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THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF
FRANKLIN'S TREE

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It is the twelfth of November and near the top of Franklin's tree, the size and shape of overgrown pearls, are five unopened buds that surely will be caught by the killing frost, which this year, later than usual, cannot now be long in coming. Since the first of August the tree has been in constant bloom and like the venerable philosopher, whose growing namesake it is, *Franklinia Altamaha* is giving of its beneficence as did he, with the same generous hand, up to the very end. Few trees or shrubs bloom continuously for three months as does this and still fewer equal it in the beauty of its blossoms. They float in the air like miniature pond-lillies, with snow-white petals and a great cluster of golden stamens against the background of its magnolia-like leaves.

No tree which ornaments our gardens has a more romantic history. For one hundred and forty years botanists have sought to find it growing in its native habitat by the Georgia river¹ which is the descriptive part of its name. Nowhere along the banks of this

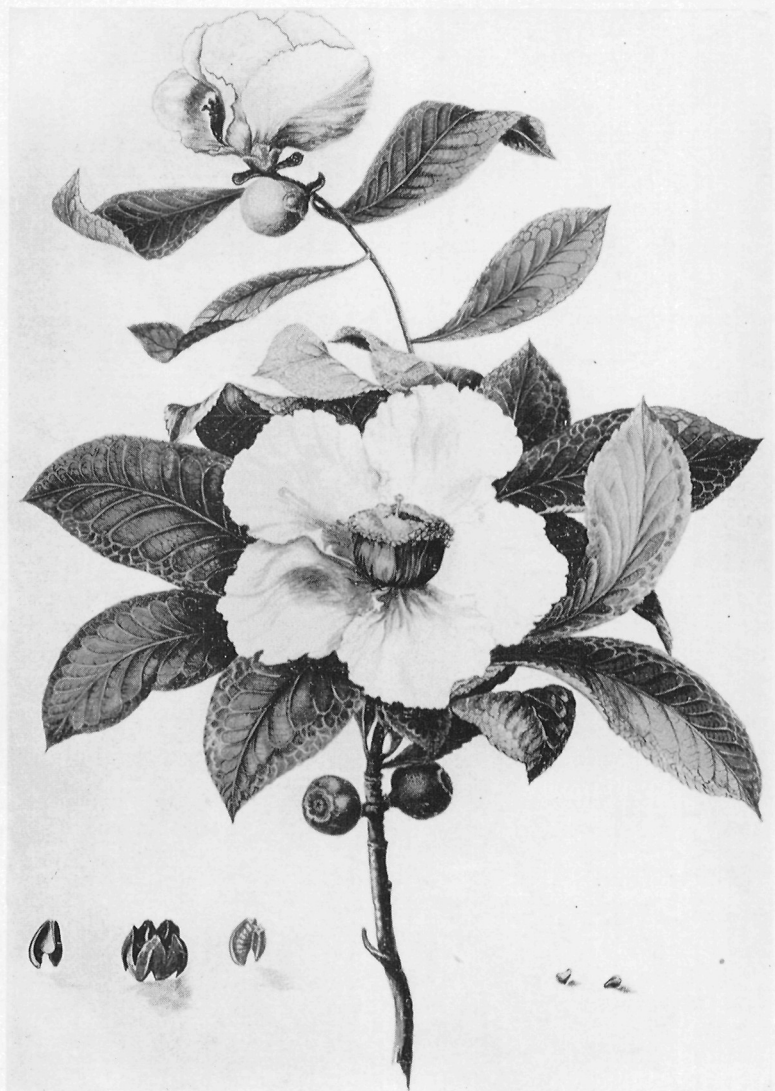
¹ The Altamaha River rises in the highlands of northern central Georgia, being formed by the union of Oconee and the Ocmulgee Rivers. It reaches the Atlantic Ocean through Altamaha Sound at Darien, Georgia.

muddy stream, or elsewhere in the state of Georgia, or in the northern hemisphere, or in the whole wide world have eager searchers found it growing in its natural state. Every specimen of Franklin's tree now known in this country is descended from the seeds or the little plant carried in 1777 from the banks of the Altamaha to those of the Schuylkill in an overloaded saddle bag. He is a rash person who would say it never will be found. Numerous expeditions have tried to run it down. This past summer an enthusiastic amateur horticulturist² in Georgia has issued a placard with a colored illustration of the bloom and leaves, which he has scattered among boy scouts, farmers, hunters and woodsmen, hoping that, for a suitable reward, they may come across a living wild plant.

