Hamlin Garland's Oklahoma, 1900–05

*By Lonnie E. Underhill**

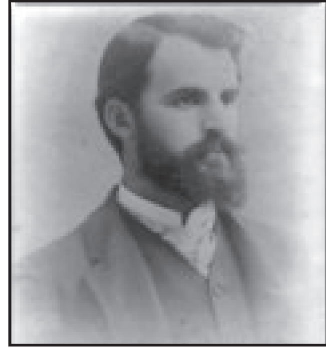
On April 22, 1900, social reformer, man of letters, and novelist Hamlin Garland and his wife, Zulime, stepped cautiously into the dark, warm night from the train that had carried them to the remote village of El Reno in the Oklahoma Territory. They had come to Oklahoma at the urging of Major George W. H. Stouch, recently appointed agent to the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians at Darlington Agency. Major Stouch had invited the Garlands to join him and his wife on his first official tour of the sprawling reservation that exceeded 3.5 million acres west of El Reno. Stouch had known of Garland's interest in American Indians, having suggested several literary topics to him when the two men first met at Lame Deer, Montana, in 1897. Garland was eager to join Stouch because he had begun writing *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop* (1902), a novel based on an

incident that had occurred in 1897 involving several young Indians who preferred to fight to the death rather than be imprisoned for their crime of killing a white rancher who had grazed his animals on a disputed section of the Tongue River Reservation in Montana. Garland hoped Stouch might offer some additional suggestions for the novel. He also had begun to think about another volume of stories tentatively titled *Our Red Neighbor*, which were to "present the Indian as a human being," a rather provocative thought at the time. For these reasons, Garland considered Stouch's invitation "a most important event" in his life.[1]

The next day, Major Stouch and the Garlands visited a Cheyenne village nearby where Garland was presented to some of the headmen. Garland later reflected in his diary, "Once they [the Cheyennes] held themselves erect among men. No one dared to give them orders. Now they are somebody's hired men—outcasts, tramps." That evening Garland talked with Chester Poe Cornelius, an Oneida Indian at the Darlington Agency, and their conversation proved not only interesting, but historically important. Cornelius, a young lawyer, confided in Garland, "Lawyers here will always be concerned largely with Indian lands, inheritance, and titles. The agency rolls do not show family relationships. Each man and woman has an individual name and there is certain to be much litigation." Garland promised to bring the matter before President Theodore Roosevelt, whom he had met while he was writing a biography titled *Ulysses S. Grant: His Life and Character* (1898).[2]

Garland also spoke to a group of youngsters at the Cheyenne Boarding School, which had been established in 1880 about three miles from Darlington Agency. He recalled, "I was much impressed with them, but could not help thinking how arbitrary this scheme of education is: to make them conform—to make them act like White people—to cut them off from all that is deep-seated in them, is the purpose of their teachers. They sing our monotonous, worn-out hymns and they wear shoddy, agency clothing. In the end they will be mere imitations of poor Whites." Garland later used these impressions in his story "Spartan Mother." Several of his other tales of the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians also focused on matters of education.[3]

The friendship between Major Stouch and Garland continued following Garland's visit to the Tongue River Reservation near Lame Deer, Montana, in 1897. He went there following news of an uprising, an "outbreak," involving the Northern Cheyennes and white ranchers. A white shepherd had been murdered in an area where the boundary line had not been surveyed, and the unsettled land was being claimed



Hamlin Garland (photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress).

by both the Cheyennes and the ranchers. The man accused of the murder, David Stanley, also known as Whirlwind and Little Whirlwind's Voice, was taken into custody by local law enforcement, and several cavalry troops under the command of Major Stouch were called to the reservation to prevent further bloodshed over the incident.[4]

On May 1, 1900, Major Stouch, his wife, and the Garlands began their tour of the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. One important event of the reservation tour occurred at Seger's Colony, where Garland met John Seger. Several years earlier, Seger had led a group of 152 Cheyenne Indians to the area, and had begun providing them with instruction in the methods of carpentry, animal husbandry, and agriculture. Garland recalled in his notes that Seger's Colony was clean, its crops were flourishing, and the buildings were substantial and well-planned. Seger's Colony was established upon what had been the headquarters of the Washita Cattle Company, which was about fifty miles west of the Darlington Agency. The colony served as a subagency, a manual boarding school, and a 1,200-acre farm and ranch. John Seger was superintendent of the school, as well as a carpenter, brick maker, mason, farmer, and subagent. He joined the Indians' games, listened to their stories, and faced both hardships and prosperous times with them. Seger considered the natives not as "treacherous fiends" or "wiley devils," but as "folks—men and women of the Stone Age." While Seger could speak the language of the Arapaho tribe, he preferred to communicate with both tribes through a sign language that both tribes understood. Seger proved to be a valuable source of information on the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, and Garland later noted that Seger had become a lasting influence on his own career.[5]

On the day of Garland's arrival at the colony, Seger told him numerous anecdotes and stories about the Indians, their customs, and their life. Garland asked if Seger had ever recorded these stories. Seger

was poorly educated and nearly illiterate, so he had not recorded the stories. Because of his lack of education, the Department of Indian Affairs had considered dropping him from service, but Seger had proven invaluable in his position at the colony and was retained.[6]

