Chattooga Quarterly

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photo by Peter McIntosh www.mcintoshmountains.com

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Director's Page

Buzz Williams

It did not come unexpected that one of our last, big, traditional foundation-givers gave us the axe. Not unexpected, because foundations depend on an invested trust fund that depends on the market. So, when the economy is bad, foundations do not possess the money they normally have to give to charitable causes. The net result is that someone will not get funded. Small nonprofits at the grassroots usually get cut first. Often foundations will simply cut funding below the regional level.

But this hurt. We really needed that grant, and my thoughts that morning were filled with doubt. Lunch time brought no solace. I opened the refrigerator at our office and it was a lonely scene. One slice of whole wheat bread, the heel, lay in rejected silence in its open, rumpled plastic bag. Then, things started to look up. In that last glance inside the fridge—just before the door, having been slammed in disgust, shook the rafters with perfect follow through—I had seen, yes, it was a full container of spicy mustard.

The greatest fruit of self sufficiency is freedom.
-Epicurus
(341-270 B.C.)
Greek Philosopher

The pots on the pantry shelf were still rattling from the impact of the slammed door when I snatched the fridge open again. A fine brand, indeed, and over in the corner screaming, "Eat me now!" was a beautiful, red apple in its prime. Things were really looking up when I spied the fresh, organic, home grown beet leaves in the vegetable drawer. The last unexplored territory were the shelves in the door, where I discovered a bottle of white wine of the California vintage, containing about two ounces. "Ah, this wine must be rare indeed, given that it has been here so long that it is surely the last of its kind," I said to myself. The truth is that I dislike white wine, but not wanting to spoil the roll of good fortune, I decided to take the drastic step of giving this wine a try.

I gathered all of my new found treasures in my arms and made it to the counter in one trip. There I carefully spread the rich, spicy mustard all over the flat side of the bread, not missing one ragged corner. Then, I carefully laid the fresh, green beet leaves across the bread, folded it over and patted it closed. I put my prize on a small plate with the nice red apple, sliced from the core, poured the wine into a glass, and headed back to my desk.

I sat and ate my delectable little lunch, and wondered how we were going to find $10,000 to replace what we had lost. A few months back, our Board of Directors Chair and Development Coordinator attended a fundraising work shop. The facilitator asked everyone where their organizations got their funding. All were surprised to find that the Chattooga Conservancy is inordinately self sufficient. We receive the lion's share of our funding from our individual members, which was far and above any other organization at the workshop.

I also thought about what a great program of work we have going. So far this year, we have received the "Watershed Group of the Year Award" from the Georgia River Network. We also convinced the City of Clayton, Georgia, to apply for a million dollars of economic stimulus money to fix its municipal water delivery system that loses about 50% of the water it carries from leaks and old meters, amounting to half a million dollars worth of lost revenue a year. We expect that money to come through, in which case we hope to further convince the city to apply the recovered revenue to fixing their sewage collection system that is the greatest source of pollution into the Chattooga River. We also have brokered a deal to receive a valuable piece of property that will soon be Clayton's new city park. The park will be a demonstration project to show the value of reestablishing a native vegetation buffer zone along Stekoa Creek that will filter sediment as well as demonstrate the benefits of using native plants to landscape the area, that are drought-resistant and require little or no irrigation. We are also working with property owners in the Chattooga's North Carolina headwaters to question the fast-track permit for spraying treated sewage effluent onto the steep terrain and shallow soils at Silver Slip Falls. In South Carolina, we recently worked with Oconee County Council members to pass a resolution against routing a potential interstate highway called I-3 through the county. In addition, our land trust has taken off, and we now hold four conservation easements. We put out one of the best newsletter publications in the business, and we have become a respected player in the watershed community. The list goes on, but this space is short. To a large degree, this record of success can be attributed to plain hard work and the fact that the Chattooga Conservancy is not constrained by funder-driven mandates that often tend towards upholding the status quo.

I took a swig of the white wine, expecting the worst, but instead found that it was the perfect compliment to the meal. In that moment of zen-like bliss it all came together. We will make it. The work is too important, and you—our members—believe in the Chattooga Conservancy's work. We will have to get even a little leaner, and make do with what funds we can find. We will certainly have to look harder for funding. At least now I know the pitch. The Chattooga Conservancy is a great investment; just look at what we have accomplished, and what our plans are for the future. Also, take a look at the mailing label on your *Chattooga Quarterly*. You are the Chattooga Conservancy. Thanks for your continued and vital support.

Tracking Down The Blue Ridge Railroad

Justin Raines

They can be found scattered among north Georgia's streamside laurels and South Carolina's high mountain ridges. Some must be sought on foot. Others can be glimpsed from highways that made rails obsolete. They are the fragments of a grand but abandoned dream that, if completed, would have altered interstate commerce and the entire face of Southern Appalachia. Today the markers of the Blue Ridge Railroad's failed passage across the mountains have mostly faded into the background, but they shouldn't be forgotten. The hand-carved stones in the culverts are still there, and rain falls daily down the shafts of the Stumphouse Mountain tunnel. To walk the old grades and gaze at the remains of the Chattooga River viaduct is like tipping the cap to another generation and an undertaking so ambitious and daunting, it's amazing to see how close it was to becoming a reality.

To really get a grasp of a project that would have provided the port of Charleston with a trading route to Knoxville and the West, to really appreciate the magnitude of the task, it's necessary to lean back and take a big breath. Close the eyes and imagine a world powered by steam way back before the roar and smell of automobiles replaced the sounds and scents of horses and mules and hay and hooves clopping on dirt and cobblestoned roads. The shots at Fort Sumter were still decades away and South Carolina was in a tight race with other coastal cities in the East to become a major seaport. Steam locomotion technology had made its way across the ocean from England. Charleston had the nation's first steam engine. The first and longest regularly scheduled railroad route in the United States ran 135 miles from Charleston to Hamburg. Now all the city needed was a way to get goods to the expanding western territories. Just one obstacle stood in the way—the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Other states such as Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia had a distinct advantage in the rush to establish a route to the west. They all had gaps in the Appalachians that allowed direct access through the mountains. South Carolina had no established pass. Difficult terrain combined with a lack of state funding hampered the state's railway plans, but there were glimmers of hope such as in 1837 when distinguished statesman John C. Calhoun claimed to have found the "Carolina Gap." Calhoun explored much of the Blue Ridge on foot from his home at Fort Hill. He believed a pass was found at Whitewater Falls, but his jubilation turned to disappointment when the gap proved to be impassable and again the project was stalled while planners tried to find a way across the mountains to Georgia and beyond. Finally, more than fifteen years later, the dream was revived and the Blue Ridge Railroad was born.

