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## ANDREW JACKSON GRAYSON

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American ornithologists know Andrew Jackson Grayson as an early collector of western birds because of the several species and races named for him. Few realize, however, that he was also one of the earliest California pioneers, an astute observer of natural history, and a bird painter of exceptional ability. It is the objective of this short paper to provide a sketch of Grayson's life and work to accompany one of his paintings reproduced as the frontispiece of this issue of the Condor.

A brief account of Grayson's life by Walter E. Bryant published in 1891 in *Zoe* (vol. 2, pp. 34-68) provides the information that his bird paintings, together with his manuscript notes on natural history, journals, and miscellaneous papers were given to the Bancroft Library of the University of California by his widow. Bryant's article was called to my attention last year and after reading it, I was curious to see Grayson's paintings but was certainly not prepared to find them to be of such beauty and vitality.

The paintings are done in water color on bristol board and are bound in two volumes, folio size. There are 154 plates depicting approximately as many species. Grayson was a great admirer of Audubon, by whose style he was strongly influenced. He drew the birds in natural positions, on vegetation and against backgrounds characteristic of their habitats. Fruits, flowers and foliage are drawn with the same care given to the birds. Many of the paintings include landscapes. Frequently the birds are portrayed feeding or in other active behavior resulting in strong, spirited composition. The species drawn are Californian and western Mexican; most are Mexican. Among the Mexican species are some which, to my knowledge, have never been otherwise illustrated.

Grayson was born August 20, 1819, in the northwest corner of Louisiana, on the Ouachita River, where his father had a cotton plantation. That area was then sparsely populated; the region was one of bayous, stagnant lakes and cypress swamps. As a lad Grayson spent most of his time wandering in the woods, observing nature and making sketches of what he found. When he was about ten, a school was built and he started to attend. Teachers changed frequently and were poorly trained. One teacher punished the boy severely for drawing in school, and his father decided to send him to St. Mary's College in St. Louis, Missouri, where he was forbidden to study art.

A year after Grayson's return from college, his father died. Grayson invested his small inheritance in a store; but he spent most of his time in the woods and soon sold out. He had developed a desire to go west while in St. Louis, where he had met frontiersmen. So when he proposed to Miss Frances J. Timmons, he asked her to come to California with him. They were married July 21, 1842. In 1845, their only child, Edward B. Grayson, was born. They moved to St. Louis to prepare for the trip west.

On April 15, 1846, a party of emigrants with Grayson as leader set out from Independence, Missouri. Several other bands of emigrants were at Independence and they combined forces. At Fort Bridger, L. W. Hastings persuaded some of the emigrants to join him in following a new, shorter route. Grayson and some others elected to stay on the old route. The group that went with Hastings was the ill-fated Donner party.

Grayson's party safely reached Fort Hall, in what is now Idaho. Between there and the Sierra Nevada they had much trouble with Indians. Cattle were stolen, men and horses were killed. Grayson lost half of his team with the most difficult part of the journey ahead. He left his wagon with a friend, packed his horse with essential provisions, mounted his wife and baby on top, and set off on foot across the mountains. On October 12, 1846, they reached a point where they could look down into the valley of California.

As soon as they arrived in San Francisco, Grayson left his family with General Vallejo at Sonoma and volunteered in Fremont's army. He served with honor and achieved the rank of colonel.

After the war Grayson entered several business ventures in San Francisco and other towns in northern California. He started a store at the corner of Clay and Kearny streets in San Francisco. He founded the now forgotten town of Grayson or Graysonville on the San Joaquin River. He became a partner in a mercantile business in Stockton. Each of these projects was abandoned after a brief period. He bought property in San Francisco and a homesite in Marin County. The latter place, "The Thicket," he sold in 1852, when it passed into the hands of Lord Fairfax and eventually became the site of the town bearing this name.

In the fall of 1853 he joined a party sent to survey the Tulare plains. Upon his return Mrs. Grayson told him that the Mercantile Library in San Francisco had acquired a set of Audubon's "Birds of America." She had seen this work and could hardly wait to show it to him. She writes that from that day his life seemed to find its proper channel: He resolved to create such a work, if the balance of his life was to be spent completing it, and to call it "The Birds of the Pacific Slope." The Graysons had moved to San Jose, and here he began to teach himself in earnest to draw and paint and to prepare specimens.

When the second annual California state fair was held in Sacramento in 1855, Grayson exhibited drawings of three birds: the Tropic Bird, Wood Duck and Road-runner. He was awarded a silver cup. For the next two years he painted and noted the behavior of many California birds. The Hesperian Magazine published a few of his paintings as colored lithographs, but they were poor reproductions.

Meanwhile his hopes of profitable fruit-raising in the San Jose region were disappointed. He was badly in debt. He sold everything but his house and grounds, which he mortgaged and leased.

In March, 1857, he and his wife sailed on the schooner *Mary Taylor* for Mexico. Edward, their son, was in school in the East. Grayson was poor again, but his head was filled with a wonderful project. He expected to include the birds of western Mexico in his portfolios.

The ship was wrecked on the Mexican coast. His drawings, drawing paper and colors were ruined. Fortunately he was offered a surveying job on shore. This gave him an opportunity to make notes and sketches and to collect specimens. Back in San Francisco, Grayson was forced to sell the material he had gathered. Some of his specimens found their way into the Smithsonian Institution where Spencer Fullerton Baird became interested in this far western collector.

In 1859, Grayson decided to settle in Mazatlan with his family, and he remained in Mexico for nearly ten years, studying and drawing birds of the mainland and islands. During this time he performed his most important scientific work. He explored and collected on the Tres Marias, Socorro and Isabel islands. He contributed articles on his travels to newspapers in Mexico and California and to several early California magazines, most of which no longer are published. These appeared under his own name or under the pen names of "Wanderer," "Rambler," or "Occidentalus."

In March, 1866, Emperor Maximilian of Mexico granted Grayson a request for an interview. Both Maximilian and his empress, Carlotta, were delighted with Grayson's paintings and interested in his project. Through their enthusiasm a contract was arranged with the Imperial Academy of Science and Literature of Mexico. He was to receive \$200 per month to enable him to carry on his work, at the conclusion of which it would be published in four languages, and in the costliest manner. In 1867, when Maximilian's ill-starred regime ended in revolution and his execution, the contract was repudiated. At this time, also, the Graysons suffered the untimely loss of their son.

Discouraged though he was, Grayson continued his work. In April, 1869, he left Mazatlan for the Isabel Islands between the Tres Marias Islands and San Blas. There he fell ill with a fever from which he died August 17, 1869, in his fiftieth year. He was buried in Mazatlan, but his remains were later brought back to San Francisco.

After her husband's death Mrs. Grayson made efforts to accomplish the publication of his paintings and notes. Baird was enthusiastic in his praise of Grayson and shared Mrs. Grayson's hope of getting his work published. But their efforts met with no success.

It is through the kindness of Dr. George P. Hammond, Director of the Bancroft Library, University of California, that the Cooper Ornithological Club is permitted to publish an example of Grayson's work, his painting of the White-fronted Parrot (*Amazona albifrons*). The male and female shown in the frontispiece are a pair collected in February, 1868, on the Rio Mazatlan, in Sinaloa. With this example of the brilliant painting and dynamic composition of Andrew Jackson Grayson before us, it is hard to believe that this artist's work could have lain unpublished and all but forgotten for almost a century.

*Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, March 15, 1949.*