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## **Hunting the Flower Hunter in Native American History**

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*"I DOUBT not but some of my  
countrymen who may read these  
accounts of the Indians, which I have  
endeavoured to relate according to  
truth, at least as they appeared to me,  
will charge me with partiality or  
prejudice in their favor."*

—William Bartram,  
*Travels*, Part II.<sup>i</sup>

Shortly after William Bartram's  
monumental, and monumentally titled,  
*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*, appeared  
in Philadelphia in 1791, its earliest

reviewers noticed two things about  
Bartram's portrayal of Native  
Americans.<sup>ii</sup> That the portrayal was full  
of valuable descriptions of Native life  
was clear. But Bartram was also prone  
to flights of rhetorical fancy, and  
perhaps fantasy, too. In *The Universal  
Asylum, and Columbian Magazine*, an  
anonymous "Impartial Review" --  
according to the large type, all-caps  
section heading at the top of the page  
—presented excerpts of the *Travels*  
interspersed with critical commentary.  
While at times the reviewer praised the  
inclusion of "so much useful  
information," and suggested that  
Bartram had earned a "respectable  
place among those, who have devoted  
their time and talents to the  
improvement of natural science," the  
review was far from positive. It  
lambasted Bartram's style as "so very  
incorrect and disgustingly pompous,"  
rife with "rhapsodical effusions," and  
took special issue with his treatment of  
Native people: "We cannot help but

think that he magnifies the virtues of the Indians, and views their vices through too friendly a medium."<sup>iii</sup> For those of us who appreciate the occasional "rhapsodical effusion" and view the *Travels* as a classic of American nature writing and an invaluable, even if flawed, study of the late eighteenth-century Native Southeast, such a lukewarm response to the original publication might appear puzzling, even a little painful. Yet this and other early reviews cut to the heart of the matter. Scholars in several different fields and across three centuries have noticed the same eccentric mix of matter-of-fact ethnography with romanticism. In Bartram's *Travels* and other writings, nature, science, religion, ethnic studies, and even British (and later U.S.) Indian policy prescriptions combine in ways that make modern specialists, entrenched within their own disciplines, cringe at times.

William Bartram could write about Native people in clear, direct prose, when he chose to do so. His descriptions of Native diet, politics, dress, and other matters testify to his skills of observation. The same William Bartram was capable of venturing

beyond the romantic into the realm of committing serious anthropological sins, perhaps even going so far as to imbue invented Indian characters with highly suspect Quaker sensibilities. More on both of these trends later, but the history of William Bartram's contribution to the study of Native American history and culture might be said to divide along similar lines, between the frank and fantastic. Early interpreters knew that Bartram had done important work, but were often so limited by their own views of Native people that they trafficked in versions of the same stereotypes as the man they were studying. The situation began to improve somewhat in the 1970s, and with the 1995 publication of Gregory Waselkov and Kathryn E. Holland Braund's *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, readers had access to a picture of Bartram's thinking on Native America that featured a level of nuance and rich context previously unavailable. Scholars studying William Bartram and Native America know Waselkov and Braund's work casts a long shadow. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *William Bartram on the Southeastern*

*Indians*, and the relatively scant number of works on the subject in the intervening decades testifies to the quality of that volume. I was honored to be asked to put together a brief "state of the field" essay about William Bartram and Native American history, but also intimidated by the prospect of trying to identify areas of future scholarly endeavor, beyond those raised by Waselkov and Braund.<sup>iv</sup> Like a typical historian, I suppose, I thought to begin by looking backward. It seemed safer. A look at the previous scholarship allows for some historiographical perspective, while it also informs some pertinent framing questions that might move the field forward slightly. Less like a typical historian, I have chosen not to offer a blow-by-blow account of everything written about Bartram's influence on Native American history, and instead have chosen a handful of signal moments. Historians are on shaky ground when it comes to predicting the future, but perhaps the tentative conclusions offered here might play some small role in pointing future students in a fruitful direction.