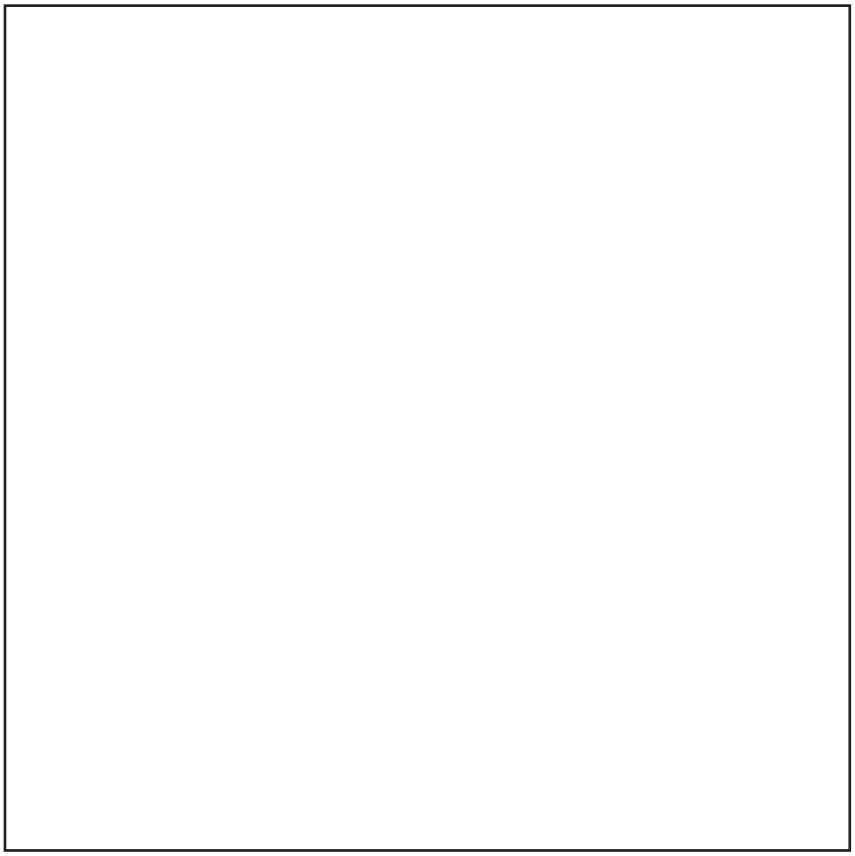
Stumphouse Tunnel in Oconee County, SC, was dug using only hand drills, sledge hammers and black powder. Visitors can explore the tunnel, which is at Stumphouse Tunnel Park on Highway 28 six miles north of Walhalla.
photo by Brian Scott

In November 1853, work began on the most complicated engineering project ever attempted in South Carolina. After extensive surveys, a route was finally selected. It wound from Anderson past Walhalla and West Union all the way up to Stumphouse Mountain. A tunnel more than a mile long would be built right through the mountain. The track would cross a bridge at the Chauga River and a massive viaduct at Sandy Ford would span the Chattooga. The route continued into Georgia and the Rabun Gap and then to Knoxville where another line would lead all the way to Cincinnati, Ohio.

It was decided early on that the railway would be built to British standards, which required gentle grades and broad curves that allowed more freight to be transported with less energy. Such standards also required an enormous amount of work and money. Some historians believe that spending so much time and money on grading and fills may have contributed to the projects eventual failure. Some suggest that a smaller line should have been built first, which would have then funded additional construction and improvements. Corruption, scandals and political misdealings also took an enormous toll on financing and the overall plan. When the Civil War began, Charleston's attention and bank roll was aimed elsewhere. Although it was never completed, it's important to take notice of the railroad's many successes and accomplishments that can still be seen today.

Tracking Down The Blue Ridge Railroad

One of the most fascinating sites on the route is the Stumphouse Mountain tunnel. Stumphouse Tunnel Park is located on Highway 28 six miles north of Walhalla. The park is open year-round during daylight hours and features the unfinished railroad tunnel abandoned in 1859. Touring the park is a good way to really appreciate the magnitude of the project. More than a mile long, the tunnel was by far the longest on the entire route. Four shafts were dug along its length to give laborers more surface area to work on. All the work was done with hand tools and black powder. Dynamite had not been invented yet, and steam-powered machines were only just beginning to replace horses and mules. Workers bored holes in the blue granite with hand drills and sledge hammers. Oil-burning head lamps lit the dark and damp tunnels while huge steam-powered air pumps ventilated the shafts. Rock and debris was carried out of the tunnel on rails with wagons and mules. Steam pumps and hoists with leather buckets were used to move water and workers into and out of the shafts. Despite the treacherous nature of the work, only a handful of deaths were reported at the tunnel.



"Single jack" drilling was used in digging Stumphouse Tunnel, and involved an individual holding and turning the steel with one hand, while hitting the steel with a hammer held in the other hand.

Most of the 500-600 laborers were Irish who settled a town near Stumphouse simply named Tunnel Hill. Only a nominal amount of slave labor was used. It is believed that many of the stone masons were Italian because the work was similar to structures in ancient Rome. During the peak of construction, progress was made at the rate of 200 feet per month. With each swing of the pick, hundreds of men unaided by modern machines truly moved mountains one shovel full at a time. Although the Stumphouse tunnel was never completed, the accuracy of the engineering and quality of craftsmanship is astounding given the lack of machines and technology.

