

**The Art of Leon Lundmark: A Personal Journey**  
**By Jeffrey Wagner**

*One whose inner thoughts are unbecoming a noble soul cannot create a great work of art.*  
*Leon Lundmark (1929)*

As I settled into an easy chair in the reading room in the Peter White Public Library in Marquette, Michigan, I looked up at a large seascape painting on the wall above a fireplace. The subject and style of the painting brought to mind the work of an artist I well knew: the Swedish-American artist Leon Lundmark (1875-1942). I had lived all of my life with several of his paintings in family homes in Chicago.

Paintings by him also graced the homes of my grandmother Agnes, and of her sisters, my great-aunts Kathryn and Grace. Lundmark and my grandfather, Dr. Emil Schlageter (1883-1945), had met and become life-long friends while painting houses together on Chicago's south side in the early 1900s. I walked over to inspect the painting and saw that it was in fact by the very same Lundmark. In block letters, he had signed it: L U N D M A R K". My sighting of one of his works in the library triggered – or in a way continued – a fortunate string of events.



*A Lundmark seascape painting of Lake Superior in the Peter White Public Library, Marquette, Michigan*

What had brought me to Marquette, Michigan? Even though I found this work here, I had not come to Marquette in search of Lundmark's legacy. A year before I had participated in a Road Scholar program for cross-country skiing in Eagle River, Wisconsin, about an hour's drive south of the Upper Peninsula's largest city, Marquette. I had enjoyed the week's stay in the rustic "Trees for Tomorrow" nature education center there, and later made a reservation for a return trip the following September for a week of hiking in fall color. Several days before the appointed date in September, I found that I had

erred. My reservation for this hiking event was for *a year from September*. So, no week of hiking in a group of Road Scholars in the north woods.

I had wanted nevertheless to see the north country in autumn. The northern forest area attracts me, perhaps because it wilder there than farther south in the Chicago area where I live. There are not many ancient (old growth) forests in the American Midwest, and many of those elderly woodlands are in Michigan's "UP". For example, Porcupine Mountains State Park, about 100 miles west of Marquette, contains some 30,000 acres of old-growth (i.e. never logged) forest that is remarkable: dark and tangled, it is a forest in wild disarray compared to the forests of the public preserves in my home (Chicago) area. All of the preserves in the Cook County system were cleared for crop and cattle (dairy) farming in the 1800s, and allowed to revert, somewhat haphazardly, to forest and meadow upon becoming public land in the early 1900s. Much of the Cook County preserves unfortunately are inhabited by invasive (non-native) species.

Still in the early years of my retirement, and enjoying a flexible schedule, I decided to travel on my own to the north woods anyway. Looking over a road map, I targeted a town in the Upper Peninsula named Ishpeming, a name that sounded of the Algonquian languages of the native tribes that had lived in that area for thousands of years. Ishpeming was near the Huron Mountains, known to be a rugged wilderness only some of which is open to the public. Since the early 1900s, I read in wiki, a consortium of wealthy Midwesterners owned and regulated much of this area. So I drove the six hours north from my home to Ishpeming, and after a night in a motel there I went into Marquette, about 15 miles away, acquired a map of the area, identified hikes up Hogback and Sugarloaf Mountains. I did the tough Sugarloaf climb that day. Views from its summit of Lake Superior's deep blue were spectacular.



*View of Lake Superior from the Sugarloaf Mountain summit*

After a hike like that, one has earned rest and coffee, and I sought both at the library. That is how I came to settle into the easy chair in the reading room, and to see the library's Lundmark seascape. After noticing it above the fireplace, I wandered into another upstairs meeting room and saw again a Lundmark painting, also a marinescape featuring, as so many of his paintings do, crashing waves and a rocky coastline. I attended a meditation gathering later that day in this room and pointing to the painting told the group leader of my interest in Lundmark. He told me that the distinctive dark rocks in so many of Lundmark's painting were surely the "Black Rocks" area of the Lake Superior

