

April 22, 1893

* Insert: Audubon in Philadelphia



Every Audubon biographer would, I think, agree that the ^{Philadelphia Bird} Artists journey to that city in the Spring of 1824 ushered in a series of events that would ^{undoubtedly} prove pivotal in shaping his destiny and that of his "Birds of America."

There is no doubt in my mind that he went there to see if he could ^{attract} ~~gather~~ some kind of scientific and perhaps even financial support for his ornithological art. Philadelphia ^{at this time} was the premier ^{science} publishing center in the United States. He had to make a favorable impression here if he was going to make it in the New World. ^{And} Although he ~~made~~ ^{met} a number of ^{people}

^{who would prove to be} ~~important~~ life-long friends and supporters here ~~that~~ ~~year~~, he also experienced the kind of rejection and disappointment that would have discouraged all but the most ~~stubborn~~ ^{in his opinion} determined of men. ^{from founders of the passing tower}

He probably had heard that there was going to be published a fair volume supplement to the late Alexander Wilson's "American Ornithology." ^{That work was} ^{in 1814} ^{Completed by} Wilson's friend and biographer, the brilliant and eccentric George Ord. Ord ^{and} was ^{now} overseeing the ^{publishing} ~~printing~~ of the new supplement ^{being} ~~which~~ was sponsored and financed by the wealthy 21 year old nephew of Napoleon, Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte. Even though the principal illustration ^{sent} were being painted by Titian Peale, member of the influential Peale family of Philadelphia, J.S.A. must have thought that the young Prince - a fellow Frenchman would want to help him. He certainly could not ignore the obvious superiority of Audubon's paintings over the cramped and truly second rate efforts of Peale and even those of Wilson. If he thought so, he ^{soon to learn}

And he was forced to share credit with Allen! Angering upon Angering!

A powerful
lesson in establishment politics that was to last
him a life time. I'll not ^{tell} the whole story here,
since I deal with it in detail in my commentary to plate ~~XXXII~~
of this book. Suffice it to say that Audubon was able
to meet all the people who counted in ^{those} ~~that~~ city, held on
stirred controversy with his remarks about fellow artists,
stimulated them, ~~stirred controversy~~, discovered a strong clique
of Wilson supporters who actively tried to prevent Bonaparte from
working with him, did manage to get the prince ^{to agree} to publish
his painting of Boat-tailed Grackles before he left ~~the~~ for New York,
and for all of his efforts was forced to agree that that city of
Brotherly Love would never embrace him or his enterprises.
~~When~~ A year later ^{and back in Louisiana} he was astonished to see ^{in those Bonaparte's subsequent} that his
beautiful presentation ^{painting} ~~of the Grackles~~ had
been re-drawn ^{and redesigned} by for publication by another artist ^{Allen} working
under the direction of George Ord and his printer-partner
Alexander Lawson. ^{and presumably with the approval of Bonaparte} If he needed no other reason to think
of Europe as the best place to seek a publisher, ^{his} ~~that~~ bastardized
Grackle plate and the cold shoulder he received in Philadelphia,
provided him with one. As soon as he returned to Louisiana
he and his wife Lucy immediately began saving their money
to finance ~~the~~ trip to ~~Europe~~ Edinburgh and eventually
to London ~~and that resulted~~

→ the beginning of an eleven year odyssey
to Edinburgh and then to London and the remarkable studio
of Robert Havell Jr. and his assistants where ^{his} "Birds of America"
was ^{finally published and completed in 1837} born, a monument to American Natural History publishing
~~that simply will never be surpassed.~~