Bartram Broadside



Published by the John Bartram Association for the 'noble & curious friends' of Historic Bartram's Garden, Philadelphia

PREFACE

The John Bartram Association dedicates this issue of the Bartram Broadside to Dr. John Bowman Bartram (1910-1995), a distinguished pediatrician, and man of broad interests and inestimable kindness, who had a long and generous involvement with the Association.

Dr. John Bowman Bartram was a seventh generation descendant of John Bartram (1699-1777) through the line of John, Jr. (1738-1812) who operated the botanic garden with his brother William after his father's death. These descendants became unofficial keepers of the family history. Notable among them was William Middleton Bartram (1838-1916) who played a key role in the founding of the John Bartram Association in 1893 and amassed an impressive collection of family papers, books, photographs, wills, and other items, which no doubt included the receipt for "Bartram Homestead Bitters" discussed below. Dr. Bartram preserved the family records and periodically donated portions to the John Bartram Association. By 1994, these donations formed the core of a small library housed on the third floor of the Bartram House and used by staff and outside researchers. The significance of this collection was recognized by the National Endowment for the Humanities in December 1994 when it awarded the Association a prestigious Challenge Grant to help fund the construction and staffing of a proper research library planned for the second floor of the Coach House.

Dr. Bartram's impact on the Association extended beyond the formation of this library. He enhanced the interpretation of the Bartram House to the public by donating furnishings and objects with specific family associations, including a rare mahogany medicine chest, a vaccination kit, a Queen Anne candlestand, a Windsor arm chair, and a tea cup and saucer given to Ann Bartram by Deborah Franklin. As there are relatively few documented items from the Bartram family, these gifts are especially precious to the Association.

Additionally, Dr. Bartram served as President of the Association from 1981–1985 and was instrumental in engaging the support of other members of the Bartram family for the Garden. He was a much admired member of the Bartram Trail Conference headquartered in Savannah, Georgia, which perpetuates the Bartram legacy in the South through biannual conferences, tours, and publications. Ever cognizant of the need to ensure the future of the Garden, in 1993 Dr. Bartram made the first gift to the Association's new pooled income fund for endowment. Despite residing more than two hours from Philadelphia, he and his wife Mal made a point of attending every special event at Bartram's; between times he called or wrote monthly, always sending something new for the research collection.

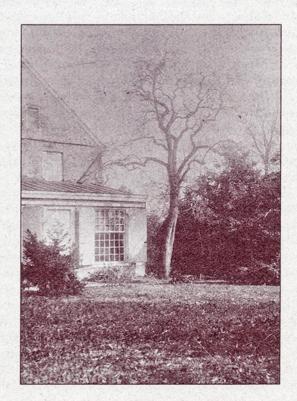
The Association is honored to have had the help of this remarkable individual in its efforts to preserve and interpret America's oldest botanic garden and, in turn, hereby honors him by dedicating the John Bowman Bartram Special Collections Library in his memory.

Martha Leigh Wolf, Executive Director

PRESERVING THE BARTRAMS' LIVING LEGACY Pamela Allenstein, Curator of Living Collections

Historic Bartram's Garden represents many things to many people, but arguably its principal role is to interpret a unique botanical history. Several generations of the Bartram family left a horticultural legacy unprecedented for its time. Not surprisingly, two hundred and fifty-plus years have taken their toll on the plant collection they assembled. The John Bartram Association is nevertheless working diligently to preserve the last living links with the Bartram period—the Garden's remaining historic trees.

The Ginkgo (Ginkgo biloba) in the historic area is one of three original specimens of this Asian tree introduced to the United States. While native to China, the Ginkgo was first sent to North America from London in 1785. Following the American Revolution, William Hamilton of the neighboring Woodlands traveled to London to acquire new plants and furnishings as part of a complete renovation of his estate. The Ginkgos were included in a large shipment of exotic plants sent back to Philadelphia. One male tree was given to William Bartram for the Bartram collection, and Hamilton planted two, a male and female, at The Woodlands. Less than 10 years ago,



"Lady Petre Pear Tree," photograph by Henry Dreer Bartram, 1898. John Bartram Assoc. collections.

