John James Audubon's
Residency in Henderson County, KY

By Jerry Long
c.2025


John James Audubon (1785-1851)

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Henderson County, KY 1810 Federal Census, p.345:

John Audubon	1 male 0-10	1 female 16-26
	2 males 16-26	
	1 male 26-45	

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Henderson County, KY Tax Lists:

1808 – no Audubon listed
1809 – no Audubon listed
1810 – no Audubon listed
1811 – no Audubon listed
1812 – no Audubon listed
1813 – Audubon & Bakewell
1814 – no Audubon listed
1815 – John J. Audubon, 6 total blacks, total value $3,495
1816 – Audubon & Bakewell, town lot & saw mill, total value $21,220
John Audubon, 3 total blacks, total value $6,675

1817 – John J. Audubon, 2 total blacks, 6 town lots & steam mill, total value $27,095
1818 – no Audubon listed
1819 – no Audubon listed
1820 – no Audubon listed

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Lexington Reporter, Lexington, KY, Wednesday, 21 April 1819, p.3:

VALUABLE PROPERTY.

The subscriber intending to go to Europe, is disposed to sell his undivided half of the Henderson Steam Mill, the other half of which is owned by James Berthoud & Son, of Shippingport, Kentucky – The Mill is situated of the bank of the Ohio river, in the town of Hendersonville, Ky. has two pair of French Burrs and one pair of Laurel Hill stones, and runs two Saws, has been in operation for two years, the engine is on the condensing principle, and with the improvements that are now making to it will be one of the best in the Union; a wharf of one hundred and twenty feet in length has just been completed, which adds much to the convenience and solidity of the mill. Those who may be disposed to purchase are requested to examine the property, the local advantages of which (its situation be.ng in a very flourishing rich country and commanding an uninterrupted navigation for its produce at all seasons of the year) are evident to all.

ALSO,

Several Lots are offered for sale, situated in the very best part of the town.

Those disposed to obtain more particular information on this subject, will please apply to the subscriber on the premises, or to Mr. James Berthoud & Son, at Shippingport, Ky.

JOHN J. AUDUBON.
Henderson, Ky. April 1.

'The Frankfort Argus; Lexington Reporter; Pittsburgh Gazette: New York Evening Post, will insert the above advertisement until the 15th of May, and forward their accounts to this [Courier] office, Louisville.

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History of Kentucky, Vol. II, Lewis Collins & Richard H. Collins (Covington, KY: Collins & Co., 1874) p.336:

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON, the most distinguished ornithologist of America, was born in Louisiana, May 4, 1780, died in New York city, Jan. 27, 1851—aged near 71. If it be true that poets are born, it is true of Audubon that he was born a lover of birds, and from a child seemed determined to make their study his life-work. He was sent to France to learn drawing and painting, and in the studio of the celebrated David neglected the higher departments of art, that he might more surely succeed in painting birds. In 1797, he settled in Pennsylvania, and in 1807, in a small canoe went down the Ohio river to Henderson, Ky., and made his home there for some years. lii 1810, the great Scotch ornithologist, Wilson, joined him, and with will and enthusiasm they ranged the forests together, from Kentucky to Florida. In 1824 he went to New York and Philadelphia, and in 1826, to England, to arrange the publication of the results of his labor. Of 170 subscribers at $1,000 each ($170,000) to his splendid volume, the "Birds of America," nearly one-half came

from England and France. He returned to the United States in 1829, but made two other trips to Europe, and published additional volumes, a portion called "Ornithological Biographies "—in all 4 vols. of engravings and 5 of letter press illustrations. In 1844, in New York, he published a new edition of "Birds of America" in 7 volumes, imperial 8vo., and exhibited to the public his extraordinary collection of original drawings. He projected a similar work on the "Quadrupeds of America," aided by hi sons and another, but did not live to complete it.

History of Henderson County, Kentucky,
Edmund L. Starling (Henderson, KY, 1887):

Pages 123-124: AUDUBON.

Mr. Collins, in a short biographical sketch of the life of the renowned ornithologist, John J. Audubon, places his arrival in Henderson during 1807, but Mrs. Audubon, in her book of his life, places it during the year 1812. From the most reliable testimony attainable, it is most probable that his arrival dates from 1810 or 1812. On December 22, 1813, he purchased from General Samuel Hopkins, agent of Richard Henderson & Co., lots Nos. 95 and 96, half of the square lying on the west side of Third Street, between Green and Elm. O the third of September, 1814, he purchased lots Nos. 91 and 92, half of the square lying on the west side of Second Street, between Green and Elm.

Page 148: AUDUBON'S MILL.

On the sixteenth day of March John J. Audubon, who had been a resident of Henderson since 1812, and Thomas W. Bakewell, under the firm name of Audubon & Bakewell, made application to Daniel Comfort, William P. Bowen, Wyatt H. Ingram, Fayette Posey and Benne Marshall, trustees of the Town of Henderson, to lease for the term of ninety-fire years, a portion of the river front, for the purpose of locating and erecting a steam sawmill. The Trustees, after mature deliberation, and fully considering the premises, granted to the petitioners the margin of Water Street, beginning at a post two hundred feet from the upper corner of lot No. 4 on the cross street, (Second Street), thence down Water Street two hundred and twenty feet to a post, thence at right angles from each of said posts to the Ohio River, reserving the free and uninterrupted use of the front for navigation and landing of boats, etc., for, and in consideration of the sum of twenty dollars to be paid annually. During the year the mill was built, and is yet standing to-day, perhaps the strongest frame in the city. It is the second or far section of the David Clark factory, now standing on the corner of Water and Second cross streets, and is the oldest building now standing in Henderson.

Audubon's Mill (from Introduction)

Page 159:

In the latter part of this year [1821] or the early part of 1822, John J. Audubon removed from Henderson.

Page 261: OLD BUILDINGS.

In 1814 William and Samuel Bowen erected a large frame one-story tobacco inspection warehouse on lot No. 4, corner Second and Water Streets During this year the following houses, yet standing, were built : The old Posey two-story brick, standing midway of the square, between Main and Water on Second Street, built by N. F. Ruggles, and occupied as a residence and storehouse. The old one-story frame on the corner of Fourth and Main, built by Rev. Daniel Comfort, and afterwards occupied in succession by William and Samuel Bowen, Nicholas Horsely and JOHN J. AUDUBON, as a residence and storehouse, and then by A. B. Barrett, William S. Holloway and others as a residence.

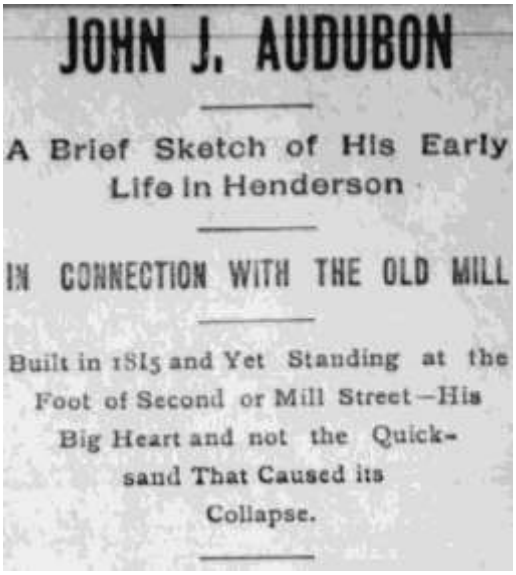
Pages 793-796: JOHN JAMES AUDUBON.