From this visit Garland took notes for four short stories. Among these stories was "Carrying the Mail," the germ for a later story "The Blood Lust," which appeared in *The Book of the American Indian* (1923). Garland revealed that in his stories he always attempted to move past simply melancholy experiences, seeking sociological background that he thought made his fiction more worthwhile. In the story "The Blood Lust," Seger selected Little Robe, a Cheyenne, to accompany him on the mail route between Fort Reno and Camp Supply. At one spot along the way, Little Robe remembered that he and his family had once camped there. He told Seger how, as a young man, he had taken his wife and beautiful daughter with him when he went south to raid a Mexican settlement and steal horses. The Mexicans, in pursuit, mortally wounded his child. Little Robe gathered a band of warriors and again raided the village, killing all of its inhabitants and burning the village. Little Robe concluded, "After that I slept." The story represented an excellent study of the development of Little Robe's character.[7]

Another story suggested by Seger was "Story of Hippy," which became "Hippy, the Dare-Devil" published in *McClure's Magazine* in 1902. It was the story of Beaver-tail, an Arapaho, called Hippy by white settlers because of a wound that caused him to limp. A warrior of good repute, he nevertheless had been derided as a weakling by the Cheyennes who, according to Seger, also regarded the Arapaho people as inferiors. In an altercation with the agency school teacher, Hippy vowed to kill him, but over a period of time the teacher and Hippy became fast friends. The Cheyennes derided Hippy even more, and in his anger he vowed to make the agent issue good beef instead of the bad meat they had received on ration day. He had forced the agent at gunpoint to requisition the best beef and he returned to camp a hero. Hippy, however, was later captured and sent to prison at Fort Smith, where he reinjured his hip and was sent home to die. On his deathbed, he asked his sons to take the white man's way saying, "The White man's road is the only safe one. The Indians' trail here is short. . . . Be at peace. Do not fight, as I have done."[8]

Garland's rendition of this story enabled the reader to become more interested in Sam Williams, the teacher, than in Hippy. Garland allowed this point of view because he was more interested in Seger than he was in the crippled Indian, and he allowed the point of view to shift

Seger Indian Training School in Colony, Oklahoma, in July 1932 (8433.A, John H. Seger Collection, OHS Research Division).

to Seger because Garland found him more fascinating. Sam Williams's character resembled Seger, who had told the story about himself. As with Seger, Williams was dauntless, poorly educated, fluent in native languages, and well-liked by the Indians. Hippy called Williams "Mi-O-Kani," a name by which Seger was known to the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians.[9]

Other stories Seger told Garland were "Yellow Horse" and "Laughing Man." Of these stories, only "Yellow Horse" was used in a completed story titled "Leaders in the Trail," but the piece was never published. The story "Yellow Horse" depicted an Indian who was so determined to take up the white man's ways by farming that he refused to strike his tent and go on the annual hunt because he had a setting hen that he did not want to disturb. At his death, Yellow Horse requested that his farming tools be placed nearby so he could see them, and he placed his children in the care of the agency farmer.[10]

On the day following his arrival at the colony, Garland attended a council, which he described as a "fine scene." Somewhat influenced by Seger's stories, Garland also saw the Arapahos as "distinctly less noble in bearing than the Cheyenne," and they seemed to remain in the background of the proceedings. Here, Garland learned that the Cheyennes also felt that the Arapahos were inferior. It was around that concept that Garland built the character motivation in "Hippy, the Dare-Devil."[11]

Individuals at Seger Colony in 1901, including Hamlin Garland (8865, W. K. Hartford Collection, OHS Research Division).

Before Major Stouch's party left Seger's Colony, Garland recorded sketches of two more stories told by Seger, "Whiteman's Court" and "Lizard." Garland developed "Whiteman's Court" into a humorous, unpublished story he titled "Lizard." In Garland's fictionalized version of the story a Kiowa Indian and his wife, who were constantly fighting, asked Seger to settle the matter. When they attended the white man's court, they enjoyed the drama and learned from the proceedings, and, on returning home, they reconciled because the white man's court had been quite enough for them. Also, before the Stouches and Garlands left the colony, they made plans to return so Garland could see Seger again.[12]

Next they visited the subagent's home in Arapaho and continued on to the Red Moon Agency, where Garland met White Shield. Garland recorded his impressions of the Red Moon Agency and a moving speech by White Shield. These became a part of an unpublished essay, "The Other Side of the Redman," that he wrote to depict the humanity of the American Indian. Twenty years later, Garland wrote that something White Shield had said during this meeting provided the title for a story

and the theme for a volume of short stories. White Shield's statement was, "I find it hard to make a home among the White man," causing Garland to grasp "the reverse side of the problem." He wrote, "I took for the title of my story these words: 'White Eagle, the Red Pioneer,' and presented the point of view of a nomad who turned his back on the wilderness which he loves, and set himself the task of leading his band in settlement among the plowmen."[13]

In the story White Eagle, a Cheyenne chief, and several members of his camp were persuaded by Williams to carry the mail between two forts. They did it well and prospered until the mail route folded, leaving White Eagle to fend for himself. Texas cattlemen began driving their herds through his area, feeding them on the Indian's grass. White Eagle and his men assisted the cattlemen to ford streams and took cattle as pay. In time White Eagle built up a sizeable herd of his own, but as the country opened up to settlement the passing drivers began rustling White Eagle's cattle.

