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# Carl Gutherz and the Northwest Landscape



*Gutherz, about 1884, the year he left Minnesota for Europe*

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Stream with Wooded Banks, Minnesota, *watercolor, about 1873-83*

**AS** surely St. Paul, the beautiful city at the navigable head of the greatest of rivers, should become to the Northwest what Paris is to the world—the great art city,” declared Carl K. Guthertz in 1897. An established artist then living in Washington, D.C., Guthertz wrote from the perspective of three decades of connection with the art scene in the “picturesque” capital city of Minnesota, a connection that began when he first traveled up the Mississippi River from Memphis in the summer of 1866.<sup>1</sup>

In the last half of the nineteenth century, Swiss-born artist Carl Guthertz (1844–1907) was a frequent visitor to St. Paul. Between 1866 and 1884 he journeyed to

Minnesota from Memphis and St. Louis to spend summers with relatives while he painted and exhibited his work. Although allegorical painting was his passion and the source of his later success in the international art world, Guthertz’s early career in the United States consisted of teaching and of executing commissions for portraits, magazine illustrations, and carnival designs. But exclusive to his travels north were landscapes that he produced in Minnesota and on excursions farther west into Dakota Territory. This relatively unknown series of pictures in the collection of the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis, Tennessee, was painted over a nineteen-year period as the western frontier yielded to

<sup>1</sup> Carl Guthertz, “St. Paul as an Art Center,” *St. Paul Dispatch*, Dec. 18, 1897, p. 11.

the onset of the industrial age in America. A discussion of the pictures reveals an often overlooked aspect of this artist's career in the Mississippi River valley and provides us with yet another glimpse of lands that were inevitably changed as settlement continued westward.<sup>2</sup>

Gutherz was the second oldest of six children in the family of Heinrich and Henrietta Gutherz, who immigrated to the United States from Switzerland in 1851. They first settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, where Heinrich, who had been a schoolteacher in Switzerland, established a terra-cotta works that failed after a few years. The family moved to Memphis in 1859–60 and remained there throughout the Civil War; Heinrich Gutherz died during this period. In 1860 Carl began work as a mechanical draftsman at a foundry while his older brother, Gottfried (Fred) G. Gutherz, joined the First Tennessee Volunteer Regiment and fought for the Confederacy. During the Northern occupation of the city, Carl's sister, Lena, met and married Mark Delos Flower, a Union soldier, in 1864. The couple moved to St. Paul shortly after the war, and it was a visit to their home that first brought Carl Gutherz north in 1866. By this time he had a proven talent for drawing and an interest in pursuing a career as an artist.<sup>3</sup>

As a young boy Gutherz had developed a deep love of nature, a passion instilled in him by his parents. Following this impulse he turned to the landscape when he began to practice his art, stating in his journal, "Nature to me [was] always beautiful [*sic*]—when I commenced to study her for the purpose of reproducing or portraying her she became Devine." Such comments suggest a spiritual approach toward the landscape, similar to the view espoused by advocates of Ruskinian prin-

ciples and members of the Hudson River School that flourished in America in the midnineteenth century. English art critic and social reformer John Ruskin (1819–1900) linked art, nature, and morality in his five-volume work *Modern Painters* (1843–60) and other writings. Artists of the Hudson River School painted highly romanticized views of the American landscape, particularly along that river in New York State. Although the connection that Gutherz recognized between nature, religion, and art would substantially influence his later work, its effect on his early landscapes is not as apparent. Rather, he produced only simple visual accountings of the countryside around him, and, as might be expected from an artist in the Mississippi valley, the river was a compelling subject.<sup>4</sup>

On his early trips to St. Paul from 1866 to 1869, Gutherz sketched the scenery as he traveled by steamboat up the Mississippi from Memphis. He later recalled the look of the state's capital city at that time:

There was little then of note at St. Paul beyond the river front, Third Street and the old capitol. Dayton's Bluff was far away, and the trip to Fort Snelling, Minnehaha, and St. Anthony, was accomplished and enjoyed by wagon road along the river, crossing the stream by the old ferry, picturesque to ideality.

Once in the city he toured the surrounding areas, painting sites like Minneopa Falls (west of Mankato) and Fort Snelling, which had long been popular among artists. Although he shared a studio in Memphis with portrait painter M. W. Clark, his own work was still that of a self-taught amateur. These early pictures were small

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<sup>2</sup> Gutherz designed costumes, floats, and printed material for the Memphis Mardi Gras in 1873–81 and also for the Carnival of the Veiled Prophet in St. Louis in the 1880s.

