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## Hamlin Garland returning to Mitchell County

Jason W. Selby Press News

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**H**amlin Garland is returning to Mitchell County.

For Kurt Meyer, president of the Hamlin Garland Society, it is an early Christmas present.

According to a press release, the Mitchell County Historical Society will unveil a newly-acquired portrait of the Pulitzer Prize-winning author during a special gathering on Sunday, Nov. 21. It will be held at the MCHS museum, which is housed at the Cedar River Complex in Osage.

A few months ago, Meyer did not even know the portrait existed.

In 1937, distinguished artist Keith Martin Sr. painted Garland while he lived in Hollywood. Recently, Keith Martin Jr. decided he should find the portrait's home. The son of the artist reached out to Meyer and the Hamlin Garland Society, which is a national organization with an online presence.



The Mitchell County Historical Society Museum is located in the Cedar River Complex in Osage. On Nov. 21, it is adding a portrait of Hamlin Garland to its collection.

“I’d like to give this portrait to a worthy organization,” Martin Jr. said to Meyer. “Do you know of such a thing?”

Meyer said he knew of the perfect place: Mitchell County.

Armed with an address, Martin Jr. sent his father’s work, which arrived this October, in a large box. It far exceeded Meyer’s expectations.

“It is magnificent,” Meyer said.

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Martin Jr. left a note:

“Thank you for putting (the portrait) in the care of the Mitchell County Historical Society to join Zulime.”

Zulime Taft was Garland’s wife. During a trip to California, Meyer visited the Garlands’ granddaughter, an artist by the name of Victoria Doyle-Jones. She decided to paint a portrait of her grandmother.

Doyle-Jones donated the finished product to the Mitchell County Historical Society. For around a decade, it has hung in Osage. After the unveiling of Martin Sr.’s work, the Garlands will be reunited.

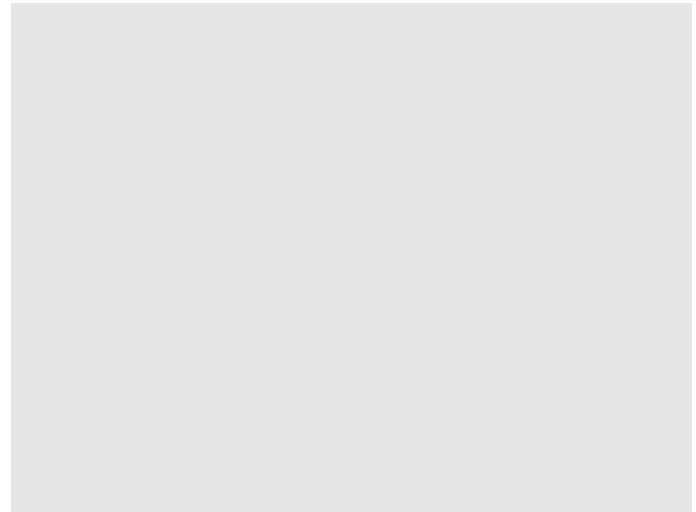
“I am delighted at the prospect of being able to donate... my father’s painting of Hamlin Garland,” said Martin Jr.

On the back of the portrait was a price, \$450, which is the equivalent of over \$8,500 today.

“This is a work of considerable merit,” Meyer said. “I think when people see it, they will not only see someone familiar to them, but they will see something that is an extraordinary capture of Hamlin Garland. The hair is tussled, there’s a twinkle in his eye. He looks like a distinguished but very friendly grandfather.”

After the portrait arrived, Meyer suggested an unveiling. The historical society agreed, and the ceremony will take place at approximately 2:30 p.m. on Nov. 21.

The event will be held in the museum and in the lobby of the CRC. The public is invited to attend. The unveiling will be the centerpiece of the event, which includes a ribbon-cutting to mark the opening of the museum’s new exhibit, Hamlin Garland Revisited.



Hamlin Garland

“It has the making of something that is rather special,” Meyer said. “In part because Hamlin Garland is a remarkable character.”

According to Meyer, in an informal poll from almost 20 year ago, librarians across the country were asked the most notable author from their state. Garland was the choice of three states, Iowa, Wisconsin and South Dakota. The fact Mitchell County was a major character in his books should be celebrated, according to Meyer.

Garland was born in Wisconsin in 1860, later moving to Iowa and South Dakota, also living in Boston, Chicago, New York City and Los Angeles. He graduated from the Cedar Valley Seminary in Osage.

The portrait of Garland arrived at a propitious time. This autumn marks the 100th anniversary of the publication of *A Daughter of the Middle Border*, for which Garland won a Pulitzer Prize. After a slump, Garland rebooted his career, Meyer said, and the book was received with universal acclaim.

“For all of his professional life, he wrote about Mitchell County and what he experienced here,” Meyer said. “And he was writing for almost 50 years. He drew upon what he knew. He knew about the structure of a house because he saw his father build one. He knew about hard fieldwork because that’s what he did. He knew about feeding the horses at night.”

Denis Boerjan, MCHS board member, is in charge of the exhibit.

“We are proud and grateful to have the portrait in the museum’s collection, along with the rest of the Hamlin Garland collection,” said Boerjan.

For the organizers of the event, they are simply making a place for Hamlin to return home.

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