It bears mentioning that William Bartram himself deserves a fair amount

of credit for the dichotomy that has prevailed in the approaches to his writing about Native Americans since the late eighteenth century. The bulk of his writing about Native people is descriptive in its style and clear and accurate in its content, and Bartram presents his observations with a minimum of philosophical commentary.<sup>v</sup> A couple of examples should suffice. On tattooing, Bartram notes: "some of the warriors have the skin of the breast, and muscular parts of the body, very curiously inscribed, or adorned with hieroglyphick scroles, flowers, figures of animals, stars, crescents, and the sun in the centre of the breast. This painting of the flesh, I understand, is performed in their youth, by picking the skin with a needle, until the blood starts, and rubbing in a blueish tinct, which is as permanent as their life."<sup>vi</sup> In describing Native governance earlier in Part IV of the *Travels*, Bartram delineates the limitations on a Creek *mico's* power, remarking that "In a word, their mico seems to them, the representative of Providence or the Great Spirit, whom they acknowledge to preside over and influence their councils and public proceedings. He personally presides

daily in their councils, either at the rotunda or public square: and even here his voice in regard to business in hand, is regarded no more, than any other chief or senator's, any other than in his advice as being the best and wisest man of the tribe, and not by virtue of royal prerogative."<sup>vii</sup> On subject after subject, from mundane matters like household architecture, diet, and daily dress, to more serious concerns such as the monuments of antiquity, preparations for warfare, and ceremonies surrounding marriage and death, Bartram's writing in the *Travels* is concise, reasonably ethnographically accurate, and direct. Although he did not spend as much time in Native American communities as some of his contemporaries, and while much of his information was filtered through white traders, Bartram's experience there dwarfed that of most Americans, and his curious nature and penchant for straightforward description render his *Travels* extremely useful for students of Native American history.

Of course, William Bartram brought his own biases, philosophies, and political leanings to Native American towns and these are apparent in the *Travels*, as well.<sup>viii</sup> Bartram was one of the earliest

supporters of the "civilization" policy and, depending on precisely when he penned the opening to the *Travels*, perhaps one of its authors. The very last paragraphs in the introduction are a clear statement of the Enlightenment-inspired policy favored by Henry Knox and other high-ranking federal officials in the new American republic, including George Washington himself.<sup>ix</sup> In short, Bartram thought it a wonderful idea to send men "of ability and virtue" to live in Indian towns, "and "by a liberal and friendly intimacy," these men would learn all they could about the various cultures among which they resided." Thus enlightened," Bartram believed, these agents could then report to Congress, which would devise "a judicious plan, for their civilization and union with us."<sup>x</sup> His belief that Native people and whites could coexist within the government of the United States, stated at the very outset of the *Travels*, helps to explain some of the overlap between his matter-of-fact writings about Native societies and his more philosophical comparisons of Native and white lifeways. This is true of several sections of the *Travels*, but most apparent in Bartram's approach to Native violence. Early in Part II,

Bartram writes that "The Indians make war against, kill and destroy their own species, and their motives spring from the same erroneous source as it does in all other nations of mankind."<sup>xi</sup> "War, or the exercise of arms originates from the same motives, and operates in the spirits of the wild red men of America," Bartram avers later still in Part II, "as it formerly did with the renowned Greeks and Romans." At this point, it might be easy to dismiss Bartram's view of Native Americans as occupying an earlier stage of civilizational development (other Enlightenment thinkers, including Thomas Jefferson, believed this to be true). On the very next page, though, Bartram completes the list by adding "modern civilized nations."<sup>xii</sup> Bartram believed that all people, and all nations, were part of an all-encompassing universe set in motion, and guided toward harmony, by a "Divine Monitor." At times, Bartram used Native American virtue as a foil to European (and emergent American) culture that he viewed as crass and grasping, among other vices.<sup>xiii</sup> Near the end of the *Travels*, he imagines a virtuous Indian complaining of the abuses of white traders when he writes "O thou Great and Good Spirit,

we are indeed sensible of thy benignity and favour to us red men, in denying us the understanding of white men. We did not know before they came amongst us that mankind could become so base, and fall so below the dignity of their nature. Defend us from their manners, laws and power."<sup>xiv</sup>

William Bartram was far ahead of his contemporaries, and indeed many current school curricula, when he wrote about Native American history. He recognized that Native America was ancient, diverse, and that the people told stories to make sense of their past. To drive home how innovative this was, keep in mind that he wrote during an era in which white people seriously debated whether natural forces, a race of disappeared giants, or some other beings created the monumental architecture of the Native American Southeast. He noticed mounds and other earthworks wherever he went, but Ocmulgee and Mount Royal stand out. At Ocmulgee, Bartram noted the presence of "visible monuments, or traces, of an ancient town, such as artificial mounts or terraces, squares and banks, encircling considerable areas."<sup>xv</sup> It's also at Ocmulgee that Bartram relates the late eighteenth-

century version of the origin story of Kasihta, or Cusseta, an important Creek town: "if we are to give credit to the account the Creeks give of themselves, this place is remarkable for being the first town or settlement, when they sat down (as they term it) or established themselves, after their emigration from the west."<sup>xvi</sup> His interest in Native American history, and Native American stories about that history, sets Bartram apart from almost every other chronicler of his time.