General information on Carl Gutherz has been gathered from the following sources: Lilian Whiting, "The Art of Carl Gutherz," *International Studio* 24 (1905): lxxi–lxxvii; Douglas Hyland, "Carl Gutherz and His Utopian Vision," *Interpretations* (Memphis, Tenn.) 13 (Spring 1982): 45–92; Marilyn Masler, "Carl Gutherz: Memphis Beginnings," *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers* 46 (1992): 59–72; the extensive Gutherz collection of original art and archival material in the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art (MBMA), given to the museum by Marshall F. Goodheart (the artist's son) and his wife, Elizabeth, during the last twenty years; "Gutherz, Carl," *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 4:58–59; Isaac Oliver Peterson, "Art in St. Paul as Recorded in the Contemporary Newspapers" (Master's thesis, University of Minnesota, 1942). Newspapers on microfilm and other information were obtained from the Minnesota Historical Society, with special thanks to curator Thomas O'Sullivan for his assistance. All artwork cited, unless otherwise noted, is in the collection of the MBMA.

<sup>3</sup> Another Gutherz sister, Anna, also married a Union soldier—William Delos Hawkins, a cousin of Mark Flower—in Memphis in 1864. She and her five children eventually lived in St. Paul as well. Virginia Dahleen Brooks, *Markell Conley Brooks: Her Ancestors and Descendants* (N.p., 1973), 5, 35, 40–41, 43–45, 47, 50, 55–58.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Gutherz, *Black Book* (unpublished journal, ca. 1891–92), 18–19, MBMA collection, gift of Marshall and Elizabeth Goodheart 86.22.572. The idiosyncratic spelling is typical of Gutherz's journal writings. For Ruskin's influence on American artists, see Linda S. Ferber and William H. Gerdtz, *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985).



Guthertz's popular allegorical oil on canvas, *Awakening of Spring*, 1872

renderings in pencil and watercolor executed with a cautious hand.<sup>5</sup>

It was only after a sojourn abroad, studying in Paris, Munich, Brussels, and Rome, that Guthertz's work took on a more polished and professional character. On the advice of family and friends he studied art in Europe from 1869 to 1872. The European academies sharpened his skills and his intellect, and the tutelage of French masters Isidore Pils (1813–75) and Guillaume-Alphonse Cabasson (1814–84) determined the romantic turn that his art would take in the years to follow.

**W**hen Guthertz arrived back in the United States in September 1872, he had hopes of building a new career in the Mississippi River valley. This region, which bordered the quickly diminishing frontier, still served as a gathering and departure point for those

artists who sought the romance, wilderness, and beauty of the western territories. Earlier, Karl Bodmer (1809–93) and George Catlin (1796–1872) had documented lands up the Missouri River, and contemporary artists like Thomas Moran (1837–1926) and Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) continued to accompany government and commercial expeditions to the West. If Guthertz had formed any serious intention of taking up the profession of an artist-reporter, he probably could have found help through his brother-in-law, Mark Flower.<sup>6</sup>

Flower, a Republican politician, served as state adjutant general from 1870 to 1875 and held other government appointments thereafter. He also engaged in a variety of businesses, including owning a steamboat and a fleet of barges that operated on the Mississippi River and its tributaries in the mid-1870s. No doubt Flower's

<sup>5</sup> Guthertz, "St. Paul as an Art Center"; "Fine Art in Memphis," *Commercial Appeal* (Memphis), Mar. 19, 1867.

<sup>6</sup> "Personal," *Commercial Appeal*, Sept. 28, 1872; Howard R. Lamar, "An Overview of Westward Expansion," in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920*, ed. William H. Truettner (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 7, 20–21.

connections in government and the river trade would have proven helpful to Gutherz if topographical illustration had interested him. But at a time when the majestic natural wonders of America fascinated many artists and certainly offered more economic potential, Gutherz felt that his path to greatness lay in the romantic figural images that he had embraced in Europe (for example, *Awakening of Spring*, painted in 1872). Nonetheless, although the landscape would no longer be of primary importance in Gutherz's stylistic development, he continued to sketch nature *plein air*—a practice from his youth that he would never abandon.<sup>7</sup>

Surprisingly, in spite of his strong affinity for idealized images, Gutherz chose not to romanticize American scenery. In fact, he did not incorporate any type of native subject matter into his more ambitious allegorical works. In retrospect, this may have been the decisive factor that contributed to his lack of recognition as an American artist. Other painters, searching for an artistic identity in America, drew upon their experiences there. They exploited such themes as the exotic terrain,