Other notable sites along the Blue Ridge Railroad's route are the Chattooga River viaduct and the tunnel at Dick's Creek. Warwoman Dell in Clayton also offers several works. There are many hand-carved stone culverts and quarries located in Georgia and South Carolina.

Ruddy Ellis is a retired Georgia Tech engineer and member of the Atlanta Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. He has explored extensively the South Carolina and Georgia sections of the Blue Ridge Railroad and has compiled a self-guided tour for those interested in visiting sites along the old routes in Oconee and Rabun Counties. Ellis has located 23 stone culverts, some of which can be seen from the road. Most of these culverts are located near rock quarries, which had to be dug near the streams because many of the stones used weighed more than a ton. Some of the areas are located on private property and can't be visited without permission, but Ellis' tour guide offers at least a full day of sites to be seen. He said that with development encroaching upon much of the old route, it is important that people see what is left so that it might be conserved. "People need to realize that what they are looking at was an enormous project," Ellis said. "They finished almost 60 percent of the grades and tunnels and most of it is still there to see if you know where to look."

There were many factors that contributed to the Blue Ridge Railroad's demise, not the least of which was the Civil War, which effectively ended funding from northern states. More efficient routes were established elsewhere and Charleston never got its direct railroad to the West. In 1861, the project was ended for good. The route was revisited briefly after the war, but no work of any significance was ever continued on the railroad. But the dream is still alive. Just ask proponents of Interstate 3 who are still fighting for a better way to get over the mountains.

For more information on Ruddy Ellis' self-guided tour of the Blue Ridge Railroad, please email the Chattooga Conservancy at info@chattoogariver.org

The Whetstone Quadrangle

Buzz Williams

This is the third in a series of articles that explore the Chattooga River watershed by examining individual sections as defined by U. S. Geological Survey quadrangle maps. Previous articles in this series have appeared in the Chattooga Quarterly *winter 2006 and winter/spring 2008 issues.*

The Whetstone Quadrangle covers a portion of the lower quarter of Chattooga River watershed mostly on the South Carolina side of the river, near Earls Ford and Sandy Ford. This section of the watershed appears in the northwest corner of the quadrangle map. The greater portion of the map, however, covers the upper Chauga River watershed, from its headwaters near the small village of Mountain Rest in the northeast corner, and across to Brasstown Church near Long Creek in the southwest corner of the map. A portion of Coneross Creek watershed lies in the southeaster corner of the map near Buzzards Roost, a South Carolina Heritage Trust Preserve.

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The Whetstone Quad can be accessed from US Highway 76 that runs from Westminster, South Carolina, through Long Creek to Clayton, Georgia, and from State Highway 28 (also called the Highlands Highway) that runs from Walhalla, South Carolina, to Highlands, North Carolina. Highway 28 passes through Mountain Rest within the Whetstone Quad, and appears in the northeast corner of the map. Here, it intersects with Highway 107 coming from Cashiers, North Carolina.

Several county roads criss-cross the Whetstone Quad between Long Creek and Mountain Rest, the most conspicuous being Chattooga Ridge Road, which intersects the Whetstone Road in the center of the map, about 1/3 of the way from the top, at a prominent 4-way stop. The Whetstone Road runs from Highway 28 near Stumphouse Mountain to the 4-way stop, where it continues on to the west and is then known as the Earls Ford Road. The Earls Ford Road passes through the historic community of Whetstone, and is unpaved for the last 5 miles on the Sumter National Forest where it ends at Earls Ford, a major access point on the Chattooga River. Forest Service road 722-A that turns off the Earls Ford Road about 1 mile before Earls Ford leads to Sandy Ford, and is another major access point on the Chattooga River. It, too, is an unpaved Forest Service road.

There are several points of interest on the Whetstone Road, beginning with the Mountain Top Trading Post on Highway 28, where one finds the best boiled peanuts on the mountain. On down the Whetstone Road towards the Chauga River, Forest Service road 737 takes off to the right leading to a Forest Service campground called the Miller Fields. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SC DNR) keeps the Chauga River at Blackwell Bridge on the Whetstone Road well-stocked with trout from the Walhalla Fish Hatchery. The Chauga River is a beautiful little mountain stream that currently is suffering greatly from sediment coming from careless development upstream but yet, the Chauga Narrows below Blackwell Bridge is one of the prettiest falls in our mountains.

Two other county roads cross the Chauga River to the north of Blackwell Bridge. The Land Bridge Road, which crosses the Chauga River upstream of Blackwell Bridge, is an old settlers road that branches off of the Whetstone Road near Stumphouse Mountain and connects with the Verner Mill Road. The Verner Mill Road basically parallels the old Cherokee path, and runs between the intersection of Highway 28 and 107 across the Chauga River to Chattooga Ridge. The Cherokee path that William Bartram followed in the spring of 1775 crossed the headwaters of the Chauga River just upstream of the Verner Mill Road, where Bartram noted the ruins of an old Indian village.

The Cassidy Bridge Road is another county road that travels from east to west across the Chauga River, south of the Whetstone Road, between Mountain Rest and Long Creek. Most of the land on both sides of the Cassidy Bridge Road is owned and managed by the Forest Service. Traveling west for about 1 mile on the Cassidy Bridge Road, from its intersection with the Whetstone Road near Stumphouse Mountain, we find the Rich Mountain Road to the left that leads south to Rich Mountain. On this road as it nears Rich Mountain, an access road branches off and leads to the Buzzards Roost Heritage Trust Preserve, which is managed by the SC DNR. The Cedar Creek Road is on the right just across from the Buzzards Roost access road, and will take you to Blue Hole Falls on Cedar Creek, which flows into the Chauga River.

About another mile down the Cassidy Bridge Road on the left is a Forest Service road that leads to the Cedar Creek Rifle Range, and to the Presbyterian Lake that is managed by the Forest Service for public fishing. Go another mile and find another Forest Service road to the right that leads to a primitive campground on the Chauga River called Hell Hole Campground. The Crooked Creek Road, yet another Forest Service road off of the Cassidy Bridge Road, is located about 1 mile before crossing the Chauga River at Cassidy Bridge. A public campground is located on the left, just before the bridge.

