The Cleveland Public Library is fortunate to own a complete set of the 1860 Bien edition of John James Audubon’s masterpiece *The Birds of America*. This 2nd edition, reissued by J.J. Audubon’s son, John Woodhouse Audubon, seven years after his father’s death was an ambitious project taken on to ease the family’s financial difficulties. The American publisher Roe Lockwood Co. was enlisted to publish the book and German-American lithographer Julius Bien was hired to recreate Audubon’s masterpiece.

As a skilled printmaker, Julius Bien, used the emerging print technology of chromolithography to achieve the look of a hand-colored print at a much lower cost. The monumental task of reproducing *The Birds of America* proved to be anything but inexpensive and was very time consuming, and the cost of printing plus the outbreak of the Civil War bankrupted the project. The publisher was only able to complete 150 of the 435 bird species from the original on 105 plates and it has been estimated that less than 100 sets were issued. Despite this, the 1860 Bien edition is considered the most beautiful example of chromolithography in America, making it an American masterpiece in its own right.

According to WorldCat, the Cleveland Public Library is one of only 16 libraries in the world that owns a complete 1860 Bien edition of *Birds of America*.