Historic Bartram's Garden represents many things to many people, but arguably its principal role is to interpret a unique botanical history.

those at The Woodlands were unfortunately felled leaving Bartram's with the oldest standing specimen of the Ginkgo in North America.

The Bartram Oak (*Quercus* x heterophylla) near the west side of the Bartram House is a rare, naturally-occurring hybrid between the Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*) and Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*). John Bartram first noticed a lone example of this tree in a neighboring Kingsessing meadow in the 18th century. The tree continued to puzzle botanists for a number of years. The present specimen may be a direct descendent of the original discovered by John Bartram. The Bartram Oak is not commercially grown, yet has real potential as an attractive, fast-growing oak. Moreover, it is likely under-represented in the oak collections of botanic gardens, making its preservation all the more crucial.

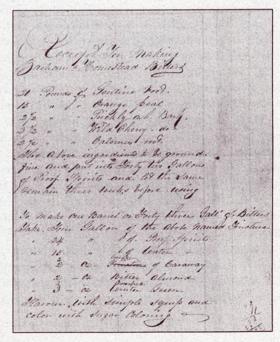
A young Petre Pear (Pyrus communis 'Lady Petre') has been planted in the location of John Bartram's original at the southeast corner of the house. The first tree was grown from seeds sent in 1739 by Lady Petre, the wife of Bartram's first and most enthusiastic patron in England. In the fall of 1763, Bartram finally could write, "the pear raised from her seed hath bore here A number of the finest relished fruite that I think A better is not in the world & intend next spring to graft several of them perhaps it may make the tree retain its fruite better..." Bartram's Petre Pear flourished and continued to produce marketable crops of fruit through the 19th century. In 1829, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society described the pear as "large, fair, melting, and of a delicious flavour." The original tree succumbed to old age in 1931 following an extremely dry summer. The present specimen is an offspring of an ancient Petre Pear, planted in Germantown in the last century. Its current owner, Mrs. Ruth Harris, contacted the Garden in the mid 1980s and generously agreed to supply Bartram's with a young tree grown from a cutting grafted onto Common Quince (Cydonia communis). The new Petre Pear at the Garden first bore fruit in 1990. Unlike the Seckle and Bartlett varieties, the Petre Pear (despite bearing delicious fruit) was never widely grown. Nor can it be purchased commercially today, even through vintage fruit tree catalogues. [The Association's concern for the preservation of this unique variety was heightened when the current specimen was badly vandalized in 1994.]

To ensure the preservation of these and other historically significant species, the Association enlisted the assistance of American Forests Famous & Historic Trees, a non-profit organization located in Jacksonville, Florida, which grows and markets trees associated with America's most historic properties. (The Mount Vernon Tulip Poplar and the Monticello Catalpa are two of the 60 selections currently available.) Under the Association's agreement with Famous & Historic Trees, seeds or cuttings collected at Bartram's are shipped to Florida for propagation and growing on. While the Garden will be ensured of the ongoing availability of young trees that are genetically

descended from the Bartram originals, Famous & Historic Trees is permitted to market them as Bartram trees. Selections from their mail order catalogue will be featured at Bartram's next Native Plant Sale, May 4, 1996.

In December 1994, Davey Tree Expert Company volunteered its assistance with the Association's beginning attempts at propagation by providing a bucket truck and arborist to obtain cuttings from the Ginkgo and Bartram Oak. Cuttings from these trees and the Petre Pear in Germantown were then shipped to Florida, together with more than 200 seeds of the Bartram family's most famous discovery, the Franklinia (Franklinia alatamaha). The Franklinia seeds were donated by Tom Wollery of Arrowhead Nursery in North Carolina. This donation was particularly generous in view of the fact that his extensive production of Franklinias is grown entirely from seed. Famous & Historic Trees recently reported that the Gingko cuttings had rooted and were growing well, and that the Franklinias sold out while still in production. The Bartram Oak and Petre Pear proved to be more problematic and will require advanced propagation techniques such as grafting and tissue culture.

Future propagation efforts will include the Garden's Yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea*), thought to have been presented to William Bartram in the 1790s by French plant explorer André Michaux, and acknowledged as the oldest specimen in Pennsylvania. Other candidates include the ancient Boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* var. *arborescens*), some variegated, and possibly descended from those sent by the Earl of Bute in the 1760s; a magnificent River Birch (*Betula nigra*) located along the



"Receipt For Making Bartram's Homestead Bitters," John Bartram Assoc. Collections.