The new agent then cut off White Eagle's rations in an attempt to break his power as a chief. The chief became very poor and, without the protection of the agency, became afraid to venture very far from the camp because of the white ranchers nearby. Another blow came to White Eagle, who had attempted to take the "White man's road," when his son was ambushed, shot, and killed. At this point, Major Curtis, or "Crooked Wrist," became agent. He went to White Eagle, promising that justice would be done. He became the chief's friend and convinced him to protect his land by building a house and settling down or renting his land to the white ranchers, but the agent warned White Eagle not to be like the poor white farmers. While White Eagle built a house, he found it difficult to leave his tipi. At this point in the story, Blazing Hand revealed to White Eagle the identity of the man who had shot his son, and White Eagle set out to kill the murderer. When White Eagle found the murderer, the white cowboy convinced him that blood revenge was not the white man's way. After a long deliberation, White Eagle returned home, evidently taking up the white man's road.[14]

The fictional White Eagle was modeled after White Shield and spoke many of the lines ascribed to White Shield in Garland's notes. Curtis, of course, was Major Stouch, right down to the crooked arm, and Williams was modeled after Seger. The story, as such, was never published, but Garland revised the story into "Hotan—the Red Pioneer." White Eagle became Hotan, and Williams became Seger. In 1937 the revision appeared as "Houtan, le Courier Rouge," in *Revue Politique et Litteraire*.[15]

On May 9 Stouch's party returned to the colony, and Garland and Seger discussed the plight of the Indian well into the night. Garland

took notes for two additional stories suggested by Seger, "Dark Ways" and "Creeping Bear." He also composed a page of notes on the sign language used by Seger to communicate with the Cheyennes and Arapahos. Garland acknowledged Seger's importance stating, "He is a very valuable man to know. He is able to give me the humorous and human side of the Cheyenne life. He knows these people. He has lived with them for thirty years. He uses the sign language with astonishing readiness and precision and is able to enter the actual mood of both Cheyennes and Arapahos."[16]

The following day, May 10, the Stouches and Garlands continued on to Bridgeport, an Arapaho camp, and then returned to Darlington Agency. Garland spent most of the evening talking to Robert Burns, a young, educated Cheyenne clerk at the agency. Although Burns was able, interesting, and well-educated, his "red philosophy came out in his talk." The clerk admitted he could not rid himself of a belief in certain superstitions of his tribe, saying, "After all, I am Cheyenne. One of the beliefs of our medicine men is that a magic arrow or a magic bullet can be sent by force of the will to pierce the heart of an enemy; and in spite of my education, I have a kind of belief in it."[17]

After an evening with Burns, Garland said he became "fully resolved" to do a book of Indian stories. He may have had Burns in mind when he made notes for "The Carlisle Indian," and this Cheyenne was most likely the model for Iapi, the narrator of "The Silent Eaters" that Garland wrote a few months later. However, the volume of short stories which the writer planned so zealously in 1900 did not become a reality until publication of *The Book of the American Indian* in 1923.[18]

After their tour of the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation, the Garlands briefly visited the Wichitas at Anadarko and the Comanches at Fort Sill, where Garland met Quanah Parker, the famous Comanche chief whose mother, Cynthia Parker, was a white woman. Garland made notes for a story, "Blowing out the Gas," in which Quanah was a character. They had dinner on the last night of their trip with Father Isadore Ricklin of the Catholic Mission near Chickasha, an event that Garland cherished in his memory.[19]

Years later Garland assessed this trip to Oklahoma as one of the most valuable of his career. He wrote, "My mind was filled with new characters and new concepts of the red people. Major Stouch, John Seger, White Shield, White Eagle, Quannah [*sic*] Parker, Robert Burns, Father Isadore, and his sisters—all suggested themes for my book of stories in which red men were to be treated as neighbors."[20]

In *A Daughter of the Middle Border* (1921) Garland wrote, "This trip to Indian Territory turned out to be a very important event in my life.

Cheyenne and Arapaho men in front of congregational mission at Darlington Agency (9515, Joseph O. Hickox Collection, OHS Research Division).