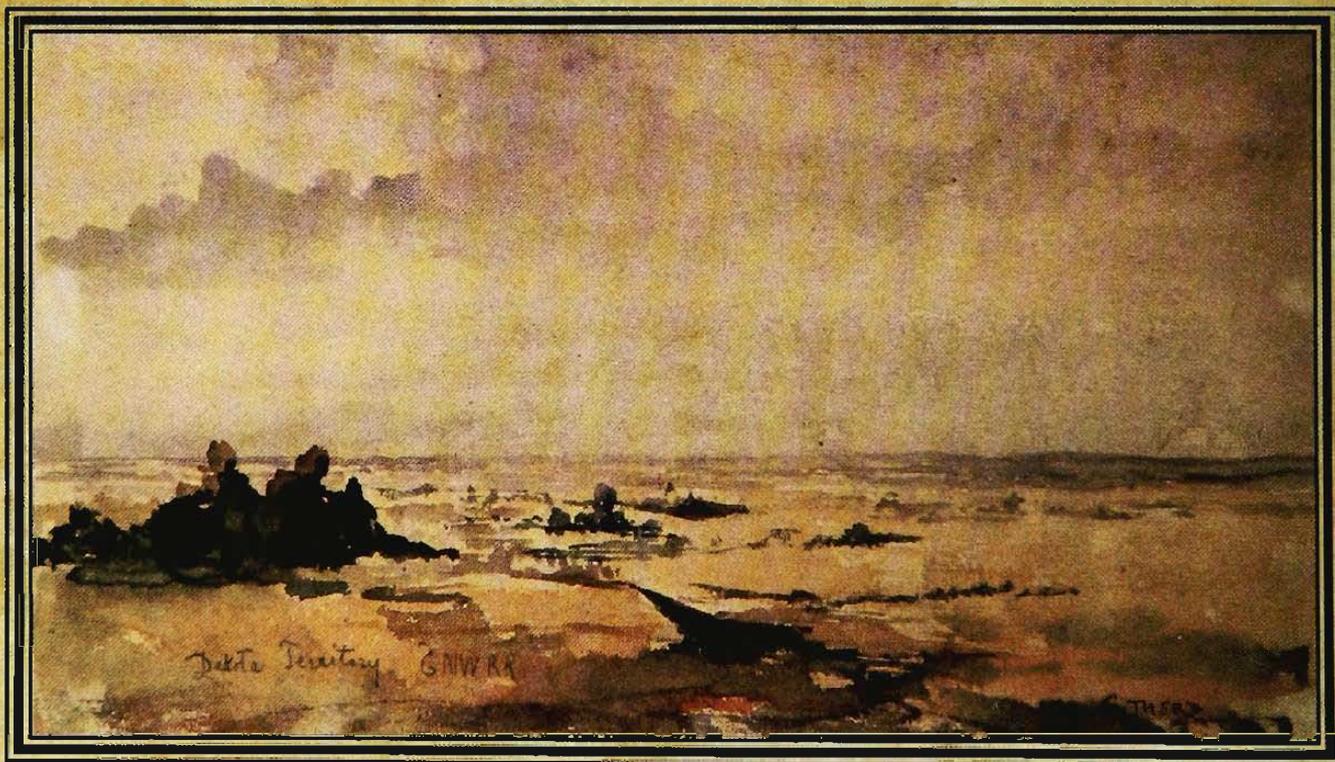
the white explorer, the mystique of the Indian, and slave culture. But Gutherz, who was now thoroughly enamored with European artistic traditions, favored classical and religious subjects. He argued that his position was not un-American. Quite the contrary:

My Ideal of Art and the muse at whose shrine I worship, is the universal, and the emotions which stir the comon [*sic*] heart of man—It is therefore international. . . . [I]t is also more especially American, because we are composed of all nations, and of all creeds of the earth.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, Thomas Moran—a zealous nationalist working in the Grand Tetons during this same period—voiced himself “as being opposed to the foreign subject in painting when we have every phase of landscape and subject at home.” He declared: “I’ll paint as an American, on an American basis, and American only.” What qualities precisely constituted “American art” was a question that each artist answered according to his or her own criteria. Gutherz, who argued for a theory of

<sup>7</sup> Brooks, *Markell Conley Brooks*, 48–50.

<sup>8</sup> Gutherz, *Green Book* (unpublished journal, ca. 1891–93), 117, MBMA collection, gift of Marshall and Elizabeth Goodheart 86.22.571.



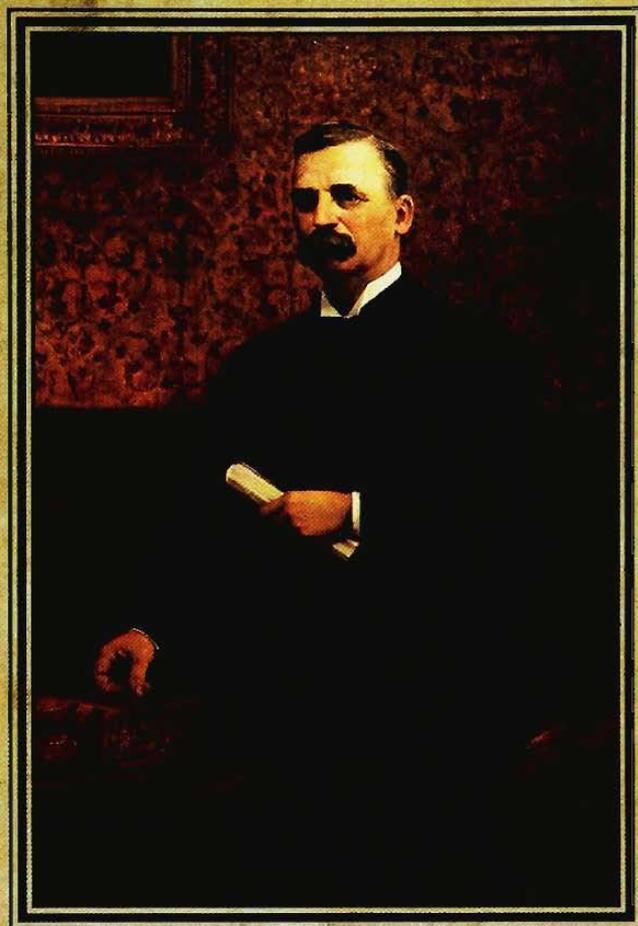
View of the Plains, Dakota Territory, *watercolor*, about 1880

universality, aspired to transcend the particular in order to express a more spiritual message. He believed that underlying thought was essential to "great" art. Applying this concept to distinct American imagery was a dilemma he never fully resolved, however, although artists in America had been struggling with it for decades.<sup>9</sup>