—The renowned man of whom this sketch treats, was born in the State of Louisiana, on the fourth day of May, 1780, and was of French parentage. He early exhibited natural tastes for art pursuits, and was from earliest childhood devoted to the feathered race. In 1797, after an extended visit to Europe, he returned to America and settled in Pennsylvania. About 1807, he floated in a canoe down the Ohio to Louisville. where he remained for some time, and where he was married to Miss Louisa Bakewell. During the year 1810, he removed to Henderson and commenced merchandising, his store house being a small log one story affair, that stood on the southeast corner of Main and First Streets. His residence was equally as insignificant, and was situated on the same square and in the rear of the present Odd Fellows building. Immediately opposite his house, on the west side of Second Street, was his pond, where he raised turtles for family use, being passionately fond of turtle soup. Mr. Audubon was a warm hearted, liberal man, and for this reason, if for none other, was greatly esteemed. He was rather reserved, yet devotedly attached to his friends, and his unsuccessful life in Henderson, is attributable to his over-confidence and big heartedness. He was by no means a close or exacting business man, but, on the contrary, let his business take care of itself, while he indulged his controlling passion for bird hunting. Men took advantage of him, and from this, he was continually pressed for means and met with frequent reverses. On the sixteenth day of March, 1816, he and Thomas W. Bakewell, under the firm name of Audubon & Bakewell, made application to the Town Trustees for a ninety-five year lease upon a portion of the river front, between First and Second Streets, for the purpose of erecting a grist and saw mill. Prior to this time, December 22d, 1813, he purchased of General Samuel Hopkins, lots Nos. 95 and 96, on Third Street, between Green and Elm, and on the third day of September, 1814, lots Nos. 91 and 92, on Second Street, between Green and Elm. The Town Trustees granted the petition of Audubon & Bakewell, and soon thereafter they commenced the building of a mill suitable for the times. The mill was completed during the year 1817, and is yet standing, being the far end section of Clark's factory. It is a curiosity for these times, and the weather boarding, whip-sawed, out of yellow poplar is still intact on three sides. The joists are of un-hewn logs, many of them considerably over a foot in diameter, and raggedly rough. The foundation walls are built of pieces of flat and broken rock and are four and a half feet thick. Mr. Audubon operated his mill on a large scale for those early times. His grist mill was a great convenience, and furnished a ready market for all of the over-plus of wheat raised in the surrounding country. His saw mill also was a wonderful

convenience, doing the sawing for the entire country. The timber and lumber used in building the old Kerr, Clark & Co. building, on Main Street, was sawed by his mill,

During all of this time Mr. Audubon continued his study of birds, :and, it is said, that the walls of his mill presented the appearance of a picture gallery, every smooth space presenting to the view the painting of some one or more birds. In 1817 Mr. Audubon built at Henderson, a small steamboat, for what purpose it is not known—more, perhaps, to gratify his erratic inclination than for any other reason. The Captain of the vessel ran her out of the Ohio into the Mississippi River, and was followed by her owner in a rowboat to New Orleans, where the little craft was recaptured and sold. In 1818 Constantine S. Rafinisque, a native of Galato, near Constantinople, Turkey, and a naturalist of great reputation, descended the Ohio in an ark, as it was called, and remained with Mr. Audubon for a number of weeks. The two—to use an ordinary expression—had a picnic bird hunting. Birds were far more plentiful and of a greater variety in those days than they have ever been since the woodsman commenced clearing the country. During Mr. Audubon's entire life in Henderson, he was an untiring student of ornithology, frequently going into the woods and remaining for two months. Upon one occasion he was known to follow a hawk, peculiar to this country for three days, in fact, until he succeeded in killing it. He was never known to change his course on account of creeks or water courses—those he would swim if necessary to keep up a trail. At one time he had watched a "flicker" or "yellow hammer," and finally saw it go into a hole in a dead tree. So anxious was he to catch the bird, he immediately commenced to climb, and in a short time found himself opposite the hole. No sooner said than done, he ran his hand in, and, to his horror, pulled out a snake, seeing which, he let go and fell with the snake to the ground, fortunately, without injury to himself. Mr. Audubon used to tell this story with a good deal of humor to his friends, who wondered at the risks he would take in pursuit of his favorite study. Mr. Audubon was a great, swimmer, and was very fond of the sport. Upon the landing of the first steamboat at Henderson, a great crowd congregated at the bank to take a look at the wonderful thing. It was a sort of holiday, and one of the amusements indulged in by many men, was that of diving from the sides of the boat into the river. Mr. Audubon put in an appearance and paralyzed the audience by diving from the bow end of the boat and coming up at the stern end after having passed entirely under the bottom. It has been told by those who knew Mr. Audubon well, that his wife was also an expert swimmer, that she used a swimming suit, and frequently swam the river for amusement. This story, however, has been contradicted by a granddaughter of Mrs. Audubon; nevertheless, old time residents, now dead, have declared to having seen her swim the river time and again. Mr. Audubon continued to reside in Henderson, happily, as all supposed, until the year 1823, when it was discovered that the green eyed monster had domiciled itself within his home. He became jealous of his wife, a beautifii1 woman, and from that time life was a burden to him. The two got along badly, and finally Mrs. Audubon determined to return to. her home in Louisville. Mr. Ben. Talbott, father of the late Ben Talbott,. deceased, tendered her the use of his carriage and driver, which she accepted, and thus she was driven overland to her father's home. There were born unto Mr. and Mrs. Audubon two children, both boys. Subsequent to his wife's departure, Mr. Audubon became embarassed and determined to dispose of his effects and remove from the wilds of Henderson. In 1824 he went to Philadelphia, and from thence to Europe, where he succeeded in having "Ornithological Biographies," and "Birds of America" published. He returned some years afterwards and settled in New York, where he died on the twenty-seventh day of January,1851, aged seventy-one years.

<u>Daily Gleaner</u>, Henderson, KY, 27 March 1896, p.4:



JOHN J. AUDUBON

A Brief Sketch of His Early Life in Henderson

IN CONNECTION WITH THE OLD MILL

Built in 1815 and Yet Standing at the Foot of Second or Mill Street—His Big Heart and not the Quicksand That Caused its Collapse.

A Louisville lady who was well acquainted with Mrs. John J, Audubon, widow of the world renowned ornithologist, contributes the following to last Sunday's Courier Journal concerning Mr. Audubon's residence in Henderson and the cause of the failure of his will to bring him that return it was hoped it would. She ways:

"Mr. Audubon's large mill in Henderson was wrecked by the caving in of the well in the cellar, dug to supply water for his steam engine, The well reached a quicksand, which caused the cave-in, and carried the foundations with it. Thus his investment and business prospects were all swept away. While he was in great despondency, his friends urged him to make his beautiful collection of paintings of birds a complete thing and offer them for sale. Up to that time he had only purchased this work as an enthusiast and a devotee to nature. Then his wife, woman of noble character. magnificent education, and of the highest aristocracy of England, encouraged him., and told him she would relieve him of the support of herself and two boys during the years he roved the Western forests and indomitably hunted and painted "The birds of America," She entered the home of the Croghans. at their grand house near Six-mile Island. as governess and accomplished all she undertook."

If the sub-stratums are the same along the river front, it is true that quick sand is to be found from thirty to forty feet below the surface at the point where Mr. Audubon's mill stands. When the foundation for the shore pier for the great bridge across the Ohio river at the foot of Fourth street is laid, the greatest difficulty was encountered with quick sand at the distance spoken of.

It is quite probable this foundation cost more than all of the others combined excepting those of course, under the river and where caissons were used. If the same vein exists at the mill that does at the foot of Fourth street, it goes without the saying that Mr. Audubon had trouble with it. But it is well-known to everyone here that the old mill is still where Mr. Audubon built it, with its peculiar walls intact and no evidence whatever, of there having been a cave in. Furthermore it was known (and if the GLEANER is not mistaken there are remaining evidences of the fact) that just below the old mill, Mr. Audubon had a saw mill, which received its supply of water from the same well that supplied the grist mill. This mill remained many years altar the grist mill had been abandoned and was operated by Mr. Audubon. There are now in the possession of certain persons hereabouts accounts and receipts for lumber made out in Mr. Audubon's own hand writing, dated

as late as 1819. The grist mill to which the Louisville lady refers was abandoned long before that time. The story as related by old timers who lived at Henderson during the residence of Mr. Audubon, is quite the reverse of that told by the widow of the great naturalist. HIs was one of the come-easy, go-easy, noble-hearted character of men, ready and more than willing to divide his all with any friend. He would credit anyone to any reasonable amount, and it was that and not the "quicksand" which brought about the collapse of the mill. The great man was universally popular with the few hundred people then living here, and every schemer who so desired found in him an easy subject of prey.