Its story starts with Peter Collinson³ of London, a wealthy Quaker mercer, who early developed an interest in nature and particularly in botany and gardening. His means enabled him to gratify his tastes and from 1712 until his death in 1768, he was one of that group of cultured Englishmen who found the highest form of enjoyment in developing their gardens and estates. This was the period when to possess a garden became the fashion. Addison and Pope and Horace Walpole lent their powerful aid to the new enthusiasm. Noblemen did not spare their means and gave as well their personal supervision to the development of their grounds. With many of them Collinson was in active correspondence and coöperation. He was elected a member of the Royal Society, became the host, the friend and correspondent of Linnæus, Kalm and other international botanists. His garden was first established at Peckham, on the Surrey side of the Thames, but in 1749 he removed to an estate inherited by his wife at Mill Hill, some ten miles northwest of London.

² Dr. C. C. Harrold of Macon, Georgia.

³ N. G. Brett-James, *The Life of Peter Collinson*, London, n.d.



Franklinia Altamaha

Courtesy of Mrs. Edward M. Cheston. From a copy belonging to The John Bartram Association made from the Water-Color in the British Museum. William Bartram has written beneath the Original painting:—"Franklinia Altamaha, a beautiful flowering tree, discovered growing near the banks of the River Altamaha, in Georgia". WILLIAM BARTRAM, *Delin.* 1788

It took two years to transplant his botanical treasures and some of them are still growing on the estate, now a boys' school, notably a hemlock, *Tsuga Canadensis*, sent by Dr. Christopher Witt, of Germantown,⁴ to Collinson prior to 1730.

Through his business connections with the Colonies, Collinson was able to secure seeds and plants with which he enriched his own garden and generously shared with other enthusiasts. Thus it was that in 1730 he was introduced to John Bartram, later to become the leading botanist of the Colonies, a man whom Linnaeus pronounced "the greatest natural botanist of his time."

Like Collinson, Bartram⁵ was a Quaker, his father coming to Pennsylvania in 1682. The son early developed a love for botany and a copy of *Parkinson's Herbal* procured for him by the scholarly James Logan started him on his career as a naturalist. He built his home, it is said with his own hands, on the west bank of the Schuylkill in Kingsessing township, a few miles above its junction with the Delaware and here established the first important botanical garden in the Colonies.

Bartram soon developed what became an extensive and remunerative trade through Collinson, whose place of business was appropriately in "Gracious" Street, London, by shipping boxes of seeds containing 105 varieties which were sold to subscribers at the uniform price of five guineas a box. The scientists and collectors under the influence of Sir Hans Sloane, whose great collections were later to form the nucleus of the Brit-

⁴Dr. Christopher Witt early established a botanical garden at his home, which adjoined that of Francis Daniel Pastorius, in Germantown.

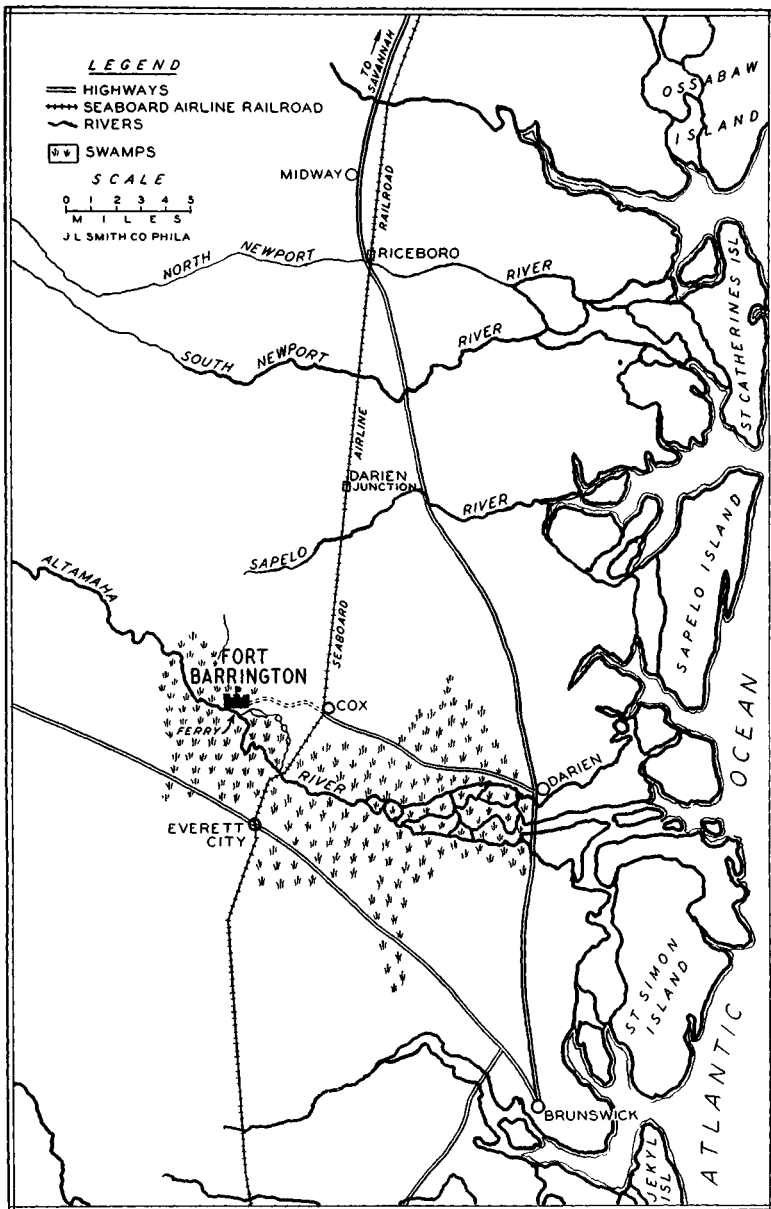
⁵Dr. William Darlington, *Memorials of Bartram and Marshall*, Philadelphia. Dr. Darlington's manuscript copy, as well as many letters of Bartram and Collinson, are in the Library of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