Years earlier the artist Thomas Cole (1801–48), in combining his sense of idealism and the American wilderness, had employed a similar notion of what he called "[drawing] a veil over the common details." This notion elevated his Arcadian landscapes from specific site recordings toward a more essential approach, one that evoked "a characteristic spirit of nature." But unlike Cole and his successors in the Hudson River School who had made the transition stylistically, Gutherz was unable or unwilling to integrate his loftier aspirations with novel American pictorial elements. As a result, his American images, which were mainly landscapes, remained purely descriptive without any higher expressive intent.<sup>10</sup>

From 1873 to 1875 Gutherz commuted regularly between Memphis and St. Paul, establishing a modest but growing reputation in both cities. In his attempt to support himself and to establish his niche as a painter in the Midwest, Carl Gutherz found little demand for the allegorical works he preferred. As a result, he continued to produce landscapes and took up portraiture as well. Trying to satisfy his own artistic goals and to survive economically tested the broad range of his talents. In a single month the *St. Paul Pioneer* reported that he had finished a picture of "Cleopatra's historic descent of the Nile," was "engaged in painting several portraits to the order of St. Paul gentlemen," and had been seen "sketching some of the scenery about the Dalles of the St. Croix."<sup>11</sup>

When Gutherz had first returned to St. Paul in 1873 after his European studies, the press reported that Huntington's Gallery on the corner of Third and Minnesota streets was his "headquarters." But the following year he opened a small studio at the Flowers' residence at 162 Broadway. A glimpse into his atelier by a journalist in August 1874 prompted these remarks:



*Gutherz's portrait of Andrew McGill, Minnesota's tenth governor, painted in 1889 in Paris*

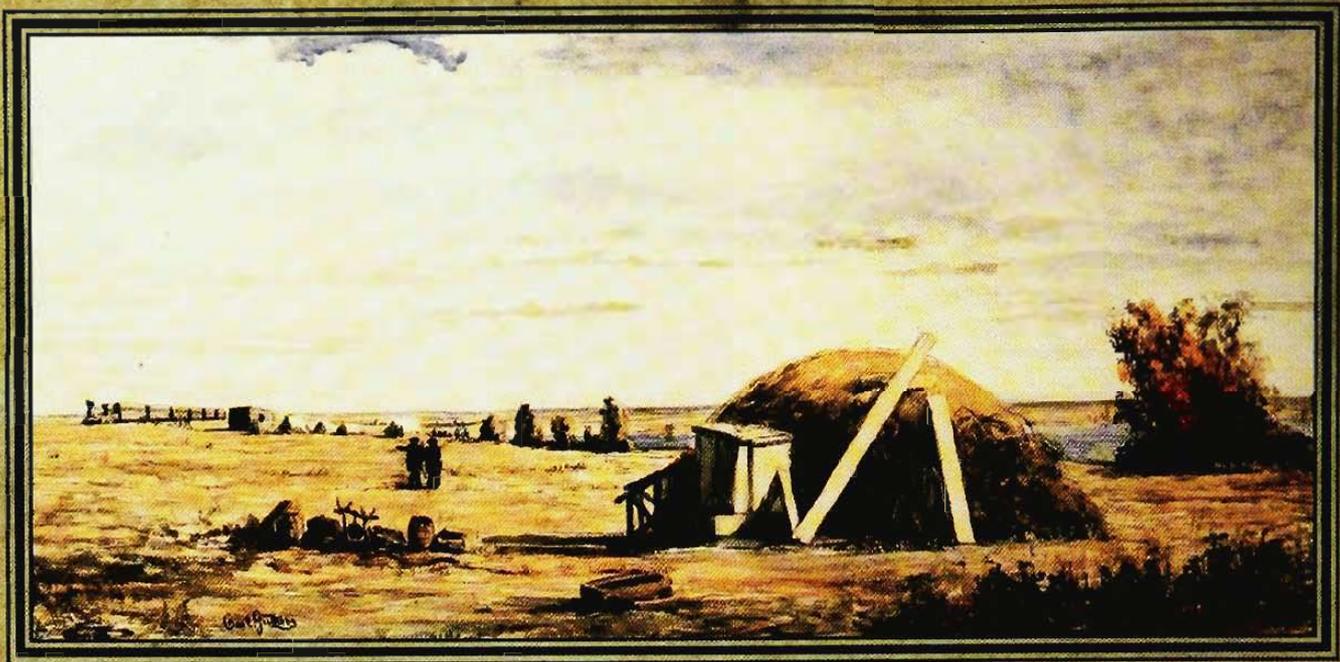
His rooms are decorated with numerous sketches of foreign and home scenery that cannot fail to interest and please the connoisseur. True, these sketches of nature, painted as simple outlines or studies, are not finished pictures, and therefore do not exhibit the finest skill of the painter, but the harmony of color and the bold and perfect execution in drawing command the admiration of the beholder.