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The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society
(Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Historical Society, Vol. 1, May 1903) pp.16-20:

John J. Audubon

By William L. Alves

The following communication from Mr. Alves, of Henderson, concerning the great painter and ornithologist, John J. Audubon, will interest those so little acquainted with his life in Henderson, Kentucky. He is known to the world as a naturalist and unrivaled painter of birds, and squirrels and other children of the forests. When Rafinesque visited America, he visited Audubon at Henderson, and we read "spent several days with this then greatest ornithologist in the world." Audubon· showed him his splendid collection of colored drawings, afterwards published in England in many volumes. Of 170 subscribers at $1,000 each ($170,000) to his; "Birds of America," nearly one-half was contributed by England and France. These paintings of birds and quadrupeds are very rare new, and bring fabulous prices in Europe. Audubon was born in Louisiana, May 4, 1780, and died in New York City January 27, 1851, aged seventy-one. He was: educated in art by the celebrated David, in France, and enjoyed the distinction of having outrivaled his teacher in painting the children of the woods. -- (Ed. The Register.)

December, 1897.
Mrs. Jennie C. Morton,

Editor The Register:

Complying with your request, I am herewith pleased to contribute of what information I am possessed of history associated with the life of the world-renowned John J. Audubon during his residence in Henderson, as learned from old-time citizens long numbered among the saints.

I take it that Mr. Audubon was a man of scrupulous honesty. He placed the highest value possible upon his word, holding it in all things the equal of his bond. He was, while a plain man in his heart, somewhat of a connoisseur in his tastes. He was lacking in business tact, and, as all men like him, was easily imposed upon. His confidence in his fellow-man was co-equal with his own self-respect. He was a man who would go his whole length for a friend, while neglecting his own affairs. In short, he preferred doing for others while his own was left undone from day to day, or neglected altogether. His confidence led him to extend credit to any man he knew, and, from this goodness of his heart he became a heavy loser. Men took advantage of him, and an easier prey for the sharper was not to be found. His disposition was of a roving nature -- his whole life being wrapped up in studying Nature and Nature's ways. He was devoted to the woods and wilds, and

would stay for weeks and months in the forests gaining the choicest information of things most interesting to him. In brief, he was a child of Nature, and was satisfied with no other life than that enjoyed in the wilds of Kentucky watching the habits of birds and breathing the pure air from the heavens.

It is agreed that Mr. Audubon arrived at the "Yellow Banks," now Henderson, in the year 1812. Soon after landing here he, in co-partnership with Thomas W. Bakewell, applied to the town trustees for a lease on a portion of the city front. The trustees gave them 200 feet square, beginning at the corner opposite lot No, 4, corner of Water and Second streets, for a term of ninety-four years, they, A. and B., agreeing to pay for the same at the rate of $20 per annum. During that year, to-wit, 1812, Audubon and Bakewell erected a grist mill on the leased ground, and for several years did all the grinding for the farmers living around and many miles from the mill.

The old mill, or the shell left, is still standing where it was built 85 years or more ago. It was a remarkably constructed building, the foundation being of rock and strong enough to withstand the weight of the Chicago postoffice, The joists are of trees cut down nearby, none of them being less than one foot in diameter; they are unhewn and in their natural growth as they stood in woods. The bark is not removed. These heavy trees are laid from wall to wall, closer together than the ordinary sawed joists of to-day are placed. No weight that could ever have been placed on the floor of this mill could have made an impression. When it is known that there is no rock near Henderson, it becomes a matter of mere conjecture where Mr. Audubon brought the foundation: and first-story rock from. He must have cordeled it from below or floated it in boats from away above Henderson.

In those days the mode of navigation was in canoes and by cordeling, certainly a most tedious and patience-worrying process. The Ohio river bank at that time extended some one hundred yards out beyond the mill and contained .a beautiful grove of trees in which the farmers fed when waiting at the mill for their grinding. As before stated, this old structure is still standing, and is well worth viewing in comparison with modern structures used for the same purpose. It was the first mill in all this section of Kentucky, and was a great convenience.

Two years after the building of this mill, Mr. Audubon, on the lot adjoining, and just below, caused to be built a saw-mill, the first known hereabouts. The mode then employed was known as "whip sawing," and on completing the mill, the mode existing was completely revolutionized, Mr. Audubon employing steam was enabled to apply all of the demand and with a much better lumber for building. Several years after the completion of the sawmill, and just when such an institution was most needed, the mill was burned, drawing a total loss, as no such thing as insurance was then known. Nothing daunted by this heavy loss, Mr. Audubon kept on at his favorite pastime of hunting and roving in the woods. During the year 1816 Mr. Audubon and his friend, Samuel Bowen., built a small boat with steam attachments. For what purpose this boat was intended is not known. It is known, however, that the commander employed to run her proved a great scoundrel. He ran the boat out of the Ohio, down the Mississippi to New Orleans without authority. Mr. Audubon, hearing of this, procured a skiff and started in pursuit. With all the fiery energy for which he was so noted, he continued the long journey which appeared, the further he went, to be the more of love's labor lost. However, on his arrival at New Orleans, he found his little craft and instituted suit to recover her. Being surrounded by a complication of troubles, and rather than be further annoyed, he sold the bloat for a mere song and returned to Henderson overland. A walk of a hundred miles, :or even five hundred miles, was never a drawback when his mind was bent on the accomplishment of a purpose. It will be observed that he was a man of extraordinary energy. During his life here he operated a grist mill, a sawmill, a general merchandise store, contracted for

buildings and built boats. During all these eventful years he paid far more attention to the woods and forests than he did to his business enterprises. In fact, it may he said his enterprises, in a very great measure were left to take care of themselves while he was off on a hunt.

As a natural consequence his losses were very heavy and finally reduced him to penury.

Mr. Audubon was a man of undaunted courage, as was proved in a number of encounters had by him with men known as desperadoes in those days. One man lost his life at his hands on the streets of Henderson, and several others were made to regret having come in contact with him. At one time he observed a cowardly officer of the law trying to arrest a river pirate who was preparing to escape, and was greatly disgusted with him. The officer had summoned a boy to go with him to arrest the criminal, and this was more than the fiery Audubon could consent to witness. Stepping up, he said to the officer, "You coward, you, if you are afraid to do your duty, don't force a boy into trouble; summon me." Glad of the opportunity, the summons was immediately issued and off they went in search of the offender, Mr. Audubon in the lead. They traced the man to the river and found him about to shove his canoe out into the stream. He was halted in time, and straightening himself he said to the officer, "What do you want" Upon his reply, the desperado looked at him and said, with an oath, "You are a coward, but that man with you looks like he would fight, so I will take him first;" so saying, the fellow, with a long, dangerous, murderous-looking knife, advanced upon Mr. Audubon, who, in turn, picked up an old oar lying near by and prepared to defend himself. The weapon in the hands of Mr. Audubon interposed no obstacle, for he still advanced. He was warned by Mr. Audubon to surrender and not resist arrest, but, heedless of the summons, he continued to advance. When within striking distance and he was about to plunge his knife into the assistant officer, Mr. Audubon; let drive with the oar in his hands and felled the fellow apparently dead to the ground. Thinking the man dead, Dr. Rankin the leading practitioner then here, was hurriedly sought for, and on his arrival at the place and on examination; found that a piece of the skull about the size of a silver dollar had been driven in and was pressing down on the brain. With the only appliances known to pioneer surgery, the doctor went down into his pocket and drew therefrom a gimlet. With this he bored a hole through the broken particle of skull bone and pulled it back to its place. The fellow was then marched up the hill and away to the old log lock-up to await the pleasure of the squire.

In addition to the large amount of business Mr. Audubon had accumulated upon his hands, he was somewhat of a speculator in town lots. Henderson had been laid off into lots, and many of the best-situated were purchased and re-sold by Mr. Audubon. He recorded in the county clerk's office there a large number of conveyances to him and by him to others. He seemed to have a preference for lots above Second street. Mr. Audubon was a man of wonderful enterprise and endless and untiring energy. With his progressive spirit, coupled with his splendid mind, had he had associated with him an honest partner of system and business tact, he would unquestionably have accumulated an immense estate. He was always hard run, but no man ever accepted his trouble with more grace and composure.

