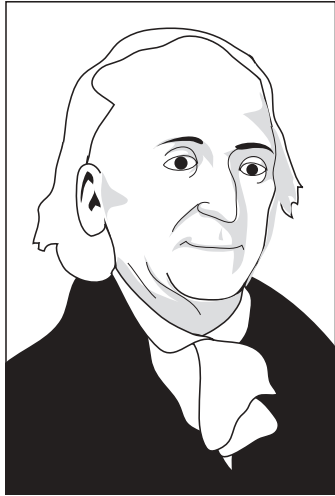


Famous Floridians: William Bartram

William Bartram was an accomplished naturalist, a poetic writer, and a talented artist. He traveled widely, particularly in the southeastern United



William Bartram

States. Florida held special enchantment for him. He spent considerable time here between the years 1765 and 1777.

Bartram published an account of his adventures in 1791 in a book called *Travels*. It was a moving and wonderful book and

quickly became an American classic. The book told about Bartram's travels in eight southern states including Florida. Its readers particularly enjoyed the descriptions of exotic, subtropical Florida.

Bartram wrote of his own personal experiences and scientific observations in living and traveling. He was the first person to use personal experiences in writing about nature. He wrote about the frontier of Florida as it was just being explored. He described the plants with rich botanical detail. He presented animals in their natural surroundings.

He wrote about the rattlesnakes of north Florida. He describes the soft-shelled turtle in detail. He listed 215 kinds of birds, with notes on their habits. With poetic language, he described roaring alligators, unfolding tropical blossoms, and the lush Floridian landscape. Bartram's writing style influenced famous poets of the time, Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, and others.

He demonstrated fine attention to detail in drawing the subjects of his studies. His drawings had the ability to put in perspective the plant or animal with its environment. He showed snakes eating frogs and birds feeding on insects or on twigs of plants.

Particularly interesting were Bartram's accounts of the Seminole, Creek, and Cherokee Indians. Bartram accurately recorded their activities and customs. He was invited by Seminole leader Cowkeeper to be guest of honor of the tribe. Bartram wrote, "The women and children saluted us with cheerfulness." He found the Seminole to be a happy people living in the remote Florida interior.

When Bartram visited Wakulla Springs, near Tallahassee, he saw the mouth of an underground river emerging on its way to the Gulf. He describes in detail the mysterious ways of Florida's underground rivers. He accurately described the layers of limestone and clay that open for waters to flow out as rivers above ground until the waters once again sink into the sand.

In 1774, Bartram visited an area of Florida that is near Gainesville. He called this land the "great Alachua Savannah." He described the area through his writing and drawings. Today it is called Paynes Prairie.

Among the people Bartram wrote letters to were nearly all the great European botanists of the day. By exchanging plant specimens with them, Bartram introduced many American plants into Europe and established some European species in the New World.

In the early 1800s, William Bartram became the grand old man of American natural science. He advised the first generation of naturalists who were beginning to explore the new territories being added to the young nation. His work would continue to influence both American and foreign writers for the next 100 years.

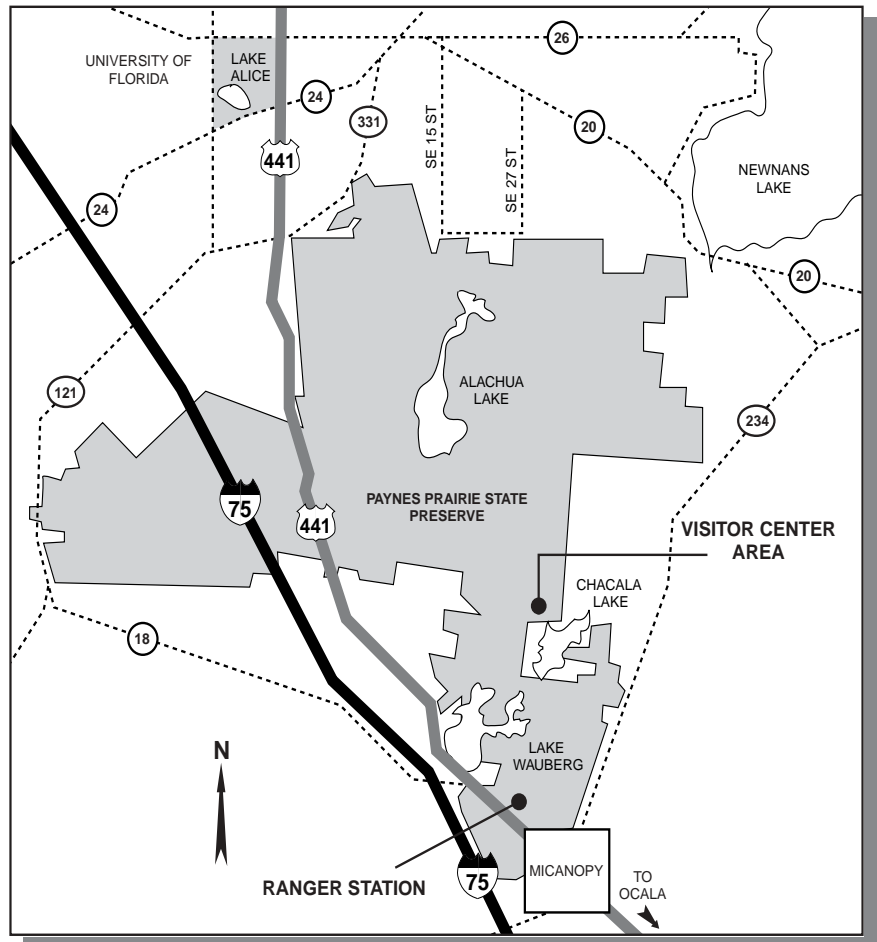
Paynes Prairie

Paynes Prairie is one of the most important natural and historical areas in Florida. It is large--21,000 acres.

The Paynes Prairie basin was formed when limestone dissolved and the ground settled. It is covered by marsh and wet prairie vegetation. There are areas of open water. During brief periods it has flooded enough to be considered a lake. Otherwise, the basin has changed little through time.

Man has lived on Paynes Prairie a very long time, as far back as 10,000 BC. During the late 1600s, the largest cattle ranch in Spanish Florida was on Paynes Prairie.

At one time, the Seminoles lived there. The prairie is thought to have been named after King Payne, a Seminole chief. Several battles were fought in the area during the Second Seminole War.



Map of Paynes Prairie

William Bartram visited Paynes Prairie more than 200 years ago. Most of the animal life, which Bartram described, is still here. A large number of sandhill cranes, hawks, and waterfowl are here in winter. The animal diversity is increased by the presence of pine flatwoods, hammock, swamps and ponds.

Today, Paynes Prairie is protected and called a preserve. It is managed by the Florida Park Service and is open all year for visitors.