

6-7-1985

Audubon: A Bicentennial Exhibition

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Audubon

a bicentennial
exhibition ~



Linderman Library,
Lehigh University,
7 ~ 8th. June 1985.

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON

AUDUBON was born in Haiti on 26th. April 1785, illegitimate son of Jean Audubon, a French sea-captain, and a Mlle. Rabine. He came to the U.S.A. in 1803 and settled at Mill Grove, Montgomery County, Pa. After several unsuccessful business ventures in Kentucky and Missouri culminated in his imprisonment for debt in 1819, Audubon resolved to pursue his lifelong avocation of drawing birds as a career. After unsuccessful attempts to publish his *Birds of America* in Philadelphia and New York, he traveled to Britain in order to raise a subscription; he was much assisted in this by the patronage of King George IV. The four "elephant folio" volumes came out between 1826 and 1838. Initially they sold for £1,000 a set; recently a set fetched \$1,700,000 at auction in New York. Audubon spent his declining years on his country estate on the banks of the Hudson. His closing years were plagued by increasing blindness and senility. He died on 27th. January 1851.

EXHIBITS

1. John James Audubon, *The birds of America*; from original drawings ... London: published by the author, 1826~1838. 4 volumes, "elephant folio."

There were in all 485 plates; plate LXIV was drawn by Mrs. Lucy Audubon and the remainder by Audubon himself. Plates I-II and VI-VII were engraved by W. H. Lizars and retouched by R. Havell, Jr. Plates VIII-IX were engraved by W. H. Lizars. All the remainder were engraved, printed and aquatinted by R. Havell. The four volumes were originally issued to subscribers in 87 instalments. The plates were issued without any text to avoid the expense of having to deposit copies in public libraries in accordance with British copyright law.

2. John James Audubon, *The birds of America*, from drawings made in the United States and their territories. New York: J. J. Audubon; Philadelphia: J. B. Chevalier, 1840~44. 7 volumes, quarto.

The quarto American edition contained fifteen plates not found in the first edition.

3. John James Audubon, *Ornithological biography; or, An account of the habits of the birds of the United States of America; accompanied by descriptions of the objects represented in the work entitled THE BIRDS OF AMERICA, and interspersed with delineations of American scenery and manners.* Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1831~39. 5 volumes.

The text written by J. J. Audubon and edited by William MacGillivray of Edinburgh to accompany THE BIRDS OF AMERICA.

4. John James Audubon, *The viviparous quadrupeds of North America*, by John James Audubon and the Revd John Bachmann. New York: J. J. Audubon, 1845-48. 3 volumes, folio.

Plates I-LXXV, XCII, XCIX, CI, CVI, CIX and CX were drawn by J. J. Audubon and the remainder of the 150 plates by his son John Woodhouse Audubon (1812-62). The 3 volumes were originally issued to subscribers in 30 instalments.

5. Letter of introduction for Edward Deertman of Liverpool, written by J. J. Audubon to Robert Gilmore of Baltimore, dated London, 1st. September 1834.

Mr. Gilmore has added a note: "Mr. Audubon is the artist & author of that superb work 'the Birds of America' for a copy of which I subscribed to present to the Baltimore Library."

6. Letter written by J. J. Audubon to George Hertz, dated 19th. January 1826.

The letter asks for Hertz's opinion of a picture Audubon is painting for exhibition at the Royal Institution in London.