceed and catch up with his baggage, which had been sent ahead, Bartram asked to be put ashore on Cumberland Island. Uninhabited except for Fort William, the island provided the naturalist and a young man who chose to join him with little more than "harsh treatment from thorny thickets and prickly vines."⁴ The next day the fort commander had the two men ferried over to the north end of Amelia Island. Their destination was the plantation of John Perceval, Second Earl of Egmont.

One of several large tracts situated along the St. Johns River, Egmont's 8,000-acre estate had been laid out in 1770 with a town. Bartram and his unidentified companion remained there for several days with Stephen Egan, Egmont's agent or manager, who helped him procure transportation for the rest of his journey. Bartram was shown four large earthworks of the Ogeeche, a people defeated by the Creeks.⁵ Before he left the plantation, Bartram pondered over the formation of the inland waterway and the geology of continental formation.

Egan arranged a day trip on a "handsome pleasure-boat," and the naturalist enjoyed seeing the great variety of plants and waterbirds, which, along with oysters and a native chili pepper, made a good picnic. Although Bartram complained about the mosquitoes, he enjoyed the fragrant orange groves that were in full bloom. His companion, less enthusiastic, dropped out at this point. Near Sawpit and Sister creeks, Bartram procured "a neat little sail-boat" from Egan and set out up the St. Johns River.⁶ It was now "about the middle of April," and he probably made his first camp alone on the western or "Indian" shore near

3. *Ibid.*, 100. Bartram calls the Suwannee River the Little St. Juan.

4. *Ibid.*, 76.

5. *Ibid.*, 77.

6. *Ibid.*, 82.

Ortega, just south of present-day Jacksonville. After a bad storm the next day, he recrossed the river and visited "Satonnia," a plantation known to him from an earlier trip in 1765 with his father John Bartram. The owner, Abraham Marshall, presented Bartram with a fine sample of indigo dye "of his own manufacture." Within a decade, commercially produced Prussian blue rendered the locally grown pigment obsolete.⁷ At this time only the "poorer class of people" cultivated the future cash crop, sea-island cotton.

At the next plantation, Bartram's host assured him that the Indian trouble was allayed and that he might travel safely up-river. Bartram continued his trip south up the St. Johns to the old Spanish fort at Picolata. In 1766, it had been the site of a Lower Creek congress called by British Governor James Grant. William and his father had attended this meeting during which the older Bartram became immobilized by an ulcerated leg and chiggers, a "most mischievous insect." In 1774, William wondered over the "incredible numbers of small flying insects," a number "greater than the whole race of mankind."⁸

Bartram followed the St. Johns to an Indian village at present-day Palatka. Youths were fishing and shooting frogs with bows and arrows as women hoed corn. Impressed with their industry, Bartram noted a large, carefully tended orange grove and "several hundred acres cleared" for corn, beans, potatoes, "pompions" [pumpkins], squashes, melons, and tobacco.⁹ Bartram later remarked that he never observed the cultivation of white potatoes among the Creeks. The sweet potato, however, was a favorite food. "The Creeks, in a manner, lived upon it."¹⁰ This blissful scene contrasted to Charlottia, a community founded by Denys Rolle in 1764 with English vagrants, debtors, and social outcasts. By the time of Bartram's visit, Charlottia (now Rollestown) had been abandoned by all but the overseer and blacksmith.¹¹ Flattering reports of prospects in East Florida sent back to England by Governor Grant and other officials had created a false sense of

7. Lillian B. Miller, ed., *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family* (New Haven, 1983), 87-88; Bartram, *Travels*, 85.

8. Bartram, *Travels*, 87, 88.

9. *Ibid.*, 96.

10. William Bartram quoted by Benjamin Smith Barton, ms note dated September 14, 18 12, Benjamin Smith Barton Papers, Courtesy of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia (hereafter referred to as APS).

