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Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Guide to the John James Audubon Collection

GEN MSS 829



by Sandra Markham

2012

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 829

CREATOR: Audubon, John James, 1785-1851

TITLE: John James Audubon collection

DATES: 1823-1898

BULK DATES: 1826-1840

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.46 linear feet (2 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection contains autograph letters, signed, written by John James Audubon to his wife Lucy Green Bakewell Audubon and colleagues, one of his engraved visiting cards, and autograph manuscript writings by Audubon and fellow naturalists Thomas McCulloch, Thomas Nuttall, and John Kirk Townsend. Prominent among the letters is one of 4,000 words from Audubon to his wife, written from Edinburgh in 1826, in which he describes exhibitions of his drawings and various social events, with a transcription of a phrenologist's reading that he had received. Also included are an 1898 letter from ornithologist Leonard C. Sanford to Sarah Manning Sage, the wife of collector Dean Sage, and a letter from John Woodhouse Audubon, son of John James Audubon, to A. J. Crossman. Prominent among the writings are 118 essays published in Audubon's *Ornithological Biography* (1831-39), describing plates included in his major work *The Birds of America* (1827-38), and an annotated pencil drawing of a petrel. Much of the material in the collection was formerly owned by William Robertson Coe.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.audj>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.audj>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon., 1952-1954; Purchased from B. Tighe on the William Robertson Coe Fund, 1954; Purchased from Wormser on the William Robertson Coe Fund, 1955.

Custodial History

A large part of the collection was given to the library by William Robertson Coe (1869-1955), who also donated his ornithological books to Yale University.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The John James Audubon Collection is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

John James Audubon Collection. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

Former call number: MS Vault Shelves Audubon

Associated Materials

Morris Tyler Family Collection of John James Audubon (GEN MSS 85)

John James Audubon (1785-1851)

American naturalist best known for his major work *The Birds of America* and *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*.

Scope and Contents

The collection contains letters written by John James Audubon to his wife and colleagues, one of his engraved visiting cards, and writings by Audubon and fellow naturalists Thomas McCulloch, Thomas Nuttall, and John Kirk Townsend. Prominent among the letters is a fair copy of two letters (4,000 words) from Audubon to his wife Lucy, written in Edinburgh in 1826, in which he describes the exhibition of his drawings and various social events in the city, with a transcription of a phrenologist's reading that he had received. Some of the letters are accompanied by typed transcriptions, and one includes an 1898 letter from ornithologist Leonard C. Sanford to the wife of collector Dean Sage. Prominent among the writings are

some of Audubon's essays published as *Ornithological Biography* (1831-1839), describing plates included in his major work *The Birds of America* (1827-1838). Also included is one letter from Audubon's son, John Woodhouse Audubon to A. J. Crossman.

Arrangement

Organized into two series: I. Correspondence, 1823-1898. II. Writings, 1826-1835.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1823-1898

0.21 linear feet (1 box)

The series contains letters from Audubon to his wife Lucy, and naturalists, printers, and business partners.

Series I is organized into two subseries: Letters from John James Audubon and Letter from John Woodhouse Audubon.

Letters from John James Audubon

b. 1, f. 1	To Lucy Audubon Also stored in: Oversize, Box 2, folder 13 Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon. Autograph manuscript copy of two letters with bound typed transcription; transcription filed in Box 1, manuscript filed in Box 2	1826 Dec 21-22
b. 1, f. 2	To Lucy Audubon Purchased from Wormser on the William Robertson Coe Fund, 1955 Autograph manuscript letter dated November 10, 1828, accompanied by engraved portrait of John James Audubon, after Chappel, 1851	1828, 1851
b. 1, f. 3	To Richard Harlan Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon., 1953 Autograph manuscript letter dated October 17 and 25, 1830, bound with typed transcription. Accompanied by an autograph manuscript letter from Harlan to John James Abert, November 25, 1837	1830, 1837
b. 1, f. 4	To Robert Havell Jr. Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon., 1954 Autograph manuscript letter	1830 Oct 10
b. 1, f. 5	To Thomas McCulloch Jr. Gift of J. W. Livermore, 1953 Autograph manuscript letter	1841 Mar 30
b. 1, f. 6	To Jean Ferdinand Rozier Purchased from B. Tighe on the William Robertson Coe Fund, 1954 Autograph manuscript letter	1823 Oct 14
b. 1, f. 7	To unidentified correspondent, regarding subscribers Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon., 1953 Autograph manuscript letter with typed transcriptions; accompanied by biographical clippings and an engraved portrait of Audubon by Cruickshank after Turner, 1835	1840 Jan 25