First of all, it enabled me to complete the writing of *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop* [1902] and started me on a long series of short stories, depicting the life of the red man. It gave me an enormous amount of valuable material and confirmed in my conversation that the Indian needed an interpreter."[21]

However, Garland had to wait to use the material he collected because in July 1900 he journeyed to the Standing Rock Reservation. There he resumed his research on the Lakota Sioux leader Sitting Bull, about whom he had decided to write a story. Louis Primeau, Garland's interpreter at the time and a half-blood trader from Rock Creek, told his friends among the Lakota Sioux that Garland was a friend who had come to write a story about Sitting Bull from the Indian's point of view. Primeau had apparently "not only comprehended my purpose in a literary sense," Garland later recalled, "but gave up his day to the task of introducing me to his people, and of interpreting me to them, as well as conveying their thoughts to me."[22]

After wintering in New York that year, Garland returned to Oklahoma in May 1901, deciding that he needed further study of the Cheyenne people. He spent two weeks with Seger, listening to his stories and taking profuse notes on anecdotes for up to fifty-two short stories. Of these, he worked seven into stories that he published. Two anec-

Indian mission at Seger Colony (15553, Floyd Haws Collection, OHS Research Division).

dotes, "The Rooster" and "Whiteman's Conceit," became "Two Stories of Oklahoma," published in *Century Magazine* in 1904. The work contained humor, which was rare in Garland's writings about the American Indian. Another of these short stories was "Nuko's Revenge," a story depicting an Arapaho man who left his pet rooster with the agency farmer while he went on a buffalo hunt, only to discover upon his return that the rooster had been killed by a turkey. Another story, "A Red Man's View of Evolution," was narrated by the agency farmer who related the philosophical story of an elderly Kiowa Indian who refused to light his pipe with matches. The stories "Big Nose" and "A Decree of Council," were combined into a new story titled "A Decree of Council" that related the story of how a Cheyenne man named Big Nose was granted the necessities of life and a second chance after he had gambled away his fortunes. "Lone Wolf's Camp" and "Lone Wolf's Old Guard" were also combined and published by *Harper's Weekly* in 1903. "Big Horse" became "The River's Warning" and was published in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in 1902. "Curley's Scars" became "The Red Plowman" and was published in *Craftsman* in 1907, and "Nistina" was published by *Harper's Weekly* in 1903. Another piece based on Seger's stories was "The Spartan Mother," which Garland based on Seger's own experience as a teacher at Darlington. This was published in *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1905. Seger repeated for a second time the story of Little Robe, and Garland titled the story "The Blood Lust."[23]

As far as literary production, Garland's trip to Oklahoma in 1901 was one of his most important. Besides the short stories he produced, Garland completed *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop*. Benjamin O. Flower, publisher of *Arena Magazine*, said of *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop*, "I think in many respects this is your best work. It combines the excellence of your more recent long books with the strong altruistic and moral motive which was so marked a feature of your earlier works."[24]

One significant result of *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop* was that President Theodore Roosevelt became convinced that Garland knew very well the conditions on the western reservations. In early May 1902 Garland met Roosevelt and others, including Dr. Clinton Hart Merriam, Gifford Pinchot, George Bird Grinnell, W. J. McGee, and Dr. Charles A. Eastman, at the White House to discuss a variety of Indian issues. During the conference, Garland argued that Indian people needed time to pass from what he considered their age to the age of electricity. He felt it would be a mistake to imagine that a single generation, or even more, could bridge the chasm. Because the Indians were gregarious, he felt to make them isolated homesteaders would be to destroy them. He advocated allotting land to the Indians, but also to allow them to continue living in villages while becoming herders and adjusting to the times.

Then Garland introduced to President Roosevelt the idea of renaming the Indians, a project that had first been suggested to him in 1900 by Chester Poe Cornelius, the Oneida man at Darlington Agency in Oklahoma. Garland viewed the entire matter of Indian names as closely connected to the policy surrounding allotment of lands resulting from the General Allotment Act of 1887. This congressional act was seen as a way to settle Indians on reservations across the West, bring overall peace to the region, and thrust the Indians into assimilation with the Anglo-dominated culture. Garland described how government officials had taken tribal censuses and assigned parcels of land to each tribal member. In so doing, the officials discovered how the nature of Indian names greatly complicated their task. Reformers such as Garland felt that enforcing the European system of family names among the Indians was the solution. Since the laws governing inheritance were based on this custom, a great amount of litigation and fraud could result unless the Indian naming practices were reformed to show family connections.[25]

Garland had first developed a concern regarding Indian naming practices when he visited the Southern Ute Reservation in 1895. Traders, schools, and agency officials all had made glaring and bungling

errors in attempting to translate Indian names. He cited an example that a dignified chieftain he met had been burdened with names like "Tail Feathers Coming" or "Scabby Horse." He suggested grouping family members and asking them to choose a family name, a practice that had been in use for generations in other cultures. Roosevelt praised Garland for his observations and asked him to develop a plan for implementing the family naming practice among the Indians. Even though Garland had the support of the president of the United States and distinguished citizens such as George Bird Grinnell, Clinton Hart Merriam, W. J. McGee, and Dr. Charles A. Eastman, the project got off to a bumpy start.

As Garland discussed the renaming initiative with the commissioner of Indian Affairs, he provided even more illustrations regarding the confusion in handling Indian names. He stated that the Indians deserved the same right to characteristic names as any other citizen, but frequent use of nicknames and the overall lack of indicating family relationships provided little more than confusion. He cited an example where "White Shield," "Brave Bear," and "Red Eagle" were brothers, but nothing showed their connection. Sadly for Garland the outcome of each conference on the subject was that he should take the lead in the project and see it through to some reasonable end.