11. Bartram, *Travels*, 96-98.

prosperity, and Bartram's comments reflect the failure of the British land grant policy.¹²

Having obtained directions to the place where the traders had secured his gear, Bartram went on to the Lower Store. From here he would make three trips to as many stores at or near Astor, Cuscowilla, and Talahasochte. The first trip began in mid May. Bartram followed traders in his small boat to the Upper Store. Along the way he described several earthworks that he recognized as unusual archaeological sites. The first was Mount Hope, a large shell midden named by his father. The largest, Mount Royal, combined many remarkable features: "a noble Indian highway," the view of an "illumined savanna," and an "oblong artificial lake."¹³ At this mound the traders spent the night with a former "Indian trader," one Mr. Kean, whose hospitality Bartram would enjoy several more times that spring.¹⁴ On the southern end of Lake George he investigated "the quantities of fragments of Indian earthen ware" and food bones at another large shell mound.¹⁵

A young Indian boy accompanied Bartram part of the way to a plantation sixty miles farther up the St. Johns River, but he soon tired of his labors and quit.¹⁶ Bartram now traveled alone. At Lake Dexter he camped at a shell midden and encountered a memorable alligator: "His enormous body swells. His plaited tail brandished high, floats upon the lake. The waters like a cataract descend from his opening jaws. Clouds of smoke issue from his nostrils. The earth trembles with his thunder."¹⁷ No longer "obliged to follow the mad career or manner of traveling with Pack Horses," Bartram could now explore and collect at leisure, but his inexperience led to more surprises. Making camp after dark, he discovered that he had "unwittingly taken up . . . lodging on the borders of an ancient burying ground; sepulchres or tumuli of the Yamassees, who were here slain by the Creeks in the last decisive battle," which occurred in 1715.¹⁸ Like the Creeks, the Yamassees had formerly lived in central Georgia.

12. *Ibid.*, 73-74.

13. *Ibid.*, 101.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, 104.

16. *Ibid.*, 113.

17. *Ibid.*, 115.

18. *Ibid.*, 130.

The burial place Bartram observed at present-day St. Francis consisted of thirty graves. "Nearly of an equal size and form, they were oblong, twenty feet in length, ten or twelve feet in width, and three or four feet high." Later that summer, in the village of Cuscowilla, Bartram observed Yamassees who spoke Spanish and wore crucifixes.¹⁹ After a terrible storm, Bartram continued on by boat to a friend's farm about "thirty miles over land" from New Smyrna. His host showed him the beautiful but smelly waters of Blue Springs. He proceeded back by river, joyfully botanizing en route to the Upper Store. There he exchanged news with the experienced skin trader Job Wiggins and set sail for the Lower Store, which he reached after several excursions.

Almost immediately Bartram again set out with traders, this time for the Indian village of Cuscowilla. The first day's journey took them to Halfway Pond. Bartram recorded how Indians used the scales of garfish to tip arrows and to scarify themselves.²⁰ Near Cuscowilla the party divided. Cowkeeper's people greeted Bartram's group and offered the casual sweet "thin drink" rather than the vomitive, ceremonial *Ilex vomitoria*, a "white drink" made from yaupon. At this time Bartram received the name Puc Puggy or "Flower Hunter" and Cowkeeper's "unlimited permission to travel over the country for the purpose of collecting flowers, medicinal plants, &c."²¹ Bartram was in his element, and his descriptions of the surrounding Alachua Savanna have served to establish both his literary and scientific reputations. Here, too, Bartram made many interesting observations of the Lower Creeks and emerging Seminoles. He noted that gardens in the village were small since most of the planting was done on the rich lands bordering the wet savanna. He also described "conte," a food prepared from smilax roots. "A small quantity of this mixed with warm water and sweetened with honey, when cool becomes a beautiful, delicious jelly, very nourishing and wholesome."²²

The traders continued on to a store at Talahasochte. On this leg of Bartram's journey, the chief trader showed him an area

19. *Ibid.*, 164.

20. *Ibid.*, 157.

21. *Ibid.*, 163.

