

## Bartram Trail Conference marker rededicated by garden club

JULIA ROBERTS  
*News-Leader*

In 1774, naturalist William Bartram boarded a ship on St. Simons Island and landed on the north end of Amelia Island, beginning his now famous travels that meandered through Florida.

Bartram's trip onto the island, and into Florida, was commemorated in 1981 when a marker was erected at the foot of Centre Street by the Rose Garden Club in cooperation with Florida Federation of Garden Clubs (FFGC) and the city of Fernandina Beach.

However, 40 years of weather was not kind to the plaque, and it was badly in need of refurbishment. Since the Rose Garden Club disbanded, the Bartram Garden Club, the only FFGC-affiliated club in Fernandina Beach, spearheaded a complete restoration of the marker.

An experienced craftsman, Tim Fillmon of Webster, was contracted to refurbish the marker in December. The garden club received a grant from District IV of FFGC for half of the cost, with the remainder funded by the club.

Upon completion the marker was delivered and reinstalled in its original location and was unveiled during a ceremony hosted by the Bartram Garden Club on Jan. 14. The marker was rededicated in memory of the Rose Garden Club.

When the marker was originally dedicated in 1981, Fort Clinch State Park assistant superintendent Mark Glisson called Bartram "the original flower child," noting Bartram's accounts of the area during an expedition that took place during the Revolutionary War are

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JULIA ROBERTS/NEWS-LEADER

Fernandina Beach Bartram Garden Club President Kathleen Luman and Bartram Trail Conference vice president Mike Adams, in character as William Bartram, unveil a plaque that marks the beginning of the naturalist's travels into Florida, which began on Amelia Island. The plaque was originally installed in 1981 by the Rose Garden Club and was recently refurbished by the current club.

## TRAIL

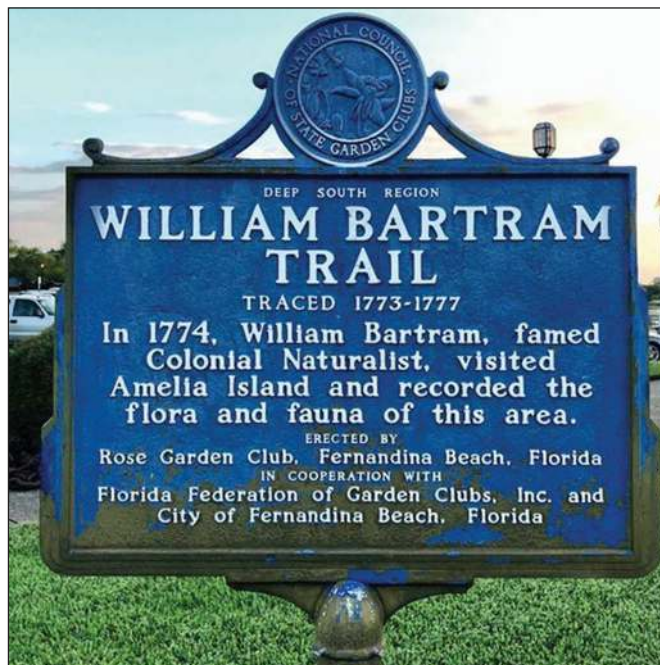
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so detailed and exact, the park services still use them to return land to its undisturbed state.

Bartram's trail is memorialized with markers that begin in North Carolina and follow his travels through South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Alabama and Louisiana. According to the Bartram Trail Conference (BTC), when the naturalist landed on Amelia Island, he crossed Egans Creek and stayed several days at Lord Egmont's plantation in the northeast section of Fernandina Beach. He then left the plantation by boat, across the Nassau Sound and onto the north end of Talbot Island, and proceeded by way of Sister Creek to what is now Jacksonville.

Mike Adams, vice president of the BTC, portrays Bartram in re-enactments, and spoke in character at the rededication. He explained Native Americans nicknamed Bartram "Puc-Puggy," or Flower Hunter, and quoted from the *Travels of William Bartram*, which was published in 1791.

