In 1886, Alexander Van Laer was appointed as the new administrator of the Buchtel College School of Art, founded just three years earlier. He had studied painting in Holland and was a graduate of the New York Academy of Design. During his four years at Buchtel College he reorganized the art studio in old Buchtel Hall and improved both the facilities and the curriculum. He left the school to pursue his career as an artist in New York City in 1890, leaving behind a landscape painting that hung in the president’s office until a fire destroyed old Buchtel Hall. Fortunately, his painting was one of the items saved from the flames that night.

In 2011, while I was serving as the Director of the Myers School
of Art, our office was contacted by Mr. Jack Harig of west Akron. He said his family had been in possession of a painting that was believed to have been saved from the fire in Buchtel Hall over 100 years earlier. Mr. Harig remembered the painting hanging in the family dining room from his childhood.

He brought the painting to my office in an ornate frame that appeared to be original. The painting was signed by Alexander Van Laer. Thanks to Mr. Harig’s generosity and thoughtfulness, the painting remains in the permanent collection of the Myers School of Art and is the earliest example we have of faculty work. Professor Van Laer went on to have a successful career as a painter, exhibiting his work across the country. He also was a contributing writer for the periodical *Art For America*. He passed away in 1920.