



Chapter 2 - by Kay Hively

George watched the tall stranger take a seat by the fireplace. Raindrops fell from his hat as he removed it and placed it on the floor by the canvas bag. The bag was unlike any this 9-year-old frontier boy had ever seen.

It was oddly shaped. George was convinced it held something wonderful.

The stranger had hardly settled into his chair before Henry Bingham, George's father, approached

the man's table. The two men talked in low, pleasant tones.

As George watched his father and the stranger, the two other customers left the inn. George was a good worker, so he began clearing their table. He liked keeping the dining room clean and neat. He never wanted dirty dishes left on a table.

After a few moments, Mr. Bingham poured the stranger

some hot coffee and then went to the kitchen to have a meal prepared.

George could hardly do his work because he was so intrigued by the stranger. His interest grew even stronger when the man opened his bag and brought

out a handful of pencils and a large piece of paper.

The man was an artist! George's heart pounded loudly in his chest. At last he

was going to meet a real artist. Now he would have to figure out a way to make friends with the stranger.

George did not have to worry about that very long.

When Mr. Bingham returned from the kitchen, he told George to take charge of the stranger sitting by the fireplace. George's father said to get the artist any supplies he

needed, and to see that he always had food and drink.

The happy boy was thrilled to hear that the man would be staying at the inn for several days, working on a drawing.

George had never been given personal charge of any customer before. Looking at his father, he saw that special look on Mr. Bingham's face. That's when he knew that his father was giving him a gift — the gift of spending time with a real artist.

Mr. Bingham introduced George to the stranger. The man's name was Chester Harding. After the introduction, the innkeeper told his guest that his son

was interested in art. The artist turned to George and said he was happy to have him as his helper. He said it would be nice to have someone clean brushes and sharpen the drawing pencils. He also said he would be happy to teach a few lessons. Then the big man smiled and motioned for George to take a seat beside him.

Trembling with excitement, George sat down and looked at an unfinished picture on the table.

The artist turned to George and asked if he recognized the man in the oil drawing.

Next Chapter: Watching a Master

Things to Think About and Do

1. In the library or on the Internet, learn about Chester (Charles) Harding. What type of art did he usually do? Name some of the famous people he painted.
2. George worked for his parents in their business. Do you help your parents with anything? Do you help around the house? Do you help a neighbor? Set a goal to do at least one extra helpful chore for your family or a neighbor every week. Try helping an elderly person with her yard or by sweeping her porch. Help your mother bring groceries from the car, or pick up trash around your house and yard.
3. Chester Harding was a visitor to Franklin. When well-known visitors come to your community, the newspaper likely writes about them. Look through your newspaper for stories about visitors – famous or not – to your community. Write a newspaper story about YOU returning for a visit in 20 years, detailing all you've accomplished. Be creative!

GLEs: R1H, R1I, R3C, W3A, W3D, SS3aB, IL1B, IL1C

Learn more about Chester Harding by visiting the following Web sites:

<http://shs.umsystem.edu/famousmissourians/explorers/dboone/harding.html>

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6476/>

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