ish Museum, were searching far and wide for anything which would enrich their cabinets and gardens. Noblemen vied with each other in the variety and extent of the plantings and many of them subscribed for the Bartram boxes annually. A list of his customers reads like an abridgment of Burke's "Peerage" or the "Landed Gentry" of England. At Kew House, the Prince of Wales and his Princess Sophia, particularly, were making the plantings later to become the Royal Botanical Gardens. Gardening and horticulture under the Royal patronage, were indeed the fashionable pursuits.

To procure these seeds and plants and natural history specimens Bartram traveled, usually alone, from Nova Scotia to Florida and from the sea to the great lakes. In the backwoods between the Blue Mountains and the Alleghenies he found his chief hunting ground and here could be heard the tinkle of the little bell tied on his horse's neck, as absorbed in his search he turned the animal loose to graze. By 1765, Bartram's fame as a botanist was secure and through the efforts of Collinson he was appointed botanist to George III.

Two years before, Spain had ceded East Florida to England in exchange for Havana and Collinson decided that the new royal botanist should attract the attention of the King by exploring the newly acquired peninsula in quest of novelties. Accordingly Bartram with his son William set out from Savannah and on September 20, 1765, reached the Altamaha River, then the southern frontier of Georgia.⁶ They had missed their way and came to the river four miles below Fort Barrington, which had been built where the road crosses the river to the then wild Indian country beyond. Here they lodged for the night and the next

⁶ The manuscript journal of this expedition is in the Library of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



The site of Fort Barrington where the Bartrams discovered *Franklinia* growing

day proceeded to the fort.⁷ "This day we found several curious shrubs" Bartram notes in his journal with a provoking vagueness to those who have searched in vain for the original habitat of *Franklinia*. William Bartram, the son, writing two decades later, records "At this place [Fort Barrington] there are two or three acres of ground where it grows plentifully."⁸ But the travelers were in a hurry to reach an important Indian Council in Florida where Bartram was to assist, so they neither identified or procured specimens of it. But this was undoubtedly the first contact of qualified botanists with the Franklin tree.

After attending the council with the Seminoles in Florida the botanists returned either by boat from St. Augustine, or if they did take the northern road through the sands and swamps, ferrying the Altamaha at Fort Barrington, they made no record then or later of seeing the *Franklinia Altamaha* on the homeward trip.

Collinson apparently never was informed of the Franklin tree, nor did he know of its being named for his old time friend, for it was Collinson who in 1745 sent over to Franklin a glass tube and an account of some German experiments in electricity which started the philosopher on the experiments which later were to startle the scientific world. The continuance and success of Franklin's work was greatly stimulated by his correspondence with Collinson and it was the latter, who, at his own expense, had Franklin's letters covering his discoveries printed in pamphlet form, they

⁷ The remains of the ancient Fort Barrington are still to be seen on the north bank of the Altamaha River. The nearest railroad station is Cox, on the Seaboard Air Line Railway.