John Bartram "had a very early inclination to the study of physic and surgery....and, in many instances, he gave great relief to his poor neighbours..."

River Trail; and a massive Bur Oak (Quercus macrocarpa) which may also date from the Bartram period.

Through cooperative efforts with organizations like Famous & Historic Trees, Davey Tree Expert Company, and Arrowhead Nursery, the John Bartram Association will ensure that the Bartrams' living legacy will live on.

BARTRAM'S HOMESTEAD BITTERS

Joel T. Fry

While organizing and rehousing the Special Collections Library at Historic Bartram's Garden in the fall of 1994, a small folded sheet of paper was found under the cover of a copy of the first volume of A. B. Stong's The American Flora, or History of Plants and Wild Flowers..., published in New York in 1846. The paper was titled "Receipt For Making Bartram's Homestead Bitters," and contained the following formula. Although not signed or dated, both the handwriting and spelling indicate the "Receipt" probably dates to the middle of the 19th century. It is possibly in the hand of John William Bartram (1813-1866), a great-grandson of John Bartram, the Botanist, but this cannot yet be confirmed.1

Receipt For Making Bartram's Homestead Bitters

20 Pounds of Gentian root

15 " Orange peal

21/2 " Prickly ash Bark

" Wild Cherry - do. 21/2

" Calomus root

The above ingredients to be ground fine and put into Forty two Gallons of Proof Spirits and let the Same remain three weeks before using

¹John William Bartram was the son of Dr. James Howell Bartram (1783-1818), and spent most or all of his life on a part of the Bartram family farmland in Kingsessing Township, Philadelphia. The copy of Strong's American Flora that contained the inserted "Receipt for Bartram's Homestead Bitters" was a recent gift to the John Bartram Association from the late Dr. John B. Bartram (1910-1995). The book was signed by his father Henry Dreer Bartram (b. 1874) and may have descended in turn from his grandfather, William Middleton Bartram (1838-1916), who was the son of John William Bartram. The only example of John William Bartram's handwriting currently available for comparison is a childhood signature in a small book. While similar to the hand of the "Receipt" it is insufficient for identification.

To make one Barrel or Forty Three Gall^S. of Bitters Take Four Gallon of the above named Tincture

24 of Proof Spirits

15 of Water

Tincture Essence of Caraway

oz. Bitter Almond

oz. Sassafras

oz. Winter Green

Flavour with Simple Syrup and color with Sugar Coloring.

Colouring for Liquor

Indian Corn Roasted and infused in spirits or water add Plums or Prunes.

Clarified Sirup

with Saffer wood and Red Saunders mixed togeather.

The plant material included in the recipe are identified below. All were once valued for physic uses, and some are still used in a limited way today.

gentian root - Gentiana lutea, Yellow Gentian orange peal - Citrus aurantium, or Citrus sinensis, Sour Orange, Sweet Orange

prickly ash bark - Zanthoxylum americanum, Prickly Ash, Toothache Tree

wild cherry bark - Prunus serotina, Wild Black Cherry calomus root - Acorus calamus, Sweet Flag, Calamus essence of caraway - Carum carvi, Caraway

bitter almond - Prunus dulcis var. amara, Bitter Almond

sassafras - Sassafras albidum, Sassafras

winter green - Gaultheria procumbens, Wintergreen; or Betula lenta, Cherry Birch, Sweet Birch

saffer wood - Santalum album, Sandalwood red saunders - Pterocarpus santalinus, Red Sanderswood, Red Sandalwood

The Bartram family had a long association with medicine. Almost all medicines of the 18th and 19th centuries were derived from plants, and botany as a science was closely tied to medicine. William Bartram wrote that his father John "had a very early inclination to the study of physic and surgery. He even acquired so much knowledge in the practice of the latter science, as to be very useful; and, in many instances, he gave great relief to his poor neighbours, who were unable to apply for medicines and assistance to the physicians of the city." John Bartram contributed short accounts of plants to several almanacs, and prepared an introduction, annotation, and appendix on North American medicinal plants for an edition of Thomas Short's Medicina Britannica, published by Franklin and Hall in Philadelphia in 1751.