From this account, landscapes were the most conspicuous works in Gutherz's studio. But the reviewer did not fail to mention the prominent local citizens that Gutherz had painted over the past year, including ex-

<sup>9</sup> Carol Clark, *Thomas Moran: Watercolors of the American West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 33; Gutherz, *Black Book*, 123–25.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism and the American Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 63, 70; for other American artists' solutions to the real-ideal aesthetic, see p. 80–109.

<sup>11</sup> "Art," *St. Paul Pioneer*, Oct. 11, 20, 25—all 1874.



Encampment between the Railroad and the River, Dakota Territory, watercolor over pencil, about 1880

governors Alexander Ramsey and Horace Austin. The article also listed the ideal paintings that Gutherz felt were his most important body of work to date, most of which could be viewed at various locations throughout the city.<sup>12</sup>

As was not uncommon at the time, St. Paul artists often displayed their art at local businesses. Booksellers were particularly accommodating; Gutherz regularly showed his work at F. A. Taylor's and D. D. Merrill's, both on East Third Street. Another bookstore popular with artists was Metcalf and Dixon on Jackson Street; on several occasions Gutherz exhibited paintings there, most notably showing with Joseph R. Meeker (1827–89), who was visiting the city from St. Louis in September 1874. Meeker had successfully integrated poetic allegory with a distinct feature of the American terrain, the Louisiana bayou, to produce a popular series of landscapes. Gutherz shared Meeker's interest in symbolism, myths, and American literature. No doubt he studied Meeker's *Evangeline* with interest when it was shown alongside his landscapes and portraits at Metcalf and Dixon. But even Meeker's style appears to

have had little influence on Gutherz's approach to the American landscape during this period, which still remained factual and free from any idealized treatment.<sup>13</sup>

Less than a month after Meeker returned to St. Louis in October 1874, Gutherz also traveled to that city for an extended visit. By the summer of 1875 he was showing his work in a St. Louis gallery. Up to this point his future had been unclear, but in the autumn of 1875 Gutherz accepted a position as professor of art at Washington University in St. Louis. He would retain this appointment for the next nine years, Meeker remaining a friend and colleague throughout his tenure. During this time Gutherz assisted Halsey G. Ives in developing the art department and establishing the St. Louis School and Museum of Fine Arts in 1881 (now the St. Louis Art Museum), one of the first art museums west of the Mississippi. While in St. Louis his personal life also prospered. He married Katherine Scruggs in Memphis in 1879, with whom he would have a daughter, Suzanne, and two sons, Godfriede and Fredrick Marshall (later Marshall F. Goodheart).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *St. Paul Pioneer*, Aug. 13, 1873; "Art in St. Paul, Carl Gutherz," *St. Paul Pioneer*, Aug. 9, 1874.

<sup>13</sup> "Art," *St. Paul Pioneer*, Sept. 27, 1874.

<sup>14</sup> *St. Paul Pioneer*, Oct. 29, 1874; "Personal," *Commercial Appeal*, Apr. 21, 1875; Peterson, "Art in St. Paul," 80–82; Brooks, *Markell Conley Brooks*, 55.

Gutherz's academic training made him well suited to the role of teacher, and the class schedule gave him the summer months to travel and paint outside of his studio. During these periods he continued to migrate to Minnesota with his family to escape the heat of St. Louis. With the security of a regular income, Gutherz could afford to indulge himself in painting works like *Sappho* (1876) and *A MidSummer Night's Dream* (1882), which he prepared for such professional showings as the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and the National Academy of Design's annual exhibitions. In contrast to these efforts, the sketches of the western frontier painted during summer trips to St. Paul reflect more of a leisure pastime. Most were done after 1880, when the railroads had spread across the Minnesota borders and through Dakota Territory, marking the last decade of westward expansion.<sup>15</sup>

The discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1874 and the construction of the railroads across the Great Plains contributed further to the relinquishing of Indian lands and the influx of settlers. By the 1880s gold miners, homesteaders, and cowboys had flocked into Dakota Territory. Artists were also known to the region: since the 1830s they had been chronicling life along the upper Missouri River. Aside from Catlin and Bodmer, John James Audubon (1785–1851) and Alfred Jacob Miller (1810–74) were among those who had ventured there on river excursions. But during the "Great Dakota Boom" the train was a popular mode of travel, and on at least one occasion Gutherz rode the Chicago and Northwestern Railway (which by 1880 ran from St. Paul to Pierre) into the area. He sketched the scenery as it passed by his window, working quickly in watercolor and adding notations in pencil. One of the inscriptions,