The west end of the Cassidy Bridge Road ascends out of the Chauga River gorge towards Long Creek. A small parking lot is located at the Cassidy Bridge crossing that is used mostly by fishermen, and by paddlers running the Chauga when the river is high after a good bit of rain. Mountain Grove Baptist Church is on the left about 1 mile up the Cassidy Bridge Road. Charlie Cobb Road, which comes in from the right about 1/4 mile past the church, heads over to the Chattooga Ridge Road. The Round Mountain Fire Tower is located at the end of a gated Forest Service road on Charlie Cobb Road, about 1/4 mile

The Whetstone Quadrangle

map created by Buzz Williams

The Whetstone Quadrangle

before it intersects with Chattooga Ridge Road.

Back on the Cassidy Bridge Road, about 1/2 mile further towards Long Creek, the Double Branch Road to the left takes you to another primitive campground on the west bank of the Chauga River. The Cassidy Bridge Road intersects Academy Road about 3/4 mile past the Double Branch Road.

The historic Long Creek Academy is located on a knoll off of Academy Road as it heads towards Long Creek, and was once a Baptist-affiliated school for local kids that operated with state support until the 1960's. The Long Creek Academy is a beautiful, old antebellum style building with huge white columns out front. The academy was once entirely powered with electricity generated by a large water wheel located on Fall Creek, near the Fall Creek Road by way of Chattooga Ridge Road. The Disney Corporation even used the Long Creek Academy as a movie set for a made-for-television movie in the 1980's. The main building and adjacent dormitory building is now the headquarters for Wildwater Limited, a rafting company that offers guided raft trips on the Chattooga River.

Early traders, hunters and adventurers such as William Bartram all followed the basic route of the Lower Cherokee Trading Path that crosses the Whetstone Quad.

The Whetstone Quad is notable for two very important reasons. First, it is defined by its rich cultural heritage, and secondly, its land ownership pattern consists of mostly national forest lands, especially in the Chauga River watershed, that are interspersed with private lands along prominent highways and roads.

The Lower Cherokee Trading Path that crosses the Whetstone Quad ran from Oconee Station across to an "ancient" old Indian village on Village Creek, then on to the Cherokee Village of Ecochee on Whetstone Creek, and through Rocky Gap and across Moss Mill Creek to Earls Ford on the Chattooga River. Early traders, hunters, and adventurers such as William Bartram all followed this same basic route through Whetstone. Interestingly, the Blue Ridge Railroad project that was begun in the 1840's, but which was never completed, followed the same general route as the old Cherokee path.

The relative pastoral terrain along the old Cherokee path across Village Creek and Whetstone Creek, and extending out Chattooga Ridge toward Long Creek, has traditionally been upkept as small subsistence farms and apple orchards. The terrain also lent itself to a profusion of grist mills on Moss Mill Creek and Fall Creek in the Chattooga watershed, and on Shingle Mill Creek and Mill Creek on the Chauga River above Cassidy Bridge. The fact that so much natural water power existed in an area where corn was grown as a staple crop also gave rise to a lot of "moonshining." Corn ground in the local water-powered mills could easily be converted into a value added product.

Much of the cultural history of the area is also linked to early timber harvesting operations at the turn of the century, when many locals worked as river drivers, sawyers and teamsters. Later, as the timber ran out, the Forest Service began buying the up the old abandoned farmsteads on the steep, worn out ground and cut-over land, to form what we know today as the Sumter National Forest. One of our first "stimulus projects" was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) that was put in place by President Frankin Delano Roosevelt during the Great Depression. One of the main CCC camps was located on Chattooga Ridge Road, about 1 mile southwest of the four-way stop marking the intersection of Whetstone and Chattooga Ridge Roads.

The Forest Service did much to restore the abused lands that make up our eastern national forests. However, one can hardly ignore the over-roaded and clear cut lands all throughout the Chauga River watershed, that occurred mostly in the 1980's when the Forest Service struggled to meet the politically mandated "timber targets" that were linked to a U. S. Congress effectively controlled by the timber industry lobby. One theory about why the Chauga River watershed was so heavily cut over by the Forest Service is that it became the "sacrificial lamb" when the adjacent Chattooga River Corridor was designated off limits to intensive timber management after it was protected as a National Wild and Scenic River. Fortunately, today many of these old loblolly pine plantations are being restored to native forests by an increasingly enlightened Forest Service, coupled with the public outcry for "ecosystem management."

The Whetstone Quad, with its rich cultural and natural history, is a great place to explore. Go and view the old piles of quarried stone along the abandoned Blue Ridge Railroad; paddle from Earls to Sandy Ford and see the Rock Garden and Dicks Creek Falls. Catch trout and red eye bass on the Chauga and Chattooga Rivers. See the ruins of old abandoned homesteads and grist mills deep in our national forests. Read William Bartram's ***Travels,*** and follow the old Cherokee Path through Whetstone to Earls Ford. Always make sure you are not trespassing on the private lands in the area by also taking along an official U. S. Geologic Survey map when exploring the Whetstone Quadrangle.

William Bartram's ***Travels***

Nicole Hayler

This May marked the 232nd anniversary of William Bartram's exploratory trek through the Chattooga River watershed, a tale that is featured in his landmark book, ***Travels***, and commemorated by The Bartram Trail. This May has also marked the return of abundant rainfall in the Chattooga watershed—welcome relief that has lifted spirits and rejuvenated an impressive springtime display of our area's lush flora. It was this remarkable flora that interested Bartram's "restless spirit of curiosity," and spurred him to venture here in the turbulent year of 1775. So, it seems an inviting moment now to look back at that exceptional time and to also consider the equally exceptional personage of William Bartram.

William Bartram was born in 1739 near the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia, and at an early age displayed talent as an illustrator. As a young man, he was offered an apprentice printer position by family friend and fellow Quaker community member Benjamin Franklin. But bypassing this vocation, Bartram began training as a merchant and trader, settling for a short while at Cape Fear, North Carolina. Then, in 1765, the first of his noteworthy voyages occurred under the tutelage of his father, John Bartram, when the two undertook a 400-mile exploration of the St. John River in Florida, after which William returned to a quiet life of farming in Philadelphia.

