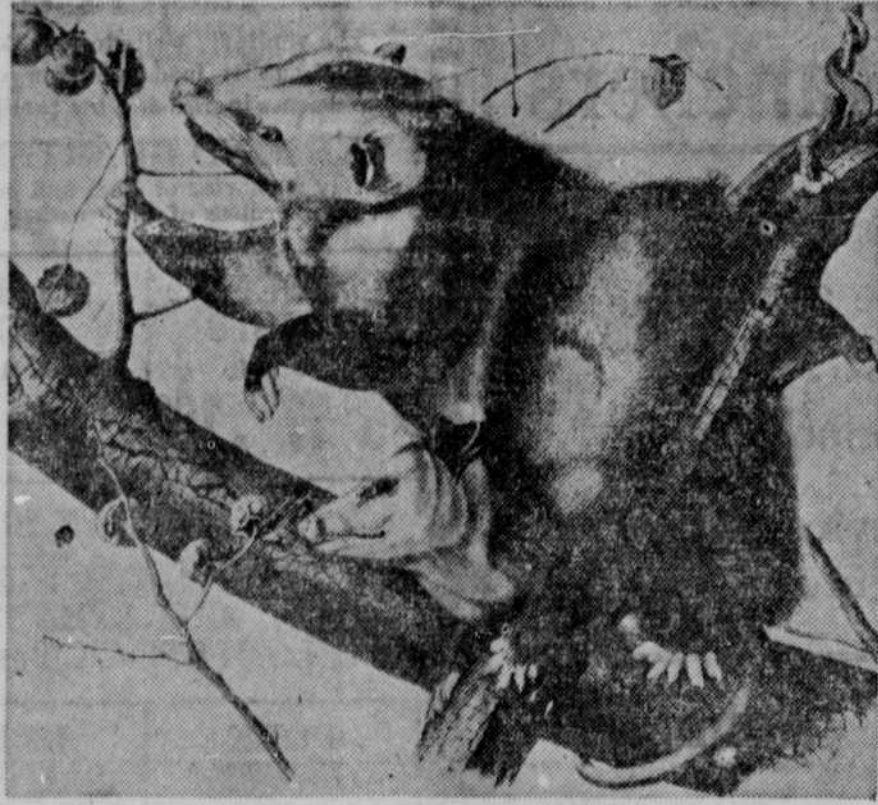


John James Audubon, Painter of Birds, Now Revealed as an Important Writer Who Was 'Witness to Our Heroic Age'

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

TO MOST Americans the name "Audubon" is synonymous with just one word—"birds." Three species bear his name, as does the society which is dedicated to the study, protection and preservation of those feathered denizens of America which were his life-long passion. We remember him also as the author-artist of a set of books which a fellow-scientist once called "the most magnificent monument that art has yet raised to ornithology." Yet there is another—and possibly a better—reason why John James Audubon should be remembered gratefully by his fellow-Americans.



THE VIRGINIAN OPOSSUM.

That is because he was "a witness to our heroic age" and, as an appreciative and understanding witness, he was one of its best interpreters. Such is the theme of a new book, whose publication by the Houghton Mifflin company of Boston, was a major event of the 1940 publishing season. The book is "Audubon's America—The Narratives and Experiences of John James Audubon," illustrated with nearly a score of facsimiles of his prints and paintings in full color.