Garland developed a circular that was issued by the office of Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones. The circular amplified and restated a pamphlet that had been established in 1890 by the commissioner of Indian Affairs. It provided directions for handling long Indian names, shortening them on occasion, and establishing family names to show family relationships. Some names were to be translated, while foolish and cumbersome names were to be eliminated. Well-known Indian names could be retained, and spelling consistency was encouraged. Garland found several supporters of the plan for the Indian renaming project, but the task was large, time-consuming, and, in the end, interest in the project dwindled. The renaming project was most successful, perhaps, among the Sioux in the Dakotas, largely because of the efforts of Dr. Charles Eastman, a three-quarter blood Sioux. Where the project failed, or was only partially implemented, officials had been compelled to depend upon the superintendents of agencies, schools, and missions. By 1913 the renaming project had been all but forgotten, becoming just another failed plan to address the issue of Indian assimilation in America.[26]

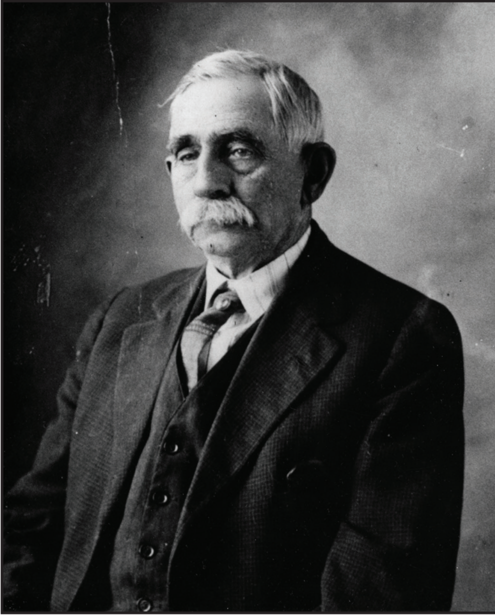
Hamlin Garland always had a connection with the land. His earliest memories were of assisting his father breaking the sod, using four-horse teams, planting wheat, and harvesting. He knew well the hard-

ships, as well as the satisfaction, associated with these tasks. He had even homesteaded at Ordway, South Dakota, in the early 1880s. He observed firsthand the personal commitment and the drain on one's health that resulted from living close to the land. So, it was surprising at the end of Garland's 1900 tour of the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation that he announced his intention to become a land owner in Oklahoma. He romanticized in his journal,

> All that day and each day thereafter, files of white-topped wagons forded the [Canadian] river, keeping their westward march quite in the traditional American fashion, to disappear like weary beetles over the long, low ridge past the fort [Reno] which stood like a guidon to the promise land. Here were all the elements of Western settlement, the Indian, the soldiers, the glorious sweeping wind, and flowering sod, and in addition to all these, the resolute white men seeking their fortunes beneath the sunset sky.[27]

These trips to Oklahoma continued to be very important events in Hamlin Garland's life. It enabled him to complete the writing of *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop*, and started him on a long series of short stories depicting the life of the "red man." He became convinced that the Indian needed an interpreter, and he felt he could fill that effort. But, beyond these benefits, he had developed a fierce desire to own some of the beautiful prairie that he had visited during his tour of the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation. This revived hunger for land generated in Garland a plan to establish a "wide ranch, an estate where each year he could spend February and March." He said to his father, "I want a place where I can keep saddle horses and cattle." To his brother, Franklin, he said, "Come to Oklahoma. I am going to buy a ranch there and need you as a superintendent."[28]

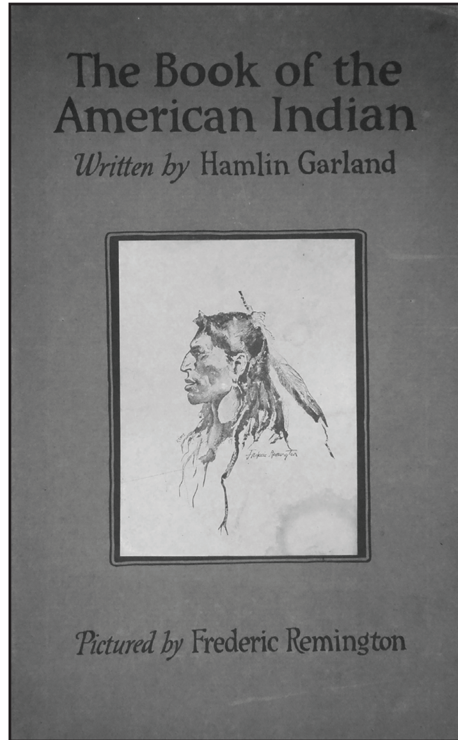
It is interesting to contrast Garland's new attitude toward land ownership, use, and speculation with views that he had held earlier in his career, both as a land owner in South Dakota and later as a supporter of single-tax advocacy. He had previously viewed farming almost with contempt as it drained the life from most of the farmers and farmers' wives that he had known. He found farm life unpleasant and the hardships insurmountable and unrewarding. Garland vividly revealed these earlier impressions in *A Son of the Middle Border* (1914) and *A Daughter of the Middle Border* (1921), both of which were written as autobiographical accounts of his experiences in the middle border states of Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, and later Oklahoma.[29]



John H. Seger (19589.111.12, Alvin Rucker Collection, OHS Research Division).

