

18 February 1988

Dear _____;

We are pleased to report that twenty-seven of the forty original bird paintings by Stuart and Scott Gentling from their famous book, OF BIRDS AND TEXAS, have been pledged to the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. In spite of problems with the Texas economy following the debut of the Gentling paintings in its exhibits hall in January 1986, the Museum has had a truly gratifying public response to its efforts to acquire the entire collection.

In the last two years the Gentling book and original paintings have been shown to thousands of viewers and have attracted important state-wide and national attention. The collection has also been displayed with great public enthusiasm at the Dallas Museum of Natural History and the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, and more institutions are requesting exhibition time. Stories about the Gentling birds have appeared on National Television, in People Magazine and other important magazines and newspapers in Texas, across the United States, and even in Europe. Their book has received unanimous critical acclaim as the most important book of its kind ever published in Texas and one of the great American bird books of the Twentieth Century.

Dr. Edmund Pillsbury, Director of the Kimbell Art Museum, recently wrote that the Gentling book is "A triumph of beautiful design, fine printing and original scholarship. There was nothing in Paul Mellon's incomparable collection of 18th and 19th century illustrated books from Britain of greater appeal and sheer beauty." Noted historian A.C. Greene ^{has} called it "The most stunning and prodigious book in Texas History." Both the Pillsbury and Greene remarks have been echoed by critics, historians, artists and librarians around the country. (See the accompanying page of critical comments.)

Many museums and ^{the majority of} ~~practically every~~ major university library in Texas have acquired a copy. However, only one Texas institution will ever be able to own the entire collection of the original Gentling bird paintings, and that is the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. We are currently assisting the Museum in its acquisition program by informing the public of the continuing status of the collection and personally helping interested patrons with the donation process. The remaining paintings can be purchased for donation at the price of \$7,500 per picture. The names of donors, as well as those persons in whose memory the pictures are given, will be prominently displayed whenever the collection is exhibited.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to believe that a treasure of national importance could have been created right here in our home town of Fort Worth -- literally by two of our own neighbors. Yet, thanks to the enthusiastic response of individuals, corporations and trusts, and even the children of the north Texas Camp Fire clubs, the Museum of Science and History now owns two-thirds of the original paintings. This is gratifying proof of wide support for the museum's efforts, and ^(it just about assures) ~~it just about assures~~ that the entire collection will remain intact and in our city as a very special part of Fort Worth's own cultural heritage.

If you are interested in helping the Museum to secure the remaining thirteen paintings, or if you would like to view the collection and discuss a possible donation, please feel free to call me. I believe there is an opportunity here for a donor to become an historic part of our city's growing artistic legacy.

Sincerely yours,