

# THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

of DREXEL UNIVERSITY

news



## **New Book Brings to Life the Making of American Science in Time for the Bicentennial of the Academy of Natural Sciences**

**PHILADELPHIA (February 20, 2012)** – A new, richly illustrated book recounts the passionate personalities and the landmark achievements that shaped the first 200 years of the oldest natural history museum in the Western Hemisphere.

*A Glorious Enterprise: The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the Making of American Science* is the first complete history of the institution, which was founded in Philadelphia in 1812. Early expeditions organized at the Academy were of central importance to the exploration of America's western wilderness, and the plant and animal specimens that were brought back formed the foundation of a collection that today contains some 18 million items.

What began as a small gathering of devoted amateurs has grown into a vibrant international center for scientific education and research. On March 24, the Academy will kick off a yearlong celebration of its past, present, and future with the opening of a major exhibition and a weekend of special events and programs.

*A Glorious Enterprise* tells the story of the brilliant and passionate men and women who endeavored to acquire and disseminate knowledge of the natural world. Thomas Jefferson, John James Audubon, Robert Peary, Ernest Hemingway, and James Bond are just a few of the colorful Academy associates profiled in this lively narrative.

Academy naturalist and historian Robert McCracken Peck and historical biographer Patricia Tyson Stroud take readers behind the scenes of the Academy, recounting the signal moments and achievements that shaped its first 200 years—from its landmark discoveries in North America and around the world, through the construction of its famed dioramas in the 1930s, to the pioneering work of Academy scientists in water pollution and conservation long before these were topics of popular concern. The 464-page book is richly illustrated throughout with hundreds of archival images and stunningly original works by acclaimed photographer Rosamond Purcell that cast specimens from the Academy's collections in a new light.

On Wednesday, April 25, at 6:30 p.m., Peck and Stroud will give a free presentation at the Academy and sign copies of their book. Boyd Matson, a lead on-air journalist for National Geographic, will interview the authors.

For more information about the Academy's Bicentennial, visit [www.ansp.org/200](http://www.ansp.org/200).

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## About the Authors

**Robert McCracken Peck** is Senior Fellow and Curator of Art and Artifacts at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University. He is the author of numerous articles and books, including *Land of the Eagle: A Natural History of North America*, *A Celebration of Birds: The Life and Art of Louis Agassiz*, *Fuertes, Headhunters and Hummingbirds: An Expedition into Ecuador*, and *All in the Bones: A Biography of Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins* (with Valerie Bramwell).

**Patricia Tyson Stroud** is an independent scholar who lives in Wayne, Pa., and East Blue Hill, Maine. She is the author of the award-winning books *The Emperor of Nature: Charles-Lucien Bonaparte and His World*, *The Man Who Had Been King: The American Exile of Napoleon's Brother Joseph*, and *Thomas Say: New World Naturalist*.

**Rosamond Purcell** has exhibited internationally and her work has been featured in *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic*, and *Slate*. She is the author of several books, including *Illuminations: A Bestiary* (with Stephen Jay Gould), *Swift as a Shadow: Extinct and Endangered Animals*, and *Owls Head: On the Nature of Lost Things*.

University of Pennsylvania Press, ISBN 978-0-8122-4380-2 | \$75 | £49

For more information about the book: <http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/14992.html>

For review copies, contact Saunders Robinson, Penn Press Publicist, [jorobin@upenn.edu](mailto:jorobin@upenn.edu), 215-898-1764.

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*Founded in 1812, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University is America's oldest natural history museum and a world leader in biodiversity and environmental research. For 200 years, the Academy has carried out its mission to encourage and cultivate the sciences, exploring the remarkable diversity of our natural world and sharing these discoveries with the public through innovative exhibits, publications, and educational programming.*

*HOURS: Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. ADMISSION: \$12 adults; \$10 children 3–12, seniors, college students, and military personnel; free for members and children under 3. \$2 fee for Butterflies! PHONE: 215-299-1000*