

I7 September 1986

Dear Bob,

I am enclosing the following information which should be of assistance to you. If you should contact a serious prospect, I can send even more information. Here is a letter from Carol Slatkin assistant director of the New York Historical Society authenticating the painting and commenting on its great importance among Audubon's works. Also included is a letter from the Philadelphia Print Shop where I bought the painting. Scott and I have researched most of the facts posed by the letter and have proven them to our own complete satisfaction. I am also including a Zeroxed copy of the Grackles as they appeared in the print of the Bonaparte supplement. Also here is a copy of a monograph detailing the circumstances surrounding the creation of the painting and Audubon's experiences in Philadelphia in that Spring of 1824.

I wish I had an 8" by 10" transparency of the painting, but these were never returned to me by the people who authenticated the work. Instead, I am sending you several copies of a print which we made from the original grackles. It is not as dark and rich as the original picture, but it will give your customers a good idea of what the painting looks like.

All of our research and all the facts and authentication papers point to the conclusion that this painting of Boat-tailed Grackles is Audubon's first published work, and it is the only Audubon bird painting published in Audubon's lifetime that remains in private hands. Peter Rathbone of Sotheby's, James Maroney of New York, and Mary Naub of Hirschel and Adler Gallery of New York all believe that the value of the painting lies somewhere between \$250,000 and \$350,000. The main problem is that this painting is so rare that there are no records to establish a market price, and even among Audubon's own works this little painting occupies a place of exceptional historical importance. The fact that the painting has appeared after it was considered lost or destroyed for 160 years also adds to its uniqueness. I will not sell the picture below \$250,000, and I am going to be cautious if I even get an offer in the \$300,000 range.

The Amon Carter Museum here in Fort Worth wants to have first refusal of the picture, but I have not guaranteed this. Also Kelly Anderson at Coe Kerr Gallery in New York is very interested in the painting. For the time being I do not intend to talk to any other people. At the moment our forthcoming exhibition at the Dallas Museum of Natural History and our recently completed book titled OF BIRDS AND TEXAS have me so busy that I have not had the time to seriously pursue

the sale of this picture. Though I do need the money, I have been advised not to rush things. I think that it is good advice.

If I can be of any help to you, please feel free to call me at any time. My home number is I-817 738 4427, and my office number is 817 332-7059. By the way do you have anything to tell me about my Amsterdam books. I will begin to sell them in earnest as soon as our Dallas show is complete.

Sincerely yours,

Stuart Gentling
4801 Harley Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76107