

May 1993

re-drawing the male bird with its head looking over its back. ~~That~~ This could have been easily done to preserve almost all of the original suitability of pp's ^{out} line intact. In spite of Audubon's protestations later in life, ~~for~~ the early recipients of the 4 volume Bonaparte - Wilson Supplement would probably never know more ultimately care about the Grackles or how that change ^{illustration} of Vol I Plate I ^{withdrawing of 2 others} come to be, ~~and being~~ ^{to turn a first}. But we know his mistreatment by the big boys ^{of Philadelphia} at a time when he was so vulnerable remained a source of pain ~~at~~ ^{to} him to the end of his days. What pleasure he must have enjoyed when his "Birds of America" almost immediately eclipsed both Willson's original ~~the~~ American Ornithology and the Bonaparte Supplement. The Grackle Controversy simply forgotten by all but those immediate players just as the Grackle painting disappeared not to publicly re-emerge until 1984, almost one hundred and sixty years later. The researches ^{of Dr. Cresswell,} ~~of this time~~ ^{and Chris Ford} and Alice Ford - and us too, - have cast a clearer light on the whole story. It is remarkable to me how the people involved ^{who himself often played poorly with the truth} ~~seemed~~ ^{human and honest} as to life. Audubon was ~~quite~~ ^{deliberately} correct when he wrote Bonaparte to comment about ~~the~~ the Supplement Grackles. "Le temps de courre la verité"

And it was in for another ^{great} surprise that July 7 1984. About a week after we received our first Communication from Alice Ford a letter arrived from Suzanne Ford, the researcher who had compiled a digest for important American Bird books for

Final scene to be at the Museum of Science and History in June 1992
"There will never be truth."
Audubon Grackles published for the first time in New York

had been ^{Coincidentally both her husband and Alice Ford's newly revised biographies} published by ~~the same~~ press. the same company, Atlantic Press. Yet ^{they did not know each other.}

strongly the American Museum of Natural History. ~~of New York.~~ ^{of New York.} I had not heard from her ~~in~~ ^{for} two years. and ~~now here we were~~ now suddenly here was a letter ^{announcing the} after ~~many~~ ^{long} years of silence. She had remarkable views about ~~the~~ ^{the} fate of our painting.

July 11, 1989

Dear Mr. Gentling:

I hope you will remember me and our correspondence and phone calls of 1986-7. I got in touch with you because I was so interested in your discovery of the Audubon painting of the Boat-tailed Grackles at that time known as Great Crow Blackbird.

In one of my many moves between ^{and} Florida house and our house here part of my files turned up missing including my correspondence with you so I am writing you to ask you if you will refresh my memory as to how, when, and where you discovered the painting as I and my colleagues have become interested in the whole curious story.

We all from time to time have funny things happen that cause us to say "isn't it a small world" but I think you will agree that what I am about to tell you beats all. About a month ago my husband and I were staying with one of ~~my~~ our married daughters. We went to have tea with some friends of hers and there on the wall was your Audubon painting of the Grackles!! She told me that they had brought it at Herschel and Adler in New York.

They would love to know more about it so
~~I~~ I told them what I knew and said I
would try to find out more by writing you.

....

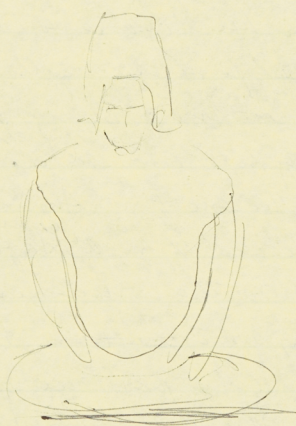
You will be pleased to know that your painting
is beautifully framed and beautifully hung in
a lovely house.

Looking forward so much to hearing from
you.

Sincerely
Susanne M. Faw
(Mrs. Francis H. Faw.)