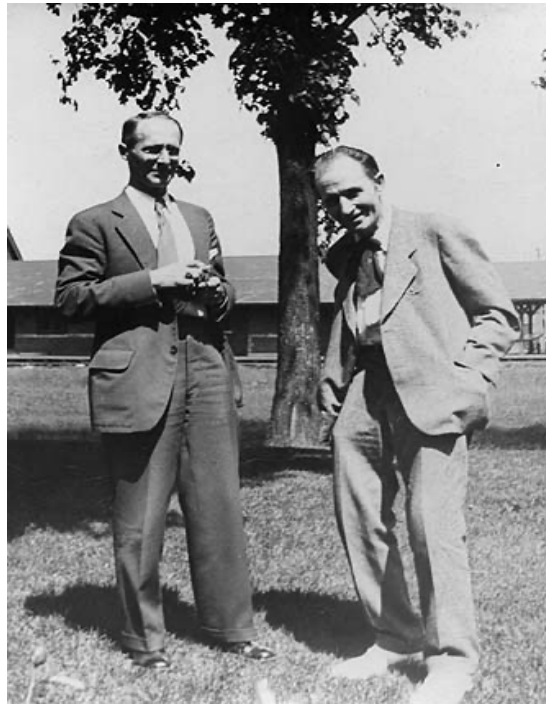
coastline in Marquette's nearby public park, Presque Isle, not more than a 10 minute drive away.

I later read that these rocks were among the oldest in the world, having been formed some 750 million years ago by volcanic activity deep (as far as two miles) underneath the earth. Over millions of years the rocks had been pushed upward by a "volcanic rift" and exposed on earth's surface by the scraping of ice age glaciers. Today's landscape, as I and Lundmark viewed it, is about 15,000 years old, dating from the end of the most recent ice age. One could now walk on these lakeside rocks that had been made deep underground eons ago. As Lundmark's work had been a thread in my life, and in that of two past generations of my family, finding these two works here in the library appeared to be another piece of that thread.

Born in Sweden, Lundmark is thought to be the illegitimate son of the Swedish Countess Hanna von Til, and one S.A. Johnson. I have learned little of his life in 19<sup>th</sup> century Sweden, only that he studied art there. He later emigrated to Chicago where he studied, taught and at least once exhibited at that city's Art Institute. I believe that when he met my grandfather painting houses, they were both keeping body and soul together. (My grandfather was a student at Chicago Medical College). In a letter written in 1938 to my grandfather, Lundmark wondered if his friend, Emil, recalled that they had painted a house together while in the employ of no less than Frank Lloyd Wright. My grandparents had journeyed to Los Angeles for a national gathering of the American Legion, and had a reunion visit with Lundmark, then living in Altadena, California. Given the tone of Lundmark's letter, there was clearly a bond of affection between them.

Lundmark had settled by 1930, according to the federal census, at 1031 South 45<sup>th</sup> Street on Chicago's south side. On my mother's fifth birthday, in August of 1931, my grandfather took her to Lundmark's home and studio there, and obtained for her a lovely small seascape, inscribed to "Miss Jean Schlageter" and signed and dated by Lundmark. My mother of course treasured the painting. It had been displayed in our home since before my birth. I recently had it cleaned professionally and as a result the water looked bluer, the clouds whiter, and the coastline rocks blacker.

My grandfather Emil died before I was born, but my long-lived grandmother had told me what she remembered of Lundmark who had left Chicago in the 1930s to move to Altadena, California, to save his health. She thought Lundmark's wife had been a Chicago public school teacher, and may have been at times the family breadwinner. She remembered that Lundmark had been disabled in his lower body, and walked with a limp (I learned later than he had been permanently injured by taking a bad fall in his youth while working on a large mural in Sweden).



*Lundmark (right) with friend and fellow Chicago-area artist, Felix Russman*

My grandmother remembered that with the coming of summer vacation each year, Lundmark and his family would travel north and paint somewhere on the shores of either Lake Michigan or Lake Superior. I had wondered through the years if he had painted actual places, or from his imagination (or both?). I did not think it likely that I would ever know, but now I did.

