Preface

John Bartram was a pivotal figure in American colonial life. With Benjamin Franklin he founded the American Philosophical Society, giving intellectuals a voice in the scientific discussions of the day. He searched the colonies for rare and useful plants, sending specimens to England that delighted his patrons. His correspondence with eminent scientists, which reported on his travels and observations, earned him a reputation as one of the leading scientists of his day, a man the great Swede Carl Linnaeus called "the greatest natural botanist in the world."

By the time Bartram received the title of "Botanist to His Majesty for the Floridas" in 1765, he had already distinguished himself as the preeminent American botanist.[1] Yet his range of interests extended beyond plants to the whole

[1] Much ink has been spilled concerning Bartram's title. He has been variously referred to as "King's Botanist," "Royal Botanist," "His Majesty's Botanist for North America," and "Botanist to His Majesty for the Floridas." Peter Collinson was presumably influential in securing the appointment for Bartram in 1765, and it may have been made in part on political grounds (to appease Benjamin Franklin and his party) in response to the appointment as "Queen's Botanist" of William Young, Jr., a strong supporter of the Penn family and the Proprietary party. Collinson wrote Bartram in May 1765 that he was appointed "King's Botanist," but on September 19, 1765 he reflected, "but under what Character the King is pleased to rank thee, I do not know only this I know He allows thee £50 per annum." The title page of William Stork's *Account of East-Florida*, which includes the text of Bartram's "Journal" from a portion of that 1765–1766 expedition, identifies him as "Botanist to His Majesty for the Floridas," so it could be assumed that Bartram's appointment was limited to the Floridas and to the time of the expedition only. Yet Collinson suggested in another letter that Bartram had arrogated the title to himself and risked losing his annuity: "... Kings Botanist ... by the way is a Title thou assumes without the Kings Leave or License which is makeing very free with Majesty. It is possible for this undue Liberty thy annuity may be withdrawn." It seems clear that Bartram never received any royal appointment that would have placed him on the civil list; rather, his income of £50 per year (for however long it was granted) seems to have been dispensed from the king's privy purse. Thus the appointment probably never carried any official title because it was never official, and the stipend can be seen as an informal, personal contribution from George III to forward Bartram's work. Peter Collinson to John Bartram, May 1765, September 19, 1765, Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, eds. *The Correspondence of John Bartram, 1734–1777* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), pp. 646, 654.

natural world, reflecting a remarkable spirit of curiosity and intelligent observation. Visitors to his garden on the Schuylkill, such as Pehr Kalm and Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, understood his rare abilities, and so did his English patrons and friends like Peter Collinson. As late as his 66th year, he set off in the company of his son William for the southern wilderness, where they discovered the beautiful shrub that William later named *Franklinia alatamaha* in honor of his father's good friend "the illustrious Dr. Benjamin Franklin." The essays in this volume attempt to take the measure of Bartram's contributions in his own day and his enduring legacy to this day. They do not present an exhaustive treatment, nor do they purport to be the last word; rather it is the editors' hope that they will draw renewed attention to John Bartram and inspire further research into his long and influential career.

In May 1999 six Philadelphia institutions (the Academy of Natural Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, the John Bartram Association, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and the Philadelphia Botanical Club) joined forces to sponsor a three-day symposium on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of John Bartram's birth. This collection of essays is the result. Not all of them were delivered at the symposium, and other papers that were delivered are not published herein. But all of the essays in this volume contribute to the telling of the story of the multifaceted John Bartram, whose life spanned most of the eighteenth century.

The volume begins with a thorough yet succinct biographical sketch of John Bartram by Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., the eminent historian of science and former Librarian and Executive Officer of the American Philosophical Society. Although this essay was originally written for the biographical dictionary of early members of the APS that Dr. Bell is now completing, the editors came to believe that it would have been hard to improve upon, and that with only slight modification it would be the ideal introductory overview of Bartram's life and career.

The authors of several essays in this volume treat the depth of John Bartram's involvement with the scientific inquiry of his time and give a critical reading to his correspondence with European scientists. Alan W. Armstrong relates the substance of a thirty-four year correspondence between Bartram and Peter Collinson concerning the shipment of plant material in the context of eighteenth-century technology. He also develops a parallel theme of the way Bartram enlarged Collinson's awareness of American wildness and diversity, while the Englishman was able to develop Bartram's full scientific capacity. Using the same correspondence, Stephanie Volmer interprets the productive play of scientific and aesthetic discourses between "curious" individuals and finds that the letter form was peculiarly useful in expanding knowledge of the natural world throughout the eighteenth century.