^{now} I regret that
I never followed up Mrs. Faw's letter. ~~I~~ I was
simply ~~no longer~~ ^{too} ~~to know at that time~~ As I look
back I can't ^{really} remember why. There was no doubt that
I was suffering from publishing fatigue. I also was very
much in love with ^{a woman} ~~my second love~~ - I met directly as
a result of the Bird Book. On a cold and clear afternoon
on January 10th, of the previous year (1938) there was a knock
on our studio door. I had an appointment with the
Grand daughter of an old friend, Harold Siskind who had
just purchased ^{been} a book. She had come to pick it up for
him as he was then ailing and feeling the aches and
pains of his 85 or so years (I had known him from our
pleasant farm days, because he was ^{one of} Tom's ^{pleasant} ^{from} ~~Switzerland~~ father's
best friends and a frequent guest at Mrs. Faw's house. He was
always one of our strongest supporters and a great
lover of birds.) When I opened the door, the first thing

I saw was those beautiful blue eyes. I was smitten at first sight. Something ^{old} told me we would never have thought possible. ~~How~~ ^{How} ~~admit~~ ^{admit} that she ~~ended my life at exactly the right time when I truly needed a rest and a change of focus. She has been part of my life ever since.~~ She came at about 3:00 o'clock ^{in the afternoon}, and we talked until nearly 7:00 o'clock that night. Or, if you will bear her version, I talked until 7:00 o'clock. Nancy, who is no shrinker, vocate said I never gave her a chance to talk. I must admit that she ended my life at exactly the right time when I truly needed a rest and a change of focus. She has been a part of my life ever since. When I got Helen Ford's letter then the one from Suzanne Fox, Nancy and I had just returned from a Safari up along the Zambezi River in Northern Zimbabwe. It was a trip made in beauty, since ~~we were~~ ^{we were} with the exception of our Guide and Camp personnel ~~and~~ ^{and} the director of the Hwange Zoo, ~~and~~ ^{and} his daughter and a reporter for the Star telegram, we were virtually alone - no other tourists. With ^{with} that broad and beautiful Zambezi in front of our tent filled ^{with} hippo, the distant shore with basking crocodiles and elephants crossing, shallows down river every afternoon as we dined on white table clothes under the shady ^{of} canopy of an old acacia tree, my mind was at ~~rest~~ ^{peace} for ^{the first} ^{time} in what seemed like years. In the evening we could hear the rasping calls of lions and ⁱⁿ the morning a full moon greeted our awakening, rising over



had brought
over the violet river mist. I took my water
Colors with me, and the lazy days were filled
with leisurely walks and canoe trips and jeep
forays deeper into elephant country. ~~to I painted~~
Both Nancy and I painted several watercolors then
and in the evenings as dinner was cooking, I sat
by our fire at the river edge and penned the
day's events in my journal. It was my first
trip to Africa. I had hunted in India more than
twenty years before, but this safari was an errand of
mercy. We had come to observe the capture of 10 Black
Rhinos for an American Breeding program sponsored
by Game Conservation International whose President
just happened to be Harry Harrison ^{who wrote the foreword to our book.} Harry and his
wife Gloria ^{were} ~~had been~~ ^{when we first arrived} seen in Nairobi, Zimbabwe's
Capitol, just before we flew up to the ~~Great~~ Zambesi
Camp.

ⁱⁿ
He had been back in Fort Worth for only a few weeks when Scott and I got the ~~news~~ the Ford and Joe letters about the fate of our Audubon paintings. At that ^{same} time Nancy and I ^{were making plans} ~~had been invited~~ to go to Nepal with other Zoo Board members as guests of ~~the~~ ^{in October} Government of Nepal and the World Wildlife Fund. After a stay in the Capital City of Katmandu we ^{then} ~~were scheduled to fly~~ South to a place called Tiger Tops and thence by elephant back out into a jungle camp to observe the capture and tagging of the wild one-horned Asian rhinos. The African ^{and Nepal} trips and the ~~proposed~~ ^{SHARE} Nepal expedition and I must admit, Nancy hardly to share ~~the trip~~ it ~~both~~ provided a wonderful escape from the book project, and I must admit I took full advantage of ^{them} it. Still, the days ^{were} filled with plenty of ^{both business} things ^{continues} ~~to~~, and I ~~was~~ ^{kept} always trying to promote the ~~one~~ book one way or another by seeking magazine articles, newspaper exposure and by giving lectures to various organizations. ~~Somehow~~ ^{was} the Audubon painting, in many ways a very painful episode ^{despite} for ~~all~~ its wonderment, I feel its loss even today, though I am assuaged ^{on the way} ~~by~~ ^{and I want to forget} ~~Scott~~ when I look up and see Scott's incredible copy of the painting Grosbeak actually painted on a piece of 1823 Watermark Whatman ~~watercolor~~ paper with an 1823 watermark. The trips around the world were simply a very enjoyable way to put that painful part of our project behind me. The expedition to Nepal