For two years or more his family, while he was away from home, resided with the family of Dr. Adam Rankin, at what is now known as the Banks farm, a mile and a half out on the Cario gravel road. At the home of Dr. Rankin Mr. Audubon's two sons were born. By way of remuneration for their board, Mrs. Audubon, who was a brilliant woman intellectually, taught Dr. Rankin's children; in short, she presided as governess and was a very great helpmate in the family. Mr. Audubon and Dr. Rankin were firm, fast friends devotedly attached to each other. Mr. William Rankin, eldest son of Dr. Rankin, frequently accompanied Mr. Audubon on his trips to the forests,

and would remain for days with him. The old house in which the Audubon boys were born is still standing and in comparatively good condition.

Very respectfully,
WM. L. ALVES.

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Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 10 December 1905, p.24:

During the first quarter of the last century a young naturalist, gun and spy glass in hand, traveled over the entire face of the American continent, from the cypress swamps of Louisiana to the cliffs and crags of Labrador studying, the nature and habits of birds – shooting them in order that he might paint their pictures, and following an individual of a rare species for days to hear its song, to see how and on what it flew and walked and after what fashion it nested, and then in remarkably clear and charming language, writing the and "biography" of the bird. His canoe pushed its nose among the bushes and under the overhanging vines along the banks of winding rivers; he struggled through the tangled briars of the cane brake, and splashed through marsh and morass; his rifle cracked among the crags of towering mountains. No place was too difficult of access or too remote from the comforts of civilization for him to journey to learn the smallest fact about its smallest feathered denizen.

Greatest Ornithologist.

That naturalist was John James Audubon, the greatest ornithologist, America has produced – dead half a century ago, but in the fact that he has never had a peer in his chosen line, still a contemporary. Every person of tolerable literary attainments in Owensboro knows of Audubon, but only the smallest part of them know that some of his best work was done in the Panther creek flats south of Owensboro and on the river island and along the banks above and below town. The child as well as the more mature student studies reproductions of Audubon's pictures very rarely the originals – but they do not dream that many of them were painted in an old brick house in Owensboro, which stands adjacent to the federal building. After the fashion of individuals and communities, Owensboro has forgotten its acquaintanceship with a great mind in the rush and grind of great commercial trivialities. But for ten or fifteen years Audubon was a frequent visitor to Owensboro, a well known figure in the surrounding forests.

Born in New Orleans.

Something in the nature of a sketch of the great naturalist is necessary in order to tell to the best advantage of his connection with the early days of Owensboro and Daviess county. Of French extraction, he was born near New Orleans, May 4, 1780. He was educated in France and studied painting under David. About the year 1800 he settled in Pennsylvania, where he lived for several years and where he married. But his love for ornithology drew him away from his home, and immediately after his marriage in 1810, he descended the Ohio river, accompanied by his wife, her brother| and his wife. The succeeding several years were spent for the most part in Kentucky.

In 1826 Audubon went to England and exhibited his drawings in Liverpool, Manchester and Edinburgh and finally published them in an unrivaled work of double folio size with 435 colored plates of birds the size of life. The plates were in four volumes, entitled "The Birds of America," and accompanied by five 8mo descriptive volumes "Ornithological Biography." The appearance of the books covered a period of twelve years, from 1827 to 1839.

On his final return to the United States he labored with Dr. Bachman| on "The Quadrupeds of America." He died in New York June 27, 1851.

Married in Pittsburg.

Audubon's connection with this section of Kentucky began shortly after his marriage. He was married in Pittsburg to Lucy Bakewell. The same ceremony joined as husband and wife Thomas W. Bakewell, a brother of Lucy, and Elizabeth Page. Miss Page was an aunt of Mrs. Frank L. Hall, of this city, who has in her possession a book of psalms presented by Mrs. Audubon to her brother, Thomas W. Bakewell. On the fly leaf is her signature with the words, "To my brother, T. W. Bakewell, as a token of affection from his sister."

Honeymoon On the Ohio.

By way of spending their honeymoon the young couples fitted out a small boat and started out on a trip down the Ohio river, and it must have been the ideal honeymoon. Two young pairs, as happily mated as the birds among whom one of them lived, with to prosaic soul to intersperse his harsh, hum-drum, common places – alone and face to face with the great powers of nature – floating placidly down one of the most beautiful streams in all the world, in that early day when the hum of machinery and the din of traffic had not chased the holy silence from the shores – watching the glimmering moonlight printing fantastic pictures on the silver water or the cloudless sunset making a sea of burnished gold.

Explored the Forests.

The trip was a long one, both in distance and in time. No feverish anxiety to return to business marred its pleasures. At frequent intervals, in nature's fairest spots, the boat was anchored, and Audubon made incursions into the forest and brought back rare specimens of birds. In the little boat or on the shady bank he painted his matchless pictures and wrote his glowing sketches. He discovered a field so rich that he could not leave it fallow. and when the boat reached what was then the little village of Henderson, the trip was ended. The bridal party went ashore and Audubon and his young wife set up house keeping in the little town. The manner in which his wife assisted him in his great work was the kind of good fortune to which only an occasional genius falls heir.

First Trip Here.

Shortly after settling in Henderson Audubon made his first trip to Owensboro. He was the guest of Philip Triplett, a scholar of considerable attainments, one of the pioneer lawyers of Owensboro, and subsequently member of congress. His house – the now delapidated old brick building just least of the federal building on Third street – was famed throughout this end of the state for its hospitality and Audubon became a regular visitor there. A room was fitted up for his work and many of his bird paintings were made there. The diary of the late Mrs. Harriett T. Johnson, a daughter of Philip Triplett, contains numerous references to Audubon.

In Panther Creek Flats.

Audubon spent many days tramping through the forests known as the Panther creek flats. Perhaps in all America there was not a spot where material of the kind he sought was more abundant than there. Besides being able to get closer acquainted with many of the well known varities, Audubon found some very rare birds along Panther creek. In all his life he was never able to find but two specimens of the "Carbonated Swamp Warbler," and both of these, he says in his

book, were shot near Owensboro. "I shot the two little birds here represented," he says, "in May, 1811. They were both busily engaged in searching for insects along the branches and amongst the leaves of a dogwood tree. On examination they were found to be both males. I am of the opinion that they were each young birds of the preceding year, and not in full plumage, as they had no part of their dress complete except the head. Not having met with any other individuals of this species, I am at this moment unable to say anything more about them.

"They were drawn, like almost all other birds I have represented, immediately after being killed, but the branch on which you see them was not added until the following summer. The common name of this plant is service-tree. It seldom attains a greater height than thirty or forty feet and is usually found in hilly ground of secondary quality. The berries are agreeable to the taste, and are much sought after by many species of birds. amongst which the red-headed woodpecker is very conspicuous."

Another rare bird of the same genus, the Nashville swamp warbler. was found here. "I have shot only three or four birds of this species," writes Audubon, "and these were all that I have met with. I found them in Louisiana and Kentucky. With the exception of few low, eagerly repeated creaking notes. I have not heard any sounds from them. I am not aware of its nest having been discovered or described by any naturalist."

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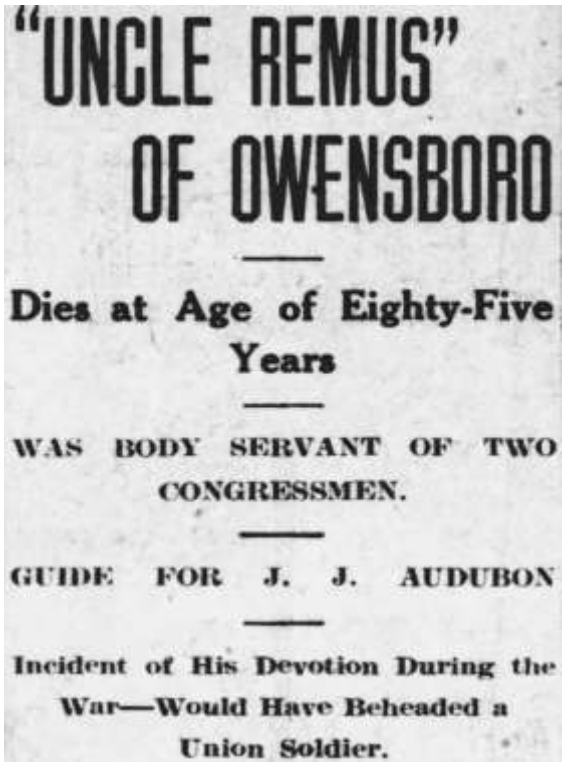
<u>Owensboro Messenger</u>, Owensboro, KY, 18 November 1906, p.13:



"UNCLE REMUS" OF OWENSBORO

Dies at Age of Eighty-Five Years

WAS BODY SERVANT OF TWO CONGRESSMEN.