Touched by the family connection to my grandfather, and by the beauty of Lundmark's work, I had began collecting his paintings during the last years of my mother's life. I scarcely knew why I was acquiring them, as I am by nature no collector. I am much more a donator than a keeper of stuff, and aspire to be something of a minimalist in possessions and furnishings. Yet, I bought over ten of Lundmark's works on e-bay. My mother, somewhat disabled with memory loss, was fortunately still able to enjoy the paintings, and together one Sunday afternoon we re-painted the frame of one. I had in mind a vague idea that I might donate the entire collection of about 15 works to ... where? Perhaps an art department or museum where Lundmark's name would be preserved and his work studied.

One of the paintings I acquired had apparently been on display at Rockford College (a college in a community of much Scandinavian heritage) and looked like it needed cleaning. I found two charming, elderly restorationists only a few blocks from my mothers' home in Wilmette, Illinois. A married Romanian couple, they had trained in Sweden. The restoration was a success, and when I picked it up after several weeks of work, they pointed out to my delight that their work had uncovered several white seagulls soaring above Lundmark's crashing waves. I know now, but did not then, that the curved gray massive rocks in the foreground of this picture were certainly Marquette's black rocks.





*Superior's violent waves crashing on Marquette's igneous Black Rocks coastline.*

Another of his marinescapes had been damaged by water leakage from the roof through the ceiling of my mother's house in Wilmette. I asked a conservationist friend, Emily Heye of Chicago's Art Institute, for advice and she referred me to a conservationist named Daniela who appraised the conditions of all of the paintings, and to Faye Wrubel, an art restoration expert who had retired from the Art Institute where she had restored several of the Institute's most notable works, including *Paris on a Rainy Day* by Georges Seurat. In a studio filled with canvasses and the tools of her trade on Chicago's near west side, she worked there to bring this work, purchased in 1950 at auction by my great aunt Kathryn back to life. When her work was complete, I saw anew the blue green colors of Superior, and the glint of sunlight upon a wave crest. Faye also gave me photographs of her at work during the different stages of her restoration. If there is magic in the making of a painting, so there is also in its restoration.



*A Lundmark marinescape after restoration by Faye Wrubel*

Any Lundmark painting that I have seen is a marinescape. Some that I owned appeared to have been made along the California coastline. He had also spent time in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, painting its rugged, wild coastline. I have seen a boat in only one or two of his works, and never any people.

On eBay, a booklet, “The Rise of Lundmark, Marine Painter”, was listed, and I bought it. It is an extended essay published in the 1920s by a Chicago gallery owner and art dealer, J. W. Young, who conducted business from Chicago's still standing Fine Arts Building at 410 South Michigan Avenue. The 30 page booklet contains pictures of Lundmark's paintings from the Midwest and from Maine. Young took the trouble to list the names of 95 owners of Lundmark works, including Chicago's well-known William Wrigley, Jr. (at that time the owner of the Chicago Cubs baseball team). Also listed as an owner is Dr. Preston Bradley, a progressive Christian and later Unitarian pastor, after whom the large hall in Chicago's cultural center is now named.

Young also wrote in some detail, and from first-hand observation by Lundmark's wife, Ruby, of Lundmark's great determination. Mrs. Lundmark had asked Young if he could “plead with [my husband] not to overtax himself.” He writes further of her description of her husband intensively at work: “She told me of his starting to work on a canvas the day before, working all day on it, turning on the daylight lamps in his studio when night came, and working on it, for several hours longer, then going to bed, and after a while she drowsily and faintly remembered his getting up, and between three and four o'clock in the morning she awoke and found him still earnestly at work on his picture”.

