

JACOB POST GIRAUD JR.

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The first regional bird study in our state, "The Birds of Long Island" by Jacob Post Giraud Jr., was published in 1844. Its author was born in New York City on August 22, 1811. The following is quoted from a letter written by George N. Lawrence to William Dutcher: "Jacob Post Giraud was born in New York and his business was that of a dealer in provisions. It seemed to consist mainly of furnishing supplies to the shipping. He had not the lively, companionable manners of his friend P. Brasher, but was rather reserved. He was perfectly reliable, firm in his friendship and very decided in his opinions."

Although he must be classed as an amateur, it is evident that Giraud was, throughout his life, seriously interested in the study of birds. He built up a large collection of mounted birds, corresponded with the leading ornithologists in this country, and was familiar with the ornithological literature of the period.

His contributions to the literature were two in number, consisting of the work mentioned above and a somewhat curious publication entitled "A Description of Sixteen New Species of North American Birds Described in the Annals of the New York Lyceum of Natural History, Collected in Texas 1838", New York, George F. Nesbitt, Printer 1841. This work is now very rare and is a collector's item. At the time of its publication it was the subject of considerable controversy, since most of the species described are Mexican. They were never described in the Annals of the New York Lyceum as stated on the title page. For a complete account of this publication the reader is referred to "Auk", Volume 36, pp. 464-472. (October 1919).

"The Birds of Long Island" contains descriptions of 286 species. It is of historic value today since it gives a reliable picture, particularly of shore birds and other game species, in the early nineteenth century. It has been called "the best piece of local ornithological work that had appeared up to that time."

About 1860 Giraud moved to Poughkeepsie, and, during the last years of his life took a decided interest in Vassar College, which had recently been founded in that city. In 1867 he gave his collection of about 800 mounted specimens of North American birds to the college. Copies of Giraud's correspondence which I have been privileged to examine through the courtesy of Miss Dorothy Plum of the Vassar Library indicate that he attempted to secure additional species in order to present to the college as complete a collection as possible. He provided a fund for the purchase of additional specimens by the college. Later, through his will, Giraud left money to endow a professorship of Natural History at Vassar. Giraud died at his residence on the south road, two miles below Poughkeepsie, on July 19, 1870 and is buried in the Marble Cemetery, Second Street, New York City.

Watertown