In the meantime Bartram's father, John, was also farming, while conducting extensive plant-hunting forays during the off season. The senior Bartram was supplying a mail-order business in partnership with Englishman and fellow Quaker Peter Collinson, capitalizing on the growing demand from English gardeners keen to get seeds and plant stock from American flowering shrubs and trees. Likely through this connection, William Bartram's botanical drawings drew notice of Dr. John Fothergill, a famous English botanist. It wasn't long, then, "at the request of Dr. Fothergill, of London, to search the Floridas, and the western parts of Carolina and Georgia, for the discovery of rare and useful productions of nature, chiefly in the vegetable kingdom," that William Bartram left Philadelphia and boarded a ship bound for Charleston. It was April 1773, and Fothergill was to finance his explorations into what was largely Indian territories in return for William Bartram sending his forthcoming collections of seeds, root stock and plant specimens to England.

Upon arrival in Charleston, Bartram immediately began establishing connections that would aid his travels into the Indian territories. For at this time, just 3 years before the Revolutionary War, settlers from colonies in Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia were flowing in a relentless tide onto Indian lands. Treaty after treaty was made with the Indian nations in efforts to affix boundaries, that were successively violated and replaced by the next treaty, with the Indians' lands always dwindling in extent. Bartram shortly learned of one such upcoming "congress" in Augusta of Cherokees, Creeks, and other Indian nations, a gathering intended to determine the bounds of a new treaty. Bartram attended the Augusta congress by way of several strategic acquaintances that included John Stewart, Indian superintendent for the southern provinces. At the congress's conclusion, Superintendent Stewart introduced Bartram's business and recommended him to the protection of the Indian chiefs and warriors gathered there.

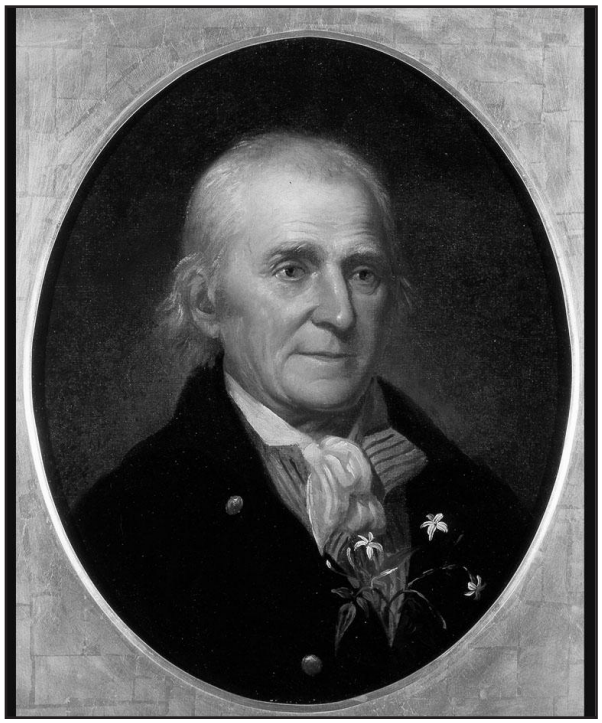
At this point Bartram, always "restless to be searching for more, my curiosity being insatiable," accepted an invitation to travel with the surveyors assembled to identify the exact boundaries of the new territory ceded by the Indians. Bartram met with "extraordinary success" on this trip, "making a very extensive collection of new discoveries of natural productions." From here he returned (with the surveyors) to Augusta, and then went to Savannah. There he determined that it was unsafe to venture into the northwestern regions of Carolina—"the Cherokees and their confederates being yet discontented"—so he decided to explore eastern Florida.

Bartram's Florida travels include numerous entertaining episodes while offering insight into his unique character and beliefs, as these adventures compose the majority of his ***Travels*** book. Bartram's singular courage is evidenced many times over, such as when on a solo boating expedition up the St. John, he used a club to fend off ferocious alligators that had encircled his small boat. Bartram also describes on many occasions what can be termed as "being seduced by the enchanting scenes of primitive nature…and terrestrial happiness," a recurring theme in his travels. These episodes are interspersed with detailed botanical observations, philosophical beliefs about human nature, and clever strategies to advance his "sylvan pilgrimage." In addition, Bartram describes joining up with a trading company bound for the Creek Indian town of Cuscowilla, on business to ratify the Treaty of St. Augustine. It is during this encounter that the Creek chief "Cowkeeper," while giving permission for Bartram to travel unlimited through their country, names Bartram "Puc-Puggy"—translated as the Flower Hunter—a name that would move with him to future encounters with other Southeast Indian nations.

In fact, on his botanical expeditions William Bartram most always sought to travel with traders, on the extensive network of trading paths that criss-crossed the Southeast Indian territories at that time. As a pattern, some of the first and most entrenched incursions into Native American lands included groups of traders feeding the Indians' appetite for new products. Bartram himself carried a compact supply of items that included needles and tobacco to proffer as friend-making devices to wary Indians. Upon returning to Charleston from Florida by way of trading routes and the hospitality of busy traders, Bartram spent the winter there, during which time he planned "agreeably to Dr. Fothergill's instructions" future travels into Cherokee country.

Willam Bartram's *Travels*

In April of 1775, William Bartram "sat forward" on horseback (his primary means of travel) for the Cherokee Nation, gathering from traders along the way "letters of recommendation and credit to the principle traders residing in the Indian towns." He chose a path directly up the Savannah River corridor. And Bartram was perceptibly anxious about what lay ahead in those distant, wild, and unexplored regions. En route to Fort James as a solitary traveler and hoping for a friendly place to rest, he notes coming upon the unsettling sight of "heaps of white, gnawed bones of ancient buffalo, elk and deer, indiscriminately mixed with those of men, half grown over with moss…rather disagreeable to a mind of delicate feeling and sensibility, since some of those objects recognize past transactions and events, perhaps not altogether reconcilable to justice and humanity."