Young's book contains several endorsements from art critics, included an extended quote by one Emma W. Moseley, at that time an art critic for the Portland, Maine paper, the “Evening Express”. Moseley, a friend of the great American artist, Winslow Homer, had spent time with Lundmark when he painted in Maine. She rather romantically speculates about the sources of Lundmark's skill and passion. “Whence comes the understanding of the sea and the lakes, the breadth of vision, the feeling for color, the strength and the vigor that has helped to make Leon Lundmark known in art circles

[everywhere]? What is more reasonable”, she enthuses in answering her own question, “than to suppose that Leon Lundmark has inherited from his ancestors who were a part of his own native Northland – that land of romance and glory – that land from which sailed fleet after fleet of Viking ships manned by some of the bravest sailors the world has ever known, a vitality and vigor and love of the sea that shows in every large or small canvas and that breathes through his very personality.”

I had wondered if Lundmark, who came from Sweden to the USA at the age of 31 in 1906, was known at all in his homeland. Moseley suggests that probably he was, mentioning that one of his paintings, “Morning - Lake Superior”, was displayed – in 1929 – in the “Gothenburg Gallery” in his native land.

Prior to collecting Lundmark, I had become acquainted with Chicago's Swedish American Museum in the Andersonville neighborhood. Many years ago, when I had lived near that neighborhood, I had many a brunch at Svea Restarant, and at Ann Sathers, famous for Swedish food and cinnamon rolls. I focused my first effort to find a home for my Lundmark collection in that museum. One day, as I drove home from church, I stopped in there and told the lady at the front desk of my paintings. She referred me to a curator in the museum's employ. The curator, Keith, suggested, after hearing my story, that he and the museum director, Karin Moen Abercrombie, come to my home to see the collection. I returned home that day and arranged all 15 works in my dining room, a tight squeeze. It was the first time that I myself had seen all of them at once, and my two museum visitors came several weeks later, voicing a positive appraisal of the collection. They proposed an exhibition of the paintings the following year. Just like that!

When the following year arrived, a curator of the museum, Emily England, was assigned to lead the creation of the exhibition to be placed in the museum's Raoul Wallenberg gallery on the second floor. I loaded all of the paintings into my car, and drove down to Foster and Clark in the city.

I joked with Emily, as we unloaded the paintings out on Clark Street, where I was double-parked in front of the museum, about a friend, a conservator at the Art Institute of Chicago, who told me of the highly structured practices that world-famous Institute used to transport art around the USA and the world. She had once personally “escorted” a painting to Paris by plane, following a procedure that assured the painting would never be out of her sight and control. “Well”, I commented, “that's *not* with the sort of delivery this is!”, and we lifted the paintings out of my car and crossing a busy Clark street, took them into the museum one or two at a time. A poor man's courier service.

Emily and an assistant structured the exhibition beautifully. She wanted to bring out the connection Lundmark had to my family, so I supplied copies of the handwritten letter to my grandfather as well as a family photo of my grandparents with my mother and uncle in their south side home. My sister, Dr. Julia Bucci, an English professor who lives in Wellesley, Massachusetts, sent on loan two Lundmarks that she owns. Appropriately, it was a family affair!





*“Pull of the Sea” Exhibition in the Raoul Wallenberg Gallery of the Swedish-American Museum, Chicago*

I had mentioned to Emily that I had played Swedish piano music in recent years, and had given programs containing it in Chicago and Madison, Wisconsin. She suggested that I might give a concert of Swedish music in the main gallery of the museum on opening day of the exhibition. I thought this a good idea, and I began to brush up on music by Swedish composers, lesser-known but excellent, such as Elfrida Andrée, Ture Rangström, Gustav Hågg, and Henning Mankell (grandfather of the mystery writer). Thus on opening day, April 6, 2019, I led a brief gallery walk, speaking about some of the Lundmark paintings and of his friendship with my grandparents, and followed that with a solo recital in the main gallery of the museum.





