

August Klagstad – Altar Artist

A faithful Lutheran, Klagstad specialized in religious paintings. Today, Klagstad's altar paintings can be found in churches throughout the United States. His "sermons on canvas" have inspired generations of worshipers in Michigan and across the nation. August Klagstad was born in Modum, Norway on August 14, 1866, the seventh of nine children of Torger and Karen Klagstad. August's father was a farmer who tilled the worn-out Norwegian soil and struggled to provide for his growing family. In 1871, with virtually no prospects for a better future, his parents made a momentous decision—they would immigrate to America. On the 4th of July, 1871, the Klagstads finally arrived at their destination in Racine, Wisconsin.



In the fall of 1887, Klagstad left Manistique to attend the Northern Indiana Normal School (now Valparaiso University) in Valparaiso, Indiana. Klagstad obtained employment at a studio in Chicago and took art lessons on Saturdays. He studied at both the Art Institute in Chicago and the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. He later worked in art studios in New York and Boston and visited museums and art galleries throughout Europe. Klagstad's first altar painting was completed in Manistique in August of 1893 while vacationing from Chicago. His images were replicas of religious paintings by the masters which were well-known to churchgoers of his day. Klagstad added his own original colors and background details. During his long career, August Klagstad produced over 1000 altar paintings which were shipped to churches throughout the United States, as well as Canada, Norway, Australia and Africa. August Klagstad died in March of 1949 in Minneapolis at the age of 82, but his art lives on in communities large and small.