



HAWTHORNE  
Fine Art

**EDWARD RUGGLES (1818-1867)**

*Along the Hudson Highlands*

Oil on board

5 1/8 x 3 9/16 inches

Signed on verso

Edward Ruggles, artist and physician, was born in Rochester, Massachusetts in 1818. The family moved to Fall River, Massachusetts in 1826, where his father became the president of the local bank and worked as an agent for a manufacturing company. Ruggles began his study of medicine at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine in 1840 and 1841, but left school for a period before continuing his studies in Paris in 1845. Inspired by the art that surrounded him in Paris, Ruggles began painting as a pastime, though it remains unclear if Ruggles ever studied professionally.

Upon his return to the United States in 1847, Ruggles opened a successful medical practice in Brooklyn, Long Island. The same year, he became a member of the American Art Union and by 1851, he was an honorary member of the National Academy, where he exhibited intermittently throughout the next decade. Ruggles married Mary Ann Voorhees, who belonged to an esteemed and prominent Brooklyn family and was an artist herself who also painted and exhibited at the National Academy in New York. The couple never had children.

It is said that around 1860, friends of Dr. Ruggles encouraged him to exhibit his paintings, which gained immediate popularity among the public. This enthusiastic reception supposedly spurred him to retire from his medical practice to become a full-fledged artist. However, the fact that exhibition records indicate he had begun showing his work ten years earlier gives doubt to these claims. It is more likely that the death of his wealthy father in 1857, and Ruggles' subsequent sizeable inheritance, was the event that prompted him to fully dedicate himself to art.

Ruggles based many of his paintings on scenes he encountered during his travels in Europe, Canada, Connecticut and Massachusetts (particularly Cape Cod). During the summer of 1865, he went to New Hampshire to paint the White Mountains, where the scenery enchanted him, inspiring him to return the following summer to continue capturing the scenic landscape.



## HAWTHORNE Fine Art

Ruggles' artistic career was cut short when he died in 1867 at the age of forty-eight. He is buried at the historic Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York. While some criticized Ruggles for giving up his respected career as a gifted physician to pursue art, he achieved notable artistic and commercial success. Ruggles was primarily known for painting tiny landscapes executed in oil ranging from a mere 3 ¾ x 5 ¼ inches to 6 x 8 inches in size. These cabinet pictures, often referred to as "The Ruggles' Gems," were very popular among collectors in New York and New England, and were sold by bookstores for several years throughout his lifetime. Their small size also made them appealing as gifts.<sup>1</sup>

Though many of Ruggles' works are now in private collections, the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts owns three of his paintings.

This charming painting is representative of the typical style of "Ruggles' Gems," which are admired for their perceptive handling of color and natural light and their seemingly spontaneous execution.<sup>2</sup> Here, a figure clothed in red and white stands on the shore the Hudson River, where two boaters sit in their small vessel and a large sailboat floats in the distance. The nearby Catskill Mountains in the background are situated against a pale blue sky filled with soft white clouds, which dominates the upper half of the painting.



Sanford Robinson Gifford. *South Bay, on the Hudson, near Hudson, New York*. Oil on canvas, 1864, 12 ½ x 25 ½ in. Private collection, Courtesy of Garzoli Gallery & Joel B. Garzoli Fine Art.

---

<sup>1</sup> Biographical information from "Edward Ruggles," askART, accessed Sep. 14, 2017, [http://www.askart.com/artist\\_bio/Edward\\_Ruggles/10046592/Edward\\_Ruggles.aspx](http://www.askart.com/artist_bio/Edward_Ruggles/10046592/Edward_Ruggles.aspx).

<sup>2</sup> *American Paintings at Harvard*, vol. 1, Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr. and Melissa Renn, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008): 422.



HAWTHORNE  
Fine Art

Around the same time of this painting, Hudson River School landscape painter, Sanford R. Gifford was painting similar views of the Catskill Mountains near his hometown of Hudson, New York along the South Bay. Ruggles may have been painting from a similar viewpoint as Gifford, as the mountain in *Along the Hudson Highlands* bears resemblance to Gifford's favored peak, Mount Merino.