At times William Bartram might appear to share quite a bit with his intellectual descendants in the fields of Native American history, American Indian Studies, anthropology, and archaeology. Here, some words of caution are in order. None of these disciplines is perfect, of course, and several have had deeply troubled, exploitative relationships with indigenous communities dangerously close to the present. Still, most scholars working in these fields today would agree that it's generally a bad idea to assume a pose of above-the-fray observer when it comes to the communities in which one does research.<sup>xvii</sup> And it's something akin to a cardinal sin of modern anthropology

to put words into the mouths of one's consultants. Pieces of William Bartram's *Travels* definitely have value as "as close as we can get" texts in their frank portrayals of late eighteenth-century Native life, but he was not a practitioner of any of these disciplines - to state the obvious, he was an eighteenth-century Philadelphia naturalist. Perhaps the clearest example of Bartram's shakiness as a historian or anthropologist comes from one of the earliest appearances of a Native American in the *Travels*. Bartram found himself face to face with an "intrepid Seminole," armed with a rifle. After a tense stare down, Bartram extended his hand in a brotherly fashion. Following a few another "moments of suspense," the Seminole man and Bartram exchanged a handshake, and then parted ways. After their parting, Bartram speculates on the meaning of the exchange:

Possibly the silent language of his soul, during the moment of suspense (for I believe his design was to kill me when he first came up) was after this manner: "White man, thou art my enemy, and thou and thy brethren may have killed

mine; yet it may not be so,  
and even were that the case,  
thou art now alone, and in my  
power. Live, the Great Spirit  
forbids me to touch thy life;  
go to thy brethren, tell them  
thou sawest an Indian in the  
forests, who knew how to be  
humane and  
compassionate."<sup>xviii</sup>

At a nearby trading house, Bartram subsequently learned that the man was "one of the greatest villains on earth" who had pledged to "kill the first white man he met."<sup>xix</sup> Bartram implies that this incident took place in 1773 or 1774 by its placement at the start of *Travels*. If it occurred at all, which is debatable, it was more likely in 1776. What are we to make of this possibly fabricated confrontation? First, the fact that Bartram just made it up is unlikely in the extreme, given his reverence for truthfulness. What seems more likely is that Bartram embellished a brief, but tense meeting between two men to serve a larger point he intended the *Travels* to make about the world more generally. The suspiciously Quaker-sounding thoughts he puts in the head of the "intrepid Siminole" are emblematic of their shared humanity,

and the harmony that Quakers believed ordered the world.<sup>xx</sup>

Beyond the *Universal Asylum* review which began this essay, other 1790s publications picked up on both the value of Bartram's description of Native American life and the notion that he had been overly generous toward his Native American hosts. In late 1792, the *Massachusetts Magazine* praised Bartram before knocking his writing style: "Nor have the customs and manners of the Aborigines, whom he visited, escaped the minutiae of attention: In description, he is rather too luxuriant and florid, to merit the palm of chastity and correctness."<sup>xxi</sup> In reviewing the 1792 London edition of *Travels, The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal, Enlarged*, argued that "If we can safely infer any thing from the whole, it is that these Indians may be a good sort of people while their passions are dormant, and while they are without strong liquor."<sup>xxii</sup>

William Bartram published very little after *Travels*, and never strayed very far from his home after the return from his travels. He was an active correspondent, and in that way he continued to influence early American

ideas about Native Americans. In answering a series of questions posed by the medical student Benjamin Smith Barton, a document eventually known as "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians," Bartram laid out his thinking about Native Americans in prose even more clear and direct than the most scientific passages of *Travels*, and he illustrated his responses as well.<sup>xxiii</sup> He also offered advice to Henry Knox, who, as the United States Secretary of War, was most responsible for devising and implementing the new nation's Indian policy.<sup>xxiv</sup> William Bartram died, fittingly enough in his beloved garden, in 1823, at the age of eighty five.<sup>xxv</sup>