Garland set about accumulating land and fulfilling his new dream of owning a sprawling ranch in Oklahoma soon after his tour with Major Stouch. He used income from the sales of his novel *The Captain of the Gray-Horse Troop* to purchase the first parcel of 160 acres in 1901. His plans included "acquiring 1,000 acres, all connecting." He imagined himself in a "wide-brimmed hat and white linen suit, sitting at ease on the porch of a broad-roofed house (built in the Mexican style with a patio), looking out over my thousand acres—I had decided to have just a thousand acres, it made such a mouth-filling announcement to one's friends." Early the following year, Garland returned to Oklahoma with the intent to purchase more land. He planned to concentrate his land purchases in western Oklahoma, in the vicinity of Seger's Colony, Weatherford, and Caddo County so that Seger could look after the property.[30]

During spring 1902 Oklahoma received frequent rain showers, and the area was green and beautiful. Garland boasted, "As I galloped about over the wide swells of the Caddo country, I was disposed to buy all the land that joined me. . . . 'Washitay,' at such moments was not only the land of the past, but the hope of the future." Brimming with confidence and inspiration, Garland purchased another 240 acres, and arranged for Seger to manage both farms he now owned. In the midst of this, however, the weather suddenly changed, ushering in "a hot,



Cover of The Book of the American Indian *by Hamlin Garland, with illustrations by Frederic Remington.*

unending pitiless blast withering the grain and tearing the heart out of young gardens. . . . There was something grand as well as sorrowful in this unexpected display of desert ferocity." Garland's dream of the "thousand acre ranch shriveled with the plants . . . and the value of land in the Washitay fell almost to the vanishing point." Garland's sense of despair evidently was only a passing mood, for he continued purchasing land until he had accumulated one thousand acres, "but, these acres were in scattered plots and the house with the patio and porch was never built."[31]

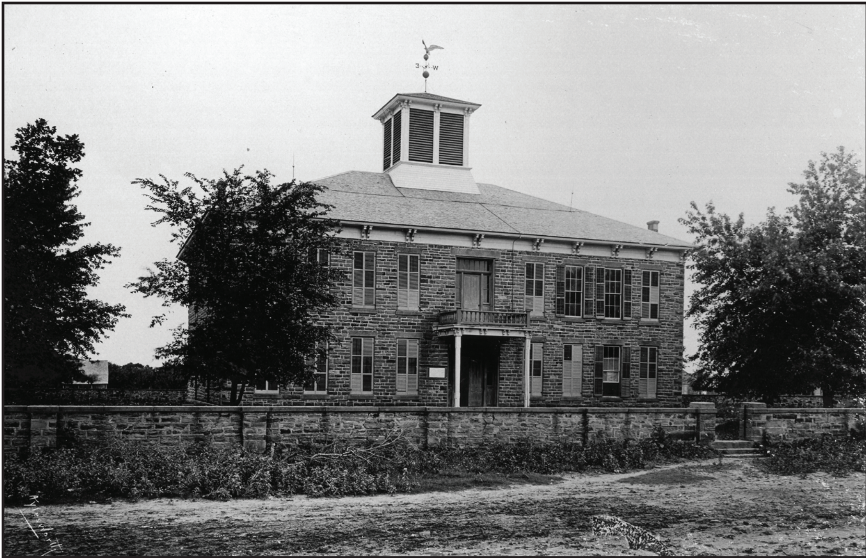
In fall 1902, Garland returned to Oklahoma and joined Seger at Weatherford. Seger was preparing to visit several points in the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation, and he invited Garland to ride the circuit with him. The two men set out for Cloud Chief in the midst of a hot, rushing October wind, "a furious wind which rapidly grew in power till it threatened to overturn the top buggy in which we rode." By mid-afternoon, the wind had become so frightening that Seger suggested stopping at a settler's home, a half shack and half dugout that was sheltered by a low hill. As the men neared the settler's

front door, a "procession of barrels, wash boilers, tumbleweeds, and chickens went streaming past." Garland later commented that "never in his darkest Dakota days" had he witnessed anything more sinister than this storm. Inside the settler's home, the noise of the storm was diminished by the sod walls, but the house was filled with dust and the roof rattled as if it might be blown off.