22. *Ibid.*, 203-04. Smilax is a common native greenbriar; today the Seminoles use a different plant, zamia, for making conte. The Indians learned about honey through trade, for the honey bee is an introduced European species.

of Florida scrub, then, as now, biologically interesting for its dwarf and aromatic species. The party was met by a small company of Creek Indians. Bartram carried gifts for such encounters, "little articles" – fish hooks and sewing needles.²³

Bartram returned to the Lower Store with good feelings about Indian friendships. He was surprised after a short trip to Mount Royal in late July to find a large party of belligerent Lower Creeks camped at the Lower Store.²⁴ Led by a mico or chief named Long Warrior, the drunken braves prepared to fight their enemies, "the Chactows of West Florida." Bartram commented upon their rowdy behavior. After "these sons of Mars" sobered up and departed, Charles McClatchy, the store manager, invited Bartram to accompany him to a more sedate feast of watermelons and oranges in the Indian village Bartram had earlier visited at present-day Palatka.²⁵ Following the enjoyable celebration, Bartram returned to the Lower Store.

The *Travels* refers to Bartram's departure from East Florida sometime in September 1774. Passing north by way of Frederica, Georgia, Bartram arrived in Charleston where he spent the winter of 1774-1775 organizing his materials. By spring he was ready to resume his travels. Having explored northern Florida and southern Georgia, he was drawn westward to the Indian nations.²⁶ So begins Part III of his *Travels*, a meandering account of a journey by horse across the Alabama lands of the Upper Creek Confederacy. In April 1775, Bartram started this venture unaccompanied, but "gentlemen" in Augusta convinced him of the wisdom of joining British traders.²⁷ His route ended at the Mississippi River where Bartram "stood for a time . . . fascinated by the magnificence."²⁸ Bartram cherished this climactic moment

23. Bartram, *Travels*, 206.

24. *Ibid.*, 214.

25. *Ibid.*, 250.

26. *Ibid.*, 253. The date, printed as April 22, 1776, on p. 254, contains a typographical error, one of many throughout the book that makes Bartram's itinerary difficult to reconstruct. See Burke S. Vanderhall, "The Alachua-St. Marys Road," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 66 (July 1987), 50-67; Francis Harper, "The Bartram Trail Through the Southeastern States," *Bulletin of the Garden Club of America* 5 (September 1939), 54-64; Lester J. Cappon, "Retracing and Mapping Bartram's Southern Travels," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 118 (December 1974), 507-13.

27. Bartram, *Travels*, 262. As Bartram's index indicates, the word "August," another confusing typographical error, refers to the city of Augusta, not the month.

28. *Ibid.*, 341.

because it had been his father's unfulfilled desire to view "the great sire of rivers."

Bartram arrived in Alabama by following the Chattahoochee River to an Uche town, "the largest, most compact, and best situated Indian town I ever saw."²⁹ Bartram estimated that there were between 1,000 and 1,500 residents. After "a little refreshment" he and the traders pushed on to Apalachucla. Along the way they crossed "a beautiful landscape," which Bartram with his love of variety remembered as "diversified with groves" and natural "lawns." Apalachucla was the "mother town" of the Creek Confederacy and, Bartram noted with some relief, "sacred to peace."³⁰ Apalachucla had been recently founded by Creeks who had abandoned an ancient town nearby because of "its unhealthy situation" in the river's flood plain. Bartram visited the impressive mounds at the old site before embarking upon a three-day journey to Tallassee on the Tallapoosa River. The party continued along the southern bank of the Tallapoosa to Coolome, twelve miles east of present-day Montgomery. So moved by the beauty of the natural vista, Bartram called the region "one of the most eligible situations for a city in the world; a level plain between the conflux of two majestic rivers."³¹ At Coolome, he delivered letters to the British agent James Germany who lived there with his Creek wife. Bartram stayed on as the traders "recruited and refitted" before embarking along "the great trading path for West Florida."

Bartram's destination was the Mobile delta, his point of departure for the Mississippi River. After a short, pleasant journey he arrived at "Taensa," probably a bluff on the Tensaw River, and he proceeded to Mobile by boat. As he approached the mouth of the Mobile River, Bartram favorably commented upon the many river islands then under "extensive" cultivation by the French.³² In contrast, the port city that greeted him was "chiefly in ruins," although the brick walls of Fort Conde were still standing. The international population numbered 416 blacks and about 300 whites— "French gentlemen, English, Scotch and Irish, and emigrants from the Northern British Colonies."³³ There

29. *Ibid.*, 312.