⁸ In his *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, etc.*, London, 1792, William Bartram devotes Chapter IX., p. 465 to an account of his finding *Franklinia Altamaha*. There is one other reference to his discovery on page 16. His manuscript journal is in the Library of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

having been considered too unimportant to be printed in the transactions of the Royal Society for the Advancement of Science. This pamphlet, subsequently translated into Italian, German and Latin, so aroused the enthusiasm of the scientists of the Continent that the letters finally had of necessity to be included in the transactions of the Royal Society.

The first name on the list of members of the ancient and very much alive American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, is that of Benjamin Franklin, the second is that of John Bartram. They were lifelong friends and fellow workers in the realm of the natural sciences. Franklin in his letters addressed him as "My dear old Friend," while Bartram addressed Franklin as "My dear beloved Friend" and after the death of Peter Collinson Bartram writes, "I have no friend as intimate or capable as my dear Benjamin," and he continues, "although I have been deprived of thy agreeable conversation for several years I have thy pretty exact picture hanging by my bed which gives a dayly fresh remembrance of intimate friendship to thy sincere friend John Bartram." When Bartram's eyesight began to fail Franklin, who was in London, sent over thirteen pairs of lenses so that he might select the pair best suited to his eyes, instructing him to keep those which were successively stronger to use as they might be needed and those of lesser power than he required were to be given to others who might need them.

Collinson's later years were shadowed by financial shrinkages and the theft at night on more than one occasion of a great portion of his garden treasures. His mantle as agent and correspondent of the Bartrams, fitting not quite so snugly, fell on the shoulders of another Quaker scientist, Dr. John Fothergill,⁹ like-

⁹ In *Dr. John Fothergill and His Friends* by Dr. R. Hingston Fox (London, 1919), will be found an illuminating chapter on the Bartrams, father and son, together with a list of the seeds which John Bartram supplied to his patrons. There is also a list of the plants which Dr. Fothergill introduced into English horticulture.

wise another friend of Franklin's, of the American Colonies and of humanity in general. Dr. Fothergill, like Collinson, had been a friend and correspondent of Linnæus, the founder of modern botany. It was "our Collinson" he writes Linnæus, "who taught me to love flowers and he who shared his comradeship could do no other than cultivate plants."

Young William Bartram, now desirous of collecting on his own account, arranged with Dr. Fothergill to finance a botanical journey into Georgia and East and West Florida. Arriving in Carolina early in the Spring of 1773 he took boat for Savannah. Fortunately he found the Provincial Assembly of Georgia in session and met several country members at his boarding place whose advice and introductions were later to smooth his way. He also met the Governor, Sir James Wright, who all unknowingly was shortly to become the last royal governor of the Colony, receiving from him courtesy and encouragement for his expedition.

Botanical and political history were both in the making as the young botanist, in high spirits, took the road for the South, astride a good horse which had cost him £40, consuming a large part of his first year's compensation. Soon he turned off the high road to the left to visit Sunbury, then a bustling town, considering itself the rival of Savannah in the volume of its shipping, but today its deserted, sandy site is one of the "lost" towns of Georgia. Here he crossed the sound to St. Catharines, one of the series of islands which, enclosing the whole of Georgia's seacoast, has been likened to a jewelled chain about a beautiful woman's neck. St. Catharines was then a princely estate of 30,000 acres, the home of Button Gwinnett,¹⁰ an English planter, who in a few years was to become a

¹⁰ In *Button Gwinnett, Signer of the Declaration of Independence*, by Charles F. Jenkins, will be found much of the background for the connection between Gwinnett, McIntosh, Dr. Lyman Hall and this section of Georgia, now embraced in Liberty and McIntosh Counties.

Signer of the Declaration of Independence and later Governor of Georgia. Bartram makes no mention of meeting Gwinnett, but a few days later he was entertained at the home of the man who, in the first important duel in our history, fatally wounded the master of St. Catharines, arousing political animosities in Georgia which exist to this day.

On the highroad to the south Bartram would pass on his right the plantation of Dr. Lyman Hall, another Signer of the Declaration. Within three years after Bartram rode by his entrance lane, Lyman Hall was sitting in the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, selected by the fervid patriots "as a delegate from the Parish of St. John in the Colony of Georgia," because Georgia, as a state, was not yet ready to join the revolutionary movement. Some seven miles west of Sunbury and near the southern highway is the settlement of Dorchester, the fourth of its name, this therefore the great-grandson of the original settlement in Massachusetts. These Dorchestrians seemed to be a restless folk, settling first in Connecticut, then in South Carolina and again in the rice lands of Georgia where they had come in 1752. In the then troublesome times Governor Wright bitterly complained of these descendants of New England as a "Puritan independent sect who retained a strong tincture of Republican or Oliverian principles." Bartram riding with his newly made friends from Sunbury attended services at Midway, the church of the Dorchester community. They listened, Bartram relates, to an excellent sermon from the pulpit, which a few years later was to be filled for six years by a young minister, the Rev. Abiel Holmes, who was to become the father of Oliver Wendell Holmes.