His description of the settlers was interesting. He said it was a "singular household." The dominating personality of the group was an elderly, practically deaf woman, "a newspaper reader with the gift of speech," claiming that she recognized Garland's name and had read some of his stories. The man of the household, likewise unique in personality, was a "grimy, bewhiskered little man," who confided in Garland that he, too, was an author, and that he had composed several hymns. He proceeded to sing them to Garland, while playing his own accompaniment on a small parlor organ, and requested Garland to judge their value. Garland later noted in his journal, "The wailing, moaning instrument, the drone of the man's voice, the smell of cooking, the half light, the pushing, shrieking wind. . . . In all of my various experiences, I have never been plunged into such a home." The evening meal was equally trying, as Garland had been seated beside the domineering, nearly deaf lady. When the wind finally died down at dusk, Garland and Seger were quick to leave, the memory of this experience remaining a "nightmare of sadness and horror."[32]

After 1903 Garland's writings resulting from his visits with Seger and others who were well acquainted with the American Indian drastically decreased. He published only one piece in 1904 and 1905, none in 1906, one in 1907, and no more until publication of *The Book of the American Indian* in 1923. Several factors contributed to this decline: family obligations, a decline in his involvement in reforming in the Midwest, an involvement in psychic writings, forestry in the Mountain West, a sadness that the "wildness" of the West was diminishing, his own fading idealistic mood, and the forced transformation of American Indians into "red members" of the Anglo-American society. Also, by this time, Garland had become involved with representatives of the Vitagraph Company of America in Brooklyn about putting some of his stories on film. Garland agreed to give the Vitagraph group the right to produce four of his stories each year for five years, but a number of setbacks in selecting a location for filming and reworking some of the stories proved too great, ending in disappointment in 1920 when the Vitagraph Company formally ended its contract with Garland.[33]

On another occasion, in 1905, Garland returned to Oklahoma, this time to check on the ranch he had purchased ten miles outside



Creek Council House in Okmulgee, Indian Territory (15819, Aylesworth Album Collection, OHS Research Division).

Okmulgee. Franklin, his brother, was managing the ranch, and they planned to collaborate on some issues involving its operation. While Garland was visiting his brother, he learned that the Creek Indians were having their last meeting in the Council House at Okmulgee. Garland was eager to witness this historic proceeding, scheduled to last several hours on March 10, 1905, prior to the March 4, 1906, deadline set by the United States government to end all functions of the tribal government.[34]

Garland noted how the speakers were patient with each other. No man was interrupted and no man's speech was cut short. No one seemed in haste, and no one appeared to be ill-tempered. None of the observers "belittled those who spoke from the floor." After carefully watching the proceedings of the final council of the Creeks, Garland hastily recorded his observations. Among the topics discussed at this council was the old question about what right the public had to make a road wherever it wanted to, despite the law specifying that "roads shall be made along the section line."[35]

Garland concluded from his visit: "Without doubt, if I would have understood their speech, I would have been able to detect, now and then, some reference to the past, some illustration taken from their immemorial traditions. But, from all this, I was debarred, and I softly

tip-toed out." All in attendance, most likely, would have agreed that the Creeks' tribal government, not unlike other tribal governments in Oklahoma, was in a state of decay. And, they also likely would have agreed strongly that "no nation and no people endures forever. The life of the greatest nations is, after all, but a small span in history." To Garland, as to Chief Pleasant Porter, the cessation of tribal affairs epitomized a final stage in Indian affairs: the dissolution of an Indian nation and the bestowing of United States citizenship upon its members.[36]

Hamlin Garland's Oklahoma forays exposed him to a number of important issues that helped shape the history of Oklahoma. He was able to see into the lives of the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians at a critical time in their history, not only through his own eyes but, more importantly, through the eyes, thoughtful judgment, and entertaining moments that John Seger had witnessed firsthand through the eyes of sympathetic white men, not through the eyes of the Indians themselves. Garland began seeing the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians as Seger saw them. He took profuse notes based upon Seger's experiences that had spanned more three decades. Seger had lived with the Indians, suffered many of their heartbreaks, and joined in their games. This enabled Hamlin Garland to bring life to many of his stories and experiences. In Major George Stouch, Garland also saw many positive influences, honest dealings, and courageous acts of the US Army as military commanders attempted to intercept and referee conflict on the frontier. Garland reacted to conversations with Chester Poe Cornelius and Robert Burns, interesting discussions that had lasted well into the night. These men were educated Indians who saw the downside of Indian families not being legally grouped together to prevent future litigation and fraud as they became landowners. He also saw the folly of the vast project that he had initiated in 1902 to rename the American Indian population. As a man who possessed a keen familiarity and close association with the land, Garland broke from his earlier experiences with farming and romanticized the idea of becoming a rancher and amassing all the land adjoining his. And, perhaps, most telling for Garland of all of his experiences in Oklahoma was the evening he spent watching the final council of the Creek Nation, the closing of an era and the beginning of the new era of statehood in 1907.

Endnotes

[*] Lonnie E. Underhill, currently retired, is the author and editor of a number of journal articles dealing with the civic, social, and military history of the American Southwest. He is coeditor of Hamlin Garland's *Observations on the American Indian, 1895–1905* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976). His graduate study at the University of Arizona included "A History of the First Arizona Volunteer Infantry, 1865–1866," a master of arts thesis directed by Professor Harwood P. Hinton.

[1] Hamlin Garland, *A Daughter of the Middle Border* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, 1921), 184; Lonnie E. Underhill and Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., eds., *Hamlin Garland's Observations on the American Indian, 1895–1905* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976), 21, 31; Hamlin Garland, *Companions on the Trail* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1931), 20. Garland launched his literary career in 1887 at the urging of William Dean Howells, perhaps the most respected man of letters in America at the time. Howells encouraged Garland to write about familiar subjects: the manners, conditions, and customs of the Midwestern farmers. However, after visiting Colorado and the West Coast in 1892, Garland turned away from writing of deplorable social conditions of Midwestern farmers to the plight of the American Indian, as efforts were being made across the West to acculturate tribes into an Anglo-dominated culture. Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 6.