30. *Ibid.*, 313.

31. *Ibid.*, 355.

32. *Ibid.*, 323.

33. *Ibid.*, 324.

were less than ninety houses, and Bartram noted many were "vacant and mouldering to earth." All the same, British trade with the Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Creeks was thriving. Common trade items were deer skins, furs, dried fish, beeswax, honey, and bear oil.

Meeting with the inevitable travel delays that plagued the eighteenth-century traveler, Bartram returned to "Taensa" on August 5, 1774, and spent a few days with a former British governor interested in the naturalist's pursuits. Since Bartram preferred freshwater habitats to the seashore, he made several short excursions from the bluff to search for unusual plants. Although he did not describe a single bird in Alabama, he did enjoy flower hunting.³⁴ Along the Tombigbee River he recorded "a delusive green wavy plain" of water lotus and remarked that the seeds "are sweet and pleasant eating," but "laxative."³⁵ Unfortunately, at "an ancient fortified post of the French," he began experiencing the first signs of a serious fever that would waylay his journey for many weeks.

Bartram was not an easy patient. After only a few days of rest at "Taensa," he set out on a thirty-mile river trip to search for a cure, a plant of "extraordinary medical virtues." His host provided "horses to ride, and a Negro to pilot and take care of me."³⁶ The trip, however imprudent, was productive, and Bartram located the powerful febrifuge *Collinsonia anisata*.

Delays at Mobile provided additional opportunities for side trips to the Perdido River and to Pensacola, the capital of West Florida. Bartram stayed less than a day but was quickly introduced to Governor Peter Chester who "commended my pursuits, and invited me to continue."³⁷ Chester asked Bartram to survey West Florida and offered him the hospitality of his home. Anxious to continue on to the Mississippi River, he declined Chester's offer, returned to Mobile, and gained passage to the Pearl River.

By the time Bartram arrived at the Pearl River, the easternmost border of present-day Mississippi and Louisiana, he was dangerously ill. His sight was impaired, and he was "stupified

34. See Arthur H. Howell, *Birds of Alabama*, 2nd ed. (Birmingham, 1928), 8-9.

35. *Ibid.*, 327. Bartram's "Nymphaea Nelumbo" is now *Nelumbo lutea*.

36. *Ibid.*, 329.

37. *Ibid.*, 331. For more on this old city, see Robert B. Lloyd, Jr., "Development of the Plan of Pensacola during the Colonial Era, 1559-1821," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 64 (January 1986), 253-72.

for want of sleep.” After more than a month of confinement on Pearl Island, Bartram resumed his travels, but the consequences of his illness were far-reaching. “My body seemed but as a light shadow,” he recalled, “I sometimes doubted of its reality.”³⁸ After viewing the great Mississippi River, Bartram returned to Mobile by boat in November. His account takes no note of the deteriorating relations between Great Britain and the American colonies. He prepared a package of “growing roots, seeds, and curious specimens” to be shipped to London, and he made a final visit to the “Taensa” plantation.

Bartram’s adventures provide interesting insight into eighteenth-century hospitality. British hosts were generous to him and cared for him when he was sick. Even though his city of Philadelphia was the seat of impending colonial revolt, British plantation owners and their employees went out of their way to show Bartram points of interest and new plants. They also provided him with security. For example, earlier, Bartram had visited “Silver Bluff,” an estate near Augusta on the Savannah River owned by George Galphin. Once a Spanish garrison, Galphin’s lands were punctuated by ancient “Indian conical mounts” and terraces.³⁹ Galphin (G. Golphin in the *Travels*) provided letters of recommendation and credit to the principal traders residing in the Cherokee towns that Bartram visited. One letter is barely literate, but its contents are telling. “The berer Mr. Barteram is a gent. I have none a lange time he is an outstanding man he is Employed by some of the first people in England to procure flowers seeds & roots of the Different Specimens that is in amaraca to send home to them any Services you Can Do him or any Sivilty shown him I shall Esteme it as a faver Done me.”⁴⁰