GUIDE FOR J. J. AUDUBON

Incident of His Devotion During the War—Would Have Beheaded a Union Soldier.

Not many of the strands that bind anti-bellum and post-bellum life in the South remain. The old master and the old servant – the one dignified, aristocratic, capricious it may be, – but indulgent; the other an imitator, wise in small things and faithful in all wherein his master is concerned – are all but extinct types. Here and there a remnant of this warmer, more exotic life,

lingers under some sheltered bank far into this rigorous winter of latter day commercialism, retaining the semblance, though the substance be gone, of a civilization the like of which this world will never know again.

One of the last products in Owensboro of the old conditions was Jim Johnson, the aged negro who died last week. Jim said he was a hundred years old, though the family Bible shows him to be fifteen years younger. He was born in the family of Philip Triplett, a member of one of the old Virginia families, who came to Kentucky to practice law when this section of the state was hardly more than a wilderness, when the territory now constituting three counties was Ohio county. He located at the Yellow banks, now gone into Owensboro, on an estate of hundreds of acres. Jim was the son of one of the women brought over from Virginia, and was born in the "quarters" at the Triplett residence in what is now the heart of the business section of Owensboro.

Only Three Stores Here.

Owensboro, when Jim first knew it, contained only three stores, and scarcely more than a score of residences. He was acquainted with every foot of the ground now covered by the city and, in spite of the many changes, always had a clear recollection of the original appearance of any particular spot that might be mentioned – he had caught a 'possum in a persimmon tree where this business block stands or had conquered with his ax a forest of black gums on the site of that handsome residence.

In many respects, Jim was a remarkable negro. No Indian who ever roamed the forests of the New World excelled him in woodcraft. In his younger days, nearly all of Daviess county was practically a trackless forest, full of wolves and panthers and deer. In the darkest night that the world ever knew, Jim could lead the way, straight as the flight of an arrow, to any point in the depths of the Panther creek forests. Take him away from his familiar low grounds into a forest which he had never seen and though clouds might shroud the sky so that moon nor stars gave him aid, he could unerringly tell directions by feeling the bark of the trees.

He never knew the need of a clock by day or by night. From the stars of the firmament, he could read the waning of the night almost to the minute, and though the stars did not shine, by some means known only to him and which seemed not to be able to put in words, he could read the hour.

Weather Prognosticator.

He was a weather prognosticator, often more accurate in his predictions than the government bureau.

He was familiar with ever animal of the forest. Show him a coon or a 'possum and he could tell whether it inhabited the swamps or high ground. He knew the meaning of the different wolf howls before Ernest Thompson Seton was born in the world.

In two things old Jim or was a master – the handling of an ax or a harvesting cradle, but he stood preeminent as an axeman. A man who knew him well in the prime of his life vouches for the statement that he could place a toothpick on the chopping block, swing his ax full and clear over him and split the pick squarely in the middle. The greatest monarch of the forest made little obstruction to his ax.

But above all things, in his old days when rheumatism had twisted his once mighty muscles, he loved to tell of his triumphs in cradeling of wheat. They once brought a man from Hardinsburg to beat him, and then did not accomplish it.

The old negro knew many famous men in his time. When John James Audobon, the greatest ornitholigist that America has produced was studying the birds of this portion of Kentucky, he stayed at the home of Col. Triplett, and the Panther creek flats constituted his most fertile field.

Jim, by reason of his superior knowledge of that region, was the logical guide for the man of science, and accompanied him on many a tramp after the feathered denizens of the forest.

The old negro knew something of politics. He had two masters, Philip Triplett and James L. Johnson, the latter a son-in-law of the first, and both of them represented this district in the national congress. Jim heard many able political discussions in his capacity as servant to these two men. In his political career he never got much beyond the questions that separated the Whigs and Democrats during the two decades before the war but, in a crude way, he knew more of these than some men who have read history.

Typical of His Race.

In folk lore the old man was typical of his race. "Uncle Remus" never told a story that was not familiar to Jim. He had told them hundreds of times for the amusement of the little folks before Joel Chandler Harris got his first line of type. There is a belief in some quarters that the "Uncle Remus" stories originated in the mind of the Atlanta journalist, but such is not the case. Where they did originate probably no man knows, but certain it is that they have been told by negroes all over the South, who only knew that they got them from their fathers.

Henry Grady in his great speech in Boston, the speech which was the culmination of his life work, described the Southern woman during the war, defenseless with her children at her knees and said, "I thank God that she is safe in her sanctuary, because her slaves, sentinel in the silent cabin, or guard at her chamber door, puts a black man's loyalty between her and danger." No negro ever more thoroughly vindicated this than old Jim.

A War Incident.

When Northern soldiers held Owensboro, the Confederates harassed them from every side. Now and then a home boy would slip under the shield of his friends, learn some of the enemy's secrets and return to the Confederate lines. The Federals were constantly searching houses to apprehend these dangerous messengers. One night they searched the house of Jim's "white folks." The master was away. Possibly the soldiers made more noise than was necessary and overturned more furniture than was absolutely required by their search, but they found no gray uniform and finally left. When one of the women of the family entered her room, she found a pair of cavalry boots protruding from beneath her bed. She screamed, and Jim and Bob in the servant quarters heard the alarm. With his ever ready ax in hand. Jim rushed to the rescue, closely followed, by Bob. The soldier was dragged from beneath the bed, and Jim had his ax drawn to brain him when his mistress appealed to him, "Jim, if you kill that man here the blood will ruin my new carpet." Jim respected the carpet but did not relent toward the offending soldier who was dragged by the stalwart negroes to the chopping block and Bob was holding his head ready for execution when a squad of soldiers, having missed their comrade, returned and rescued him.

Through the remaining forty years of his life after the war Jim remained as true to his "white folks" and to the white people in general as he was on the e night when the cavalry boots were dragged from beneath his mistress' bed. He never went away from home hunting for freedom, and in the last days of his life he told his "Uncle Remus" stories to "Meh Lady," a little girl descended in the fifth generation from his first master.

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Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 19 March 1913, p.4:

MILL BURNED AT HENDERSON,
WHICH WAS OLD LANDMARK

Catches Fire From Burning Trash Heap –
Clark Tobacco Factory Also Burns

Henderson, Ky., March 19. The old mill, formerly owned by, and the home of the world famous naturalist. John J. Audubon, together with the Clark tobacco factory, combining a loss of $15,000, together with 50 hogsheads of tobacco on the river bank valued at $6,000 and owned by the American Tobacco company, burned late Tuesday afternoon.

The famous old mill sat on the bank of the Ohio. The Henderson bridge, wharfboat, and a number of small boats were all set afire but were quickly extinguished by all the fire apparatus in the city.

The old factory was used as the high water mark of 1884. Had the wind today been in the opposite direction, the entire business section of the city would have been wiped out.

The fire originated by children burning brush. The old Audubon building was erected in 1816 on the bank owned by the city, and it was given a 99 year lease, at which time it was to revert back to the city. It was prized highly and frequently visited by admirers of Audubon's works.

The total loss and damage will run nearly $20.000, with insurance. damage, It was the biggest fire in the history of Henderson.

Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 18 June 1939, p.1B:

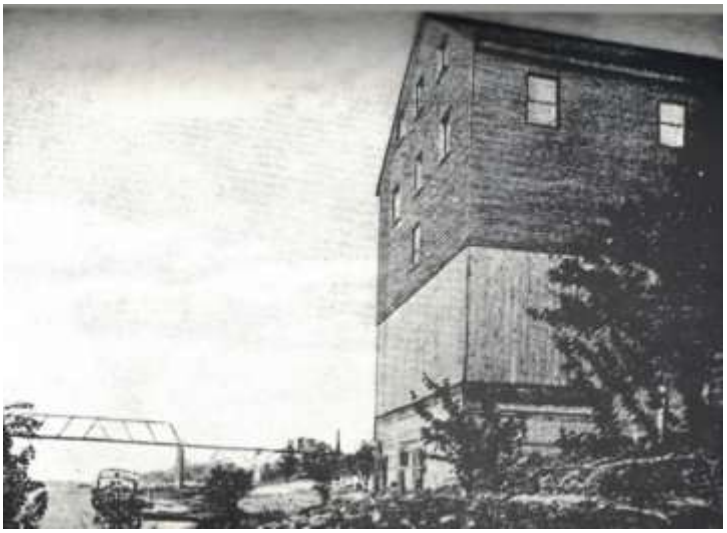
Audubon Memorial State Park Beauty Spot of Mid-West Kentucky: In this museum building are hung scores of paintings of John James Audubon, who roamed the hills that are a part of the park in the early Nineteenth century. Art lovers find the desire to stay in the museum for hours, admiring the works of Audubon rather than see the other beauties of the place. On the suggestion that an Audubon museum might be had in the park an appropriation was secured from congress and the project went forward with the support of the national and state governments.