Portrait of William Bartram, painted by Charles Peale in 1808, that conveys Bartram's kindly disposition. The flower tucked in his waistcoat is a fragrant Jasminum officinale.

Bartram proceeded for Keowee (east of the Chattooga watershed) in mid-May of 1775. En route, and as with previous excursions, he sought out the most influential people that were positioned to help advance his expedition. In this instance he found Alexander Cameron, deputy-commissioner for Indian affairs for the Cherokee Nation, who agreeably housed William Bartram for several days and supplied him with "ample testimonials and letters of recommendation to the traders in the nation," as well as a "young Negro slave" to pilot him as far as Seneca.

Most everyone knows the year of 1775 as just preceding the start of the Revolutionary War. Not so well known, perhaps, are the parallel histories of the Southeastern Indians and the tumultuous period of their nations' decline that was so integrally part of this era. What Bartram viewed upon arrival in Seneca was a new Cherokee town, built after the Lower and Middle Cherokee settlements had been sacked, burned, and their agricultural lands destroyed during the Cherokee War. This war ended in 1761 and staggered the Cherokee Nation, leaving their extant populated towns as just a remnant of their former sovereign territory.

Drawing ever closer to the Chattooga drainage, Bartram left Seneca for Fort Prince George, which stood across the Keowee River from the abandoned Cherokee town of Keowee. Now unaccompanied, he was unsettled at being "all alone in a wild Indian country." William Bartram knew well of the fresh blood that had been spilt between Cherokees and frontier settlers, "and the injury not yet wiped away by formal treaty: the Cherokees extremely jealous of white people traveling about their mountains, especially if they should be seen peeping in amongst the rocks, or digging up their earth." Yet he composes his mind and moves onward. Once at Fort Prince George, which by that time was no longer a fort but a trading house, Bartram waits there several days for an Indian man recommended as a suitable "protector and guide." Impatient after learning that the hoped-for companion would not arrive anytime soon, Bartram "determined to set off alone and run all risks."

His route from Fort Prince George through the Chattooga River watershed has been the subject of much local interest and speculation. ***Travels*** offers some distinct landmarks to fuel this debate, and has Bartram entering the Chattooga drainage by way of "Occonne mountain" (the present day Stumphouse Mountain complex in Oconee County, SC), from whence he "enjoyed a view inexpressively magnificent and comprehensive." Bartram continues on, contemplating "this magnificent landscape, infinitely varied, and without bound," while simultaneously discovering a new species of rhododendron. Descending the mountain, he then travels up and down through "incomparable forests," "exceedingly rich" soils, and "fruitful strawberry beds," along the way citing landmarks so characteristic of the Chattooga watershed such as a "charming narrow vale" and a "rapid large creek," while observing "frequently the ruins of the habitations or villages of the ancients." Interpretation of ***Travels*** at this point places Bartram's route as passing through the Village Creek area, crossing Chattooga Ridge into the Whetstone Valley, and going onward to the Chattooga River at Earls Ford (please see also the Whetstone Quadrangle map on page 6).

Then Bartram crosses the Chattooga: "Crossed a delightful river, the main branch of Tugilo, when I began to ascend again, first over swelling turfy ridges, varied with groves of stately forest trees; then ascending again more steep grassy hillsides, rested on top of mount Magnolia, which appeared to me to be the highest ridge of the Cherokee mountains which separate the waters of Savanna river from those of the Tanase or greater main branch of the Cherokee river." "Mount Magnolia," which Bartram named after a new species he found growing there "in a high degree of perfection" (the Frasier Magnolia), is most likely

William Bartram's *Travels*

Pinnacle Knob in Rabun County, Georgia, near the Eastern Continental Divide as cited in this passage. After crossing the Chattooga into Georgia, ***Travels*** indicates Bartram's route as following the Warwoman Creek drainage, then turning up Martin's Creek and through Courthouse Gap, then down into the Stekoa Creek drainage near Clayton, and from there heading north through Rabun Gap.

Bartram's energy for botanical explorations falters at this point. He now calls the expedition a "lonesome pilgrimage," and he is beset by the steep and rugged terrain that makes for "troublesome travel," while a heavy thunderstorm dampens his spirits. Bartram's lack of a "guide and protector" for this journey into Cherokee country surely contributes to his malcontent. Yet he rides on and crosses the Little Tennessee River, continuing to follow trading paths now bound for the Cherokee town of Cowe. In spite of the recent hardships inflicted upon the Cherokee people, they left Bartram alone as he passed through the Cherokee villages of Echoe, Nucassee and Whatoga. He finally arrived at Cowe to the hospitality of an established trader in the Indian settlement. Near Cowe are two of the most memorable encounters recited in ***Travels***.

The first is the oft-cited, erotic episode where Bartram and his Cowe host venture into the forest and come across an "enchanting view" of "companies of young, innocent Cherokee virgins" frolicking and collecting strawberries. William Bartram describes a "sylvan scene" of the tantalizing landscape, replete with strolling turkeys, prancing deer, and "swelling, green, turfy knolls," that is entwined with the sensual "floriferous, fragrant native bowers" and the young Cherokee women "disclosing their beauties to the fluttering breeze, and bathing their limbs in the cool fleeting streams." This scene fuels Bartram and the trader's desires to "have a more active part in their delicious sport," but alas their advances are deferred by watchful Cherokee matrons "who lay in ambush." This incident has achieved notoriety in modern discussions of ***Travels***.

Disappointed again in securing a companion for the trip from Cowe to the Cherokees' Overhill towns, Bartram again "resolved to pursue the journey alone." The traders in Cowe advised against this, as most of their fellow entrepreneurs had departed the Overhill towns due to the Indians' "ill humor" brought on by their recent skirmishes with frontier Virginians. Bartram pushed onward, though distinctly discouraged at being "left again wandering alone in the dreary mountains, not indeed totally pathless," and admitting that "I might soon as possible see the end of my toil and hazard." Still, he was determined to make it to the highest land in the Cherokee territory, into an area he described as a "sublimely awful scene of power and magnificence, a world of mountains piled upon mountains."