was not quite as wonderful as the African trip,
because I was sick with a light fever and
a ~~hitch~~, persistent cough throughout most of
the trip. But, if anything, the experience was
even more exotic, with jungle jaunties on Elephant
back, evening visits to strange temples and medieval
cities. In western Nepal our group was confronted ^{in full} ~~by~~ ^{daylight}
by a tiger ~~in full daylight~~ that jumped across
^{our path} ~~the path~~ in front of us, frightening our elephants,
sending monkeys screaming through the trees
above us and causing a stampede of spotted
deer running off in all directions. What a moment
and what a rare one! We had been told that
there was no way that we were likely to see
a tiger in that area unless we put out bait
~~for~~ and waited all night for one to come. But in
daylight. ^{Never!}

Although I even have a ~~Nepali~~ ^{somebody} Bird Book
story for Nepal to tell about. To bring us back to our
main subject. Ed Bass, our host, wanted to give
the King of Nepal, _____, a copy of
"Of Bird and Tree" as a gift from our Texas Group.

This majesty not only accepted the gift with
enthusiasm but at the last minute decided
to hold a banquet ^{at the place where} ~~at which~~ the book would
be carried in by his palace guard and officially
presented to him. ~~by the king~~. All this was

being arranged by Ed without my knowledge.
6 and ^{when} we were back at Ed's Hotel Varanasi for a last few

days stay before the long flight back to Texas &
remember seeing several very ^{impressive-looking} ~~important~~ Nepali's
^{at the hotel} ~~talking to~~ coming and going, evidently having some
sort of important discussion with Ed.

When I asked Ed what was going on, he
presented Nancy and me with a ~~beautifully written~~
formal invitation ^{to dine with the King at} ~~for dinner~~ at the palace. What
the Commings and goings of the palace folk were about
was the date of the dinner, November 11, 1982. That
was two days after we were scheduled to leave for home.
Ed knew this, and he was trying to see if something
could be worked out. There was no way to reorganize
our flight schedule, ~~and~~ so I told Ed that we would
simply not be able to attend the banquet. He answered by
saying, that it was not all that simple. "You are in
Nepal, Stuart," he said. "An invitation to the palace
is more than just an invitation. It is a command of
sorts. Although the invitation has an RSVP. on it,
no one refuses. A refusal is not handled with the
utmost tact, it can be considered as an insult."

Bruce Bunting, WWF representative for Asia who
had been working on our problem with Ed chimed in.
"You see, Stuart" One just doesn't turn the King
down. It is important to keep in mind that the ruler
here is more than just a king. He is the chosen
embodiment of Lord Shiva. So here you are not
just turning down the command ~~appetition~~ of
a king, you are also turning down a God.
"Off ~~the~~ ^{the} way," I said. "You mean its possible

to be honored one day and thrown into a viper
pit the next?

"Yes" he said.

"Oh my" I said.

"But not to worry." ^{David Bruce} Ed was going to write
the most obsequious and flowery refusal letter
ever presented to a King. "Da

~~For the next~~
just after I got ^{back} to my room, there was a knock on
the door. It was the desk boy with a handful
of stationery and a note from Ed. It read

"Here is paper for HRH and your invitations
(for correct spellings). You may begin note with
"your highness" and end with "most respectfully
yours."

Noney's and I spent the next hour writing and re-writing
my apology. Ed and Bruce made a few changes
and I returned to my room to re-pen the letter.
Apparently that was enough for the King who was
presented the book on schedule. Ed did the
presentation and two palace guards in full uniform
bore it to the King's chair. A few days later I
asked Ed Bruce if he could try to illicit a comment
from their majesty that I could use one day in
our Book promotion. The best he could get out
of the King ~~was~~ who really found the book was "well
it's not the kind of light reading one does in one's
bath tub." Not exactly a great promotional quote
later. after Noney and I got back home we