Henderson: Guide to Audubon's Home Town In Henderson
Susan Starling Towles, Kentucky Writers' Project, WPA
(Northport, NY: Bacon, Percy & Daggett, 1941):

Foreword – Pages 5-6: … But the chief magnet of all is that here in Henderson, John James Audubon, the man of genius and of mystery, spent his happiest and saddest days in his "dear little log cabin at Henderson in Kentucky." He lived in many places and was admired by all when famous. But here he was loved and appreciated by the cultured and stable citizenry when he was still unknown and poor. They appreciated him while he was building the tremendous work that was to flower into "the greatest tribute ever paid by art to nature."

Henderson deserves attention most of all because it is the home of the only Audubon Museum in the world. There, bird and Audubon lovers may see original paintings and prints, the wild turkey seal that became to his family a coat of arms, his annotated books, and numerous Auduboniana housed in the mediaeval-looking stone building in the forest hills, sacred to Audubon—the chief reason for the need for a Henderson Guidebook.

SUSAN STARLING TOWLES.



Page 32: Saw & gristmill erected by John J. Audubon in 1817

Page 40: cogwheel from Audubon mill

Pages 69-77: JOHN JAMES AUDUBON

Among the many honored citizens of Henderson the memory of John James Audubon is best loved. It was here that the years of his early married life were passed—the most untroubled and perhaps the happiest of his career. Here, too, he reached the deepest depths of despair. His neighbors, not always understanding his erratic ways and roving habits, yet recognized his splendid qualities of mind and heart. Later in life, when Audubon emerged from obscurity and became generally recognized as a great artist and ornithologist, his genius and ability came to be more fully appreciated. Now the loving admiration for Audubon that has endured in Henderson for a century has at last been manifested in the gift of a great national memorial.

The date and place of the birth of John James Audubon have, for years, been a matter of dispute. That Audubon himself failed to clarify the confusion is evidenced by the fact that in his published autobiography he refers to the "puzzling background" of his life, to his "noble birth," and to his "great secret." Many of these references were deleted or changed when his journals were published.

His descendants, having absorbed such references throughout their lives, infer that Audubon was the "lost Dauphin" of France, child of the martyred Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, who disappeared during the French Revolution. Mrs. Leonard Sanford Tyler, a member of the Audubon family, has recently (1937) published a book, *I Who Should Command All*, in which she sets forth the romantic theory of the naturalist's royal birth. Yet Audubon in his sketch, "Myself," written for his sons, claimed Louisiana as his birthplace. A bronze statue in New Orleans proclaims the ornithologist a native son of Louisiana, and for years the *Encyclopedia Britannica* carried the information that Audubon was said to have been born on the fifth of May, 1780, in Louisiana, his father having been a French naval officer and his mother a Spanish creole.

To Francis Hobart Herrick, distinguished American biologist and ornithologist, belongs the credit for solving the major part of the mystery that for years has surrounded the birth and parentage of Audubon. In 1917 documents discovered by Herrick were published which established the fact that John James Audubon was born at Aux Cayes, on the island of San Domingo, on April 26, 1785, and was the natural son of a ship's captain named Jean Audubon and a "Mile. Rabin," styled, as was the custom at that time, "a creole de Saint-Domingue."

Capt. Jean Audubon, the naturalist's father, was the son of a humble fisherman living on the west coast of France. Leaving home at the age of twelve to make his way in the world, he made numerous voyages, fought battles with buccaneers, was imprisoned in England, came to be master of his own ship, and grew enormously rich in the African slave trade. He fought for America in the War for Independence, commanding a ship in the fleet of Comte de Grasse. He is described as "short of stature, with auburn hair and a fiery temper, as stubborn and fearless an opponent as one could meet on the high seas, and one of the gamest fighting cocks of the merchant marine." In 1772 he married Anne Moynette, a widow, rich and kind. She lived at Nantes while he was fighting and trading around the world. Captain Audubon owned an estate at Aux Cayes, San Domingo, where he spent much time.

The Herrick documents point out that the son of Captain Audubon was himself termed "a creole de Saint-Do-mingue," and named Jean Rabin; that his mother died within a year after her son's birth; that the boy lived in Aux Cayes until he was four years old, and was then taken to the United States with a half sister named Rosa Bouffard. In 1789 Captain Audubon sailed for France with his two children and, when they arrived at Nantes, Madame Audubon received the trio with warmth and affection. The boy became the adored son of his stepmother, who allowed him every indulgence and boasted that he was the handsomest boy in France. "I loved her," he said.,, "as if

she had been my own mother, and well did she merit my affection.." With her he passed his boyhood at La Ger-betiére, his father's estate on the Loire near Nantes, constantly attended by a Negro servant from San Domingo. When the boy, Jean Rabin, was eight, and his half sister was six, Captain Audubon and his wife legally adopted them and gave them the name of Audubon. With the papers of adoption drawn before a notary public, properly witnessed and filed in Nantes, the boy, in 1794, became Jean Jacques Fougere Audubon.

His father was usually absent in the wars, but he saw to it that his son had excellent tutors. He learned music, he danced, fenced, skated, and became an expert in them all. For a short time he studied painting in Paris under the great David.

It was Captain Audubon's wish that his son should enter the navy, and his studies were directed accordingly. But even then the young Jean Jacques loved to escape to the woods, and in his frequent excursions he made a collection of more than two hundred drawings of French birds. His father manifested little patience with the lad's tastes, realizing that they interfered seriously with his studies. He gave up the idea of educating him for the navy, and sent him, at the age of eighteen, to attend to his property at Mill Grove, on the Perkioming Creek, near Philadelphia, which had been purchased on one of his early visits to this country. Here, with his father's agent, Da Costa, the young naturalist lived for a time the life of a country gentleman, hunting, fishing, and collecting specimens of American birds. According to his own statement, it was here he first conceived the idea of the work on American ornithology. He wrote in his journal, "Millgrove was ever a blessed spot to me.. . . Hunting, fishing and drawing occupied my every moment; cares I knew not, and cared nothing for them."

It was at this time Audubon met Lucy Bakewell, whose father, William Bakewell, lived within sight of Mill Grove at Fatland Ford. This acquaintance soon ripened into love, but there was an interval of five active years before the marriage. William Bakewell, before giving his consent, urged Audubon to establish himself in business. Accordingly, he spent a short time in New York in the wholesale establishment of Benjamin Bakewell, an uncle of his fiancée, but soon convinced his friends that he was unfitted for a business career, and returned to Mill Grove.

Finding Da Costa interfering in his love affair and unsympathetic in the matter of finances, Audubon went to France to confer with his father and urge his consent to his marriage. In 1806 he returned with Ferdinand Rozier, a young Frenchman of excellent business qualifications, sent to America by Captain Audubon to balance the artistic temperament of his young son. The two, with a supply of merchandise obtained by giving a note to Benjamin Bakewell, set out for the West, hoping to make their fortune selling to the thousands of emigrants swarming into the Ohio Valley. Louisville, Kentucky, was chosen for the experiment, and soon the firm of "Audubon and Rozier, Merchants," was definitely established and doing business. By spring Audubon felt that prospects were sufficiently encouraging to justify his marriage to Lucy Bakewell. He returned to Mill Grove, sold his property, invested the money in merchandise, and was married April 8, 1808. The years proved this alliance to be a fortunate one, for Mrs. Audubon not only loved but understood her gifted, temperamental husband, and proved to be a stabilizing influence throughout his life.