In the nearly two centuries since his passing, his influence on Native American history has ebbed and flowed. References to the *Travels*, and occasionally other writings, appear sporadically in the years just after his death. Benjamin Smith Barton would go on to become one of America's most prominent natural scientists, though he died before he was able to complete a planned volume on American Indians that would have undoubtedly leaned on Bartram's observations. The pictures and text that Bartram sent Barton were

published in fits and starts in the late 1840s and early 1850s under the auspices of Ephraim George Squier, in *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, a similar volume on New York, and finally in Volume 3 of the *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society*. In combination with the *Travels*, the publication of "Observations" in an important scientific journal ensured that William Bartram's work would continue to inform scholars, including Charles Colcock Jones, Jr., and eventually John Swanton.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The early to mid- twentieth century featured many of the same disputes over Bartram's Native American material that had animated the earliest reviews. In 1925, for example, literary scholar Benjamin Bissell accused Bartram of romanticizing Native Americans: "Sentimental exoticism seems to reach its height in William Bartram."<sup>xxvii</sup> To prove the point, he quotes from the same passage in *Travels* that I did above ("Defend us from their manners, laws, and power.") This was too much for N. Brillion Fagin. In 1933, Fagin shot back at Bissell, wittily accusing him of failing to "distinguish between Bartram's manner

and his matter."<sup>xxxviii</sup> Fagin argued that even if some parts of Bartram's writings were fanciful, they were true to the spirit of eighteenth-century Native America, which Fagin perceived to be "practically untouched by civilization."<sup>xxxix</sup> Though guilty of reading the early American past through the lenses of "civilization" and "savagery," Fagin astutely pointed out the importance of being able to separate "the romanticist from the scholar, the rhapsodist from the observer."<sup>xxx</sup> Ernest Earnest, who wrote a joint biography of John and William Bartram for the Pennsylvania Lives series in 1940, believed William to be "thoroughly imbued with the fashionable European doctrine of the 'noble savage.'"<sup>xxxi</sup> This was part of an effort to show how cosmopolitan Bartram was. Of course, unlike most purveyors of the "noble savage" myth, William Bartram had spent time in Indian communities. Josephine Herbst, in her 1954 *New Green World*, seems to have romanticized Bartram, who in his own time was accused of much the same. She appreciated that "in taking his stand, with the Indian, he took his stand against most of the colonial world," which might be more of an

admirable sentiment if the book had not begun with the idea that the "birds and Indians of Florida" were "wild glorious creatures all."<sup>xxxii</sup> Some writers and editors preferred to remind readers of the physical dangers that Bartram faced in a kind of surprising way: "the fear of unfriendly Indians lurked constantly in the back of his mind" and "in the remote places, Indians and renegades lent danger to travel" grace the pages of *John and William Bartram's America*, aimed at a broad Cold War-era reading public.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

No one doubts the indispensability of Francis Harper's "Naturalist Edition" to anyone interested in William Bartram. He believed that Bartram had been "ultra-indulgent" in his approach to Native American subjects.<sup>xxxiv</sup> I suppose "ultra-indulgency" is up for debate, and to me it carries connotations of a parent-child relationship that I cannot see in Bartram, but the great value of Harper's text, apart from the copious notes which rely heavily on Swanton to corroborate and elaborate on Bartram's findings, is that, like Bartram's original *Travels*, it allows readers to see for themselves how Bartram's writings about Native Americans fit with the larger work. This is something that

neither Waselkov and Braund's *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, or my *The Flower Hunter and the People*, for that matter, attempt to do.

The advent of the Bartram Trail Conference in 1975, founded to coincide with the United States Bicentennial, and the subsequent publication of *Bartram Heritage* in 1979, might have heralded a new era in the relationship between Bartram's works and Native American history.<sup>xxxv</sup> The timing was certainly right. By the 1970s, non-Native scholars were more willing to take Native voices seriously, and Native Americans were more forceful in their desire to be heard by the academy and associated groups. Unfortunately, the introduction to *Bartram Heritage*, and the original resolutions of the Bartram Trail Conference, do not mention American Indian history specifically. The Conference also suggested partnerships with various governmental entities, but not a single Indian tribe was among these. While the volume does contain sporadic references to eighteenth century Indian populations, and a brief section titled "Indians: Symbols and Men" did praise Bartram's "image of the Indian" as "too advanced for ready