"Bitters" were a unique product of the American market from roughly 1850 to 1906. Part beverage, part medicine, bitters contained plant extracts in a base of water, sugar, and alcohol.

Bartram's children inherited the family interest in plants and medicine. His sons Isaac Bartram (1725-1801) and Moses Bartram (1732-1809) became apothecaries, and both were important figures in the drug trade in Philadelphia. William Bartram (1739-1823), an important naturalist in his own right, copied much information on the preparation of plant medicines in his "Commonplace Book." Medical prescriptions and receipts are scattered through this manuscript. William also compiled an annotated "Pharmacopoeia" with prescriptions for various medicines taken from nine standard European works. On at least one occasion William collaborated with Dr. James Woodhouse, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania, raising seeds of the South African ice plant (Mesembryanthemum) for Woodhouse's analysis. (Woodhouse did original research for his medical degree on the persimmon and plant astringents or bitters.)

The Bartram name remained associated with medicine in Philadelphia in the early part of the 19th century. George Washington Bartram (1784–1853), a son of Moses, continued his father's forty year business at the "DRUG, CHEMICAL & MEDICAL STORE," on North Second Street. In 1810 he advertised "...A constant supply of Bartram's famous EMPLASTRUM ADHOESICUM, prepared as usual...To be had as usual, and only by him, Bartram's COUGH SYRUP, HIVE CORDIAL, HOOPING COUGH DROPS, WORM TEA, And the unparalleled SAY'S BALSAM..." (The Aurora, Philadelphia, Wed. Jan. 10, 1810).

Another of the Bartram grandsons, James Howell Bartram (1783–1818), studied medicine under Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton, professor of *materia medica* and natural history at the University of Pennsylvania. James H. Bartram was the second son of John Bartram, Jr. (1743–1812). James attended lectures in the medical school of the University from 1801–1804, but was forced to leave before completing his MD. degree at the death of his brother John Bartram III, in March of 1804. James H. Bartram did not remain at the Bartram Garden however. To continue his training, he sailed from Philadelphia in September of 1804 as surgeon, aboard the ship *George Washington*. After visiting to Cape Town, Batavia, Isle de France, Madras, and Calcutta, James returned to Philadelphia in 1805 aboard the brig *Mercury*.

On his return, Dr. James H. Bartram practiced medicine in Philadelphia and the Bartram neighborhood of Kingsessing. He could be the source of the original formula for the "Bartram's Homestead Bitters" as the surviving copy of the "Receipt" may be in the handwriting of his son, John William Bartram. Without further information however, it is difficult to confirm the origin of the recipe. It could have been a formula sold through Isaac or Moses Bartram's apothecary store; it could have been devised by William Bartram at the garden; or even descended from an 18th-century mixture of John Bartram. The large scale of the recipe and the generous use of proof spirits

The public are respectfully informed, that the Old Established Stand,
No. 59, N. SECOND STREET, conducted Ava.

DEUG, CHE MIGAL & MSDIGAL STORE,
For above lorry years, by Moses Bartram,
lately deceased,
It now occupied by his son,
GEORGE W. BARTRAM,
WHO pledges himself to the public, that he will use his best on leavors to maintain the reputation it has obtained, and assures them, that at all times they may be supplied with any articles belonging to the above line of business. As a general and complete assortment of every thing appertaining to the business may be had of him, it is deemed needless to insert a list of Medicines.

The Physicians, Surgeons, &c. may rely upon their orders and preacriptions receiving the most securate attention.

Also—A constant supply of Bartram's famous SMPLASTRUM ADMOESICUM, prepared as usual.

Country Physicians, Druggists and Storekeepers orders, will be streetly and punctually attended to.

To be hind required, and only by him,
Bartram's GOUGH SYRUP,
TIVE CORDIAL,
HOOPING COUGH DROPS,
WORM TE.,
And the supparalled SAY'S BALSAM,
Also—BREAST PLAISTER for gathered breasts in Womon.

R. R. An Apprentice to the above business is wanted.

The Aurora & General Advertiser, Philadelphia, Wed. Jan. 10, 1810.

suggest a later date however, and also a possible commercial venture.