After a long journey down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh in a flatboat, Audubon and his wife arrived ii Louisville, where they lived at Gwathmay's Hotel, "The Indian Queen." Here, on June 26, 1809, their first son, Victor, was born.

Audubon always loved Louisville, then a town of about one thousand people, "for its beauty and for the Virginia spirit of hospitality" that made him feel so much at home. Sales were good for some months, but Audubon's interest in business was not sufficient to win success, and growing competition began cutting into trade. In the spring of 1810, Audubon, his wife and baby,

Victor, with Rozier and all of the merchandise, embarked on a flatboat and floated down the Ohio to Henderson, Kentucky, where Audubon and Rozier for the second time entered the general store business.

"When I first landed in Henderson, Kentucky," he wrote, "my family, like the village, was quite small. The latter consisted of six or eight houses, the former of myself, my wife, and a young child. Few as the houses were, we fortunately found one empty. It was a log cabin, but as better could not be found, we were well pleased. The country round was thinly settled and all purchasable provisions rather scarce; but our neighbors were friendly, and we had brought our bacon-hams; our pleasures were those of young people not long married; a single smile of our infant was, I assure you, much more valued than all the treasures could have been. The woods were amply stocked with game, the river with fish, and, now and then, the hoarded sweets of the industrious bees were brought from some hollow tree to our table."

Audubon probably came to Henderson because of his friend Dr. Adam Rankin. The families of Dr. Rankin, Senator Talbot, the Holloways, and Judge Thomas Towles, abound in traditions of the naturalist.

However, history was repeated here; Rozier was ever in his place behind the counter, while Audubon roamed through the forests and countryside in pursuit of rare birds. With his rod and gun, he bountifully supplied the table.

Again Audubon wrote for his children: "Your blessed mother and I were as happy as possible; the people around loved us, and we them; our profits were enormous, but our sales were small, and my partner suggested that we remove to St. Genevieve on the Mississippi River. I acceded to his request, but was quite determined to leave your mother and Victor in Henderson, not being quite sure that our venture would succeed as we hoped. I therefore placed her and the children under the care of Dr. Rankin, who had a fine farm about three miles from Henderson."

Placing their merchandise—three hundred barrels of whisky, some drygoods and powder—on a large flatboat, Audubon and Rozier left Henderson in a December snowstorm. It was an eventful journey down the Ohio and up the Mississippi. Icebound at Cash Creek, Audubon had a happy time hunting wild swans with a band of Indians, always friendly toward him. "When one day's sport was over, we counted more than fifty of these beautiful birds whose skins were intended for the ladies of Europe," he noted in his journal.

Later on the travelers were again frozen up, this time in the Tawapatee Bottom, and Rozier fretted while Audubon reveled in his hunting, writing and drawing. At the old French settlement of St. Genevieve, Rozier was happy to be once more among his countrymen, but the place proved uncongenial to Audubon; so he sold his share of the business to his partner and returned on horseback to Henderson. This journey to St. Genevieve with all its perils are graphically described in his *Ornithological Biography*.

For several years after Audubon returned, it seemed that Henderson was to be his permanent home. It was a time of great happiness to the naturalist and his little family—a time of peace and plenty, and a growing collection of bird studies. His general store did a good business, even though the proprietor spent weeks at a time in the woods. With profits from the business he purchased several acres of land and a house. Here their second son, John Woodhouse, was born—"My Kentucky boys," Audubon always called his sons. A daughter, Lucy, born at Henderson, died in infancy. She is buried in the family graveyard of Gen. Samuel Hopkins' plantation –"only the birds know just where little Lucy lies."

It was of this period of his life that he said, "The pleasure I have felt in Henderson, under the roof of that log cabin, can never be effaced from my heart until death." Audubon

characteristically tells the story of his financial troubles which soon followed. He wrote: "I had purchased the adjoining land and we were doing very well when Thomas Bakewell [Mrs. Audubon's brother] came on the tapis. Unfortunately he took it into his head to persuade me to erect a steam mill at Henderson. . . . Well, up went the steam mill at an enormous expense in a country then as unfit for such a thing as it would be now to settle in the moon. . . . How I labored in that infernal mill from dawn to dark, nay at times, all night. My pecuniary troubles increased, I had heavy bills to pay which I could not pay or take up. . . . I parted with every particle of property I held to my credit, only keeping the clothes I wore that day, my original drawings, and my gun." Audubon was jailed for debt but later released on the plea of bankruptcy. He determined to return to Louisville.

"Without a dollar in the world," he wrote, "bereft of all revenues beyond my personal talents and acquirements, I left my dear log house, my delightful garden and orchards, and with that heaviest of heavy burdens, a heavy heart, I turned my face toward Louisville. This was the saddest of all my journeys—the only one in my life when the wild turkeys that so often crossed my path and the thousands of lesser birds that enlivened the woods and prairies, all looked like enemies and I turned my face from them." This was in 1819. Mrs. Audubon and the children remained for some time in Henderson, where they were well cared for by their good friends.

In Louisville, and later in Cincinnati, he drew crayon portraits at five dollars a head and succeeded so well that before long he had an abundance of work, and Mrs. Audubon was able to join him. Senator Isham Talbot sent her with her children in, his carriage to Louisville, where she and her husband lived with their friends, the French *emigres*, Nicholas Berthoud and his wife.

But as soon as circumstances were better, off went Audubon again, this time down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, exploring for birds and paying his expenses by making portraits. His family remained at Shippingport with the Berthouds. After a period in New Orleans, where Audubon worked as a tutor, as drawing teacher, as dancing master, and even painted street signs, he saved enough money to send for his wife and sons, and again "began life with $42, health, and much anxiety to pursue my plan for collecting all the birds of America."

Mrs. Audubon secured an excellent position at the Perrie plantation in Louisiana where she taught the young ladies of the neighborhood and took upon her shoulders the burden of the needy family—a burden she carried for some twelve years. Through their combined efforts they earned enough money to enable him, in 1826, to take his drawings to England. It was Audubon's hope to obtain the aid in publishing his work which he had failed to find in America. At Liverpool he exhibited his drawings at the Royal Institution, with considerable profit. At Edinburgh he made an arrangement with Mr. Lizars, engraver of Selby's birds, to engrave the *Birds of America* in elephant folio size. However, of the collection of 435 copper plates in the folio, but twelve were made by Lizars, the remaining 423 being made by the Havells of London.

In the spring of 1829 Audubon returned to America with about ten published numbers of the 435 prints in the great folio edition of the *Birds of America*, and it was not until 1839 that the book was completed and published. During that period he not only traveled between thirty and thirty-five thousand miles by the crude conveyances of the time, drew and painted more than one thousand birds, and personally solicited subscriptions to his work from the public, but wrote nearly one million words of text. He kept a journal of his experiences which abounds in vivid and graphic descriptions.

The publication of the octavo of *Birds of America* was completed in about four years. In this edition the birds are scientifically classified, which adds to its value as a book of reference. Parts of *Ornithological Biography* appeared during the years from 1831 to 1838, and these plates

were later consolidated with those of *Birds of America* in a complete edition of seven volumes, issued between 1840 and 1844.

For many years Audubon continued his wanderings and his labors; he roamed from Florida and Texas to Brunswick and Labrador, and through the West, collecting materials for the books yet to be published. The results of these years were given in his *Viviparous Quadrupeds of America* and *Biography of American Quadrupeds,* published in the years from 1840 to 1854. These two works were the joint product of Audubon, his two talented sons, Victor and John, and the Rev. John Bachman.

The last years of Audubon's life were passed happily in the society of his wife and sons at his New York estate, "Minniesland," purchased in 1841. Four years before his death his eyesight, as well as the delicate mechanism of his mind, began to fail. On January 27, 1851, the great naturalist passed away at the age of sixty-six. He is buried in Trinity Church Cemetery which adjoins his own Property, now Audubon Park, on the Hudson River, near New York. Engraved on his monument is this inscription from the Benedicite, "All ye fowls of the air, bless ye the Lord, praise and magnify him forever."