As soon as the congregation broke up he resumed his journey, spending the night with Benjamin Andrews, one of the leaders of the Dorchester community and

when we came near of river of soil is very sand (26)
 for about 1/2 mile from of low land, which is often overflowed with river (27)
 great lots of of inhabitants which sometimes reach 12 or 15 foot perpendicular
 we passed our way & fell 4 mile below fort Barrington where we lodged this night
 this day we found several very curious shrubs one bearing beautiful good fruit
 2 this morning was clear & cool therm 57 arrived at of fort which is pleasantly
 situated on of bank of of river of Alabama here it is 300 yards over of bank
 is about 15 or 20 foot high above of common surface of of river & fine laguna
 runs up on of side half of mile & several cypress swamps in 3/4 of mile
 the distance of river is low reach near a foot & a half ten mile above of fort which
 is of present bounds of of Indians & whites; of fort is about 80 mile by water up river
 813 by land west of of water it is sometimes fordable & lies below of fort there
 great bodies of low land on each side of of river some places near of mile wide many
 of which is flowered in of spring very gradually rising 2 or 3 weeks more or less as of
 they melt in of mountains but this uncommon season of rain which hath not been
 above 50 years has reached thro all these southern provinces by of best accounts
 hath destroyed much of their rice where of waters rose commonly 2 foot deep &
 floated as well as soaked most of what was cut & floated a brook of great part of
 of of ears of what was standing above of water several feet deep in water it was
 almost of often bent of of branches ears above of foot long broke off & soaked in
 & water rice is certainly of very profitable grain when of season is favourable & such
 ground will suit it best that will produce no other grain but of prodigious quantity
 of stagnate water being dammed up to assist of growth of this fine grain must of sup-
 port of order of country make it hard to white people yet be more healthy than one could
 expect in such humid situations I did not expect nor could I have believed it but
 from of general price of of inhabitants that at this fort of command or assumed some
 that he had passed over of pond of shallow water on of ice & not broke in with tops of
 his orange trees is yearly killed by of frost with sharp N. W. wind & of therm
 confirming it as you may observe by my Journal of inhabitants of this river is in
 in such danger of losing their crops as of Savannah & of more northern rivers where
 of frosts is more apt to come in September once in ten years more or less & both danger
 to their crops more than upon this river which generally flows only in of spring in March
 or April this day we rode up & down of river searching the banks from PM 7 to
 3 clear fine morning therm 57 searched down of river & observed of great variety in so-
 mon appearance of oaks & petals of dwarfed winter-green & evergreen one of of 4 foot diam
 & 100 feet diameter in of spreading of of tree & 20 foot round above of foot from
 ground about 8 foot from of ground as usual it divided into 4 or 5 great branches
 of of great globular top as for of dwarf oaks they vary in their leaves as to size
 prodigiously which many takes to be real varieties which is only seminal or accidental
 of real varieties are of low dwarf with shining long leaves one winter oak with little
 leaves & of summer oak hardly two alike of with long pedicels to of long acorns of
 water oak white oak one with very rough shells almost closing over of acorn, one
 common sort of red & greenish & black oak two kinds of ash of rare couple with large
 red oak white cedar limes which is used for punch & of common black tupelo from
 beam heavy & sorts one with very narrow leaves papaw chickapaw & 2 or 3 fine
 flowering shrubs beside of great magnolia red & purple berries bay & umbrellas
 4 *napellaea floridana* *Staphy. cornu.* *hemisphaerica* *hirc* *comp. gappu* *portulaca* *very multispina*
pink *prop* *thorns* *and* *shrub* *like* *ice* *dogwood* *grassy* *pine* *liquid* *amber* *perenn* *capitulation*
 them 76 walked down of river & searching for plants but found no new
 4 therm 54 searched & found hills all about then PM 4 & rode up river
 to of bluff 30 foot perpendicular some strata of every formation hard clay but
 of river being rose 4 foot above its common run of rocks which I wanted to observe
 was covered some of of strata of sand was interbedded so as to resemble a stratum
 5 clear morning therm 57 set out from fort Barrington for quest of fine of sandstone
 about 30 feet above hills of quartz monad in of chert on each side