John Bartram had secured his reputation as an important American scientist by the mid-eighteenth century. A clear step in gaining international recognition came from Carl Linnaeus's regard for Bartram's work. Crystal A. Polis and Robert E. Savage elucidate the early relationship with the Swedish botanist and his disciple Pehr Kalm that led to his election to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1769, a recognition Bartram valued highly. Two papers focus specifically on John Bartram's critical thinking and contributions to botany. From the record of his written observations, Gene Kritsky develops a case study that demonstrates Bartram's keen discernment of the difference between the long-cycle seventeen-year cicadas from the annual type in his Pennsylvania locale. Bartram's sophisticated understanding of the insect's natural history is evident in his manuscript, which remained unpublished until 1804, well after his death, by which time the cicada was no longer a great curiosity. Alfred E. Schuyler and Elizabeth P. McLean pursue questions that still draw the attention of botanists and horticulturalists about Bartram's enormous contribution to the discovery and documentation of North American plant species. They establish how Bartram's contribution might better be understood using nine examples of plants that were important to the eighteenth century, several of which have remained the subject of research to this day.

John Bartram's published papers, manuscript letters, and travel diaries do not give as full a record as scholars would like to have about his political affiliations and especially about his role in several Indian conferences. Still, scholars have been able to skillfully interpret the written record he did leave to discover what role Bartram played in these events, even if only as a witness. Three papers in this collection focus on Bartram's trips whose ostensible purposes were botanizing and exploring, but that served also as ventures with political significance. William Goetzmann takes the apparent puzzle of Bartram's trip to the Onondaga in 1743, in the company of mapmaker Lewis Evans and Indian guide Conrad Weiser, as the starting point to unravel the complex motives for the Pennsylvanians' negotiations with the Iroquois. At stake for colonials and the British was the wavering position of the Indian nations in frontier alliances where the French were a contending force. Goetzmann shows Bartram's link to the expedition through Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Hallock expands our sense of Bartram as a witness to frontier cultural interplay. In his essay on the Onondaga expedition, Hallock uses the written accounts of Evans and Bartram to uncover the sense in which the Americans and British conceived of the Iroquois identity as one wholly dependent upon European rivalries.

Deciphering texts and objects of material culture relating to John Bartram's Florida travels, Kathryn E. Holland Braund and Lawrence Hetrick find further evidence of the dualities of natural history exploration conjoined with political

objectives. In the aftermath of the British assumption of power in Florida, John Bartram's official appointment sent him down the St. John's River, deep into unexplored territory until he was stopped fifty miles from the river's source in a maze of channels. Hetrick finds Bartram's diary of this final major trip a record of fine observation and a personal triumph that is echoed in his confident correspondence with Collinson thereafter. As another official duty of the 1765 trip, John and William Bartram attended the Congress of Picolata, where meetings between the Creek Indians and the British representatives negotiated the use of lands and the trading of goods. From the detail provided by John Bartram's diary entries, Braund constructs a lively account of the treaty ceremony that is corroborated in the depictions on two decorated powder horns made especially for the occasion.

John Bartram's enduring contribution to American cultural history lies in his appreciation for its native species and his care in establishing them with knowledgeable plantsmen in the colonies and abroad. Joel T. Fry documents John Bartram's extensive collecting and his appreciation for the total range of plants, even those that were ugly and had no apparent use. Fry reviews the ongoing archeological research at the Bartram botanic garden, which confirms its original plan and the changes that transformed the garden into a public park. Recent history at the botanic garden has sought to reverse the long neglect and restore the species Bartram brought there. While the large number of species Bartram collected and introduced into English gardens has never been fully ascribed to him, John Edmondson's essay finds indirect evidence of Bartram's contribution in the illustrations of botanical artist Georg Dionysius Ehret. Edmondson, using letters and herbarium material, establishes Bartram as the source of the plants, and he traces the connection of Ehret through the personal circle of botanical correspondents, including Peter Collinson, Hans Sloane, Carl Linnaeus, and Daniel Solander. Edmondson's essay shows how the culture of plant collecting and the creation of gardens and of art coalesced in the eighteenth century and was influenced by financial resources and entrepreneurial skills.

The legacy of John Bartram's life and work remains everywhere in gardens where the plants he cultivated are delightful features of the landscape. His early recognition of native American plant species and his role in introducing them abroad emerges as a theme in these essays, as does a new understanding of his full contribution to the scientific and political life of his era. Thus this collection serves as a stimulating beginning for further inquiry, and very likely will open new questions for scholarly research. The eighteenth century was enriched by the curious mind and energy of John Bartram, and our present century continues to be inspired by his unique spirit.