comprehension in 1791,"<sup>xxxvi</sup> the notion that modern Native nations might have a stake in Bartram's legacy was apparently beyond the scope of the Bartram Trail Conference as originally conceived. In recent years, the BTC has met biannually at sites important to William Bartram, and has made great strides toward correcting its early oversight. A brief overview of the conference programs since 1995 demonstrates that it would be exceedingly rare for the meeting *not* to include historians of Native America, archaeologists, or members of Native communities mentioned in Bartram's writings.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Reviews in scholarly journals praised *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians*, edited by Gregory A. Waselkov and Kathryn E. Holland Braund as "fascinating and fresh,"<sup>xxxviii</sup> and the notes as "indispensable."<sup>xxxix</sup> And they were right. The book remains a signal achievement in Native American history. Not only did it provide new editions of Bartram's writings about Native Americans to a new generation of scholars, it also published a the previously undiscovered "Some Hints & Observations, concerning the civilization of the Indians, or

Aborigines." Though now twenty years old, its importance in the field is undiminished, largely because of the thoroughness of Waselkov and Braund's research and their ability to place William Bartram into the intellectual context of his own times so beautifully.<sup>x1</sup>

Though it appeared not too long after Waselkov and Braund's masterpiece, Edward Cashin's *William Bartram and the American Revolution* seems not to have relied too heavily on the earlier work (it appears in the bibliography, is cited only a few times, and Cashin thanks Braund in the notes for showing him "Some Hints and Observations"), perhaps due to delays in the academic publishing process. Cashin did an important service to students of William Bartram by placing him in a context often overlooked. Though one would not know it from reading Bartram's *Travels*, the naturalist moved through the British colonies and into Southeastern Native towns at the very time that tension between Britain and the colonies erupted into open warfare, with long-lasting and devastating consequences for Native people. In the preface, Cashin noted that "Readers who are interested only in Bartram

might be annoyed by the intrusion of politics and violence into this story. I ask them to consider that Bartram must have been far more annoyed."<sup>x1i</sup>

In the book which follows, Cashin used research in manuscript and published primary sources paired with deep reading in historical literature to restore the balance between Bartram's sometimes timeless (and certainly troubled in the precision of its dates) narrative and the actual political world which he and his hosts inhabited.

Work produced in the past five years or so has built upon the strengths of some of the previous scholarship while illuminating some ways in which future students might continue to probe the connection between William Bartram and Native American history. A trio of beautifully illustrated works on William Bartram's life and career, including the *Travels*, appeared in 2010. Each ranges over a variety of interesting subjects, and aficionados should own all three, if they don't already.

In *Bartram's Living Legacy*, editor Dorinda G. Dallmeyer, after pointing that Bartram's "South was no unpeopled wilderness," touts his accomplishments as a "cultural

historian ... carefully recording the way in which the Indians used the land along with the changes wrought by the arrival of the Spanish, French, and English settlers." She also praises Bartram's ability to treat "Indian cultures with the same respect accorded to that of the European settlers."<sup>xlii</sup> While many of the essays contain brief references to Bartram's Native American material, and the lavish paintings by Philip Juras attempt to recreate the landscape as Bartram (and his Native hosts) experienced it, one essay is particularly germane to the current undertaking. Kathryn E. Holland Braund, building on many years of careful study, artfully reminds readers that William Bartram did not wander aimlessly through a paradise outside of history, but rather a land reshaped constantly for thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans. And it was still changing. Read sensitively, Bartram's *Travels* point the way toward an understanding of the late-eighteenth century Native Southeast that emphasizes its deep roots while at the same time acknowledging its recent past and the challenges posed by the colonial onslaught. Braund closes her look at

the "real world" of Bartram's *Travels* by noting that "it was a world in transition, changed and still changing, as new plants and animals, new ideas and new connections, produced new kinds of people who traveled the ancient paths along with William Bartram."<sup>xliii</sup> The rigorous combination of the ancient, the recent, and the interplay between the two, points the way toward a deep understanding of William Bartram's role as a historian of Native America.