"This world, as a glorious apartment of the boundless Creator, is furnished with an infinite variety of animated scenes, inexpressibly beautiful and pleasing, equally free to the inspec-



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

**The plaque before it was refurbished, above. An article highlights the William Bartram Trail marker that was installed in 1981, below.**

tion and enjoyment of all of his creatures," he said.

At the rededication ceremony, Kathleen Lunman, president of the Fernandina Beach Bartram Garden Club, recognized the Rose Garden Club, which originally erected the marker.

"We are forever grateful for their vision, forethought

and love of our natural world, which is represented by their desire to create a lasting memorial to America's first naturalist, William Bartram, whose footprints on Amelia Island in 1774 began one of America's most exciting adventures," Lunman said.

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# In Memory/

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## Garden Club Honors Early Florida Explorer

By Paul Hicks  
News Leader Staff Writer

The memory of a long ignored explorer of the southeastern United States was revived, if only for a moment, last week by the Rose Garden Club of Fernandina Beach.

A marker which now stands at the foot of Centre Street is but a small reminder of the accomplishments of William A. Bartram, explorer, botanist, humanist, and naturalist.

"He was the original flower child," said Ft. Clinch State Park Assistant Superintendent Mark Glisson during formal marker dedication ceremonies last Tuesday. Markers depicting the travels of Bartram from Fernandina Beach to Naples on Florida's west coast are erected throughout the state.

Glisson, a dedicated naturalist of today, considers Billy Bartram his personal hero, and unequivocally compares the 18th century naturalist to such renowned folk heroes as Davey Crockett and Daniel Boone.

"I respect him more for his lasting contribution to botany and many of his other contributions that are still useful today, but mostly because he was a non-violent hero," Glisson told the dedication audience.

It is from Bartram's accounts of the southeastern states that the Federal Park Service is able to reconstruct the closest possible approximation of how federal reserves looked before the intrusion of European settlers in the new world.

"His accounts of this area while he was on an expedition here during the Revolutionary War are so detailed and exact that the Park Service still uses them to return the lands back to their pristine state," he said.

The lost camillia, a flower thought to be extinct now, might never have been discovered were it not for Bartram, according to Glisson. Discovering the plant in Georgia during his southeastern expedition, Bartram sent drawings and seeds back to what were then considered the colonies.

To date, no other person has found the plant growing in the wild and what specimens remain are a tribute to Bartram.

The Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus called Bartram the world's greatest living botanist for his many contributions to Linnaeus' taxonomic classification system.

Bartram, more than any other individual, classified and made drawings of more plants and flowers than anyone else who helped the Swedish scientist develop the system still used today to identify plants.

The Indians, who Bartram is said to have spent more time among than his own people, called him 'Puc-Puggy' or Flower Hunter, and regarded him as a harmless creature. He was said to have urged that other white men study the Indian ways, instead of encouraging the Indians to become like the whites.



A simple marker at the foot of Centre Street marks the passage of Florida explorer William Bartram.

His only book, "Travels," was published in 1791, but according to Lt. Glisson was largely ignored for over 100 years.

"It has only been in recent times that people have begun to look on the great contributions of Billy Bartram and recognize their value," he said.

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## City of Fernandina Beach Government

January 14 at 3:20 PM · 



The Bartram Garden Club, Inc. recently commissioned a restoration of the William Bartram Trail marker at the waterfront in Fernandina Beach. The marker was originally gifted by the Rose Garden Club in 1981, in cooperation with the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. The marker, which has been completely restored to its original 1981 color and condition, was unveiled today in a small but lovely dedication ceremony. Before photo in the comments!



## William Bartram Trail Marker



*Before restoration*



*After restoration*

On Thursday, January 14, the restored William Bartram Trail marker was unveiled to the public in a small ceremony hosted by the Bartram Garden Club of Amelia Island. Erected in the 1980s, the marker has been restored back to its original appearance. Be sure to check it out on Front Street!