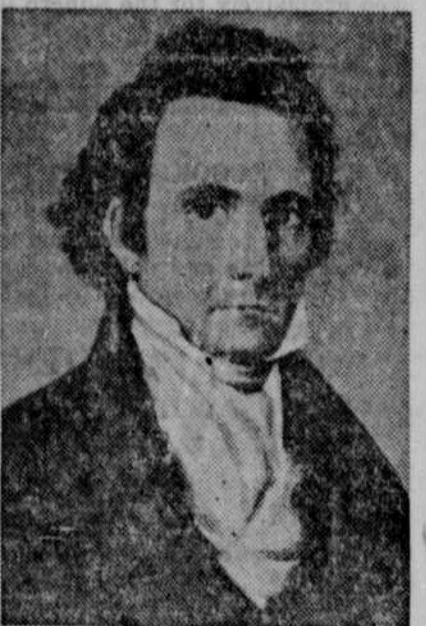
But more important than this inclusion of authentic reproductions of Audubon's paintings in a popular-priced book is the fact that his "narratives and experiences" in it are edited by Donald Culross Peattie. And Mr. Peattie, naturalist and author of such books as "Singing in the Wilderness" and "A Prairie Grove," is probably the one man in America today who is most competent to act as an appreciative and understanding interpreter of John James Audubon, a witness to and an interpreter of our heroic age.

Some of the most charming prose that Mr. Peattie has ever written is included in "What Audubon Knew," which serves as an introduction to the book. It says in part:

"The source of history is the narratives of those who lived it. . . . Now of all those who ever lived here, traveled and greatly adventured, none could bear more fascinating testimony than John James Audubon. He had the advantage of being a foreigner. . . . So that he took nothing for granted, and in the perspective of a more mature culture, all things American struck him as fresh. He had the further advantage that he was a genius, and a genius of art at that, so that to observe, to depict what he saw, was habitual and instinctive. . . . But Audubon had, too, a genius for the art of living. He lived with zest for the adventure and with personal ardors. He

It is at this point in his essay that Mr. Peattie points out how Audubon's fame as an ornithologist, the renown which has made his name synonymous with the word "birds," has obscured his value to his fellow-Americans as "a witness of our heroic age." Moreover, his art as a painter has overshadowed his ability as a writer. For a professional writer he was, a man who wrote to sell and who did sell.

"I am not saying that he knew how to write history like the learned Parkman, or style like



JOHN JAMES AUDUBON
A self-portrait in oils, made at Beech Woods, Feliciana parish, La., in 1822 at the age of 37.

the choice Thoreau, or that he thought as an equal with Emerson," observes Mr. Peattie. "I am asserting only that while Cooper went to England while he wrote 'The Prairie' (an unreadable dull book, to my ears), Audubon was on the prairies. That where Emerson knew his Carlyle, Audubon knew his Mississippi squatters, that while Thoreau was

libraries and are therefore known to only a few scholars and specialists in American history.

For these reasons Americans generally know little about Audubon, the writer, even though they may be familiar enough with Audubon, the artist, and what they do know about him as a chronicler of the period in which he lived is when he is quoted "in evidence for the unbelievable numbers of the passenger pigeons, or the destruction of the buffalo, or on some other point in natural history."

Therefore the great value of this book is that it "makes up in some measure for neglect of Audubon's precious testimony." For, as Mr. Peattie says, "as editor, I have preferred to bring him forward less as the naturalist than as one who knew river captains and roustabouts, pioneers and men of letters, Indians and scientists. This without, of course, slighting his natural history writings but reducing them to some reasonable proportion to the whole. That whole is the America of his day, America as he, and perhaps only he, knew it—Audubon's America."

How richly that promise is fulfilled is shown by a reading of the chapters which follow the introductory "What Audubon Knew," and Mr. Peattie's evaluation of "Audubon as a Witness." The titles of those chapters are indicative of the diversity of Audubon's experience, the catholicity of his interests and the scope of his "traveling around North America"—"Kentucky Days and Nights," "Hunters' Tales," "Pioneer Types," "Deep South," "Four Proud Fowl," "Down East for Birds and Subscribers" and "Out West With Buffalo and Indians."

To those who think of Audubon only in terms of birds, the amount of his writing about animals will be revealing. After completing his monumental work, "The Birds of America," he began work on "The Quadrupeds of America" and "into the new project the old master entered with all the zest, so he wrote his young friend Spencer Baird, that he had once felt for birds." So it is appropriate that this new book reproduces almost as many pictures of animals (seven in all) as it does pictures of birds (eight).