"Made on the cars while going at a rate of 40 miles an hour," attests to their spontaneity. In these small studies he captured the coloring, sparseness, and flatness of the expanse, affirming the sentiment that "Dakota was mostly earth and sky."<sup>16</sup>

Other small watercolors of varying technique and subject matter suggest that Gutherz made several trips into the western territory in the early 1880s. They include a scene painted in broad, loose strokes of a river channeling through an endless vista of red-ocher earth. Another is a more detailed sketch of an encampment set between the railroad and a river. Still another, a delicate rendering of a striated rock formation reflected upon water, may have been done aboard a riverboat. These small-scale studies reflect no higher objective than to serve as travel sketches. But in the autumn of 1883 Gutherz approached his travel drawings with more serious intentions. At this time he began work on a large salon painting that would express the culmination of his western experience.

*Dakota*, Gutherz's only American landscape of international note, depicts the plowing of a wheat field on one of the huge "bonanza" farms that were established in the Red River Valley in the 1870s and 1880s. These corporate-run farms, which were highly mechanized, came to represent the new dawn of agriculture in America. Gutherz may have been moved to paint the scene in response to the overwhelming sentiment for western expansion that swept the St. Paul area in 1883 when the Northern Pacific finished its historic rail line from St. Paul to the Pacific Coast. The celebrations in September of that year aroused a fervent outpouring of patriotism as the city hosted dignitaries and celebrities who rode the railroad on its maiden journey west.<sup>17</sup>

Gutherz, whose artistic talents were well known to

<sup>15</sup> *A MidSummer Night's Dream* (private collection) was shown at the Annual National Academy of Design Exhibition, 1882, No. 626. *Sappho* (private collection) was originally intended for the Philadelphia Centennial (1876) but was not completed on time. Gutherz sent two other allegorical works, *Ecce Homo* (1875; unlocated) and *Awakening of Spring* (1872); the latter received a medal.

<sup>16</sup> John Milton, *South Dakota: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 24–25, 73–74; J. Leonard Jennewein and Jane Boorman, eds., *Dakota Panorama: A History of the Dakota Territory* (Freeman, S. Dak.: Pine Hill Press, 1988), 230. The full inscription on sketch 68.11.17d reads: "near the Dekota teritory and state line of Minnesota Chicago and Northwestern RR made on the cars while going at a rate of 40 miles an hour."

<sup>17</sup> *Dakota* (or *Ploughing in Dakota* or *Ploughing in North Dakota*), in the collection of the United States Capitol, was purchased by the federal government in 1887; preparatory sketches and studies for the work are in the MBMA collection. The 1883 event was reported by the *Daily Pioneer Press* (St. Paul and Minneapolis), Sept. 3–5, 1883. For discussion of the railroad and its effects upon American art and artists, see Patricia Hills, "Picturing Progress in the Era of Westward Expansion," in *The West as America*, ed. Truettner, 126–39; also Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting c. 1830–1865* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 123–37. For the history of bonanza farms, see Hiram M. Drache, *The Day of the Bonanza: A History of Bonanza Farming in the Red River Valley of the North* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1964).



*Horse studies for Dakota, oil on canvas, 1883*

the citizens of St. Paul by this time, was called upon to assist with the design of the commemorative invitations and pamphlets. He produced a sketch of the St. Paul riverfront with a Northern Pacific train running along the shoreline. As an active participant in the festivities, Guthertz was also one of the prestigious guests selected to attend St. Paul's ceremonial banquet. Henry F. Farny (1847–1916) of Cincinnati, a notable illustrator and painter, was also there. One of the few artists still doing work on Dakota themes, Farny first traveled up the Missouri River to Fort Yates in 1881. On that trip he collected a substantial amount of material on the Dakota people, and he subsequently became absorbed with painting Indian subjects. In the fall of 1883 *Century Magazine* commissioned Farny to document the lands along the Northern Pacific rail line, as a member of the party accompanying Henry Villard, the railroad's president. Perhaps a conversation with Farny was the spur that motivated Guthertz to travel to Dakota Territory one more time.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "The Gala Day! The Invitations, Etc.," Aug. 28, 1883, "Monday's Doings: The Banquet," Sept. 1, 1883, and "The Banquet," Sept. 3, 1883—all in the *St. Paul Daily Dispatch*. For an overview of Farny's life and work, see Denny Carter, *Henry Farny* (New York: Watson-Guption in co-operation with the Cincinnati Art Museum, 1978).

<sup>19</sup> "The St. Paul Art League," *Sunday Pioneer Press* (St. Paul and Minneapolis), Oct. 7, 1883, p. 12. For a discussion of other American farming scenes, see Elizabeth Johns, "Settlement and Development," in *The West as America*, ed. Truettner, 226–33.