Artists Copies were for sale for \$5,000 each, and
 they sold out almost immediately. The wonderful
 thing about these bird studies was that they ~~showed~~
 were done not in the Audubonesque style
 that we self-consciously ^{employed} adopted for the
 color plates. ~~that these~~. Rather, they were more
 naturalistic ^{less stylized} ~~with a~~ ^{style} ~~with a~~ ^{more} ~~stylized~~ ^{romanticism}
~~in the process~~ ^{out} in the lines and most of the pros.
~~it seems~~ ^{at us} ~~ironic~~ ^{to us} that ~~that~~ should come in to
~~its~~ ^{own} style at the end of the project. But
 Actually we could see ~~that~~ ^{work was} our styles changing
 about mid way through the project as we applied
 our skills with greater commitment and concentration.
 Scott and I have never ^{held ourselves up to be wild life}
 painters. Our book was ^{created} ~~always~~ ^{simply} planned as an art
 book ^{and simpler} ~~paying~~ ^{our love of the} homage to ~~the~~ ^{beauty of} ~~John James Audubon's~~ ^{John James} ~~paintings~~ ^{paintings} and other
 American natural history. ~~It also~~ ^{Our book} ~~was~~ ^{showed} not only
 the ~~work~~ ^{art} of Audubon but also Albrecht Dürer,
 Joris Agassiz, Funtz, the great Swedish painter, Bruno
 Zeller and a host of known and unknown painters
 of Japan and China. By the way, the Sung dynasty
 painter of China and the Great Screen painter of
 17th and 18th Century Japan created works very
 similar to Audubon's. It is no surprise ^{then} that
 Audubon's ^{work} has long been ^{respected} ~~popular~~ in those countries
 especially in ^{always} Japan. ~~Acceptance~~.

Some might
 think that
 project
 might

Anyway,
 We had to work even harder to keep
 a style consistent throughout the plates

However, not only

I tried to show our book's connections to not
 just to Audubon, but to other artists and cultures when

never
at other ~~than~~ ^{as} he was ~~not~~ free from ^{The} criticism and controversy ^{about} George Ord, Charles
vestition constantly design ^{from} his beliefs and ^{the} ^{scientific} ^{conferences} and ^{the} ^{unpopular}
remonstrance in penning and ornithologist ^{of} ^{the} ¹⁹ ³ ^{of} ^{the} ^{writing}

I lectured about the project. But I was now doing less
of that too, as my own attention was returning, to my
regular painting and to my studies of C. L. Cullen.
The trip we made with Mollie Pasater and her
group in August of '89 was my first return to Mexico
since 1872, and it was good ~~to~~ ⁱⁿ many ways
to feel the ~~distance~~, growing, distance from those
roller coaster publishing days. The Mexico trip and
mollie helped move the ~~finances~~ ^{of Science + History} museum to
focus on our needs so that by early 1890 our
financial obligations were finally resolved. I
wonder how J. A. must have felt when he saw
that last ^{and elegant} ^{free} plate of his "Birds of America" pulled off
the press in Robert Hamell's ^{own} shop that June day in
1838. He probably scarcely had time to think about
the enormity of his accomplishment. There were
still his "ornithological biographies" to finish - the
fifth and final volume of which was not to be completed
~~until~~ ^{not} for almost a year. And then there was the smaller
octavo-sized edition of the "Birds" to be published for
the popular market. And ~~also~~ ^{then} the mammals. There was
certainly no time for him to ~~rest~~ ^{relax} and he must have
felt at age 53 that he ~~had~~ ^{could not for a moment} ~~little time to~~ ^{rest on his}
laurels ^{as} ~~if he was to succeed with these other projects.~~ ^{DRAFTED}
In the next 8 years ^{as} ^{grew} his fame grew and his image ^{as} ^{compulsively} ^{crafted}
The Great American Woodsman and patriarch of American
naturalists eclipsed Gervase Wilson ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{popular} ^{mind} and signed
~~over~~ ^{publications} last of the Mississippi ^{and} signing
up subscribers for his various ~~works~~ ⁱⁿ ^{progress}. The