Medical dosing with bitter or astringent plant extracts has an ancient history. "Bitters" however, were a unique product of the American market from roughly 1850 to 1906. Part beverage, part medicine, bitters contained plant extracts in a base of water, sugar, and alcohol-often 40% or more alcohol by volume. Part of a long tradition of American self-medication with patent remedies, bitters appeared and flourished in conjunction with the movement toward temperance, and eventual prohibition of alcoholic beverages in the United States. Prohibition began in Maine in 1851 and was in effect in some form in most eastern states long before national enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1920. Bitters were an alcoholic beverage disguised as a medicine, and were often acceptable even among abstaining families. Bitters were served in homes, in bars, and saloons. Recommended dosage was usually a wineglass or more a day. As Federal taxes on alcohol increased, bitters avoided taxation by classification as medicines. In 1883 the Internal Revenue determined that when sold as a beverage over the bar, bitters were subject to the alcohol tax, but when sold in bottles from drugstores they were not. This ruling held until 1905 when they became subject to tax as alcoholic beverages. (Watson 1965: 14-16)

The sale of bitters was big business, and they are best remembered today by collectors of the distinctive glass bottles that once held the product. One of the most famous mixture,

The "Bartram's Homestead Bitters" is typical of the mixtures used for many commercial bitters. Considering the widespread appeal of bitters, a bottle or advertisement ... may yet surface.

"Hostetter's Bitters," was based on the formula of a Lancaster County, Pennsylvania physician, Dr. Jacob Hostetter. His son began marketing the bitters in Pittsburgh in 1853, and nation-wide advertising during and after the Civil War pushed yearly sales over \$1,000,000. Hostetter's claimed to cure or relieve dyspepsia, ague, colic, dysentery, bilious complaints, and diarrhea. (Young 1961: 125–128). Commercially successful bitters adopted distinctive labels or bottle shapes to identify their product, and held copyright or trademark rights to the design. Bitters advertised through newspapers, almanacs, trading cards, and traveling medicine shows. The products were named after doctors, historical figures, places, or medicinal content. There were "Congress Bitters," "Constitution Bitters," "Quaker Bitters," and "Botanic Bitters," just to name a few.

By the early 20th century the reputation of bitters as healthful tonics became tarnished. Their high alcohol content was questioned as were many unproven health claims. Bitters were lumped with the many other patent medicines and examples of quackery attacked by Progressive reformers. In 1904 Edward Bok of the *Ladies Home Journal* launched a series of articles attacking high alcohol bitters and other quackery. In 1905 and 1906 Samuel Hopkinson Adams repeated the same attack in *Colliers*. The Internal Revenue redefined bitters as alcoholic beverages in 1905, and the sweeping Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906 required truthful labeling of ingredients and alcohol content. Although a few bitters survived this concentrated attack and a few are still manufactured today, they are a little know and quaint survival of another time. (Young 1961: 130–143, 237; Young 1967: 30–35).

While bitters, and the fortunes made selling them, were attacked by right-thinking progressives in the early years of this century, they may not have deserved all the wrath brought down on them. Bitters were not as completely without merit as many quack medicines of their time. They did not generally contain narcotics or poisonous ingredients. Many of the herbal components used in bitters were legitimately prescribed as tonics and laxatives, although usually in much higher dosage than provided in most bitters formulas.

The "Bartram's Homestead Bitters" is typical of the mixtures used for many commercial bitters. Several astringent plant extracts—gentian root, prickly ash bark, cherry bark, and calamus root—were combined with aromatic and flavoring components in an alcohol-water base. The ingredients combine European medicinal plants: gentian, orange, calamus, caraway, and bitter almond; and native North American species: prickly ash, wild cherry, sassafras, and wintergreen. The base was diluted, sweetened with sugar, and colored. The final product would have been a potent 37.5% alcohol or 75 proof.

This high alcohol content was typical of commercial bitters sold from 1850 onward. The size of the "Receipt" formula suggests it was a commercial venture. The herbal tincture would have yielded a little over 450 gallons or 10½ barrels of finished bitters. The name "Bartram's Homestead Bitters" plays to the 19th-century market, including historic and frontier associations. As yet there is no evidence of commercial sale of the Bartram Bitters. Guides to bitters bottles record distinctive bottles for similarly named "Old Homestead Wild Cherry Bitters," "Prickly Ash Bitters," and "Bertram's Long Life Bitters," but these were not manufactured in Philadelphia. (Watson 1965). Many commercial bitters were sold in plain bottles with only paper labels, and so are rarer survivals. Considering the widespread appeal of bitters, a bottle or advertisement for "Bartram's Homestead Bitters" may yet surface.