Only a few weeks after the banquet, in mid-September, Carl Guthertz visited the northern Dakota farms where he gathered ideas and compiled a series of preliminary sketches in pencil, watercolor, and oil. He closely studied the horses and their movements in relation to the plow, and he drew details of the mechanics of the plowing equipment. He also worked up large compositional sketches of the farmland. When Guthertz returned to Minnesota he addressed the St. Paul Art League, discussing his plans for an elaborate painting that would measure ten feet square. Although the subject matter of these large farms was not new to Americans, Guthertz, who hoped

to show the finished canvas in Paris, believed Europeans would find it fascinating.<sup>19</sup>

Guthertz expressed his personal view of western expansion in essays recorded in his journals in the early 1890s. Several sections from the essays elaborate upon the establishment of a utopian society, a topic that Guthertz explored at great length in his later years. In one passage (reproduced with Guthertz's spelling), the impact of his frontier experience is apparent:

[T]ake the young man instead [of] sending him to the battle field you supply him with the nessesary means and utensils to help him build a new home . . . give him the land to till . . . let your armorys insted of turning out engines of distruction turn out plowshares—and instruments to produce grain for the hungry. . . . This world contains a vast amount of most adventagious untilled and desirable lands, which could be made to bloom into untold richnes by inteligent labor. . . .

I have seen some very remarkable transformation of lands, and wonderful results, from what in the Northwestern states of America is known as the Free claims—and Homestead claims. . . This land a few years ago barren, now blooms in lovely homes, and prosperous Cities and is blessed by all the most advanced thought of the day.<sup>20</sup>

Gutherz's notions that it was in the interest of a country to have its lands tilled and improved and that civilization was measured by the yield of those lands or by "commerce" were principles of the western industrial age in which he lived. Even his idyllic treatise did not elude the influence of the modern scientific advances and progressive thought that shaped Victorian society. In fact, like most learned people of the period, he embraced science and technology, declaring that "we must march with" the microscope and the telescope. He also felt the necessity to "work out a higher Ideal" that would "keep pace with the free [unfettered] truths and sciences."<sup>21</sup>

**D**akota represents one of the only instances where Gutherz experimented with the duality of the real and the ideal as applied to an American theme. In discussing his inspiration for the painting, Gutherz drew upon religious passages and revealed his attempt to evoke the same spirituality as contained in Jean-François Millet's French peasant imagery:

When I saw the army of plows moving in rythmick measured tread over the vast plain, the sulky plow with its three and five horses attached to them and the plowman seated upon his bright chariot (the plow) I thought of the sacred words And the swords shall be turned into plowshares, and peace reigns upon the earth—

Here on the vast Dakota plains where the men come from all nations . . . to work in peaceful occupation whilst in Europe [men were exercising] the modes of warfare. . .

Compare it with the Angelus—insted of the church steeple in the distance I have given the elevator and [railroad cars] and stacks of grain.<sup>22</sup>

Overlooking the racial conflicts that played a central role in the settlement of the West, Gutherz stressed rather the nation's heroic principles and philosophical ambitions. He chose to characterize the United States as a peaceful melting pot—where common men and women aspired to noble pursuits—without alluding to the negative ramifications of the encroachment into western lands. This concern was expressed by a number of artists, including Farny, in the second half of the nineteenth century as they foresaw the demise of the free Indian nations and the close of the American wilderness. Gutherz was not indifferent to social issues; indeed, exposure to two wars—including the Franco-Prussian War, which erupted during his studies in Europe—had made him an ardent pacifist. But his idealistic nature compelled him to look beyond the dispiriting conflicts of reality and to promote a more hopeful portrayal of humanity.<sup>23</sup>

Gutherz composed *Dakota* on a long, rectangular canvas to accentuate the broad horizon line of the plains, a line that divides the picture into two nearly equal sections of earth and sky. The artist succeeded in conveying the enormity of the vista, but his plowing figures did not attain the sublime quality of Millet's genre scenes. Nevertheless, the parade of plows toiling upon the western expanse with smoke rising from the engine of a distant train on the horizon accurately portrays this aspect of frontier life.<sup>24</sup>