being posthumous by Philadelphia painter J.T. Bowen

year 1843 saw him feeling his age and his declining
stamina yet far out on the prairies of the upper Missouri
at Fort Union in search of animal specimens for the
"Univiparous Quadrupeds of America," a three-volume
Imperial Folio that was to be his artistic Swan Song.
Even though he still had eight more years to live, he
was clearly slowing down and was increasingly finding
it difficult to focus on the necessary scientific
demands of the monumental publication, much to the
frustration ^{and annoyance} of his collaborator, the Reverend John Bachman
of Charleston South Carolina. The Reverend was rightly
worried that J.T.A. was spending more time chasing
buffalos than seeking out the field rodents and less
exciting furry residents of the western plains. In short
Audubon was becoming distracted. He was losing focus.
His two sons Victor Biffard and John Woodhouse Audubon
were assuming more ^{of the} ^{credible} ^{than their skill or even} responsibility
of the publication. ^{while both were creating the paintings} Neither of ^{even} ~~them~~ ^{any more} had their father's level
of knowledge of the subject. Still, the first volume of the
Quadrupeds, which appeared in 1845 contained some of J.T.A.'s
most beautiful work. The two remaining volumes were
to have fewer and fewer works by the Great Bird Artist, as
John Woodhouse assumed the heavy mantle of ^{completing the} ~~work~~ ^{work}.
~~change~~ Failing eyesight was the excuse given the artist
Woodhouse those, but family members were hiding a sinister
secret behind the pleasant facade, "Minnie found" Audubon's
house just outside New York City. The truth was that at age
61 Audubon's ^{on the Hudson} ~~mind~~ was going. He was literally aging before
Jury and his sons eyes. The symptoms around very much

Alzheimer's disease to me. In early 1847 he suffered a ~~serious~~ stroke ~~but~~ ^{3rd and} the last ^{and} Folio volume of the Quadrapeds was published that year by his sons. For the next few years Old J. A. gradually slipped into a complete seclusion, totally detached from his family and ~~the~~ events around him. He still took his daily walks around Minnie's Pond, but he was always accompanied. He could not be let out of sight. In those twilight years, plagued by a strange decline made worse by a stroke, he spoke only once. Alice Ford tells a touching story of how shortly before Audubon's death, a young relative, William Babcock, visited Minnie's Pond.

When he suspected the old painter in one of his reveries, Audubon, at first bewildered and then delighted, gazed up for an instant and - to everyone's astonishment - exclaimed, "Yes yes, Buby! You go down that side of Jug Pond, and I'll go this side, and we'll get the ducks." These words were his last. AF p429

Birds were on his mind to the ^{very} end. Audubon died at Minnie's Pond January 27, 1851 and was buried in the Cemetery at the nearby Trinity Church. Some years later his grave was moved to where it was when Scott and I paid our visit ^{that late afternoon} after the soothly ~~audubon~~ sale.

Write about our last visit
to the museum in June 1992

If I had to pick an event for our folio's own song, it was probably the lecture I gave at the 20th North American Print Conference ~~at Austin~~ in November of 1988. These conferences were truly impressive gatherings of scholars, teachers, museum people, publishers and librarians and they ~~were~~ ^{had been} held in different cities around country. This year, since the theme was "Prints and Printmaking in Texas," the meeting was ~~being~~ ⁱⁿ held at Austin.

I was asked ~~both~~ to give a talk about our book experiences and to loan ^{some} our ^{own} printings for an exhibit at the Texas Memorial Museum ~~next to the University~~ to run concurrently with the conference. It was somewhat amusing to me that the memorial museum was on the campus of U.T. Law School when I was a very unremarkable student for a very unremarkable year in 1965-66 before I left the real world behind me for the Pennsylvania Academy ~~of the Fine Arts~~ and the life of an artist. The exhibit was ~~the~~ our last show of the bird paintings held outside of Fort Worth, and the title of my lecture was composed in a 15th Century vein. ~~I still took~~ ^{from Texas and its curious relationships to John James Audubon and American Natural History publishing}. I still love that title, but it proved too cumbersome for conference brochures, who ~~both~~ asked me to boil it down. ^{The} ~~for the conference proceedings~~ Thus, I am on record for having delivered a speech on "Tradition