Afterword

During initial archaeological survey of the 'Seed House' at Historic Bartram's Garden in 1979, testing in the southernmost room of the structure removed approximately 25% of the floor area. This room, now identified as John Bartram's 1760 greenhouse, retained little evidence of its original function. Instead, it had been used as a receptacle for household trash in the first decade of the 20th century. Between 1900-1910, large numbers of glass bottles and containers, ironstone and semi-porcelain china, and other discards were stashed under the wooden floor of the room. This included beer and soda, catsup, pickle, and oil bottles, cold cream and cosmetics containers, and even ink and artists materials.

Over 40% of the containers were medicine bottles, and while none of these bottles contained bitters, a number of patent medicines were represented by multiple examples. There were seven bottles of Dr. D. Jayne's Expectorant, a well-known Philadelphia product; six bottles of Munyon's Paw-Paw, another Philadelphia patent medicine; six bottles of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound; and the collection included Ozomulsion, Bromo-seltzer, Hankin's Specific For Rheumatism, Gout, and Lumbago, Dr. Kilmer's Swamproot Kidney, Liver, and Bladder Cure, as well as bottles from pharmacies in West Philadelphia (Parrington 1979, 1981). These empty bottles provide compelling physical proof of the widespread dependence of Americans on patent medicines and nostrums in the early 20th century. It was this dependence on often ineffective, fraudulent, or dangerous potions that spurred the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906. Bitters were classed with these patent medicines by reformers, and did not survive the twin assault of drug reform and prohibition.

References

Bartram, James Howell, Remarks and Observations on a Passage to the Cape of Good Hope, Batavia, Madras, Calcutta, etc. etc. The John Bartram Assoc., Philadelphia: 1991.

Bartram, John, ed., Thomas Short, *Medicina Britannica*, 3rd ed.,
Philadelphia: Franklin and Hall, 1751, (reprinted 1765). Also
John Bartram, "Indian Physick," preface to Richard Saunders
[Benjamin Franklin], *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Philadelphia:
1741; and to John Jerman, *The American Almanac for 1741*,
Philadelphia: 1741.

Bartram, William, "Some account of the late Mr. John Bartram, of Pennsylvania." *The Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal*, part 1, vol. 1 (1804), pp. 115-124.

> "Commonplace Book" survives in two fragments, the larger in a private collection, American Philosophical Society microfilm 1342, and a small section, "William Bartram's Commonplace Book 1797-1802," HSP, Bartram Papers.

"Pharmacopoeia" HSP, Bartram Papers, Small Volumes.

Parrington, Michael, "Excavations at the 'Seedhouse' at Bartram's
Garden, Philadelphia, 1979." MS report prepared for the John
Bartram Association, December 1979, Museum Institute for
Conservation Archaeology, University Museum, University of
Pennsylvania.

"Medical Archaeology in Philadelphia: A Study of Early Twentieth Century Medicine Bottles Excavated at Bartram's Garden." Expedition, (Spring 1981), p. 34–38. Watson, Richard, Bitters Bottles, Thomas Nelson & Sons, New York: 1965.
Wilson, Rex L., Bottles on the Western Frontier, University of Arizona Press,
Tucson: 1981.

Young, James Harvey, The Toadstool Millionaires: A Social History of Patent Medicines in America before Federal Regulation. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton: 1961.

The Medical Messiahs: A Social History of Health Quackery in Twentieth-Century America. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton: 1967. reprinted with new afterword 1992.

© 1995 The John Bartram Association

Bartram Broadside is edited by Joel T. Fry, Curator of Historical Collections, Historic Bartram's Garden. Ideas and contributions on the Bartram connections to exploration, horticulture, botany, and other natural sciences are encouraged.

Historic Bartram's Garden

The Pre-Revolutionary Home of John Bartram
Naturalist Botanist Explorer

54th Street and Lindbergh Boulevard Philadelphia
Pennsylvania 19143 215-729-5281

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 02148
Philadelphia, PA