Not the least interesting feature of the book is a "Biographical Note" (a long "note" albeit, since it covers 22 pages!) which tells in interesting fashion the story of his life from the date of his birth, April 26, 1785, at the port of Les Cayes or Aux Cayes on the south coast of the republic of Haiti until his death in New York city on January 27, 1851.

This biographical sketch discusses the much-disputed story of his paternity and cites the fact that available documents prove conclusively that he was the natural son of Lieut. Jean Audubon of the French navy and a Creole woman of good birth, whose family name was either Rabin or Fougere. Says Mr. Peattie: "This should set at rest the preposterous claim that has recently (and only recently) been set up for him, that he was none other than the lost Dauphin, Louis XVII, majesty disguised as a wandering artist! This legend would be too far-fetched for notice if it were not, unfortunately, the one story about Audubon that sticks in many minds. Two women biographers of Audubon have recently taken it quite seriously, and thousands of words have been written in debate on this point. They can all be cut short by laying down a fact denied by nobody. The unfortunate little Bourbon prince had a deformed ear, while Audubon's ears were both quite normal. Who will seriously argue the point beyond this?"



THE SNOWY HERON, OR WHITE EGRET.

savored everything, even the unsavory. He saw almost everything, from 1803 to 1849, from Florida to Labrador, from New York city to Fort Union on the borders of Montana. He lived among Pennsylvania Quakers, in Kentucky among pioneers from Virginia, in New Orleans among Indians. He explored Maine and South Carolina, Texas and Florida.

Wide Variety of Experience.
"In the nearly 50 active American years of Audubon's life, what other individual had such a variety of experience? No one, certainly, was at once so sensitive and so lusty. No one with his pen and his brush. . . ."



HOMESICKNESS, perhaps, had brought him back. Old Peter Johansen buttoned his threadbare overcoat, blew warm breath on his rough hands and jumped to the ground. There was no railroad detective to grab him for riding that freight train, because this was the day before Christmas. All but the homeless, like himself, seemed busy preparing for the Day of Days.

Forty years, Peter reflected, since he last set foot in Clark City. It had been a year after the big earthquake; a year after all hell broke loose, killing his parents and sister as they sat at dinner in the little house on Vine street.

Peter remembered: How he had come home late that evening; how the earth began quivering like a beast possessed; how he had



Peter stood alone for a long time watching the star appear.

searched like a madman through the ruins of that shock-wracked, fire-swept bungalow. Then, as Clark City began rebuilding, he had drifted off in a daze to roam up and down the earth—a ne'er-do-well, a hobnob. But always he remembered Linda, dear little sister Linda. In 40 years her memory always came back stronger than ever on Christmas Eve, for it was then that they used to climb Lookout Hill hand-in-hand at dusk, watching the evening star rise in the heavens.

That, perhaps, was why he was back this Christmas Eve. "Almost dusk now," he reflected, trudging along Clark City's busy thoroughfare. Christmas crowds jostled him, for he was a hapless wanderer with no place to go.

No place to go? Not Peter! Soon he found his way to the old residential district where Lookout Hill rose like a sentinel. "The same old hill," he told himself. "Little Linda! If you were only here now to see your big brother! No—thank God you're not here, for your big brother is ashamed of himself!"

At the crest Peter stood alone for a long time, watching the star appear as it had since that first night over Bethlehem. He didn't notice the old lady until she spoke.

"Beautiful, that star, isn't it?" Peter fumbled with his greasy-stained cap.

"Yes'm, it is. Especially from Lookout Hill."

"Many years ago," she continued, almost in a trance, "my little brother and I used to watch that star rise in the heavens each Christmas Eve, until—" (she wiped a tear away)—"we were separated somehow during the big earthquake. He was killed, they found out later."

"Each Christmas Eve ever since I've come back here, just to remember him. I hope he's happy up there in Heaven."

Peter was staring at her, fairly ready to shriek, for it was Linda! No doubt about it, now!

He recognized the tilt of her nose, unchanged by the years; the familiar ring of a voice that somehow had failed to grow old. But he held himself back, for Peter was ashamed of himself.