and Contiguity: A Modern Elephant Folio from Texas." While I discussed the creation of our book the main thrust of my talk had to do with our Audubon discovery, ~~and how it~~ our research to confirm its authenticity and how the painting came to our rescue. I presented a slide show to accompany the talk, and one of the slides was of ~~my own~~ ^{sixth} painted copy of Audubon's Goshawks as they could have been altered to fit the dimensions of the Bonaparte-Wilson plates without sacrificing the dynamism of ~~Audubon's~~ ^{J.D.S.'s} original work. (See illustration) My entire account had ~~the~~ some of the elements of a good detective story and you could have heard a pin drop ~~when~~ ^{as} I told it. I had come directly from Fort Worth to the Conference and had walked in ~~off~~ ^{from the} parking lot with speech ^{notes} and slides in hand without meeting many people in the audience. If I had known who was sitting out there, I would have been nervous as hell. But they loved the talk, and the question-and-answer session that followed ran over time. I also ~~had~~ brought a portfolio of the Goshawk prints we had printed a couple of years ^{before} and I gave a copy to each of ~~the~~ members of the audience, handing them out like party favors. They were a big hit. I think I have mentioned the lecture given at an earlier North American Print Conference ⁽¹⁹⁷⁸⁾ by ^{Book Review} William Reese. ~~It~~ ^{is} titled "The Bonaparte Audubons at the Anson Carter Museum and the friendships of John James Audubon and Charles Lucien Bonaparte." The talk was given ironically

Martin Reese

in Fort Worth. William Reese was only hours behind me when I made that telephone call to Philadelphia that secured the Grobbs painting. My talk then was a logical and fitting follow up to his, and just another ^{part} of those curious links and coincidences that seemed to color our discovery.

That evening everyone showed up at the Memorial Museum for a reception honoring our Bird Paintings. I was sorry that Scott had not come with Nancy and me to see the enthusiasm and good feeling the paintings created. That evening as the lights were dimmed and we filed out of the museum I truly felt that the promotional side of our project was done. We had ^{never} had ^{any} other money to advertise or promote an book out side of Texas. We still had ~~time~~ as to finish paying our debts, ^{which} ~~but that~~ would be done by the museum of Science and History's purchase of our collection and through Texas Book Sales. ~~I had done~~ Although I ^{made} ~~was to~~ ^{to} ~~make~~ an important speech about our book to a large sponsored gathering of scientific illustration in 1990, my mind had moved on to other things. ^{I believed} I had done everything in my power to publicize our book & had had it reviewed by ~~literary~~ as literature or science.

It had been reviewed by as art and literature by book critics and art critics in a host of articles in magazines and newspapers including Texas Books in Review, and Texas Librarian (the magazine of the Texas State Library and Archives).

mention
the museum had

Commissioner ^{above story} ^{an even esatogical ~~now~~ human interest story by Roger Moore} ~~As history~~ ^{As a major event in the history of} ~~important publication~~ ^{the publishing history} ~~of the book~~ ^{the book became} ~~as a cover story for the immensely respected~~ ^{Northwestern Historical Quarterly} ~~and even as science and~~ ^{anthropology in The Bulletin of the Texas Anthropological} ~~Three Museums outside of Ind. with held~~ ^{for exhibition of the paintings so that the special} ~~beauty of the original could be seen more widely.~~ ^{of the book and its unique historical association} ~~By November of 1888 I was pretty much~~ ^{out of hustle.}

The sheer size of the book, its beauty and its historical association ^{plus a great deal of hustle} had attracted their attention, but by November of 1888 I was pretty much out of hustle. Strongly, though I was often fatigued by book business, I have never gotten tired of showing the book to others or just looking at it ^{just} by myself.

In writing this account I have had to think about some people and events that I ^{probably} ~~ordinarily~~ would rather have forgotten. I am not a nostalgic person, and I don't hold grudges. I have had ^{to} research ^{many} ~~much~~ of the events I have ^{told about} ~~covered~~ here by going through years of correspondence, memor and personal notes - all kinds of bookish documents and legal papers to recover the true story as best I can. The emotional roller coaster ride of those years had many very wonderful moments that brought us in to

Contact with people who have remained good friends. We learned a great deal about the best and worst sides of human nature including our own and by the very magnitude of our enterprise we were drawn out of our predictables and comfortable ~~selves~~ selves and forced to move in a wider world. It was sometimes painful. It was sometimes quite glorious and uplifting. ~~And~~ It was always challenging. Even today I am still amazed that we were able to maintain our focus and determination through ^{that} a maze of complexities and strong personalities brought ^{will} together for the making of "Of Birds and Texas." In spite of the mistakes we made, our original plan was a very good one. And in spite of our ^{creative} conflicts, all the people who shared in the book's creation - our fellow artists, the printers and binders, the photographers and color workers, the museum and gallery people, the staff people, the bookers, accountants and packaging people ^{all of them, I know,} truly wanted the project to succeed. Time has ~~had~~ ^{his} a way of smoothing over the differences we had with some of our collaborators and allowed me to appreciate more fully their contributions. I ^{sincerely} truly thank them.

