



# JOHN JAMES Audubon CENTER AT MILL GROVE

1201 Pawlings Rd, Audubon, PA 19403

610.666.5593 x101

<http://pa.audubon.org>

## VISITOR ORIENTATION

**Welcome to the first home in America of the famous artist & naturalist - John James Audubon!**

*Here is some brief information to help you with your visit. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask the volunteers or staff at the front desk in the Gift Shop for assistance.*

### MAY I TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS?

No photographs are allowed inside the museum, not even with cell phones. This is for security reasons and to help us preserve the art. Photographs are allowed outside the building and on the grounds.

### WHERE'S THE NEAREST RESTROOM?

There is NO public restroom in the museum. Please use the handicapped accessible public restroom at the back of the Pavilion (across from the parking lot) before coming down to the museum.

### WHAT IS THERE TO SEE IN THE MUSEUM?

**1<sup>st</sup> FLOOR** - A brief introductory video (viewing is optional) ~ One volume of John James Audubon's rare masterpiece, his double-elephant folio "The Birds of America" featuring 435 life-size images of birds ~ One volume of his rare "Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America" featuring 150 images of North American mammals ~ Additional individual prints, paintings and works by Audubon and his son John Woodhouse Audubon ~ Colorful wall murals created in 1954 – 1956 by the Philadelphia artists George Harding and John Hanlen.

**2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR** - Features a re-creation of Audubon's bedroom ~ A children's activity room (the mural room) ~ An interactive exhibit on Bird Banding ~ A changing exhibit gallery ~ Additional wall murals by Harding & Hanlen

**3<sup>rd</sup> FLOOR** - Includes exhibits of antique hats, stuffed animal specimens, local history materials, Native American artifacts, and mineral specimens

### WHAT ABOUT THE HOUSE?

Originally built in 1762 for James Morgan, this stone, center hall, colonial house, has sheltered many families during its life. Its most famous resident was the young John James Audubon, who lived here from 1804 – 1806 while a teenager. The owners of longest duration were the Wetherills, a Quaker family who had several generations live here almost continuously from 1813 to 1951.

In 1951, the centennial of John James Audubon's death, Montgomery County purchased the house and land, turned the house into the museum you see now and named the site the "Audubon Shrine and Wildlife Sanctuary."

Today the site is a public/private partnership between the County and the **National Audubon Society (NAS)** called "The John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove." The collections you see in the museum are primarily owned by the County, augmented by NAS collections. Because this is a significant location relating to the namesake of the National Audubon Society, in 2004 the Society entered into an agreement with the County whereby NAS leases the site from the County in order to operate the site and offer educational programming.

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## **HOW DID THE AUDUBONS HAPPEN TO OWN THE HOUSE?**

Capt. Audubon, John James's father, purchased the house and about 170 acres in 1789 as an investment. He and his family never lived here, instead installing the Quaker Thomas family as tenant farmers and managers of the farm and lead mine.

The Audubon family was French and lived in western France near Nantes. Capt. Audubon sent his 18 yr. old son to Mill Grove in 1803 for two reasons; to push young John to mature and begin to make something of himself by helping to manage the farm and lead mine, and to prevent his only son from being drafted into the armies of Napoleon, the French Emperor.

John James Audubon, at first sad to leave his family and to travel so far from home, fell in love with the all the new birds, animals and plants he found here. Although his time here was short, Audubon experienced three personal "Aha!" moments while living here, inspirations that shaped his life and career from that point forward. These were:

- He made the first documented bird-banding experiment in America.
- He came up with the idea of using wire and pins to position his bird specimens in life-like positions, which advanced his artistic accomplishments.
- He fell in love with the girl next door, Lucy Bakewell, who lived at the neighboring farm called "Fatland." Audubon ultimately married Lucy, a smart move on Audubon's part as she proved to be a stalwart companion and instrumental in his later success.

## **IS THERE ANYTHING HERE THAT IS ORIGINAL TO JOHN JAMES AUDUBON?**

Just one. Exhibited on the second floor, in the recreation of Audubon's bedroom, is an original sketch of wildflowers done by Audubon in while he was living at Mill Grove in 1806.

Because John James lived here only briefly, and at a time when he was young and did not own substantial personal possessions such as furniture, etc. (furnishings would have belonged to the tenants, the Thomas's), there are no other personal possessions in the house that belonged to Audubon while he was here.

*Look for exhibit labels throughout the museum to give you more information. Feel free to ask questions of the staff and volunteers you meet in the museum. If they can't answer your questions, they will locate someone who will be pleased to take your questions.*

## **OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **WHAT ABOUT THE GROUNDS?**

The grounds are open dawn to dusk. There is no charge to use the grounds or picnic tables. The Pavilion is used only for special events and only by reservation. There are five miles of trails on the grounds, plus the Audubon Loop Trail (the Loop Trail connects with the Schuylkill and Perkiomen Trails). The site is comprised of 212 acres. The river you see is the Perkiomen Creek. It empties into the Schuylkill River.

### **ARE DOGS ALLOWED ON THE GROUNDS?**

Because this is a wildlife sanctuary, no dogs or pets are allowed on the grounds. Thank you! We appreciate your cooperation.

**THANK YOU FOR COMING - WE HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR VISIT!**

*Please sign our guest register in the hallway. We enjoy seeing where our visitors come from, whether local or from far-flung locations!*