

John Tyler Morgan

(1824-1907)

John Tyler Morgan served Alabama as a U.S. senator for 30 years. He was born in Athens, Tennessee, but moved with his parents to Alabama at a young age. In 1845 he was admitted to the bar; he established a law practice shortly thereafter. Morgan enlisted as a private in the Confederate army in 1861, quickly rising through the ranks to become brigadier general two years later. Following the war he returned to his law practice and in 1876 was elected as a Democrat to the U.S. Senate. His service began March 4, 1877, and continued until his death in 1907.

From the start, Morgan advocated an interoceanic canal in Central America to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and more than any other member of Congress, he contributed to the successful accomplishment of that enterprise. He distinguished himself as a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, serving as the ranking minority member for 22 years, and as the chairman from 1893 to 1895. Morgan also served as the unofficial minority leader from 1901 to 1902, and from 1905 to 1907, when he died in office.



Artist Carl Guthertz.
(Architect of the Capitol)

In March 1893 Senator John Morgan was appointed by President Benjamin Harrison to a commission representing American interests before the Bering Sea Tribunal, then meeting in Paris. While there, Morgan renewed a former acquaintance with artist Carl Guthertz. Guthertz was eager to paint a portrait of Senator Morgan, who resisted giving up the time for sittings. Eventually, Morgan agreed to six sittings, saying that he “would waste no more valuable time on it.”

Guthertz completed the portrait that May. The painting hung in Senator Morgan’s Washington, D.C., residence, and it remained in the family’s possession until offered to the Senate by the senator’s daughter, Cornelia Morgan. Seeking an appropriate home for the portrait in 1910, she offered to either sell or donate it to the Senate. The Joint Committee on the Library requested a memorandum from her regarding the circumstances and conditions under which the portrait was painted. Shortly thereafter, the Senate introduced a resolution authorizing the Joint Committee to purchase the painting for \$1,000 from the contingent fund of the Senate. No action was taken at that time regarding the acquisition, however, and despite another Senate resolution two years later, the issue was never settled. By then the portrait was on display in the meeting room of the Joint Committee on the Library. Decades later, with the establishment of the Senate Commission on Art, the Senate eventually assumed stewardship of the painting.

Guthertz was born in Schöftland, Switzerland, in 1844 and at the age of seven immigrated with his parents to the United States. The family settled first in Cincinnati, Ohio, and later in Memphis, Tennessee. As a young man, Guthertz traveled to Europe for instruction in art, studying at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and later in Belgium and Rome. In 1872 he returned to the United States and eventually settled in St. Louis, where he taught in the art department at Washington University and helped establish that city’s School of Fine Arts. In 1884 Carl Guthertz moved to Paris for a 12-year residency; it was during this time that he painted the portrait of Morgan.

Among Guthertz’s other works are the mural on the ceiling of The Members Room in the Jefferson Building at the Library of Congress, and painted portraits of Jefferson Davis and Susan B. Anthony. Extensive collections of the artist’s works are located at the Brooks Gallery in Memphis, and at the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul. Guthertz died in Washington, D.C., in 1907 at the age of 63.

John Morgan

Carl Guthertz (1844-1907)

Oil on canvas, 1893

57¼ x 38 inches (145.4 x 96.5 cm)

Signed and dated (lower left corner): CARL GUTHERZ / PARIS 1893

Gift of Cornelia I. Morgan (daughter of John Morgan), 1910

Acquisition undocumented

Cat. no. 32.00024