On his return, Bartram reluctantly left behind his trusty but spent horse and crossed Georgia along the same route by which he had entered Alabama.⁴¹ After the traders went ahead to negotiate safe passage, Bartram and his guard, a young Mustee Indian, were left to their own devices. They had to build a cane raft to ferry supplies and to cross another difficult place by way of a “raccoon bridge” created by a fallen sapling. Finally arriving

38. Bartram, *Travels*, 336.

39. *Ibid.*, 258-59.

40. George Galphin, April 30, 1775, Darlington Papers Manuscript Division, New York Historical Society (hereafter NYHS).

41. Bartram, *Travels*, 352.

at the Indian village of Mucclasse, a weary Bartram was asked to intervene on behalf of the lover of a young chief's wife. Bartram declined, for the guilty offender faced the harsh justice of "cropping," having both ears cut off.⁴²

Proceeding on with the trading caravan to Coolome, Bartram revisited James Germany before leaving for Attasse. There he was introduced to the "ancient chiefs" of the Upper Creeks in an impressive ceremony. "We spent the evening and great part of the night in drinking Cassine and smoking Tobacco."⁴³ At Coolome he also recorded a forty-foot-high wooden pillar, "round like a pin or needle." Bartram unsuccessfully inquired about the history of this monument, for none of the local pines he saw achieved this height.⁴⁴ Bartram left Coolome with this and many other unanswered questions about the origins of the various Indian groups he had encountered. Setting out on a quiet Sabbath, "the white people's beloved day," which the Indians kept "religiously sacred to the Great Spirit," he arrived in Georgia shortly after New Year's Day 1776. He continued collecting plants throughout the region for the better part of a year before returning to Philadelphia by sea. Besides plant presses, his equipment included a "portable leather boat, about eight feet long, which was of thick soal leather, folded up."⁴⁵

Most of the villages Bartram visited with the traders in Georgia and Alabama belonged to the Muscogulges, the dominant group within the Creek Confederacy. Muscogulge hunting parties procured deer skins and other pelts for the British stores. They also traded with the Illinois for decorated buffalo robes, which Bartram, with his artistic eye, greatly admired. The most beautiful painting he found amongst the Muscogulges, however, was the skin tattoos "of their ancient chiefs & micos which is of a bluish, lead or indigo color."⁴⁶ These images of "animals of the chase" he compared to mezzotinting (in Bartram's day, an expen-

42. *Ibid.*, 355.

43. *Ibid.*, 357.

44. *Ibid.*, 362.

45. *Ibid.*, 363.

46. See William Bartram, "Answers to Queries about Indians, 1789," Bartram Papers, Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (hereafter HSP); E. G. Squier, ed., "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians by William Bartram, 1789," *American Ethnological Society Transactions* 3 (1853), 1-81. The manuscript came from Dr. Samuel George Morton who, in 1847, acquired it from an unnamed man in Mobile who had rescued it from the trash.

sive means to reproduce illustrations for natural history books). Muscogulge tattoos may well have inspired Bartram's famous map of the Alachua Savanna, which is covered with small delicately stippled drawings of animals in flight. "Herds of sprightly deer," he explained in Part II of his *Travels*, "squadrons of the beautiful fleet Siminole horse, flocks of turkeys, civilized communities of the sonorous watchful crane, mix together, appearing happy and contented in the enjoyment of peace, till disturbed and affrighted by the warrior man."⁴⁷ The disruption of animal species Bartram first observed in frontier Florida would become increasingly troublesome to his understanding of the human place in nature.

