



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

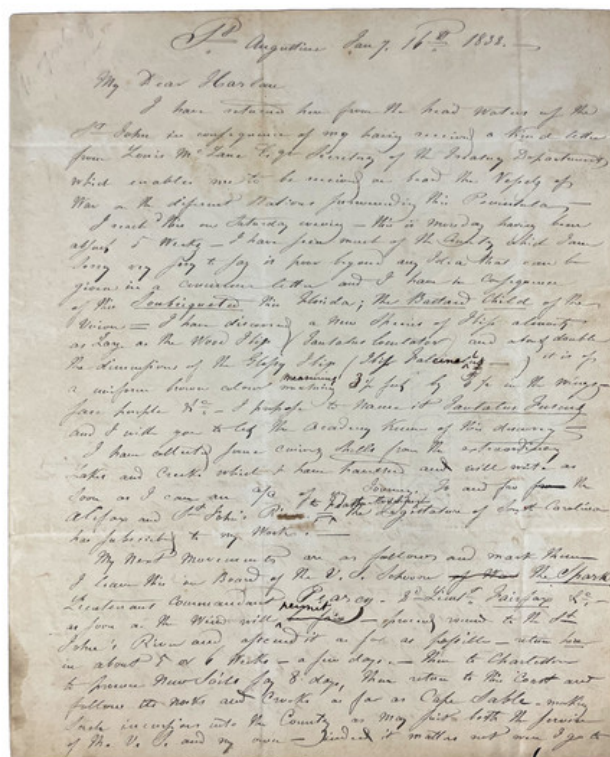
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(Audubon in Florida) Autograph letter signed "J. J. Audubon" to naturalist Richard Harlan, discussing Audubon's publication of "The Birds of America"

Stock#: 98786
Map Maker: Audubon
Date: 1832 (January 16-18)
Place: St. Augustine, Florida
Color: Pen & Ink
Condition: VG
Size: 7.75 x 9.5 inches
Price: \$ 28,000.00



Description:

"I have in consequence of this Soubriqueted this Florida; The Bastard Child of the Union"

An absolutely fantastic, content-rich letter, dated January 16th and 18th, 1832, from the renowned American naturalist and painter John James Audubon to his colleague and fellow naturalist, Dr. Richard Harlan. Audubon writes from St. Augustine, Florida, detailing his explorations and scientific discoveries in the region.

Audubon begins by mentioning his return from the St. John's River area, facilitated by a letter from Louis McLane of the Treasury Department. This letter allowed him access to U.S. naval vessels, aiding his research in the Florida peninsula. He describes the Florida landscape as disappointingly poor and barren, dubbing it "The Bastard Child of the Union."

In his naturalist pursuits, Audubon reports the discovery of a new species of ibis, which he proposes to



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name *Tantalus Fuscus*. Strangely, it seems that this name might have already been proposed for an ibis in 1766. He has also collected various shells and plants, including three species of heaths and a *Kalmia*, along with observing unique parasitic plants. He plans to forward these specimens to Harlan. Audubon notes that if Constantine Samuel Rafinesque-Schmaltz had been present he would have discovered many more new species.

Audubon outlines his upcoming itinerary, which involves traveling on the U.S. Schooner *The Spark*, exploring various rivers and coasts down to Cape Sable, and gathering more specimens. He expresses his immersion in nature, spending days in water and nights on land, and notes the active wildlife, including alligators and eagles.

Audubon laments the lack of governmental support for his work, particularly the delay on his publications, and proposes lobbying Congress for subscriptions to his *Birds of America*. ("perhaps such an act might be passed at the time when we are richer (being out of Debt, I may say) than any Nation on Earth except the Chinese.") Audubon expresses pride in his country, citing recent governmental support for science but also recalling past disappointments, such as Alexander Wilson's lack of acknowledgment from Thomas Jefferson and the hostility he faced in Philadelphia in 1824.

The letter closes with personal updates, including the lack of correspondence from Harlan, and mentions his next address in Charleston, South Carolina, under the care of Reverend John Bachman. He also refers to reading a review of his work and mentions his extensive correspondence obligations.

Audubon mentions: St. John's River; Cape Sable; Alifax (Halifax?); Spring Garden Plantation, Volusia County; Louis McLane; Alexander Wilson; Thomas Jefferson; John Bachman; George William Featherstonhaugh; Constantine Samuel Rafinesque-Schmaltz; Richard Harlan; U.S. Schooner *The Spark*; Commandant Piercy; ibis; alligators; warblers; bald eagles; etc.

A presentation copy to Audubon of Harlan's *Fauna Americana* (1825), sold at the Reese Sale in 2022.

Provenance

Charles Hamilton Galleries, Inc. Sale 87, May 8, 1975, \$1,300 ("A remarkable Audubon letter!");
Christie's New York, November 11, 1998, lot 126, \$5,720;
Christie's New York, July 20, 2023, lot 1119, \$16,510

Transcription



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St. Augustine Jan'y 16th 1832

My Dear Harlan

I have returned hear [sic] from the head waters of the St. John in consequence of my having received a kind letter from Louis Mc Lane Esqr Secretary of the Treasury Department which enables me to be received on board the Vessels of War on the different Stations forwarding this Peninsula --

I reach'd this on Saturday evening -- this is Monday having been absent 5 weeks -- I have seen much of the Country which I am sorry very sorry to say is poor beyond any idea that can be given in a common[?] letter and I have in consequence of this Soubriqueted this Florida; The Bastard Child of the Union -- I have discovered a new species of Ibiss about as large as the Wood Ibiss (Tantalus loculator) and about double the dimensions of the Glossy Ibiss (Ibiss Falcinellus -) it is of a uniform brown colour measuring 3 1/2 feet by 1 1/2 in the wings -- face purple &c. I propose to name it Tantalus Fuscus and I wish you to let the Academy know of this discovery.