She didn't notice him shuffle off after awhile, for Linda was still watching the star.

In the freight yards he found an empty boxcar and bedded down under some straw in a corner. After a while he felt the car move, and somehow he was glad.

"Yes, it was Linda," he sobbed to himself, "but I just couldn't tell her. Thank God she's alive and happy. And Thank God she remembers me on Christmas eve as I was, not as I am."

After awhile he fell asleep.

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Cakes Printed in Germany
A famous Christmas cake in Germany is Aachen Printen, from which the English word "print" is derived. In the days before book-printing the idea of imprint belonged to the baking business to express the making of patterns in cakes. Many of these cakes have figures representing the old gods Wotan and Thor.

Santa May Not Smoke Cigars
Santa Claus, perhaps, doesn't smoke—or he would be better informed on the quality of cigars.

Elegance of Fabric, Fine Furs Achieve New Style Distinction

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



UNDOUBTEDLY the most outstanding characteristic of smartest winter fashions is the elegance and superiority of the materials employed in their making. Women of discriminating taste find their fondest hopes realized in the high distinction imparted to costumes by choice fabrics styled with classic simplicity. Add fur opulence and you have sounded the keynote to which the better part of the present style program tunes into uncertain terms.

Especially in the matter of woolen weaves have all previous records been exceeded with versatile textures, gorgeous colorings and fascinating novelty. Never before in the annals of textile history has there been such a superb showing in fabric output. The existing vogue for three-piece costume suits, and the style prestige accorded the new soft-styled dressmaker coats have intensified spontaneous enthusiasm and interest in handsome sterling quality woolens.

Above in the illustration is presented a stunning coat with the dressmaker look. Softly styled as a dress is this new type now coming into prominence. The patrician model here shown has a nice sort of formality partly because of its softly sculptured lines and partly because of the fine 100 per cent wool Forstman fabric, called "velperla," of which it is made. The color "graingold" is also news. It gives one the feeling of autumn tinted birch leaves. Golden hued woolens and coppery tones and tints are being played up in all their glory, especially with the very smart spotted furs and with beaver trims. You will love the texture and "feel" of the material that fashions this coat. It is not only all wool with velvety fine finish, but it is crush resistant.

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Trotter Derby



Here is an instance where the camera catches Dame Fashion in the very act of having appropriated for her very own the time-honored Derby hat pictured in the family album worn by revered ancestors in the early sixties or thereabouts. At any rate the "trotter derby" is smart this season, especially if you feminize it with a bewitching veil, face its wee brim with flattering blue velvet and wee bows of velvet ribbon in cunning pose at the back.

Masculine Influence

The masculine influence in women's fashion reflects in the new derby hats feminized with prettily frivolous veils, and flannel long-sleeved shirts that are topped with jackets cut and tailored in man fashion. Long wool knit socks and striped ties are campus favorites.

Hat, Gloves Add Color to Costume

When you buy a new hat, buy a new pair of smart leather gloves to match. That's fashion's favorite idea for putting color spice into this year's costumes and American leather glove makers are playing right into fashion's hands with an array of colors such as you've never before seen.

There are two smart ways of matching gloves and hats . . . either match the gloves to the hat itself or to the trimming. Matching the trimming is a good idea if the hat is black with a contrasting feather, facing, ribbon or veil on it.

Or, better still, when you get a hat with contrasting trim, choose two pairs of gloves—one to match the hat and one to match the trim. Then when one pair of gloves is being washed (and most American-made gloves can be washed) you have another harmonious pair to wear.

This hat and glove combination is an unbeatable idea for making one costume look like more, particularly if the main costume is black, dark brown, gray or beige . . . all of which can use hats and gloves in several different colors.

Frog Fastenings

The fact that frog fastenings are again in use comes as good news. Not only are "frogs" made of braided "a la militaire," but the newest note is to form them of cordings of the same cloth as the dress or coat. They serve in a utilitarian way admirably, and designers are developing the theme from the decorative point of view.

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