**The Pull of the Sea**  
**Leon Lundmark**  
**April 6 - June 23, 2019**



**Gallery Walk and Concert by**  
**Jeffrey Wagner**

**Program of Events**

This exhibit is sponsored by:  
Illinois Arts Council  
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The Swedish American Museum aptly had named the exposition, "The Pull of the Sea", and included in the displays a poem –a paen, really- Lundmark had written of his love for the sea. He hand-wrote this copy for my grandfather in a 1936 letter to him, "To the Sea":

*Ageless, Immortal Sea:  
Bathing your shores in friendly waters,  
Or lashing them with fury, your  
Greatness is too vast to heed the  
Petty flickerings of man who gazes  
Out upon your mystery.*

*I have watched your surface when calm  
And mirrorlike you borrowed the  
Colors from overhanging clouds, blending  
Them into a hue of pearls and glittering  
Jewels.*

*I have been captivated by the baby-  
Smile in your tiny ripples. I have  
Listened to the rhythmic music of  
A Strauss waltz in the even rollers  
Near the shores.*

*I have seen you when in wrath  
You charged the rugged cliffs who  
Crumble, and must yield to  
The power in your onslaught.*

*You have taught man to muster  
Your forces and made a servant of you  
For the benefit to mankind  
Heaping many blessings upon us from  
Your inexhaustible stores.*

*You have taught us to glide over your  
Vast expanses from continent to continent  
Abridging the endless gaps that separate them.*

*I have dreamed on your shores of  
Happy moments of freedom experienced  
Only, born on the white wings of a  
Sailing craft over your blue surface  
Unhampered by evils of those I thought  
My friends.*

*Oh! How many times I've laid my weary  
Head to rest sung to sleep you your  
Sweet lullabies.*

*Poets have called your "Lundmark's  
Sweetheart" and truly, you are my  
Sweetheart for I love you so.*

*I have tried to understand you in my  
Humble way, but, although I understand  
You not, In loving you. I find joy  
And happiness that passes all understanding.*

I later learned that this poem had been read at a 1942 memorial service in Marquette for Lundmark, several weeks after he died in California. The poem is effusive, but given the brilliant fruits of his labors, hundreds of lovely marinescape paintings, it rings sincere. Lundmark clearly painted what he greatly loved. He told a Milwaukee newspaper reporter in 1931, "Love is the motive power behind any beautiful art." And, in another interview in a Marquette newspaper, he said, "Painting the sea is never monotonous. How can the sea become tiresome with its ceaseless change and its varying moods? Of course, the waves do not stand still and pose for you, that is one difficulty".

The Swedish American Museum is not essentially an art gallery, and it did not want to keep the paintings after the four-month long “Pull of the Sea” exposition. So, gratified by the exposition but still having the paintings on my hands I used my “courier service” once again and drove them home. Back up on the dining room wall they went.

I thought back on all of this, as I sat in the Peter White Marquette Public library, now knowing that it was in fact here – Marquette, Michigan – where Lundmark came to paint. I walked to the front desk, asked for the library director, and soon met Ms. Andrea Ingmire. I told her of my interest in Lundmark, and that I owned a collection of his paintings, while my sister owned two of them. I told her that I'd been looking to donate the collection, and wondered if the library would be interested. She countered with a suggestion that I contact Emily Lancot, the director of the nearby DeVos Art Museum of Northern Michigan University. Ms. Ingmire also told me that the library held in the reference section a Lundmark folder that contained articles collected over the years. I went upstairs, asked for the folder, and began to learn more of Lundmark's residencies in Marquette.

Later, from my motel in Ishpeming I phoned and left a message for Ms. Lancot, an artist and curator as well as museum director, who returned my call early the next day. Yes, she was interested in Lundmark and regretted that the DeVos only had one of his paintings in its collection. I went over to the museum later that day and we discussed the possibility of my donating to it. She explained how to submit forms, photos, etc., and that the museum board would decide later in the year about the paintings. After returning home later in the week, I carefully photographed the collection and sent those images with my application.

After meeting Ms. Lancot, that same day I made the short drive out to Sunset Point on Presque Isle, and viewed “Black Rocks”. Presque Isle, meaning in French “almost an island”, is actually a peninsula that swells out into Lake Superior, widening considerably from a narrow bridge to the Marquette mainland. It is about a mile in length.