Braund and Charlotte Porter's *Fields of Visions*, also published in 2010, focuses specifically on the *Travels*, and a contribution by the recently deceased Edward Cashin, as well as those by Jerald Milanich, Craig Sheldon, and Mark Williams have plenty to offer. Cashin's "The Real World of Bartram's *Travels*" follows up his findings in his American Revolution volume, with a heavier emphasis on Native American history and culture. Cashin passed away in 2007, but he left behind an important legacy, and one which we as students of William Bartram and the Southeast can profit: "The time may be right, two hundred and more years after the appearance of *Travels*, to study Bartram in the world in which he lived, in addition to the one we wrote

about.<sup>xliiv</sup> Jerald Milanich, one of the most prominent archaeologists of early Florida, contributes an essay that combines history, archaeology, and the history of archaeology in an instructive way, using the Bartrams' 1766 visit to Mount Royal, and the subsequent Clarence B. Moore expedition to the same site as a demonstration of what modern disciplines might learn from each other. In a similar vein, Craig Sheldon (himself an expert on the aforementioned Clarence Moore), compares Bartram's drawings of Creek architecture and town plans to the archaeological record. Several observers noted the kinds of buildings in which Creeks lived. Sheldon points out that Bartram's great strength lies in his ability to populate those buildings and plans with families and communities in ways that few other eighteenth century observers could.<sup>xlv</sup>

In a brief, but significant piece, archaeologist Mark Williams performs an interesting feat of historical sleuthing as it relates to "Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians," and its passage from Benjamin Smith Barton to Ephraim Squire.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Neither *Bartram's Living Legacy* nor *Fields of Vision* can match *The Search*

*for Nature's Design* in production value. "Lavish" doesn't quite do it justice. It weighs in at over six hundred pages, and features over one hundred illustrations, many of them in striking color. Part One consists of letters, several of which have bearing on Bartram's philosophy regarding Native Americans. Part Two anthologizes longer manuscripts, notable for Bartram's religion and temperament generally, and, more specifically, because Kathryn Holland Braund republishes "Hints & Observations" in it. She furnishes a brief but finely wrought introduction, and supplies illustrations as well.<sup>xlvii</sup>

Apart from the literature *about* Bartram and Native Americans reviewed above, generations of historians have relied upon Bartram's writings as sources in their own right. Listing the number of times that Bartram has been cited by subsequent students of Native American history would exhaust even the most dedicated reader's patience. The pedigree is long, and includes many of the classics of Southeastern Indian history, from Werner Crane's *Southern Frontier* to Christina Snyder's *Slavery in Indian Country*. Between these representative early and late

works on the shelf, one could find works by Chapman J. Milling, Tom Hatley, Kathryn E. Holland Braund, J. Leitch Wright, David Corkran, Angie Debo, Claudio Saunt and Charles Hudson, to name just a few, all of whom drew on William Bartram to a greater or lesser degree. Put simply, the world of Southeastern ethnohistory would be immeasurably poorer if historians did not have access to Bartram's texts.

So now for a "benediction" before we part ways to explore William Bartram's interpretation of Native America on our own. A look at past interpretations of William Bartram's writings on Native Americans, especially as presented in the *Travels*, points to some key ways in which future scholars might build upon the legacy of the past while attempting to avoid the pitfalls and shortcomings of some of those who came before. Historians are not usually in a position to command people, nor should they be, but if I were, I would suggest the following, in no particular order: go outside, learn from other disciplines, consult with Native experts, and spread the word.

*Go outside.* Take William Bartram's descriptions of features of the Native landscape to the sites he described. Comparing his notes to archaeologists' site reports and other written documents can lead to new insights, and being in a space, no matter how transformed by the intervening centuries, can do the same. This is not a novel suggestion, of course, just a reminder that the life of the mind can sometimes benefit from forays outside of seminar rooms, libraries, and archives. The writings of Brad Sanders, Charles Spornick *et al.*, and James Kautz have trod this ground previously, and can serve as our modern guides. Honor Bartram's reveries, but place them in time and space.

*Learn from other disciplines.* In William Bartram's Enlightenment, history, archaeology, botany, and other fields were lumped into a larger, more thoroughgoing quest for understanding. While we should not long for a return to Bartram's time, historians should take archaeologists seriously and vice versa. Anyone engaged in subjects touch upon by William Bartram, from anthropology to zoology, can benefit from keeping abreast of what's going on in other fields of academic endeavor.