Letters from John James Audubon (continued)

b. 1, f. 8	Signature clipped from letter Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon., 1954 Removed from <i>Audubon and his Journals</i> , by Maria R. Audubon (1897); accompanied by autograph manuscript letter from Leonard C. Sanford to Sarah Manning Sage, September 22, 1898	1898, undated
b. 1, f. 9	Engraved visiting card for "Mr. Audubon" bearing on verso stamped wax seal with image of "Wild Turkey" plate from <i>The Birds of America</i>	undated
Letter from John Woodhouse Audubon		
b. 1, f. 10	To A. J. Crossman Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon., 1953 Autograph manuscript letter	1860 Feb 22

Series II: Writings, 1826-1835*14 Folders*

The series contains autograph manuscripts by Audubon composed for his publications relating to birds and quadrupeds. Interfiled with Audubon's own writings for his *Ornithological Biography* are several autograph manuscript entries by naturalists Thomas McCulloch (1776-1843), Thomas Nuttall (1786-1859), and John Kirk Townsend (1809-1851).

Series II is organized alphabetically.

	<p><i>Ornithological Biography</i> Stored in: Oversize, Box 2, folders 14-25 Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon., 1952</p> <p>Contains autograph manuscript descriptions of birds to accompany 118 plates contained in <i>The Birds of America</i>; the essays are arranged in order of plate number.</p>	1835, undated
b. 1, f. 11	<p>Petrel Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon.</p> <p>Graphite sketch of bird with autograph manuscript notes and description on recto and verso</p>	1826 Jun 20
b. 1, f. 12	<p><i>Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America</i> Gift of William Robertson Coe, Yale 1949 Hon., 1952</p> <p>Autograph manuscript notes for Part 10, plate 49, "Douglasses Spermophile" (Douglas's Marmot); the notes roughly correspond to volume 1, pages 373-76.</p>	undated

Oversize

b. 2, f. 13	Letter from John James Audubon to Lucy Audubon, in Series I	1826 Dec 21-22
b. 2, f. 14-18	<i>Ornithological Biography</i> Sections published in volume 3, from red-throated diver through arctic tern, with unidentified drafts	1835, undated
b. 2, f. 19-25	<i>Ornithological Biography</i> Sections published in volume 4, from American avocet through black-throated bunting, with "Observations on Our Smaller Thrushes" and unidentified drafts	1835, undated

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Birds -- North America
Natural history -- United States
Ornithologists -- United States
Ornithology -- United States
Petrels -- Pictorial works

Occupations

Ornithologists -- 19th century -- United States

Names

Abert, John James, 1788-1863
Audubon, John James, 1785-1851
Audubon, John James, 1785-1851 (Audubon's
Birds of America)
Audubon, John James, 1785-1851
(Ornithological biography)
Audubon, John Woodhouse, 1812-1862
Audubon, Lucy Green Bakewell, 1788-1874
Coe, William Robertson, 1869-1955 --
Ownership
Harlan, Richard, 1796-1843
Havell, Robert, 1793-1878
McCulloch, Thomas, 1776-1843
Nuttall, Thomas, 1786-1859
Rozier, Jean Ferdinand, 1777-1864
Sage, Sarah Manning, 1841-1915
Sanford, L. C. (Leonard Cutler), 1868-1950
Townsend, John Kirk, 1809-1851