Quite a few people had gathered to watch the sunset, and I joined them. As I looked from “Sunset Point” out over Superior, at its waves and at the wild, rocky coastline, I froze in a moment of *deja vu*. “This is it”, I thought, “this is *exactly* where Lundmark painted so many of the water scenes upon which I have looked for all of my life. This is certainly the place – *his* place.” I wished my grandparents could be here, and my mother. Perhaps they were, in spirit? Of course they were.

I later read in a Marquette newspaper article dated 1929 that Lundmark said “There is no more beautiful place in the world than Marquette and I've traveled and painted in enough lands that I ought to be able to be something of a judge in that”. In another article dated 1921 Lundmark told a Marquette reporter, “Never, in my entire career, have I seen any one particular district that offers so many possibilities as here”. And he proclaimed to a group of high school students in Marquette in 1928, “I love every inch of this town, every face of its people. I shall continue to come back for as long as I can.”

It was a lovely evening; two kayakers had paddled out to view the sunset from the bay; and a few people ventured out onto the edges of Black Rocks to silently view it from there. A sunset community, a temporary community, and a good gathering of souls. There was something of reverence in the air as the sun descended. I thought to myself of Lundmark's poetic lines: *Heaping many blessings upon us from your inexhaustible shores ....*

Lake Superior, named the “gray beast” (*bête grise*) by the early French voyageurs, is a massive thing. I've lived near the shores of Lake Michigan for most of my life. Michigan can get wild enough, but Superior has a different vibe. It is the largest freshwater lake in the world by surface area, and third largest by volume. It is very deep (1300 feet at its greatest depth, more than four increasingly cold football fields). While there are beaches along its shoreline, its waters are nearly always cold. A swimming lake only for the hearty. A particularly chilling, and well-known story is that of the sinking of the ore ship, the Edmond Fitzgerald, in 1977. In the midst of a fierce storm during “the gales of November” near Whitefish Point, on the Canadian side of Superior, the great ship went down with all

29 hands, including its veteran captain, Ernest Michael McSorley.

While in Marquette, I attended a public lecture about the wreck, and about the composing of Gordon Lightfoot's well-known song, "The Wreck of the Edmond Fitzgerald." The cause of the sinking has never exactly been determined (there are two or three viable theories), but the rapidity of its sinking has been established by last minute communications between it and other ships in the area. Superior's storm sank the great boat quickly. One theory holds that the Edmond Fitzgerald was designed to handle the larger waves of earth's great oceans, and not the shorter spacing of storm waves in the Great Lakes. A degree of mystery will likely rest eternally with the great ship at the bottom of the *bête grise*. She sits in Superior's depths with many other of its shipwrecks, estimates ranging from 6,000 to 25,000. Lightfoot, however, surely made the *Edmond Fitzgerald* the most famous of those thousands. The Edmond Fitzgerald's resting place on the bottom of Lake Superior is now officially a graveyard for the 29 seamen; recreational or exploratory diving expeditions are not allowed.

I was coming to enjoy the Upper Peninsula's largest city, and the Marquette County seat, more and more. In addition to attractions such as Presque Isle and the public library, Snow Bound Books is an excellent bookstore on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. One longs for the survival of that genre of independent book retailers. The Roman Catholic Cathedral, Saint Peters, dating from the 1890s, is an imposing Romanesque structure made from local (and fireproof) Jacobsville sandstone. This type of stone coexists with the volcanic peridotite of Black Rocks on Presque Isle. I also visited the Marquette County Courthouse, still an active courthouse, where the well-known 1959 movie, "Anatomy of a Murder", was made. The movie stars Jimmy Stewart, Lee Remick, Ben Gazzara, and a young George C. Scott.