A page of John Bartram's Journal covering October 1-5, 1765, and the
 exploration of the vicinity of Fort Barrington.
 In The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

reaching the following day the hospitable home of McIntosh. This was undoubtedly the plantation of "Borlum," a name which had been brought with him from his Scotland birthplace by John Mohr McIntosh, the leader of a band of 130 Caledonians who had settled in Georgia in 1736. They had settled along the flat and marshy banks of the Altamaha River at a place they named New Inverness, now Darien, the very antithesis of the granite crags of Scotland. Here were to be heard the skirling of the bagpipe, the swish of the claymore and the Gaelic accents of the Highlands. Through the draping moss the lurking Indian descried the bare knees, the flapping kilt and the red tartan of the McIntoshes and paused in wonderment or fled in dismay. In 1740, John Mohr McIntosh learning that his brother, the chieftain of the clan, was dying, planned to return to Scotland as his heir and successor. But taking part at the urgent request of Governor Oglethorpe in an expedition against the Spaniards in Florida, in command of the company of Highlanders, he was taken prisoner and sent to Spain. Here he was imprisoned for several years but returned to Georgia and died there in 1761, leaving eight sons and three daughters.

Bartram had been welcomed at the plantation with open arms and true southern hospitality and urged to tarry as long as he would. The next day he rode on to the home of Lachlan McIntosh, the second son of the old patriarch, whose plantation lay near the Altamaha River. Lachlan McIntosh, whose home was to be a shelter to Bartram on more than one occasion, was to become the stormy petrel of Georgia politics. It was he who, to Button Gwinnett's chagrin and thwarted ambition, had received the command of Georgia's first regiment raised in the Continental service and thereafter the antagonism between them continued unabated to the end. As fellow members of the Assembly the

quarrel culminated in one of its sessions by McIntosh arising in his place and calling Gwinnett "a scoundrel and a lying rascal." No other course seemed open to Gwinnett than the resulting duel in which both men were wounded, Gwinnett so critically that he died May 19, 1777.

This distressing affair resulted in McIntosh's temporary removal from the state and his active participation as a Brigadier-General with Washington in the distresses of Valley Forge and other military service in the north. But no shadow of these impending events fell on the peaceful plantation or the enjoyment of the northern guest. "Having been greatly refreshed by continuing a few days with this kind and agreeable family I prepared to resume my journey southerly." It was the next day, that, taking the road up the northeast side of the Altamaha to Fort Barrington, after riding fifteen miles he again came upon the grove of small trees which he and his father had first discovered in 1765. "On drawing near the fort I was greatly delighted by the appearance of two beautiful shrubs in all their blooming graces." "Blooming" in this case must have been a general term for *Franklinia* does not bloom until the autumn. He continued on to Florida, returning later to the hospitable McIntosh's home where it was arranged that young John McIntosh should accompany him on an extensive trip through the backwoods of Georgia, a journey which was to cover 1000 miles before their return.

Just when Bartram secured the cuttings, plants or seeds of *Franklinia* which he sent to his patron, Dr. Fothergill, is not clear from his rambling and obscure account of his travels but it would seem that it was on the return from his first visit to East Florida. It was in 1774 that Dr. Fothergill, through William Malcom, a nurseryman of Kennington, presented a plant to the

Royal Gardens at Kew and it first became known to the English scientists.¹¹

For five years Bartram wandered through the wilderness of the country of the Cherokees, the Creeks, the Choctaws, the Chickasaws and the Seminoles.¹² He gazed over the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and noted the mighty flood of the Mississippi. Towards the north he penetrated what is now Tennessee. He would return to the coast at intervals, shipping his boxes and bales of seeds, plants and natural history specimens to Dr. Fothergill, now from Sunbury, now from Charleston and again from Mobile. For long periods his family had no word from him and several times concluded he was dead. Meanwhile the muskets had rattled at Lexington and Bunker Hill; Trenton, Saratoga and Brandywine had passed into history. Independence had been declared, Georgia had taken its place among the united Colonies and Sir James Wright had fled from Savannah. Button Gwinnett had fallen before the pistol of General McIntosh. Apparently unmindful, or at least not noting these momentous events which greatly increased the restlessness and danger

¹¹ I am inclined to the opinion that the *Franklinia* presented to Kew Gardens by Dr. Fothergill was not procured by Bartram but by a young man named Williams who was collecting for Dr. Fothergill. The latter writes William Bartram September 4, 1773 as follows: "There is a young man from England engaged in the service of a company at Charleston. He travels into the Cherokee country and though unacquainted with botany has sent me many rare seeds and some plants packed up with much judgment which are now recovering from their voyage. It may not be improper at some time to go with him as he will be able to point out things which he had not been able to collect." Bartram Correspondence, IV. 27. In The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

"William Malcolm, a nurseryman of Kennington, introduced *Gordonia pubescens*, to Kew in 1774, the year of its introduction into England." Letter of Arthur H. Hill, Director of Kew Gardens, July 28, 1932, to the author. William Malcolm was undoubtedly acting for Dr. Fothergill.

