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Studying Wisconsin: The Life of Increase Lapham, early chronicler of plants, rocks, rivers, mounds and all things Wisconsin

Martha Bergland, Paul G. Hayes

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With masterful storytelling, Bergland and Hayes demonstrate how Lapham blended his ravenous curiosity with an equable temperament and a passion for detail to create a legacy that is still relevant today.
—John Gurda

In this long overdue tribute to Wisconsin's first scientist, authors Martha Bergland and Paul G. Hayes explore the remarkable life and achievements of Increase Lapham (1811–1875). Lapham's ability to observe, understand, and meticulously catalog the natural world marked all of his work, from his days as a teenage surveyor on the Erie Canal to his last great contribution as state geologist.

Self-taught, Lapham mastered botany, geology, archaeology, limnology, mineralogy, engineering, meteorology, and cartography. A prolific writer, his 1844 guide to the territory was the first book published in Wisconsin. Asked late in life which field of science was his specialty, he replied simply, "I am studying Wisconsin."

Lapham identified and preserved thousands of botanical specimens. He surveyed and mapped Wisconsin's effigy mounds. He was a force behind the creation of the National Weather Service, lobbying for a storm warning system to protect Great Lakes sailors. Told in compelling detail through Lapham's letters, journals, books, and articles, Studying Wisconsin chronicles the life and times of Wisconsin's pioneer citizen-scientist.

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