

Lost Portrait Of Mayor Samuel Carlson Returns

By MANLEY J. ANDERSON

Two Mayor Carlsons were back in Jamestown City Hall today — one in body and one in spirit.

A long-missing portrait of the late Mayor Emeritus Samuel A. Carlson has been returned to the building after an absence of more than a decade. It now is known where the portrait has been during that period, and the manner in which it arrived there continues to be a mystery.

Mayor Steven B. Carlson and City Clerk Shirley Anne Bratt said the oil painting by Elmer Holmberg came up missing about May 1971 after hanging in the old City Hall lobby for many years.

Its absence was discovered during the move from the old City Hall to the present one when the artist's relatives inquired about it. The mayor said a major search was initiated for it, but to no avail.

This is where Robert W. Matson, well-known area auctioneer, enters the picture. He said that about 18 years ago he had auctioned off the former Boothcraft properties on East Second Street in Jamestown.

One of the partners in the business was the late Elmer Linus Johnson, who had lived in the Ashville area and was widely known for his paintings and portrait restorations.

Matson said Johnson had taken some goods from the East Second Street business to his home and Johnson's wife, Ellen, contacted him about selling them.

The auction was held recently. Among the articles found by Matson was what he first believed to be an old picture frame, with the front side hung toward the wall.

On further examination, he found it to be the painting of the late Mayor Carlson, complete with an inscription on a brass plate at the bottom — summarizing some of his life's accomplishments. Carlson served as mayor of Jamestown from 1908 through 1934.

Matson realized the nature of his find, took the portrait out of the sale, and contacted the present mayor. Matson and Carlson theorize that the portrait was brought to Johnson to be touched up or restored, but have no knowledge as to who made it available to him.

Matson took the portrait Friday afternoon to Fenton Park Nursing Home, where Johnson's widow is a resident. He said that after he explained the situation to her, the picture would be returned to City Hall.

Police Chief Richard D. Ream recalled the missing portrait, along with a plaque that also was somehow lost during the move from the old City Hall to the new one. The plaque was located some years ago, leaving only the portrait to be accounted for.

Ream said: "We were told at the time we got the plaque back that the portrait was probably around town some place and eventually it would turn up. I'm happy it did."



Back In City Hall

A long-missing portrait of Jamestown's late Mayor Emeritus Samuel A. Carlson has been returned to City Hall. The oil painting was found by auctioneer Robert W. Matson, left, during a sale of goods from the estate of a late artist and portrait restorer. With him is Mayor Steven B. Carlson, who expressed appreciation that the missing painting was found.

P-J photo by Richard W. Hallberg