



## **MAX GUNDLACH (1863—1957)**

Affectionately known as “Grandpa Moses,” Max Gundlach only received recognition for his elegant and skilled oil paintings in the last decades of his life. Born in Germany in 1863, he immigrated to the United States with his family when he was only five years old, most likely settling in Chicago. Only a few years later, he began work at a wood engraving shop, where his natural talents quickly allowed him to advance from simply making the engravings to designing them. He went to art school at night.

After ten years at the wood engraving shop, Gundlach became a commercial artist. He toured the Southwest briefly to paint landscape scenes for the Santa Fe and Union Pacific railroads and became known as a “genius at decorating ‘railroad’ folders.”<sup>1</sup> He returned to Chicago by 1880, and joined the Palette and Chisel Club, but did not associate much with its members, preferring to keep himself and his work secured away in his studio. After thirty-five years of this situation, several of the group’s members sought entry to his studio and discovered that it was filled with canvasses of exceptional beauty and feeling. As Gundlach explained, on his mornings off, he would paint scenes from local parks, and pose his wife and daughter as models for figure studies.<sup>2</sup>

Thus began Gundlach’s career as a fine artist. By the following year, he was exhibiting regularly with the Palette and Chisel Club. He mostly painted and showed landscapes which were praised for their atmosphere, composition and feeling. Gundlach continued to paint and exhibit into his 90s; his last known exhibition was in Chicago in 1955, when he was 92 years old. He gave an interview ahead of the show that was printed in newspapers all over the country. In it he stated, “I’m getting better in my old age. Painting comes easier the

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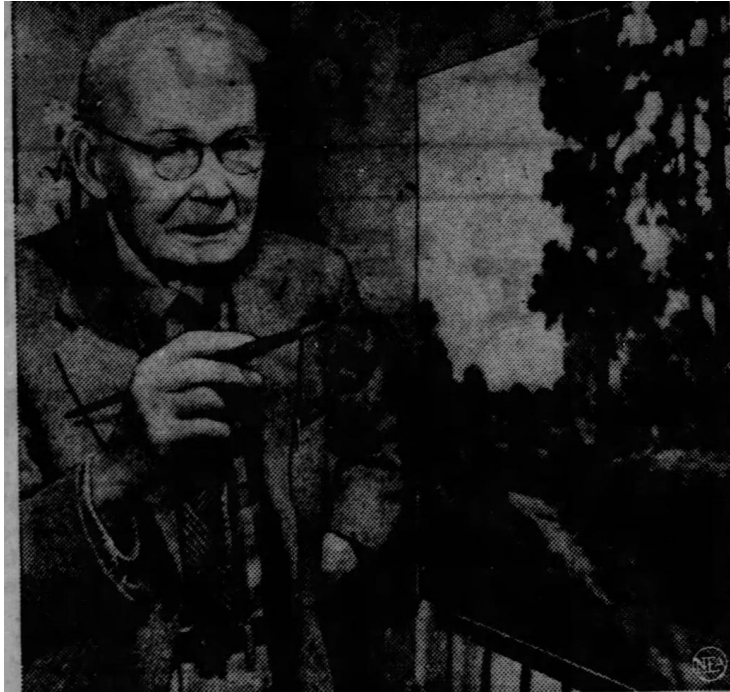
<sup>1</sup> *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 22, 1915, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



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Fine Art

older I get.”<sup>3</sup>



Max Gundlach painting in his Winnetka home at age 92.

Gundlach died in Chicago in 1957, at the age of 94.

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<sup>3</sup> *Linton Daily Citizen*, March 11, 1955, p. 2.