

# William Bartram's Georgia



February 22, 2011



## College of Environment + Design UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

*Bartrams Living Legacy: The Travels and Nature of the South*, published in September 2010, was the brainchild of two University of Georgia faculty, and contains beautiful landscape prints by a CED alumnus. A one day conference – “William Bartram’s Georgia: Art & Science on the Southern Frontier” – will be held in Savannah on Friday, March 4, 2011.

William Bartram (b. 1739) grew up near Philadelphia with a botanist father, whom he often accompanied into the field after displaying a love of nature and illustration. Traveling with his father to coastal South Carolina and Georgia in 1765, he developed an affinity for the South and decided to stay behind to start a plantation. This effort, and his next career as a surveyor both failed, however, and he returned to Philadelphia as a shopkeeper.

In 1773, a British plant collector became the patron of a multi-year, 4,500 mile, expedition to survey and document Southern landscapes. Bartram entered the Athens, Georgia area as part of a survey party to mark the boundary of lands ceded to the English by the Creek and Cherokee tribes, and became the first person to describe 42 new plant species and 23 new animal species. He was a pathfinder for many reasons, writing about the inrelatedness of landscapes to the living things – plants, animals, and people – that inhabit them, a concept that today is known as an ecosystem.

Bartram was also very interested in Native culture, and at least one quarter of his work is an extensive documentation of that society, which along with his descriptions of the lives of European settlers on the frontier made him an anthropologist as well. He returned to Philadelphia in 1777, but due to the Revolutionary War, his *Travels* were not published until 1791. The work proved immensely popular due to his vivid accounts and “lyrical hymns of praise.” He is considered by many to be the true father of environmental philosophy, looking at nature with a holistic lens prior to Thoreau at Walden Pond.

Philip Lee Williams of The University of Georgia’s (UGA) Franklin College of Arts & Sciences is a well known writer with a myriad of published works, as well as being a UGA alumnus. He was working with Mercer University Press on his work – *The Flower Seeker: An Epic Poem of*

*William Bartram* – when he inquired about the prospect of creating an anthology of southern nature writers inspired by Bartram. Bartram’s seminal work, *Travels*, has not gone out of print since its 1791 release, and this new volume – *Bartram’s Living Legacy: The Travels and Nature of the South* – includes the newest reprint of it along with seventeen essays exploring the relevance and influence of William Bartram to the Southern landscape today.

Dorinda G. Dallmeyer, director of the Environmental Ethics Certificate Program at UGA’s College of Environment & Design (CED), signed onto the project as editor in January 2009, and contributed her own essay to the publication. She holds three degrees from UGA, co-manages the Southern Nature Project, and her writing has been recognized with multiple awards. Dallmeyer’s personal connection to the project comes not only from being a nature writer herself, but also living her whole life in landscapes described by Bartram in his *Travels*.

When contacting other writers, Dallmeyer said the general feeling was one of excitement about the prospect of having their words bound in the same volume as Bartram’s. A large part of Bartram’s allure is that he provides a window to the past, answering the question, “what did this place look like 200 years ago?” Direct guidance was not necessary, as writers contributed essays focused upon their personal connections to Bartram and the Southern landscape. Topics range from wildlife biology to gardening as a way of recovering health, and getting lost in the swamplands of Florida to large scale environment change. Both *The Flower Seeker* and *Bartram’s Living Legacy* were published by Mercer University Press in September 2010, and are available through Amazon.com, Borders, and Mercer University. UGA students will find both works available for check out through the Main Library and the Owens Library in Caldwell Hall.

*Bartram’s Living Legacy* also contains prints of a number of paintings as well as an essay by a UGA CED alumnus, Philip Juras (BFA ’90; MLA ’97). His artwork combines direct observation with historical, scientific, and natural history research to depict, and in some cases, re-imagine, landscapes as they appeared in the 1770s. These paintings are currently on display in an exhibit titled, “The Southern Frontier: Landscapes Inspired by Bartram’s Travels,” at the Telfair Museum in Savannah, Georgia through May 8, 2011. The exhibit will next be shown at the Morris Museum in Augusta, Georgia over the summer months. These images and many more have been compiled and published by Telfair Books, and distributed by The University of Georgia Press in a volument titled the same as his exhibit. This work may also be found on Amazon.com and at Borders.

A conference titled “William Bartram’s Georgia: Art and Science on the Southern Frontier,” is being sponsored by the Georgia Sea Grant College Program, Mercer University Press, the Bartram Trail Conference, and The University of Georgia’s College of Environment & Design. The one-day conference discussing Bartram’s continuing influence on science and the arts will be held in Savannah, Georgia at the Jepson Center on Friday, March 4, 2011. The registration fee of \$50 includes all conference materials, conference luncheon, closing reception, and exclusive, after-hours admission to the Telfair Museum on the evening of March 4. Additionally, participants of the conference will earn 2.5 Continuing Education Unit (CEU) hours. To learn more about the upcoming conference and to register, please visit the Bartram

Project website. For other questions, contact Dorinda Dallmeyer via e-mail at [dorindad@uga.edu](mailto:dorindad@uga.edu).