Bartram rode for a day or so beyond Cowe on an arduous trading path, then coming to a seminal event in his journey. For coincidentally, using the same path and traveling rapidly in the opposite direction was a large group of Indians. Bartram recognized Atakullakulla (a.k.a. "Little Carpenter"), the "emperor or grand chief of the Cherokees" at the head of the caravan, and turned off from the path in deference to him. Atakullakulla paused to accept this show of respect, and Bartram addressed him in the most complimentary language as being "the great Ata-cul-culla," while also offering that his Pennsylvania "tribe of white men" were "themselves brothers and friends to the red men, but particularly to the Cherokees." Continuing the conversation, the two quickly arrived at their mutual acquaintance of Superintendent John Stewart, who Atakullakulla was going to see in Charleston, and whom had recommended Bartram to the friendship and protection of the Cherokees. Here Bartram notes, "To which the great chief was pleased to answer very respectfully, that I was welcome in the country as a friend and brother." They parted and Bartram continued on for several miles in the high hills, with intentions of visiting the Cherokee Nation's Overhill towns.

A combination of factors now occupied Bartram's thoughts. Surely, he was deliberating on his encounter with Atakullakulla, whom he held in such high regard. Definitely, he was aware that the Overhill settlements could not be visited "with entire safety" until current treaty negotiations were concluded, anticipated to be mid-year at best. So "upon serious consideration," the next day he suddenly and decisively turned around and arrived back at Cowe that evening. From there he returns to Keowee, and then accompanies traders to Seneca, where the Indian chiefs were gathered in council. Bartram observes that the Indians were not in good humor, so he abandons plans of visiting the Cherokee Overhill region during that growing season.

Bartram's spirit for adventure and inquiry is not yet quelled, however. He joins a caravan of traders bound for West Florida, and subsequently ventures as far as the Mississippi River. He never does complete his expedition into the northern reaches of the Cherokee Nation, and returns to Philadelphia in early 1778.

Now, enter the modern world. There are some who believe William Bartram had entrepreneurial ambitions, or was just crazy to travel into Indian territories during the height of those war-torn times, simply in search of new plants and flowers. However, ***Travels*** shows that Bartram was quite aware of the threats, and took care to cultivate the most advantageous connections for a safe journey. His thoughtful and friendly nature combined with a healthy measure of bravery and a deep respect for Native Americans also made him well equipped for this mission. And clearly, for Bartram his mission was fueled in part by the motivations of a personal spiritual journey and his belief that the "vegetable kingdom" was at the apex of worldly manifestations of the "Almighty." If more of our spiritual pursuits were as thoughtful and free-thinking as William Bartram's were, surely our own troubled world would benefit.

Watershed Update

[illegible]

In the spring of 2008, local conservation groups petitioned the Oconee County Council to pass a resolution against a proposed interstate highway known as I-3 coming through this upstate South Carolina county. The original proposal by Georgia politicians to build an interstate highway from Savannah, Georgia, to Knoxville, Tennessee, promoted a route for the highway through the north Georgia mountains. But heavy opposition in north Georgia counties allied with numerous local resolutions opposing this route caused proponents of I-3 to seek other options, including a route through South Carolina. The issue died down in the excitement over the November elections, and the request for an Oconee County resolution languished in committee.

Early this spring, the Chattooga Conservancy sent a letter to Oconee County Council restating the urgency of following through with the resolution. Oconee County Council granted time for a presentation by the Chattooga Conservancy, where we argued that a significant portion of the Obama Administration's "stimulus" money would go to agencies such as the state departments of transportation, thus rekindling the push for I-3. We pointed out that with opposing resolutions in place in north Georgia counties and one obvious route up Highway 11 for building the interstate, Oconee County was a "sitting duck" for a superhighway we do not want or need. The Chattooga Conservancy drafted the Oconee Resolution, which passed unanimously in stating the county's opposition to "a federally-funded interstate corridor called Interstate 3 [or any other name for such a corridor] going in, through, or near Oconee County, South Carolina."

[illegible]

On May 12th, the Chattooga Conservancy signed a "consent agreement" with the United Community Bank of Clayton, and the City of Clayton, Georgia, that paves the way for a series of events leading towards establishing a new city park on State Highway 441 adjacent to Stekoa Creek. The agreement calls for the United Community Bank to donate a 2.9 acre tract to the Chattooga Conservancy, for which the bank will receive a tax credit. The Chattooga Conservancy will then hold the property for a short time while we craft a conservation easement that will protect the land in the future, and draw up a conservation plan and site design for the park. Then, the Chattooga Conservancy will transfer the property to the City of Clayton, who will use its value as the required match for a "319" grant already secured by the city. The 319 grant funds are anticipated to help pay for eradicating all of the invasive, non-native plants growing in the 50-foot buffer zone next to Stekoa Creek, and to reestablish native plants in this riparian area. The 319 grant will also be used to restore the stream bank in the area, where needed.

The city park project will serve to demonstrate how using a buffer zone of native plants can control erosion, because the restored riparian area vegetation will serve as a filter strip for preventing erosion and sediment from entering Stekoa Creek. The native vegetation in the buffer zone will also feature drought-tolerant plants that are attractive, and possess the additional benefit of requiring little or no irrigation.

While serving as a demonstration project for restoring the riparian area and beautifying Stekoa Creek, the city park is also

[illegible]

The Chattooga River District of the Chattahoochee National Forest has finally decided to address the erosion problems on a particularly bad section of the Willis Knob Horse Trail near Earls Ford at the Chattooga River. For several years the Chattooga Conservancy and concerned riders have urged the Forest Service to re-route a section of heavily used trail that runs from Earls Ford on the Georgia side of the Chattooga River, upstream to an intersection with the trail coming down from the Willis Knob Horse Camp. The Forest Service's proposal is for a re-route up to the Willis Knob Trail via a gentler slope that follows the contour. However, the Chattooga Conservancy has proposed a better route that is based on an on-the-ground survey of the area. In the coming weeks, we will be working with the Forest Service to fine tune the proposed trail in order to alleviate much ongoing erosion, and to establish a route that will not require nearly as much work to maintain at acceptable standards.