Before heading home, I undertook the challenging Hogback Mountain hike. This one was quite rugged (the easier Sugarloaf Mountain hike featured wooden stairways). I had not much planned it out, nor asked advice of anyone local. Clearly not much money or effort had been invested in trail signs or even trail maintenance. As I ascended, the going got rough: a narrow trail that squeezed a hiker between trees and boulders; a trail that was not well marked and not always even easily found. Occasional colored blazes on trees helped. I had worn the wrong sort of shoes, had brought an insufficient amount of water, and no snacks, but I persisted. And trails of this sort are not much easier on the way down, either.

The open summit area consisted of several open rock faces. The tall pines near the summit have bent in response to the winds off nearby Lake Superior. A young lady and her dog frolicked on the rock faces. I thought later that I probably should not have attempted this climb alone. My cell phone had no signal up there. Yet, I had tasted the Huron Mountains. As with Sugarloaf, the views were spectacular. Ancient forest wildness was my companion all the way up to the summit and back down.

Several months after my visit to Marquette, I received word from Emily Lanctot that the DeVos would accept five of my Lundmark paintings. I was delighted, and would have driven them up right away, but the Covid pandemic was setting in at that time, so I delayed delivery for several months. The DeVos had required that donated art works be appraised so I undertook to do that. Ms. Lanctot gave me a list of appraisers and I selected one in Milwaukee: the Delind Art Gallery. I contacted them, and arranged to bring the five selected by the DeVos up to them for appraisal. The gallery stands right around the corner from the historic Pfister Hotel (that has an excellent art collection in its main lobby). I carried my paintings in for appraisal. William DeLind and Michael Goforth set to work. The most expensive of the five was a large marinescape with a large rock formation looming over the coastline. My great-aunt Kathryn McHenry had bought it at an auction in the Washington, D.C., area in 1950. It was appraised at \$6,000, the highest value in the collection.

By the time I felt safe traveling in pandemic, it was autumn, about a year after my first visit. So I traveled to Marquette, and met with Emily Lanctot and Jane Surrell, a representative from the Northern Michigan University Foundation. Forms were filled out, signed, and the deal was happily done as we stood, masked, outside the museum. Five Lundmarks had now, as I saw it, come home.



Before heading home, I drove around the area looking for an easier (than my previous) approach to Hogback Mountain, and though I never found one someone at roadside suggested I take a turn and walk along the Dead River nearby. I did this, and after marveling at the wildness of the rock formations and careening waterfalls comprising the river at this point, I wondered where it got its gloomy name. After returning home, I got in touch with a friend, the art historian Arthur Bourgeois, who hailed from Marquette, and asked him. It was, he explained, because a Native American graveyard lay near the river.

At this point I still had nine remaining Lundmarks, plus two I wished to keep for myself for my lifetime. What to do? I recalled visiting with my mother the Ridge Park Field House on the south side of Chicago, a place in the Beverly neighborhood that she had frequented as a girl. It was a happy trip down memory lane for her and though her short term memory was failing her childhood memories from the 1930s apparently were not. She told me of her joy in swimming there, and of her mother's Womens' Club meetings there in the 1930s and 40s. We then noticed an odd component of the Field House: the Vanderpoel Art Gallery. What was an art gallery doing in a Chicago Park District facility?

We knocked on the door and were admitted. To describe the Vanderpoel as a hidden gem is not to exaggerate. The gallery was established in 1919 by the Dutch-American artist, John Vanderpoel (1862-1911), and has co-resided with the Park District building ever since. The gallery is filled, wall to wall -- and in several levels per wall -- with American art. Their collecting today focuses on American women artists. I have at home a photo made in the 1940s of my grandmother and a group of evening-gowned women there, probably for a womens' club gala event. In the background the paintings of the gallery are displayed.

I then remembered the trip to the Vanderpoel with my late mother, and wondered if that gallery would like any or all of my remaining Lundmarks. I liked the family connection, proposed a donation via e-mail, and heard back soon from Irene Testa, the museum director, that she was in fact interested. Again -- forms, digital photos, appraisal values ... and the museum accepted four of them. A few weeks later, I drove them down the the Field House. Ms. Testa told me that one of the paintings was of such a size that it would be put on display immediately. This, I knew by now, was good news. Museums and galleries typically display a small portion of their collection at any given time.