*Consult with Native experts.* One of the most heartening, and longest overdue, trends in recent Native American history is the willingness of archaeologists and historians to visit Native communities and speak with elders and tribal preservation offices, in an effort to include more Native voices, particularly modern ones, in our approaches to ethnographic accounts of the past (and to advocate for Native communities in the present). This, combined with the arrival of a new generation of scholars who are members of tribal communities or closely associated with them is one of the best ways to ensure that historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists cease to exploit the communities whose history they study. Additional voices may sometimes lead to discomfort, some jostling of old stories, and some things that Bartram misreported, misunderstood, or omitted from his narrative, of course, and that's fine. That's one way to write better history (or archaeology, or botany, or musicology, or ...).

*Spread the word.* Whether one regards him primarily as a botanist or values him more as a chronicler of Native American life, the sad fact remains that

William Bartram's life, work, and legacy are largely unknown beyond academic circles and a smallish circle of dedicated laypeople. I regularly offer classes that touch on Native American history, and William Bartram actually passed the Macon campus of Middle Georgia State University, though he could not have known it. A marker placed by the Bartram Trail Conference on our campus in 2011 commemorates the fact. As I was preparing the manuscript that would become *The Flower Hunter and the People: William Bartram and the Native American Southeast* several years ago, and every semester since, I asked students of every conceivable educational background who William Bartram was, and what he did. I struggle to recall more than a couple of students, out of thousands with whom I discussed the matter, who knew anything at all about Bartram, let alone his passage through Middle Georgia or his contributions to Native American history. We who understand the importance of William Bartram's writings on Native Americans need to do a better job of conveying their significance, and their shortcomings, to a broader audience. The notion that a turn of the nineteenth-century

naturalist might become a celebrity in the era of Twitter might seem farcical at first, but he does have 358 friends on Facebook as of this writing (359 if he approves my request).<sup>xlviii</sup>

Finally, as we plan our own travels, whether physical, scholarly, or if we're lucky, some combination of the two, it's worth remembering that William Bartram was not hacking his way through a trackless wilderness, and neither are we. He travelled on paths already blazed and made smooth by Creeks, Cherokees, Seminoles, and others. We might profit from his example as we follow the paths laid out by the scholars who came before, while all the while keeping our eyes open to the possibility of new discoveries along the way

## Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> William Bartram, *Travels* (Philadelphia, 1791), 212. Accessed via University of North Carolina's *Documenting the American South*, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/bartram/bartram.html>, July 17, 2015. Page numbers for future references to the *Travels* refer to this edition. Emphasis in original.
- <sup>ii</sup> For a succinct history of the publication of *Travels*, see Josephine Herbst, *New Green World* (New York: Hastings House, 1954), 247-48, and Gregory A. Waselkov and Kathryn E. Holland Braund, eds., *William Bartram on the Southeastern Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 25-28.
- <sup>iii</sup> *Universal Asylum, and Columbian Magazine*, 1792, vol. 1. Quoted material appears on 266 and 267. <https://archive.org/details/universalasylumc11792phil>. Accessed July 17, 2015. A review of the review, of sorts, appears in Francis Harper, ed., *The Travels of William Bartram* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998; orig. 1958), xxiii-xxiv.
- <sup>iv</sup> On multiple occasions preparing this essay, I flattered myself that I had uncovered some new or exciting piece of Bartramiana, only to discover upon re-reading the pertinent sections of Waselkov and Braund that they had gotten there first.
- <sup>v</sup> Waselkov and Braund, 206.
- <sup>vi</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, Part IV, 503.
- <sup>vii</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, Part IV, 496.
- <sup>viii</sup> On Bartram's influences, as well as his religion and philosophy, see Waselkov and Braund, 206-9, and Laurel Ode-Schneider, introduction to "'The Dignity of Human Nature': William Bartram and the Great Chain of Being," in Thomas Hallock and Nancy E. Hoffman, eds., *William Bartram and the Search for Nature's Design: Selected Art, Letters, and Unpublished Writings* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 340-58.
- <sup>ix</sup> To be sure, the civilization policy, which stressed Protestant Christianity and cash crop agriculture, was bigoted and injurious, even fatal, to Indian identity, but a comparison to the racially charged and exclusionary policies of the 1820s and 1830s might force modern readers to at least recognize earlier schemes as *comparatively* benign. For more on this policy, see Reginald Horsman, "The Indian Policy of an 'Empire for Liberty,'" in Frederick E. Hoxie, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Native Americans and the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 37-61.
- <sup>x</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, xxxiv.
- <sup>xi</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, 213.
- <sup>xii</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, 292-93.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Matthew Jennings, ed., *The Flower Hunter and the People: William Bartram in the Native American Southeast* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2014), 20.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, 492.
- <sup>xv</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, 54.
- <sup>xvi</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>xvii</sup> Waselkov and Braund, 209.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, 21.
- <sup>xix</sup> Bartram, *Travels*, 22.
- <sup>xx</sup> The richest analysis of this particular incident can be found in Waselkov and Braund, 200, 204. Thomas Hallock has also argued, perceptively, that Bartram shuffled events and other narrative fragments around in order to tell a better story.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Quoted in Francis Harper, ed., *The Travels of William Bartram*, xxiv.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Quoted in Francis Harper, ed., *The Travels of William Bartram*, xxv.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Matthew Jennings, *The Flower Hunter and the People*, 119-166.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Waselkov and Braund, 187-98.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Perhaps the account most worthy of the man whose death it describes is Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Natures of John and William Bartram* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 3-11.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Waselkov and Braund, 199-213.

