

my copy

TO KENNETH T. JACKSON AND THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

To the Board of Trustees and the librarian of the New York Historical Society.

My brother Scott and I would be honored if the New York Historical Society would accept this trade edition copy of our "Of Birds and Texas". It is offered in recognition of the valuable role the Society played, not only in the creation of our original elephant folio "Of Birds and Texas" in 1986 but of this new book as well.

This new work contains an essay titled "Of Birds and Texas, Audubon and Us" which recounts the almost surrealistic story of our discovery and purchase of a long-lost Audubon original bird painting and how it saved our publishing project at the eleventh hour. That picture of a pair of boat-tailed grackles was painted for Charles Lucien Bonaparte to be included in the supplement he was sponsoring to Alexander Wilson's "American Ornithology". Audubon's painting was so maliciously handled in the printed reproduction which eventually appeared in the supplement that he decided to pursue the publication of his "Birds of America" in Europe. He remained angry about this incident until the end of his life, and the painting would not be shown to the public in its beautiful original state until it appeared in our own elephant folio.

In a very real way we corrected an ancient injustice by reproducing Audubon's grackles in our folio as he meant them to be seen. And in so doing, we gained fresh insights into his life and the grackles incident that brought us intimately closer to our childhood hero than would have been thought possible.

Our forced sale of the painting at Sotheby's in 1987 saved our project from bankruptcy and allowed the folio to be published. Audubon seemed to reach out from the grave to rescue us. And this was an added irony, since we had dedicated our book to the great "American Woodsman" from the very beginning of the project and many years before we discovered his grackle painting.

One final note: the fascinating ongoing story of Audubon's little painting of the grackles has united our "Of Birds and Texas" in a real and unique way to the two greatest 19th century publications of American birds, Audubon's "Birds of America" and Alexander Wilson's "American Ornithology". I don't know if any other contemporary bird book can make such a claim.

We are also pleased to reaffirm our friendship with the New York Historical Society in our new book and are honored to reproduce on page 215 Scott's original watercolor of the red screech owl which was painted on the Title Page of the folio given to the Society in 1986.

Sincerely yours,

Stuart Gentling

Scott Gentling