

THE VIVIPAROUS QUADRUPEDS OF NORTH AMERICA
1845 – 1848
by
John James Audubon and The Reverend John Bachman

In 1831, Audubon met Reverend Bachman in Charleston, South Carolina, where Bachman was pastor of the Lutheran Church. Bachman, a thorough scholar, was intellectually and emotionally involved with the study of natural history. Although an amateur in this area, he was accepted as a reputable colleague by naturalists in both America and England. Audubon and Bachman formed a close and enduring association resulting in their collaborative publication of the *Quadrupeds*. Without Bachman's assistance Audubon's final major contribution to art and science would never have been finished.

In 1843 Audubon set out on a steamboat trip up the Missouri River. The purpose of the trip was to gather material for the planned *Quadrupeds* work. Audubon was now 58 years old; his eyesight was keen, but his physical strength was ebbing. While the expedition fell disappointingly short of scientific data, Audubon finally realized his dream of visiting the American West. It was his last field expedition.

By 1846 Audubon's eyesight had so deteriorated that he turned over the painting of the *Quadrupeds* to his youngest son, John Woodhouse Audubon. It is believed young Audubon drew approximately half of the works featured in the *Quadrupeds of North America*.

Despite these drawbacks, Audubon and Bachman produced a work that then, and for half of a century thereafter, had no equal in its breadth, scientific accuracy and popular interest. The work, measuring 28 by 22 inches, is called "Imperial Size" and contains 150 hand-colored lithographs prepared by J. T. Bowen of Philadelphia. Generally bound in three volumes, the complete set cost \$300.00. A three-volume work giving the "animal biographies" was issued separately. Later, an Octavo, or "small work" edition was issued, first in 1849, and then again in 1851 and 1854. The books in these editions measured 7 inches by 10 ½ inches and contained the original 150 plates, five bonus plates, and the biographical text.

Today Audubon's beautiful creatures convey all the drama, motion and excitement of the vanishing wilderness he loved so passionately. In his writings, edited and fleshed out by Bachman, Audubon's wit and keen observations allow us to sense the fascination of a century lost.

This set was a gift to Mill Grove in 1961 from the Estate of Mrs. Charles T. Church
given in memory of her husband.