At this time the warrior Siminoles spoke Hitchiti or Lower Creek dialects and were not yet organized into separate towns.⁴⁸ Bartram wrote, "They don't require it, for their Towns are but small, and consequently their Councils just sufficient for the government or regulation of the Town or Little Tribe." In matters of consequence, Bartram believed they were "influenced by the Nation [Upper Creeks]."⁴⁹

Three other major Indian groups occupied the region between the Savannah and Mississippi rivers that Bartram traversed. Organized as confederacies or "nations," they were the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws. The Cherokees inhabited the mountain valleys of the Carolinas, and Bartram listed forty-three of their towns in the *Travels*. He described the Cherokees as "the largest race of men I ever saw, and equally comely." They enhanced their good looks with the use of *Rhus glabrum* (smooth sumac) to "henna" their hair and bloodroot and other "vegetable pigments."⁵⁰ Bartram regretted the introduction of "cheap" European cosmetics and complained that "if adopting or imitating the manners & customs of the white people is to be termed civilization, perhaps the Cherokees have made the greater advance." The Choctaws, with 3,000 warriors, were the traditional enemies of the Lower Creeks. They occupied an area from the Tombigbee to the Mississippi rivers. Bartram thought

47. Bartram, *Travels*, 165; see Bartram's illustrated ms map of the Alachua Savanna, APS.

48. Jerald T. Milanich and Charles H. Fairbanks, *Florida Archaeology* (New York, 1980), 253.

49. Bartram, "Answers to Queries," HSP.

50. *Ibid.*

they were “remarkably slovenly” in their dress but otherwise “said to be ingenious, sensible, and virtuous men; bold and intrepid, yet quiet and peaceable.”⁵¹ The smaller nation of Chickasaws lived to the north of them.

Bartram estimated that there were 11,000 Indians in the area of his travels.⁵² Although he found them to be generally “healthier than whites,” they faced a formidable enemy in smallpox, the “most dreaded of all diseases.” Indian children suffered fatally from “Hooping cough” and endured internal parasites that, Bartram noted, were combatted with ashes of beanstalk and other vegetables eaten with corn. Joining an old debate, Bartram argued that venereal disease was “the native produce of America,” and he observed irises cultivated around large artificial ponds for treatment of this and other ailments.⁵³ Another remedy for syphilis “kept secret from the traders” was made from a species of *Lobelia*.⁵⁴ Current medical theory held that indigenous diseases had local cures, plants that explorers such as Bartram eagerly searched out.⁵⁵

Bartram did not incorporate all of his Alabama observations into the narrative of the *Travels*. Many were sent out to colleagues in 1789 prior to publication of the book.⁵⁶ In 1789, Bartram's sketches of Indian villages and earthworks were also forwarded to the American Ethnological Society rather than being published.⁵⁷

For readers of Bartram's day, his drawings were particularly exciting. Unlike Thomas Jefferson, Bartram was convinced that earthworks were ceremonial and not simply lookout towers or heaps of dirt incidental to agriculture. “It is reasonable to suppose, however, that they were to serve some important purpose in those days, as they were public works, and would have required the united labour and attention of a whole nation.”⁵⁸ Eighteenth-

51. *Ibid.*

52. Bartram, *Travels*, 367.

53. *Ibid.*, 361.

54. Bartram, “Answers to Queries,” HSP.

55. Ann Leighton, *American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston, 1976), 186; and Michael Kraus, “American and European Medicine in the Eighteenth Century,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 8 (May 1940), 684-86.

56. See Frank Hamilton Cushing to Isaac Mines Hayes, January 20, 1899, APS Archives.

57. These drawings, now lost, were copied by John Harvard Payne in a document at the HSP.

58. Bartram, *Travels*, 266.

century science could not meet the challenge of dating “those days.” Jefferson, for one, was distressed by the suggestion that revelation rather than science was needed to decipher this particular chapter of human history.⁵⁹ Without technology for determining the age of sites, eighteenth-century observers tried to find other means to interpret them. On the walls of houses at Attasse, Bartram noted “various paintings and sculptures, which I suppose to be hieroglyphic,” but he could not ascertain the meaning of the symbols.⁶⁰ Instead, Bartram’s comparative approach led him in another direction.