A view from horseback of a section of rutted and eroding horse trail that should be rerouted, near Earls Ford on the GA side of the Chattooga River.

Watershed Update

planned to have a small picnic area, a short nature trail with educational signs, some playground equipment, an interpretive kiosk, and a small parking lot. Donations from the community are welcome and needed for the city park; please contact the Chattooga Conservancy for details, and to get involved.

[illegible]

When Barak Obama was campaigning for president, he courted the conservation community by pledging to reinstate the infamous Roadless Rule. The Roadless Rule was put in place by the Clinton Administration during 2001 to protect about 58 million acres of roadless areas on our national forests, which are known to provide critical habitat for plants and animals as well as a host of threatened and endangered species. However, during the summer of 2004, the Clinton-era rule was effectively nullified by the Bush Administration. The Bush option for protecting roadless areas mandated that each state design their own plan for protecting these valuable areas. Several states moved forward with establishing their roadless area plans, with Colorado and Idaho leading the way. Meanwhile, litigation ensued about the Bush and Clinton Administrations' different roadless area rules.

Conflicting court opinions resulted from the ongoing litigation, and citing this, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack (who oversees the Forest Service) recently issued an interim directive that has been billed as a 1-year "time out" for the roadless area controversies. Further, Secretary Vilsack has reserved the final say about building new roads in roadless areas for himself. Unfortunately, the new directive does not stop the state-level roadless area plans already underway in states such as Idaho and Colorado. Here, groups are battling about critical flaws in the state plans, such as removing thousands of acres from protection, and the expansion of existing coal mining and utility infrastructure in the roadless areas. This puts the Obama Administration's campaign promise in serious jeopardy because all roadless areas deserve protection, due to the critical habitat they provide for so many threatened and endangered species of plants and animals.

[illegible]

It was another active session for water issues in the recently completed legislative session for the Georgia Statehouse, with only a few among many bills favorable to water protection measures passing. One bitter defeat particularly important for the north Georgia area was SB 155, known to many as the "Stream Buffer Destruction Bill." The bill passed, and removes requirements for a vegetative buffer strip to protect ephemeral streams.

What exactly is an ephemeral stream, and why do they deserve protection? Ephemeral streams are those water ways that flow only after a storm or heavy rain event, and are very important elements of the larger stream ecosystem. (These streams are not human made ditches, as claimed by some SB 155 proponents.) One of the landmark studies about the importance of buffers on ephemeral streams was done by a Forest Service hydrologist right here in the Chattooga River watershed. This study, and others, clearly show that because ephemeral streams flow during storm events, they can potentially deliver tremendous sediment and pollutant loads to downstream areas unless they are protected by vegetative buffers. One study on a small 1/4 acre tract with no ephemeral stream protections showed 50 tons of sediment were delivered downstream in a single decade. Now, with no protective buffer strips required, ephemeral streams can be completely denuded during development activities, which will certainly lead to more erosion and sediment into our mountain streams, which are already suffering from too much pollutants. *For more info about GA water issues and the state water plan, see also www.garivers.org (GA River Network).*

[illegible]

Early this spring, the Chattooga Conservancy was recognized as the "Watershed Group of the Year" by the Georgia River Network (GRN). The awards ceremony took place at the Classic Center in Athens, Georgia, in conjunction with the GRN's 2009 Annual Conference. April Ingle, GRN Executive Director, said "It's great to acknowledge the efforts of citizens and organizations who work tirelessly to protect the rivers they love. It's so nice to be able to give these folks a pat on the back and say 'thank you!' to them."

The GRN also noted that "Throughout their history and today, the Chattooga Conservancy can be credited with major accomplishments and actions that have effectively served to protect the Chattooga River watershed and nearby areas."

Chattooga Conservancy staff graciously accepted the 2009 "Watershed Group of the Year" award from the Georgia River Network. Pictured (l to r) in front of our office are Nicole Hayler, Buzz Williams, and Melinda Fischer. Melinda recently departed for a full-time job, and our new assistant and bookkeeper is Lisa McAdams. Welcome Lisa, and thank you Melinda—we'll miss you!

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to everyone who recently renewed their membership, joined as a new member, or contributed gifts, services, and memorial donations to the Chattooga Conservancy.

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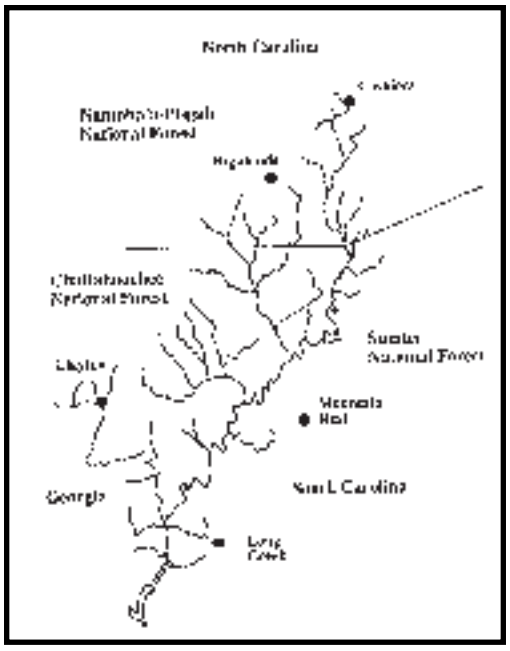
Mission: To protect, promote and restore the natural ecological integrity of the Chattooga River watershed ecosystems; to ensure the viability of native species in harmony with the need for a healthy human environment; and to educate and empower communities to practice good stewardship on public and private lands.



Goals:

Monitor the U.S. Forest Service's management of public forest lands in the watershed, and work cooperatively to develop a sound ecosystem initiative for the watershed

Educate the public

Promote public choice based on credible scientific information

Promote public land acquisition by the Forest Service within the watershed

Protect remaining old growth and roadless areas

Promote sustainable communities

Promote conservation by honoring cultural heritage

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