Cost
Creating "Of Birds and Texas" occupied us for almost a decade with an emotional intensity that is difficult to describe. The book cost us much more than money. We hadn't planned on the project taking so long. Had we known of the cost in time taken from the rest of our art, I am not certain whether we

would have undertaken the project - even if we had known it would succeed. Time, money, trauma all exacted their toll. But there was payback too. The book. The accomplishment itself. ^{The book} Its beauty and above all ~~that~~ ^{its} strange, serendipitous connection with our long-hood mentor John James Audubon. We would never have learned about his Grouse painting, if my brother, Pete, newly interested in bird books ^{long lost} because of our own project, had not placed our names on the mailing list of the Philadelphia Bird Shop. And we would never have had the money to purchase the Audubon if it were not for funds made available by book sales. I probably would not have recognized the particular context of the Grouse I saw in the catalogue if I had not ~~recently~~ ^{at and} researched the work and had written about Audubon's ^{Philadelphia} experience in Philadelphia in our book's introduction six months earlier.

It would have been a remarkable ^{enough} experience to discover any original Audubon work, but to have ^{chanced} come upon such a special piece - his first ^{ever} published bird painting and not only that but to ~~have it~~ ^{scientifically} published, albeit in an adulterated form, in the First Great Book of American Birds ^{printed} published in this Country - Alexander Wilson's "American Ornithology". If this were not enough, to observe as Cook Slaten ^{of} the New York Historical Society that ~~John~~ ^{did} Audubon's place ^{Best field guide} of Birds of America was a visual challenge ^{only} to the altered Wilson Plate ^{looks thus in a very different way} ^{19th Century American Bird book} ^{YUL?} ~~thus linking~~ the two greatest ~~books in the same~~ ^{ways}. And the connections go further. ~~and~~ They touched us and our book too, as you know, but painting

also belonged to Charles Bonaparte and eventually wound
up in the possession ^{of all people} of Audubon's most dedicated enemy,
George Ord. From Ord's hand it passed into obscurity
until the Philadelphia Bird Shop ~~published~~ ^{listed} it as
a possible Audubon original in their catalogue. To know
~~how angry D.A. was for~~ ^{all those years} ~~that J. J. I. presented~~ ^{was angry} about the treatment
of his Goshawk painting for ~~many years~~ and to know that
it was ^{properly} published at last in "Of Birds and Trees" ^{as}
~~he originally wanted it to be seen~~ gives us a sense
of having ^{corrected} an ancient injustice. It connects our
book in the most ^{unique} ~~convincing~~ ^{and} ~~direct~~ personal
way to the great bird artist. I don't think that there
is ⁱⁿ a book of ~~American~~ Bird that can claim ^{such a} ~~this~~
wonderful connection to Audubon, Wilson, Bonaparte,
and Ord, Waterson and others and the ^{story} ~~history~~ of American Natural
History.

What our book project gave us, it eventually took
away. ^{And} Although we no longer own that painting, we
can never be deprived of the ~~role~~ ^{that} we and our ^{Bird} book
played in bringing ^{it} ~~that work~~ ^{to} back from obscurity
and ^{publishing} ~~publishing~~ it for the first time as Audubon would it
to be seen. If we had received no other recompense
but that, it would have been payment enough. Audubon
waited nearly a hundred and sixty years for the world
to see ^{the} ~~his~~ painting ^{behind the print}. That became his first published
work. I have no idea what the world will think
of us ^{and} ~~our book~~ of Birds and Trees a hundred and
sixty years from today ^{if} it will even come. The seven
years that have passed since our ^{first} ~~book~~ was published

The book gave
the book value away

for our labors

have covered ^{our} own part like that snow outside
my open window. I have tried to find the truth ^{about} ^{our} ^{again}
not just as I remembered it but hopefully as it happened.
Some things I have chosen not to tell but others know,
perhaps old J.S.A. was right, ~~but~~ "time will uncover the
truth."

Aunt Gentling
May 25th, 1952

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