Well, there I was with five to go and pleased with my progress. I do not know why it took me several months to think of it, but I contacted once again the director of the public library in Marquette, offering her the five, and after ascertaining that there were suitable display places in the library, she took me up on it. So, for a third time I drove in early December to Marquette, a city I have truly grown to enjoy by this time, and delivered the four paintings and one water color to the library. I made a celebratory hike the next day not up Sugarloaf Mountain (closed for the winter season), but out onto Presque Isle, closed for the winter season to cars, but not to hikers, and therefore much less populated. I stood, quite alone, at Sunset Point near Black Rocks, while Superior's waves crashed violently, repeatedly, and rhythmically. And I thought again of their age: 750 millions years!

Lundmark, I reflected, had stood and painted, near where I now stood as recently as the early 1930s, about 90 years ago. I value that historic connection, with a link to my family, over time -- about three generations -- while understanding that those rocks think that to be not a very long time. 750 million years old may as well be ageless to the human mind, even immortal, as Lundmark himself wrote in his poem. If he had stood and painted one of his works for several days on these rocks, that is an infinitesimal portion of time against the background rhythm of a clock that had been ticking for millions of years. I read in one of his newspaper interviews that Lundmark too appreciated the value and nature of time: "A work of art", Lundmark told a Milwaukee reporter in 1931, "is the result of years of thought. A beautiful thought must come to the artist before he can paint a beautiful picture". A visual art work, such as Lundmark's, seems to freeze time, or perhaps extends time for the viewer. Or maybe it nullifies time, or removes us from time altogether?

I think of Eric Weiner's thoughts on the philosophy of Henry David Thoreau<sup>1</sup>: “When he [Thoreau] saw a rose he corresponded with it and, in a way, collaborated with it ... Many artists describe a similar phenomenon: When they look at an object, they sense it looking back at them.” Or, as Thoreau himself wrote in his *Journals*, “Go not to the object; let it come to you”.

Do Superior's waves look back at me? Did they look back at Lundmark? Do they crash on those black rocks, splashing, spraying upwards to get a better view of us? If there is any sense in this it means that Lake Superior was painting itself through Lundmark. Or making a photo of itself through my camera. Whatever the case, Lundmark and I are passing glints in the ancient eyes of Lake Superior. We are surely only two of its countless collaborators.



*Photo of Lake Superior and Black Rocks by Jeffrey Wagner*

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1 Weiner, Eric. *The Socrates Express* (Avid Reader, 2020), page 62



*Black Rocks and Superior, painted on a calm evening by Lundmark*



From an exhibition in 2023 at the DeVos Museum in Marquette of Lundmark's works

## Lundmark and the Lake

Born in Sweden, Leon Lundmark traveled to America in 1903, where he lived in Chicago for much of his life before retiring in Glendale, California. A prolific painter, Lundmark's paintings were shown at sixty-one galleries in the United States and internationally at a dozen galleries.

Water is constant in Lundmark's paintings, but the location changes. Lundmark's seascapes represent both US coasts and sometimes depict the bodies of water in between. Lundmark's passion for the sea is visible in how he uses texture and color to emphasize the impermanence and depth of the space while capturing a distinctive mood. The detail in Lundmark's pictures speaks to the artist's craft while conveying the experience of being at sea or near the lake.

The majority of this collection is a gift from Jeffrey Wagner. Wagner's grandfather, Dr. Emil Schlageter, met Lundmark in Chicago in the early 1900s, where the two worked painting houses together. After becoming lifelong friends, Lundmark gifted a seascape painting to Schlageter's daughter, Wagner's mother, at age five. Much later, Wagner found a connection to his mother and their family's history as they collected Lundmark paintings together, amassing a sizeable collection. A chance interaction with Lundmark's paintings at the Peter White Public Library led Wagner to discover more about Lundmark and his connection to Marquette and Lake Superior and eventually to find a home for some of the paintings he and his mother had lovingly collected together.