¹² William Bartram, *Travels through Carolinas, Georgia and E. and W. Florida, Etc. 1773-1777*, Philadelphia, 1791.

from the Indian tribes, Bartram pursued his leisurely way, wearing out horse after horse but ever on the alert for some new plant or specimen for his patron. The Seminoles called him "Puc Puggy,"—the flower hunter. He seemed everywhere to have been regarded as a gentle, harmless wanderer to whom it was a pleasure to bring specimens that would help him. It is said he had agreed to act as a guide, under his friend General Lachlan McIntosh, for the abortive expedition against the British at St. Augustine in the spring of 1777. Whether he actually started with the troops after McIntosh was relieved of the command is not known. It would have been an unsuited job for a Quaker botanist but he would have known well the trails and fords and perils of the way, which he himself had traveled so often.

During the spring and summer of 1777, he revisited several districts in East Florida and Georgia and it was then, no doubt, he obtained for his own use the seeds of the tree that had so intrigued both father and son on their first visit twelve years before. In the late autumn he rode northward, reaching home in January, 1778, to find his venerable father had died and Philadelphia occupied by General Howe and his troops. It is said John Bartram's death had been hastened by fear for the safety of his Garden on the approach of the British army.

The treasured plants or seeds which Bartram brought home were planted in the Garden and in five years these young trees were producing seeds. Just when Franklin was informed of the honor conferred upon him by naming the rare tree for him we do not know, nor whether Franklin in any way acknowledged the honor done him. Many honors had come to him but none that will be more enduring than this living one, nor one which in its interest and rarity would be more appropriate.

Some twenty miles from Kingessing, Humphrey Marshall, a first cousin to John Bartram, had established a botanical garden in Chester County, remnants of which still remain. He too was a botanist of note and a correspondent of Dr. Fothergill's. In 1790, his son Dr. Moses Marshall set out on a botanizing tour extending as far as Georgia.¹³ He was interested in hunting up the plantation of *Franklinias* and found them growing as his cousin had described, near Fort Barrington, but from that day to this, one hundred and forty-three years, no one has seen it growing in the wild.

It is the rule with botanists that the first publication of a name in some recognized botanical work gives such a name priority and permanently attaches it to the plant. It was in cousin Humphrey Marshall's "*Arbustum Americanum*," published in 1785, that the first description of *Franklinia Altamaha* was given and the name scientifically applied. The European botanists, however, had previously decided it belonged to the family of the *Gordonias* and early labelled it *Gordonia pubescens*.¹⁴ It has been known by this name for a century and a quarter, but lately Dr. Frederick V. Coville, of the Department of Agriculture at Washington, is

¹³ Extract from a letter from Dr. Moses Marshall (nephew of Humphrey Marshall) to Sir Joseph Banks, dated Philadelphia, October 30, 1790, from William Darlington's *Memorials of Bartram and Marshall*, p. 563: "In May last I set out for a botanic tour by way of Juniata to Pittsburg, etc. etc. & thence to Ninety Six to Augusta and to Savannah town and continuing Southwest to the river Altamaha in Georgia. I here found the *Franklinia* or *Gordonia sessilis*, better called: *i.e.* *floritus sessilibus*. I then returned to Charleston—making a route of about 1600 miles and thence by water to Philadelphia."

¹⁴ Extract of letter from Sir Joseph Banks to Humphrey Marshall, Soho Square, May 6, 1769, in William Darlington's *Memorials of Bartram and Marshall*, p. 562: "The *Franklinia* is, as you conjecture, a species of *Gordonia*. A drawing of that plant sent here by Mr. Bartram to Mr. Barclay has been compared with specimens; so that no doubt now can remain on that subject."

inclined to insist that *Franklinia* is the correct name. The seeds of the latter are so different from those of the *Gordonia* that he and other botanists regard it as a distinct genus.