I have collected some curious Shells from the extraordinary Lakes and Creeks which I have traversed and will write as soon as I can an a/c[ccount] of my Journey to and fro ~~from~~ the Alifax and St. Jon River to [George William] Featherstonhaugh. == The legislature of South Carolina subscribed to my Work.

My next movements are as follows and mark them I leave this on Board of the U.S. Schooner ~~of war~~ The Spark Lieutenant Commandant Percy [i.e., Piercy], 2d. Lieutt. Fairfax &c. as soon as the Wind will permit _ proceed round to the St John's River and ascend it as far as possible _ return here in about 5 or 6 Weeks _ a few days. _ Then to Charleston to procure New Sails Say 8 days, Then return to This Coast and follow the nooks and Crooks as far as Cape Sable _ making Such incursions into the Country as may suit both the Service of the U.S. and my own _ Indeed it matters not were [sic?] I go to provided I find birds, Plants, Shells, Fishes or Quadrupeods _

I have discovered 3 diferent [sic] species of Heaths one bears Yellow blossoms the 2 others red and purple. _ a beautiful Kalmia (I think) and some extraordinary Parasite Plants resembling the Pine Apple Plant growing on the Eastern Side of Cypress Trees from 6[?] to 40 feet above the Water _ I have specimens of all those in abundance which I will forward to you when I reach Charleston. _ Was Rafinesque here God Knows how many ^ more New species he would discover. ==

I have nearly become an Amphibious being spending the greater Portion of my days in the Water and my Nights on the Land which by the way is not quite in accordance with nature's



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arrangement. ==

The Alligators were full of Life when I was at Spring Garden. _ White headed Eagles are fishing. the smaller birds that reside here Copulating, and strange to say the Warblers that Migrate, moving eastwards every warm day and returning every cold ones _ This is a curious observation that leads me very far on certain principles of Nature of which I must speak to you abnout when we meet._

I am just now pressed for time and will leave this returning to it after the Mail has come in which I hope will bring me a long letter from you. _

I am again at Leizure [sic]._ and I rejoin you my excellent friend with more pleasure believe ^me than that with which I retraced my steps from the Barren Land of the Interior Country_

I have seen nothing yet of an act passed by Congress to [save?] the Duty on my Publications_ I hope my Friends at Washington are not too mcuh engaged at other things to make them forget poor Audubon._ I have been thinking that if a proposal was made to the house of representatives which might (if passed then) be suported [sic] by the Senate, by a powerful friend of Science for the purpose of Subscribing for 50 Copies of the Brides of America that perhaps such an act might be passed at the time when we are richer (being out of Debt, I may say) than any Nation on Earth except the Chinese. what do you think of such a plan and how could it be brought to bear on the hearts of the Backwoodsmen or on the Arts of the Metropolitans?_

I am prouder of our Country than ever_ The reason is simple but patent._ The heads of Departments have lately imported Germs on the improvement of Science in our Dear Union which I think will grow with as much Vigour and Strength as any of the Wild Plants of our richest Swamps._ No pleasure was more Keenly felt by me than that of receiving the letters of which I have spoken from Louis McLane of the Treasury Dept._ it goes Saying that "And the Department feeling diposed" "to lend to the cause of Science every aid which may not" " be incompatible with a Just regard to the Public Service;" "I have to request ~~you~~ will receive Mr. Audubon and" his party with their effects on board the Cutter under your Command at any part where they may present themselves and where you may happen to be; _ and after that you will convey them to Such other points within your Cruizing limits where the Duties appertain to the Revenue ~~Cutter~~ Service may lead you and where they may wish to go._ [??] [??]"

I think that we are positively improving and that very [??] I have the advancement of my Country so much as has that [??] now and then wish I could hire the Muses and Minerva for a while for the purpose of performing in our land what they have so effectively accomplished in others _ [??] In



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poor Wilson Since Say 20 years ago. _ how disapointed he must have felt when after writing to Jefferson he received not even an Answer And how disapointed Poor Audubon was when he presented ^himself at Phila[delphia] was hooted[?] at so lately as 1824 =

Now no one of any merit may can pass unkown and unsuported, and I think I am rising from my own ashes through the Kind Interest my Country is now taking in the advacnement of Science. _ I really feel proud of her my Dear Harlan with a Cause! _ Now Should I live long enough to deserve her aplause I shall die happy_ I must again for a while bid you adieu_

The mail has arrived but not a word from you _ one Letter from J.A. Abert [John James Abert?] and one from my Brother in Law N. Berthoud.== Address now and until further notice to the care of the Reverend John Bachman Charleston S.Ca. who will Know all our movements and will be able to forward accordingly. _ Kind remembrances to F. and others_ Your Friend

J.J. Audubon

18th Jany. The Wind is still contrary but there is some appearance of its blowing from the South Tomorrow if so we shall put to sea for the St. John's and I will be heartily glad of it for I am fairly sick of 3 days inactivity. == I have read F.'s review of my Birds and Biography this morning _ I will write to him next opportunity _ I would have done this time but my European Correspodance has prevented me because I must divide my time amongst all my good friends _ given him my best wishes and now once more adieu_

Detailed Condition:

1832. Bi-folded folio. 4 pp (9 1/2 x 7 3/4 inches). Integral address panel with St. Augustine postal stamp. Some faint staining and browning, small area of marginal loss where wax seal affixed.