“We might possibly *better* our condition in civil society,” Bartram suggested, “by paying some more respect to, and impartially examining the System of Legislation, Morality & Economy of those despised, persecuted *Wild people*, or as they are very learnedly— called *Bipeds*.” Bartram’s cynical reference to Aristotle was aimed at scientific colleagues rather than readers of his *Travels*.⁶¹ Queries from the American Ethnological Society had probed the uniformity of human nature— mental, moral, and physical.⁶² Anatomy, or, more correctly, Indian physique, and capacity for labor were intimately involved with the European work ethic.⁶³ Bernard Romans, an otherwise objective surveyor of Florida plants and soil types, was surprised to see Chicasaws “do what no uncompelled savage will do, that is work in the field to raise grain.”⁶⁴ Another colonial surveyor, William Byrd, finding him-

59. For more information see Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1948), 55, 60-80; and Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill, 1973). See also Lee Eldridge Huddleston, *Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492-1729* (Austin, 1967), 114-16.

60. Bartram, *Travels*, 361.

61. For a key to the Aristotelian corpus on human classification, see Pierre Pellegrin, *Aristotle's Classification of Animals*, Anthony Preus, trans. (Berkeley, 1982), 101.

62. Benjamin Smith Barton to William Bartram, August 26, 1787, HSP. See also Frank Spencer, “Two Unpublished Essays on the Anthropology of North America by Benjamin Smith Barton,” *Isis* 68 (December 1977), 567-71.

63. See Thomas Jefferson, “Query VI,” *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York, 1984), 169-82. Jefferson discretely left Buffon’s descriptions of “degenerate” Indian physical anatomy in the original French. See also J. H. Eddy, “Buffon, Organic Alterations, and Man,” in William Coleman and Camille Limoges, eds., *Studies in the History of Biology* (Baltimore, 1984), 36.

64. Bernard Romans, *A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida* (New York, 1775; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1962), 83.

self "intirely out of the Christian World," viewed "Cherokee Society" disagreeable.⁶⁵

Even William's father John Bartram described the Indians as bloodthirsty savages. Their reprisals against settlers, he insisted, should never "be forgot by our childrens children."⁶⁶ William Bartram's paternal grandfather had been murdered by Indians in North Carolina and his mother held captive for almost a year.⁶⁷ John Bartram's unique opportunity to witness counsels of the Six Nations in 1743 and the Lower Creeks in 1766 never tempered his bitterness. Despite otherwise liberal beliefs, in 1756, his opinion of Indians as a colonial scourge reflected an earlier Puritan view.⁶⁸ His ideas did not change with time. A few years before his death he wrote with shaky hand against the "most barbarous savages on earth."⁶⁹

Bartram's *Travels* stands in marked contrast to his father's diatribes. The last sentence of his book ends on the horns of dilemma. "None of them that I have seen discover the least signs of the arts, sciences, or architecture of the Europeans or other inhabitants of the old world; yet evidently betray every sign or mark of the most distant antiquity."⁷⁰ The book reiterates to the point of repetition Indian lifeways as highly organized or, in some cases, more organized than those of their new European neighbors. Their "constitution," he argued, "better maintains human happiness, than the most complicated system of modern politics."⁷¹ Coming on the heels of the Constitutional Convention, this comment is more than a passing reference. His ninth response to the American Ethnological Society reads in part: "The same spirit that dictated to Montesque [*sic*] the Ideas of Rational Government, seem to superintend and guide the Indians." The reference here, as Bartram's readers knew well, was to Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, published in 1748, and the dictum of

65. W. W. Abbot, "William Byrd on His Mission to the Cherokees in 1758," in Randolph Shipley Klein, ed., *Science and Society in Early America: Essays in Honor of Whitfield J. Bell, Jr.* (Philadelphia, 1988), 102.

66. See John Bartram's note in the verso of a letter from Lionel Chalmers, July 12, 1774, HSP.

67. Edmond Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *The Life and Travels of John Bartram: From Lake Ontario to the River St. John* (Tallahassee, 1982), 7-8.

68. See John Bartram to Peter Collinson, February 21, 1756, John Bartram Correspondence, APS.

69. John Bartram to Lionel Chalmers, July 12, 1774, HSP.

70. Bartram, *Travels*, 408.

71. *Ibid.*, 388.

the absolute necessity of virtue to republics.⁷² It is worth mentioning that, like Montesquieu, Bartram discussed native religions as a social fact rather than as a chapter in the history of Christianity. He scoffed at efforts to bring the Creeks “over to our mode of civil society.”

