



HAWTHORNE

Fine Art

Otto Norquist (1859-1905)

Otto Norquist was born in 1859 in Sidan norra, Ärtemark, Västra Götaland, Sweden to Johanna Danielsdotter and Olivier Norquist. The family settled in St. Paul, Minnesota when Norquist was eleven years old. He began his career in 1879 as a printer and worked for the firm of Groff & Berkey while boarding in the neighborhood of Phalen's Creek near 8th Street.¹

In 1883, Norquist married Ida Caroline Akerstrom. Also Swedish-born, Ida was raised in St. Paul from the age of five. Her father studied art in Stockholm and worked decorating church interiors and houses in St. Paul. He built a large house for his family that also accommodated church meetings and Sunday school for the Swedish Lutheran community. Ida first became acquainted with Otto at church where she admired his curly hair and singing voice. Norquist was an artist as well as a musician.²

In 1884, Norquist and his brother-in-law John Theodor Haglund took over the print shop where Norquist had worked the previous year. Their printing house, Norquist & Haglund, was located on the corner of Ninth and Willis Streets.³ By 1890, Norquist was lauded for his work in St. Paul's *Pioneer Press*. He had distinguished himself as an animal painter and was selling his work.⁴ His paintings of dogs were particularly in demand and his work was displayed in a gallery on Third Street.⁵ In 1891, Norquist planned to move to West Superior and Duluth before going to Paris to complete his studies.⁶

In 1899, Norquist's painting of the old city hall was highly praised and was deemed "a genuine work of art." Assemblyman Nelson petitioned to buy the painting, valued at \$300, to be hung in the council chamber.⁷

Although Norquist resided in a predominantly Swedish area on the east side of St. Paul his subject matter was purely American.⁸ His paintings *Mississippi River*, 1889, *Mississippi River*, 1890, *St. Paul's First City Hall*, 1889 and *Minnesota State Fair*, 1890 can be found in the permanent collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Otto Norquist died in St. Paul, Minnesota on July 22, 1905.

¹ *St. Paul City Directory 1879-80* (Saint Paul, MN: R.L. Polk & Co., 1879) 354.

² E. O. Norquist, "Grandma Never Saw Rushville," *Rushville Republican* (Rushville, Indiana), Sat, Nov 5, 1955, 4.

³ "St. Paul," *Skaffaren och Minnesota stats tidning* (St. Paul, Minn.), October 1, 1884, 4.

⁴ "St. Paul," *Svenska folkets tidning*, (St. Paul, Minn.), December 3, 1890, 4.

⁵ *Skaffaren* (St. Paul, Minn.) Dec. 31, 1890, 8.

⁶ "St. Paul," *Svenska folkets tidning* (Minneapolis, Minn; St. Paul, Minn), June 17, 1891, 5.

⁷ "A Work of Art," *The Saint Paul Globe* (Saint Paul, Minnesota), Sat, Jul 22, 1899, 2.

⁸ Philip J. Anderson, *Swedes in the Twin Cities: Immigrant Life and Minnesota's Urban Frontier* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001) 142.