

Early Travels
in the
Tennessee Country
1540-1800

*With Introductions, Annotations and
Index*

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THE WATAUGA PRESS
JOHNSON CITY, TENNESSEE
1928

The 5th passed several Creeks and Rivers on which is an abundance of a climbing Fern of the genus . . .

The land through which these rivers flow is less fertile than the territory of Nashville or Cumberland settlement and two-leaved pines are found there in abundance.

Sunday 6th of March 1796 arrived at West Point on the Clinch River.

The 7th slept at a distance of 15 Miles near the junction of the Houlston river with that called Tenesee.

The 8th arrived at Knoxville.⁸⁸

The 9th dined with Governor Blount.

The 10th took my lodgings in the house of Captain Loune⁸⁹ near the Cumberland river.⁹⁰

The 11th herborized on the opposite bank bordered by steep rocks covered with Saxifrage, bulbous *umbellifera*, etc.

The 12th continued to herborize.

Sunday the 13th, visited Captain Richard⁹¹ Commandant of the garrison.

The 14th herborized; saw in bloom, *Anemone hepatica*; *Claytonia Virginica*; *Sanguinaria*.

Saw a new genus of Plant designated by Linnaeus *Podophyllum diphyllum* and discovered some years ago in Virginia while passing by Fort Chissel. This Plant is less rare in the fertile lands of Kentucky and Cumberland. It is found in the neighborhood of Knoxville. Dr. Barton⁹² called it *Jeffersonia* in a description he gave of this plant after seeing the flower of the Shoots I had brought back to Philadelphia in the hands of the Botanist Bartram.⁹³ The time when the plant flowers in the neighborhood of Knoxville is about the 10th of March.

The 15th received the Letter from Governor Blount in answer to that I had written him respecting the discovery of a new *Sophora* in the neighborhood of fort Blount. Started the same day and slept at a distance of 7 Miles. Paid two shillings 3

⁸⁸ Gov. Sevier had not yet qualified as governor of the new State, and was not in Knoxville at the time. DeWitt, *Diary of Sevier, passim*.

⁸⁹ Looney, of the Sullivan County family of the name.

⁹⁰ A slip of the pen; really the Holston, now the Tennessee.

⁹¹ Capt. Wm. Richards.

⁹² Dr. Benj. S. Barton, professor of botany in the University of Pennsylvania.

⁹³ William Bartram, of Philadelphia, author of *Bartram's Travels*.

pence for Supper and for Maize and fodder for the Horses. Bundle of fodder 2 pence.

The 16th of March 1796 slept a mile from Iron Works at the house of Mr. Rice, lawyer,⁶⁴ 30 Miles from Knoxville.

The 17th slept near Bull's gap 30 Miles from Iron Works.

The 18th passed by Lick creek and by Green court house 18 Miles from Bull's gap.

The 19th passed by Johnsborough⁶⁵ 25 Miles from Green. Several merchants are established at Johnsborough who obtain their goods from Philadelphia by land.

Sunday the 20th started from Johnsborough. Saw in passing Mr. Overton of Kentucky,⁶⁶ Major Carter of Wataga,⁶⁷ at whose house I had lodged several years previously with my son, and Colonel Avery.

Sunday 20th of March 1796 saw in bloom *Corylus americana*, flower having the Styles or stigmas of a purpurine color. *Ulmus viscosa geminis aureis floribus 4-5-6-andris, stigmatibus purpureis* . . .

Slept at Colonel Tipton's 10 miles from Johnsborough.

The 21st remarked that the Mountains were covered in several places with *Sanguinaria*, *Claytonia* and *Erythronium* with spotted leaves. These Plants were in bloom. *Magnolia acuminata et auriculata*; *Rhododendron*; *Kalmia*; *Pinus abies canadensis*, *Pinus strobus*; *Azalea* etc. etc. grow in abundance at the foot of those Mountains. Arrived at Lime Stone cove and slept at Charles Collier's⁶⁸ 18 Miles from Colonel Tipton's.

The 22nd crossed Iron Mountain and arrived at night at David Becker's,⁶⁹ 23 Miles without seeing a house.

⁶⁴ James Reese, father of Wm. B. Reese, who became one of the great Supreme Judges of Tennessee. He lived at the present Jefferson City.

⁶⁵ The traveler continued to have difficulty with the word "Jonesborough."

⁶⁶ Judge John Overton, formerly, but not at the time, from Kentucky.

⁶⁷ Not Col. John Carter as Thwaites states in his annotation of these Travels of Michaux. Colonel Carter died of small-pox in 1780. His son, Landon, is referred to by the traveler.

⁶⁸ Of the family from which descended Col. Arthur S. Colyar, author of a two-volume biography of Andrew Jackson.

⁶⁹ Baker's. Michaux here passed into North Carolina, but through Iron Mountain Gap, which is ten or twelve miles west of Carver's Gap, through which he passed on a former journey into Tennessee. His son went through Iron Mountain Gap six years later.