



ISAAC SPRAGUE & the Art of Discovery

JANUARY 31 - MAY 2, 2010

*Opening reception
Sunday, January 31, 1-5pm
Remarks by the curators 3pm*

ISAAC SPRAGUE (1811-95) was one of the greatest American bird and botanical artists of the 19th century, and yet he is largely unknown. This exhibition shines a well-deserved spotlight on his work, incorporating new research on his life and presenting some never-before-exhibited artworks.

A Hingham native, in 1843 Sprague accompanied John James Audubon on his trip West to observe and draw animals and plants for the *Quadrupeds of North America*. And for twenty years he worked at Harvard with the famed botanist Asa Gray, introducing American plants to the world through his illustrations for Gray's ground-breaking books. Audubon described his watercolors as "truly wonderful."

THIS EXHIBITION will be the first museum exhibition in 40 years to focus on Sprague's work—since exhibits at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Houghton Library at Harvard University in the 1960s. It will bring together works from ten private collections and seven museum collections, for the most significant exhibition of his work to date. Visitors will view works from the early years in Hingham, the trip west with Audubon, the technical botanical work at Harvard, a drawing and lithographs from *The Scenery of the White Mountains*, and many paintings of birds, a subject he pursued throughout his life.