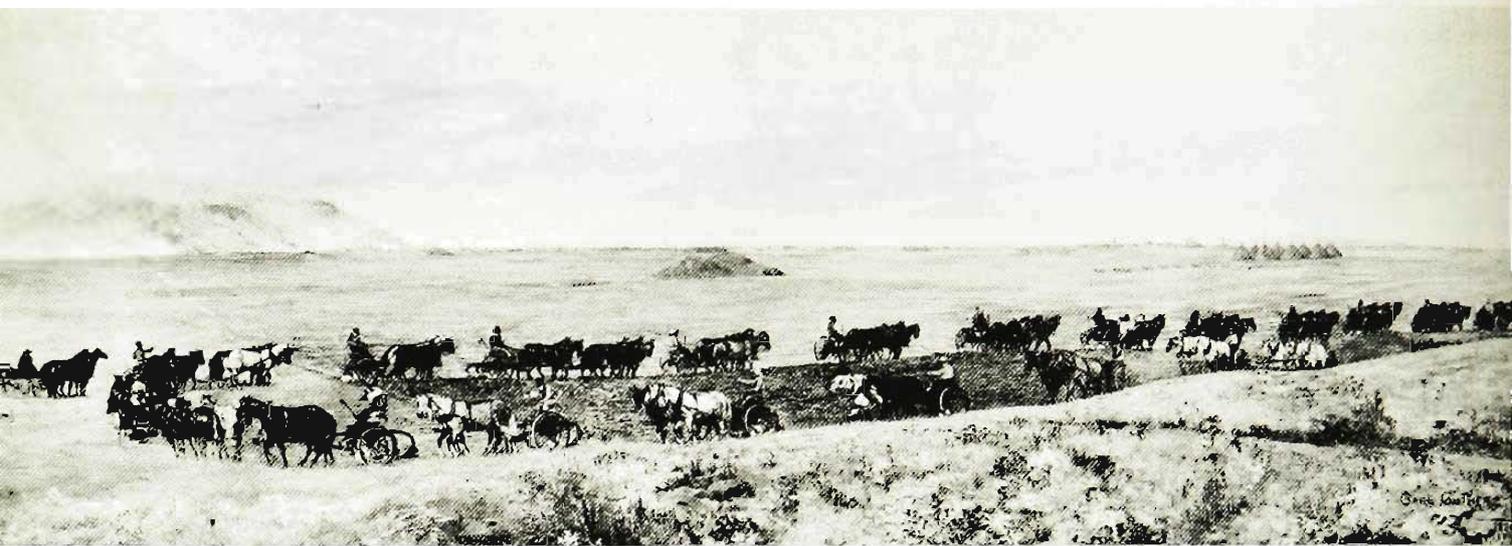
<sup>20</sup> Gutherz, *Black Book*, 1–4. See also Hyland, "Carl Gutherz," 64–67.

<sup>21</sup> Gutherz, *Black Book*, 3, *Green Book*, 117. Throughout his life, Gutherz tried to combine science, religion, and art. Hyland linked Gutherz's interest in what the writer called "reconciling the soul and science" to the influence of Swedenborgianism; Hyland, "Carl Gutherz," 67.

<sup>22</sup> Gutherz, *Green Book*, 123. The painting referred to is Millet's *The Angelus* (1857–59; collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris).

<sup>23</sup> Carter, *Henry Farny*, 28.

<sup>24</sup> *Dakota* bears an uncanny resemblance to the 1898 two-cent, Trans-Mississippi stamp entitled "Farming in the West." Marshall Goodheart said that his father designed the stamp, although no information has come to light to support that claim ("The Art Scene," *Memphis Press Scimitar*, Nov. 22, 1979, p. 17). The stamp was based on a photograph taken at the Chaffee Farm in northern Dakota Territory by an unknown photographer in about 1888. Perhaps the painting had an indirect influence on the idea for the stamp design. See Lester G. Brookman, *The United States Postage Stamps of the 19th Century* (New York: H. L. Lindquist Publications, 1967), 3:169–70.



*Gutherz's monumental oil painting Dakota, 1884; the painting's whereabouts is unknown.*

Gutherz completed the canvas in his St. Louis studio in the spring of 1884. It was one of the last that he would paint before he and his family left for Paris in June, an event that would mark the beginning of the second and most prolific phase of his career. After exhibiting *Dakota* at the 1885 Paris Salon (where it received little notice and critical review), Gutherz abandoned American images entirely. He began to paint large-scale, symbolic works embodying Christian religious concepts—figural works that were readily accepted by the annual salons in Paris and Munich. Under the influence of Jules Lefebvre (1836–1911) and Gustave Boulanger (1824–88), Gutherz produced some of his grandest works, including *Light of the Incarnation* (1888), *Arcessita ab Angelis* (1889), and *The Evening of the Sixth Day* (1893).<sup>25</sup>

Gutherz moved back to the United States in 1896 to execute a series of murals for the Library of Congress, spending the last years of his life in Washington, D.C. Before his death in 1907 he completed numerous por-

traits and executed murals for the People's Church in St. Paul (1901) and the Circuit Court House in Fort Wayne, Indiana (1903). He also returned to his first love, the landscape, painting countless scenes of the rolling, wooded hills near his vacation home outside the nation's capital in Maryland.

As research continues on this artist, his life and work will become more familiar to historians of the middle and upper Mississippi River valley. Although Gutherz's activities in the Northwest have received little notice, he was a prominent member of St. Paul's artistic community whose landscapes offer us additional descriptive history of the region. Moreover, an understanding of the aesthetic and social factors that influenced his style can deepen our awareness of the relationship of the artist to the American landscape. Gutherz's personal commentary on the frontier, contained in his journals, provides further insight into the prevailing expansionist ideology and the extent of its role in determining the course of nineteenth-century American art.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Palette Scrapings* (St. Louis School of Fine Arts), Jan. 1884, p. 20; Lois Marie Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 212. For information about Gutherz's relation to symbolist imagery and theory, see Charles C. Eldredge, *American Imagination and Symbolist Painting* (New York: Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, 1979), 100–101.

<sup>26</sup> This issue has been reexamined in such works as Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze*, and Truettner, ed., *The West as America*.

*The McGill portrait is from the MHS collections. All the other illustrations, including Gutherz's photograph by Alfred Zimmerman, are from the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art.*



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