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- <sup>xxvii</sup> Benjamin Bissell, *The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1968; orig. 1925), 46-48.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> N. Bryllion Fagin, *William Bartram, Interpreter of the American Landscape* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), 57.
- <sup>xxix</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.
- <sup>xxx</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Ernest Earnest, *John and William Bartram: Botanists and Explorers, 1699-1777 and 1739-1823* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), 3.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Quoted material appears in Herbst, 251 and 5, respectively.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Helen Gere Cruickshank, *John and William Bartram's America: Selections from the Writings of the Philadelphia Naturalists* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1957). Quotations from vi and xii.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Francis Harper, "Introduction," xxv.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> For a brief overview of the Bartram Trail Conference, see "What is the BTC?," <https://bartramtrailconference.wildapricot.org/page-1647762>, accessed July 24, 2015.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Bartram Trail Conference, *Bartram Heritage* (Montgomery, Bartram Trail Conference, 1979), 42.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Many of the past conference programs and speakers' lists are archived at Bartram Trail Conference, "Biennial Conference," <https://bartramtrailconference.wildapricot.org/Biennial-Conference>, accessed July 24, 2015.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> W. L. McDowell, review in *Journal of the Early Republic* 16:2 (Summer 1996), 312-13. Quotation from 312.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Patricia Galloway, review in *Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 38:1 (Winter 1997), 123-25. Quotation from 125.
- <sup>xl</sup> It may seem impolitic for a historian to suggest, but the depth and breadth of the research conducted by Waselkov and Braund, and the scholars assembled for Hoffman and Hallock's *The Search for Nature's Design* (discussed below) mean that blind trips into the archives are likely to be fruitless. There is no doubt that more archival material relevant to Bartram exists in private collections, but without concrete leads, the search is more likely to frustrate than illuminate.
- <sup>xli</sup> Edward Cashin, *William Bartram and the American Revolution on the South Carolina Frontier* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), xiii.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Dorinda G. Dallmeyer, preface to Dallmeyer, ed., *Bartram's Living Legacy: The Travels and the Nature of the South* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2010), x.
- <sup>xliii</sup> Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "The Real Worlds of Bartram's *Travels*," in Dallmeyer, ed., *Bartram's Living Legacy*, 439-53. Quotation appears on 453.
- <sup>xliv</sup> Cashin, "The Real World of Bartram's *Travels*," in Kathryn E. Holland Braund and Charlotte M. Porter, eds., *Fields of Vision: Essays on the Travels of William Bartram* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 3-14. Quotation from 12.
- <sup>xlv</sup> Craig T. Sheldon, Jr., "Where Bartram Sat: Historic Creek Architecture in the Eighteenth Century," in Braund and Porter, eds., *Fields of Vision*, 137-68.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Mark Williams, "E. G. Squier's Manuscript Copy of William Bartram's *Observations on the Creek and Cherokee Indians*," in Braund and Porter, eds., 169-179.
- <sup>xlvii</sup> Kathryn E. Holland Braund, "Native Americans in William Bartram's 'Hints & Observations,'" in Hallock and Hoffman, eds., 358-71.
- <sup>xlviii</sup> "William Bartram Facebook Page," <https://www.facebook.com/william.bartram.37?fref=ts>. Accessed August 1, 2015.