The original Franklin tree, or possibly a successor, was growing in Bartram's Gardens when about a half century ago they were abandoned and greatly neglected. Wandering cows broke in and horned the tree so seriously that it was all but dead but rescued by a neighboring gardener it was removed to his nearby home and nursed back to health. Later it came in the possession of the Meehans,¹⁵ the well known nature lovers and nurserymen of Germantown. When it had recovered the nurserymen proceeded to raise additional plants by the layering process. For many years this was the only successful method of propagation. Neither seeds nor cuttings could be made to grow although the Bartrams had produced young plants which were listed in their earliest catalogue of plants for sale.¹⁶ In layering, a branch was bent to the ground and a heavy stone placed upon it; in three years it had taken root sufficiently and was cut off from the parent limb. It was allowed to grow where it stood for two years more and was then ready for transplanting. This was how my tree was grown and it was a red-letter day when the friend who cared for it for the five years telephoned it was ready for transplanting. It will be real-

¹⁵ Thomas Meehan's account of the Franklin Tree will be found in *Meehan's Monthly*, VI. 201. In it he properly suggests that the tree was introduced in Europe prior to William Bartram's expedition. Joseph Meehan, brother of Thomas Meehan, was the particular admirer of the Franklin Tree and one of the earliest, if not the original Meehan tree, is still growing on the lawn of his daughter Mrs. George W. Williams, 121 Pleasant Street, Germantown.

¹⁶ In the catalogue of Bartram's Botanical Garden for the year 1810 under the heading "Ornamental Forest Trees of the Second Class and Middle Ground, Esteemed for their foliage and flowers," is listed "*Gordonia pubescens*—*Frankliniana* with flowers of delightful fragrance, 50c to \$1.00."

ized how slow the process and how difficult to obtain young plants so that to own a *Franklinia* tree during the Victorian era was to mark one as a horticultural aristocrat. The number of Gordonias living at that time, mainly in the gardens around Philadelphia, was not more than a score and every *Franklinia* growing today traces back to these garden aristocrats which in turn were descended from the Bartram tree which was so nearly finished by the aggressive cows.¹⁷

Twenty years ago Dr. Coville discovered what was wrong,—that both the seeds and cuttings could be propagated successfully only in an acid soil,—the soil in which *Kalmias* and *Rhododendrons* thrive. With this fact established a few appreciative nurserymen are now raising young plants in quantities and the Franklin tree will soon be a common denizen of our gardens.

Many expeditions have searched for the Franklin tree in its original habitat, beginning with the expedition made in 1882, by H. W. Ravenel, a South Carolina botanist, at the instance of Professor Charles S. Sargent of the Arnold Arboretum. Other parties have combed the muddy swamps which border the Altamaha in the region of old Fort Barrington to their own great discomfort and the annoyance of the rattlers and other venomous snakes which infest the region. Professor Edgar T. Wherry,¹⁸ now of the University of Pennsylvania, has made three unsuccessful expeditions. Fire may have destroyed the original plantation, it may have been grubbed out by the early settlers, or the salt tides may have backed up the river, or again freshets may have washed it away. Several times in recent years the

¹⁷ A scientific description of the botanical features of *Franklinia* will be found in Dr. Charles S. Sargent's *Silva of North America*, I. 21-22.

¹⁸ See the "History of the Franklin Tree" by Dr. Edgar T. Wherry, of the University of Pennsylvania, in the *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 18, No. 6, 1928.

daily press has carried a news item that the *Franklinia* had been found but these have all been erroneous, other plants having been mistaken for it.¹⁹

The Franklin tree seems not to be long lived. It is hardy in the north as far as Boston, growing to a height of about twenty-five feet, branching low, the limbs smooth and beautifully marked. In the autumn its leaves turn a glorious crimson but fall at the first heavy frost. Its smooth, striped trunk makes it easily identified, its snow-white blooms are its glory and its long continued florescence its distinction. All in all it is a worthy monument and memorial of the "First Civilized American" whom Philadelphia claims as its own.

Bartram's Garden, long in decay, has now been taken over as a city park under the interested coöperative care of the John Bartram Association which has restored and is now protecting and developing the house and grounds. In the garden is again growing a descendant of the original Franklin tree, but one of quick manufacture, symbolizing the electric age which Franklin himself started and the efficiency and hurry of the present day. I have recently seen an acre patch filled with growing sturdy, young *Franklinias* and it bids fair to become an every day remembrance of the distinguished circle of Franklin and his botanical friends.

¹⁹ Two botanists from Philadelphia, Dr. Francis Harper and Arthur N. Leeds of the Academy of Natural Sciences, visited the Altamaha, near Fort Barrington, on April 5, 1933, searching unsuccessfully for the Franklin tree in its wild state. They did discover on or near the site the other plant *Pinckneya*, which William Bartram found growing in close association with *Franklinia*.