Pages 104-105:

AUDUBON MEMORIAL STATE PARK, 3 miles north of Henderson, is a 500-acre tract presented to the State by citizens of Henderson County in memory of John James Audubon, who spent the years from 1808 to 1819 roaming through the forests of Kentucky. The wooded hills and valleys of the park lie along the Ohio River between a branch of the old Natchez Trail from the south and the Shawnee Indian Trail to Green River. This region, beloved by Indians and early settlers, is rich in association with the great naturalist. Here he hunted, fished, made bird studies, and sometimes carved his name in delicate letters on the trees. It is fitting that this wooded land, a survival of "the beautiful, the darling forests of Kentucky," should be preserved as a memorial to the man who said "the highest title I desire is that of the American Woodsman."

Just within the park is the gray stone MEMORIAL MUSEUM which identifies Audubon with Kentucky. The French Norman style of architecture was chosen for this building because of Audubon's French ancestry and because it permitted the round tower that contains holes in the masonry for nesting birds. A sixty-foot hall of two stories, two rooms at the back, and several galleries contain a collection of original paintings by Audubon, prints. portraits, manuscripts, and other Auduboniana. Another room is called the Transylvania Room, and contains the growing collection of material concerning the historic background of Henderson and Kentucky. Early maps, manuscripts, portraits, prints, and a wealth of historic materials have already been provided for this room. Near the park entrance there is a GATEHOUSE built of stone, a reproduction of a French Norman Inn, with a tearoom, banquet hall, and a cobbled courtyard with tea tables. In the formal French garden adjoining is a bird bath formed from the millstones found on the site of the Audubon mill

Within the park is an artificial lake set apart as a refuge for wildlife. Its secluded situation and tree-lined banks make it an ideal breeding place for birds. In a different section of the park is another lake for fishing and boating. Stone cabins for camping parties, shelter houses, open-air ovens, and trails are being constructed far away from the wildlife reserve.

From the high hills in the park there is visible the Audubon Memorial Bridge, so named by the State of Kentucky, over the Ohio River. This $3,000,000 structure, called the Henderson-Evansville Bridge, on US 41, was dedicated on July 4, 1932. It is the gateway to the North.

<u>The Kentucky Encyclopedia</u>, John E, Kleber, editor
(Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992), pp.40-41:

AUDUBON, JOHN JAMES.

America's foremost naturalist and illustrator of birds, John James Audubon was born April 26, 1785, in St. Dominque (now Haiti) on Les Cayes, his father's plantation. His father, Jean Audubon, was a French naval officer, merchant, and slave trader who had served under General LaFayette in the American Revolutionary War. Audubon's natural mother is thought to have been Jeanne Rabbine, his father's mistress, who died shortly after his birth. Audubon grew up in France under the affectionate care of his father's wife, Anne Moynette Audubon. He preferred roaming the woods and sketching birds to academic studies.

In 1803 Audubon arrived in America to manage his father's farm in Norristown, Pennsylvania. He led an active social life, with enough time to study and draw the abundant birds of his new country. His outgoing nature and accomplishments as a musician and dancer attracted Lucy Bakewell, daughter of a neighbor, who became his wife on April 5, 1808.

Audubon and Ferdinand Rozier, his fellow-Frenchman and business partner, had left Pennsylvania in 1807 to become storekeepers in Louisville. Both were aware of the frontier town's reputation as a gathering point for trappers and traders. The following year, Audubon brought his new bride to "temporary" quarters in Louisville's Indian Queen Hotel, which was to be their home for more than two years. In 1809 their first son, Victor Gifford, was born. As before, Audubon spent a great deal of his time in the woods, observing and drawing birds.

By 1810 Audubon's collection of bird portraits had grown to more than two hundred drawings. At that time, noted Scottish ornithologist Alexander Wilson arrived in Louisville to draw birds and to sell subscriptions to a published portfolio of his works. After seeing Wilson's drawings, Audubon confided that he, too, had been working for years in an effort to draw all the birds of America. Until that meeting, he had considered his efforts merely a personal pastime. However, he could see that his own drawings were superior to Wilson's.

Later that year, believing more profits could be made where there was less competition, Rozier convinced Audubon to move their business 120 miles downriver to Henderson, Kentucky. Along with Rozier, the Audubon family moved into a log cabin, setting up their store in the front room. By 1811 the ambitious Rozier suggested moving farther west, to the Mississippi River outpost of St. Genevieve, Missouri. After seeing St. Genevieve, Audubon decided that it lacked potential, and he and Rozier amicably agreed to end their partnership.

The first years in Henderson brought the Audubons relative prosperity and happiness. A second son, John Woodhouse, was born there on November 30, 1812. Audubon took advantage of frequent business trips to increase the number of drawings in his portfolio. Victor and John took an interest in their father's avocation, later becoming accomplished artists and playing roles in the successful completion and publication of Audubon's books on birds.

By 1818 Audubon had fallen into serious debt. Embittered by his misfortunes and grieving at the death of his two-year-old daughter, Lucy, in 1817, Audubon sold the family's belongings and they returned to Louisville, where he earned his living by painting portraits and giving art lessons. He was jailed briefly for his debts, and he filed for bankruptcy in the panic of 1819. The final sad note of his time in Kentucky came with the birth and death, in Louisville, of his daughter

Rosa, who was buried in an unmarked pauper's grave. Audubon and his family left Kentucky in 1819, moving first to Ohio, where he became a taxidermist for Daniel Drake's new Western Museum in Cincinnati, and in 1820 to Louisiana.

Audubon's four-volume *Birds of America* was published in 1827-38, ensuring his place in history. His artistic renderings of America's birds and animals are unsurpassed in their accuracy and beauty. The work was followed by the five-volume *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of America* (1842-45) and portfolios (1846-54). Audubon also wrote *Ornithological Biography* (1831-39), the text of the fifth volume of *Birds of America*, and *Synopsis of Birds of North America* (1839), which cataloged the birds.

Audubon spent several years of increasing senility. He died on January 27, 1851, at Minnie's Land, his home on the Hudson River (now Audubon Park in New York City), and he was buried there.

Many of Audubon's engravings, paintings, personal artifacts, and one of the few remaining complete, four-volume sets of the double-elephant *Birds of America* portfolios are on view at the John James Audubon Memorial Museum at Audubon State Park, Henderson, Kentucky.

See Lucy Bakewell Audubon, ed., *The Life of John James Audubon, the Naturalist* (New York 1894); Mary Durant and Michael Harwood, *On the Road with John James Audubon* (New York 1980).

Constance Alexander and Roy Davis

AUDUBON, LUCY (BAKEWELL).

Lucy (Bake-well) Audubon, teacher, was born in Burton-on-Trent, England, on January 18, 1787, to William and Lucy (Green) Bakewell. Her father, a wealthy Englishman, brought the family to America in 1801, and they settled near Norristown, Pennsylvania, on land adjoining the family farm of John James Audubon, the naturalist. Lucy Bakewell married Audubon on April 5, 1808.

The couple lived first in Louisville, then in Henderson, Kentucky. The store that Audubon opened there failed, and he declared bankruptcy in the Panic of 1819. The couple lost everything they owned, including Lucy's inheritance. The Audubons moved to Ohio, then Louisiana, and to New York in 1839. Lucy supported their family financially as a tutor while Audubon traveled in search of birds for the drawings that would make him famous. "If I were jealous," she once said, "I should have a bitter time of it, for every bird is my rival."

In 1830 Lucy went with Audubon on his second trip to England, where she helped arrange for the engraving and publication of *The Birds of America* (1827-38). Audubon died in 1851. Lucy edited The Life of John James Audubon, the Naturalist (1869), which included a good bit of Audubon's own writing. In 1863 she sold the original studies for *The Birds of America* to the New York Historical Society.

The Audubons had four children: Victor, John, Lucy, and Rosa. Lucy (Bakewell) Audubon died June 13, 1874, at the home of her sister-in-law in Shelbyville, Kentucky. Her ashes were buried beside Audubon's remains at Minnie's Land, their home in New York.

See Francis Hobart Herrick, *Audubon the Naturalist* (New York 1938); Carolyn E. DeLatte, *Lucy Audubon, A Biography* (Baton Rouge, La., 1982).

Gail King

John James Audubon house in Henderson, KY
(from wikipedia.org)

Museum at John James Audubon State Park located on U.S. Route 41 in Henderson, Kentucky, just south of the Ohio River. The park was established in 1934 and the museum opened on 16 July 1938.

Eagle by John J. Audubon