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Ju;y 3, 1989

Mr. Stuart Gentling
Gentling Gallery
Fort Worth, Texas

Dear Stuart Gentling:

Thanks to the magazine piece by Donna Pate, which an Austin niece sent to me, I learned about OF BIRDS AND TEXAS a while back. The glimpses of it, there, were really exciting, but here in the boondocks I don't know who may have a copy for me to see if I am lucky. It will--already has--put you right up there with Fuertes, Audubon and where you and your brother deserve to be. You may know my biography of Audubon (U. of Okla, 1964) but perhaps the recent revised and amended edition from Abbeville. In it, this time, I went into the whole matter of The Great Crow Blackbird, thanks to eleventh hour research breaks and after many years of trying to discover whether it still existed and, if so, where. The data in the catalog missed the fire at a few important point it was a brave try. I take for granted that the dealer who had the drawing in Maryland (he once took it to Wintertur for an appraisal but was turned away, that not being their practice) may be the one who located one of the drawings from the 1826 MS Journal of Audubon which turned up years after publication of my rendering in 1967. It was bought by the dealer Wm Reese whose catalog offers it for sale at just about the time of the recent spectacular H.B. Martin estate sale, at which Sotheby sold it on June 5 or 6. I don't know who bought the journal or for how much, but in time the news will emerge.

What stunned me, and it is why I am writing to you, is that Hirschl & Adler sold the grackle drawing almost immediately after their bid won it. I am very anxious to learn who acquired it, and hope that you can help me. I own an Audubon drawing which, because it was a gift 34 years ago, I would never auction. I am getting on and wish to settle its fate myself. It is the only existing strictly botanical study by JJA, or so I believe, drawn 6 weeks after the founding of the first American Botanical Society in Philadelphia. Drawn at Mill Grove on July 15, 1806 when JJA as newly 21 and still a neophyte. Over the years I have succeeded in determining its history, a fascinating one. I should think that the collector who wanted the grackle might appreciate such a rarity. Various institutions would welcome it as a gift but my income bracket was too low even before the new rules about gifts were laid down by the IRS. So do please help me out, if you can, and provided you know who bought the grackle drawing. I wanted to show it in color but the publisher treated this recent edition as if it were a reprint, which indeed it wasn't! H. & A. decline to identify the buyer who, I feel sure, would enjoy what more I could tell him about the drawing with such an extraordinary history.

Sincerely,