[2] Garland, *Companions*, 22–23.

[3] Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 31–32; Muriel H. Wright, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), 81.

[4] Lonnie E. Underhill and Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., "Cheyenne Outbreak of 1897," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 24, no. 4 (Autumn, 1974): 30–41; Lonnie E. Underhill and Daniel F. Littlefield Jr., "The Cheyenne Outbreak of 1897, as Reported by Hamlin Garland," *Arizona and the West* 15, no. 3 (Fall 1973): 257–74.

[5] Garland, *Daughter*, 178–79; Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 33–34; Garland, *Companions*, 24–25.

[6] Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 32; Garland, *Daughter*, 248; Garland, *Companions*, 28–29.

[7] Garland, *Daughter*, 256; Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 33.

[8] Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 34. Garland's view that the Arapahos were inferior to the Cheyennes was likely influenced by John Seger, who had lived among both tribes for more than thirty years. Although Seger spoke the Arapaho dialect and as a matter of fairness to both tribes, Seger used only sign language to conduct business with the Cheyennes and the Arapahos, so as not to slight the Cheyennes with whose language he was unfamiliar. Garland, *Companions*, 25. Historian Muriel Wright described the Arapahos as "friendly, contemplative, and religious." She noted that in tribal days, the Arapahos had "always been much more tractable than their warlike allies, the Cheyenne." Wright, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma*, 42.

[9] Wright, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma*, 42.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Garland, *Companions*, 34.

[12] Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 34.

[13] Garland, *Companions*, 35; Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 34–35.

[14] Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 36.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Garland, *Companions*, 30; Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 36.

[17] Garland, *Companions*, 34–35.

[18] Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 37.

[19] Garland, *Companions*, 36–38.

[20] Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 37; Garland, *Companions*, 38.

[21] In this view, Garland perhaps had allowed the conditions on Indian reservations to influence similarly the views he had expressed earlier in his career when he wrote about social conditions of Midwestern farmers, his recent support of Henry George, the single-tax movement, and protests against land speculators that forced poverty among the masses. Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 37; Garland, *Daughter*, 182.

[22] Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 37.

[23] Ibid., 41–43.

[24] Garland, *Daughter*, 182–83; Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 45; Garland, *Companions*, 129.

[25] Garland, *Companions*, 23, 136; Richard B. Morris, *Encyclopedia of American History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 464.

[26] Garland, *Companions*, 137–39; see also Daniel F. Littlefield Jr. and Lonnie E. Underhill, "Renaming the American Indian, 1890–1913," *American Studies* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1971): 33–45. Lonnie E. Underhill, "Hamlin Garland and the Indian," *American Indian Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1974): 103–13; Lonnie E. Underhill, "Indian Name Translation," *American Speech: A Quarterly of Linguistic Usage* 43, no. 2 (May 1968): 114–26.

[27] Garland, *Daughter*, 178.

[28] Ibid., 182–83.

[29] In 1887 Garland read a paper titled "The Social Aspects of the Land Tax" at a meeting of the Boston Anti-Poverty Society. The paper was in support of the principles of social reform advocated by Henry George in a volume, *Progress and Poverty* (1879). The premise of George's argument for social reform was that large corporations such as railroads had contributed to the strangle-hold of producing high rents and low wages in America. His proposal would remove all forms of taxes, thus redistributing wealth in America for the masses by focusing on actual land use and the economic rent derived from land through a single tax, while discouraging land speculation that produced less taxes and forced poverty across America. Henry George Jr., *Henry George* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1939), 115.

[30] Ibid., 247.

[31] Garland, *Companions*, 314; Garland, *Daughter*, 250.

[32] Garland, *Companions*, 315–16.

[33] Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 51–55.

[34] Lonnie E. Underhill, "Hamlin Garland and the Final Council of the Creek Nation," *Journal of the West* 10, no. 3 (July 1971): 511–20.

[35] Garland, *Companions*, 319; Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 183.

[36] Garland's observations of the Creek Council House led him to the conclusion that the Creeks' government was in a state of decay, and he drew a parallel to other Oklahoma tribes at the time. He wrote: "The interior of the building still more definitely and drearily typed the passing of tribal supremacy. The walls were in decay, and paper flapped from the ceiling and the grimy stairway . . . led to a desolate hall above. . . . I walked lonesomely about, finding no one who spoke English or who could inform me whether the Council was to hold a session that evening or not, and when I returned to the street and inquired of the white citizens, no one seemed to know, and no one seemed to care." Underhill and Littlefield, *Observations*, 184-85; Garland, *Companions*, 313-14. The Dawes Act of 1887 provided that every Indian in the territorial limits of the United States be declared a citizen of the United States. The act was amended in 1901 when every American Indian in the Indian Territory was expressly declared a citizen of the United States. On June 2, 1924, Congress conferred citizenship status upon all Indians born in the United States. Wright, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma*, 10.