Bartram shared Jefferson’s idea that Indians were happier than Europeans because their social order was maintained without “coercive means,” but he was less dogmatic than Jefferson about the economy of nature.⁷³ The real problem for Indian peoples presented in the introduction to the *Travels* was reconciliation with a technologically sophisticated society. Although not as learned in the European sense as the ancient Greeks or Egyptians, the Indian peoples of his experience were morally civilized “without precept or scholastic education.” Bartram never doubted that moral actions, rather than educational background, served as the basis for communication—the first step toward reconciliation.

With the exception of the introduction, Bartram’s *Travels* avoids the subject of race relations, but a manuscript among his papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania states his views. The essay is closely written on the verso of a broadside announcement, but the vocabulary suggests the excitement that followed the English publication of Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* in 1791. On behalf of the “Universal Family of Mankind,” Bartram writes, “God is no respecter of Persons & that the Black White Red & Yellow People are equally dear to him & under his protection & favour & that sooner or later ye must render full retribution.” The Indians were not the “barbarous savages” of his father’s comments, nor were they noble savages. There was no social redemption to be gained by going back to some Golden Age. In 1789, Bartram rejected “leveling things down to the simplicity” of Indian life; in no way did he advocate living among the Cherokees like Henry Timberlake.⁷⁴ By the time the *Travels* was published in 1791, general hostility of the Creeks and Cherokees toward settlers subjected the frontier to disquietude and danger. Bartram knew bloodshed was forthcoming. The Indians were

72. Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (Oxford, 1976), 40, 206, 282.

73. For more information see Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and his Time*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1951), II.

74. See J. Ralph Randolph, *British Travelers Among The Southern Indians, 1660-1763* (Norman, OK, 1973), 142-54.

“tenacious” of their liberty. Their cause should have been familiar to former British subjects.

The Indian peoples of Bartram's concern were his contemporaries, and, in this sense, their well-being was a mirror of the times. The fate Bartram feared for their nations would also befall their tyrants. Bartram shared with the chiliasts of his time a sense of imminent destruction.⁷⁵ The idea of divine retribution gave an odd, but not unique, twist to his natural history.⁷⁶ The retribution Bartram sought was justice or balance in nature. The relationship of the hunted and the hunter that pervades passages in the *Travels* is another expression of his preoccupation with equilibrium. The product of a Quaker education, William Bartram opposed warfare and deplored brutality. On more than one occasion the naturalist recoiled at the wanton destruction of wildlife he witnessed among the traders.⁷⁷ He also recognized the impact of recent European trade pressure upon the Indians. Large numbers of birds and animals were being slaughtered for trinkets. Hunters stockpiled skins for trade since “white people have dazzled their senses with foreign superfluities.”⁷⁸ The situation was made more acute by colonial discontent. His countrymen's justifiable desire for political liberty was, to his horror, causing a profound disruption of nature.⁷⁹ The revolutionary “course of human events” was leading to massive destruction of the animals upon which Indian welfare was dependent. The so-called civilized sciences, republican government, and organized religion appeared to Bartram to operate with arrogance and reckless disregard for the natural world. As his book marked the close of a century, civilized white men, not the native nations of the Southeast, had become the barbarous “sons of Mars.”

75. Sacv An Berconteh, “The Typology of America's Mission,” *American Quarterly* 30 (Summer 1978), 148-55, discusses the context of revivalist and civil millennialism in the eighteenth century.

76. See Wolf Lepenies, “Linnaeus's *Nemesis divina* and the Concept of Divine Retaliation,” *Isis* 73 (March 1982), 16, 21, 25.

77. For example, see Bartram, *Travels*, 174.

78. *Ibid.*, 184.

79. For a work devoted to understanding Indian destruction of the animal species necessary for their own survival see Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships in the Fur Trade* (Berkeley, 1978), 113-49.