

A red-ink woodcut-style illustration of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a river flows with stylized, wavy lines. A rider on horseback, wearing a hat and a light-colored shirt, is positioned in the lower right, looking towards the left. The background features a steep, rocky mountain slope with several tall, thin evergreen trees. The entire scene is framed by a simple black border.

A FAMILY GUIDE

TO THE

MACKAY GALLERY

OF

CHARLES M. RUSSELL

ART

Montana's Museum • Montana Historical Society

225 No. Roberts ★ Helena, MT 59620-1201

www.montanahistoricalsociety.org

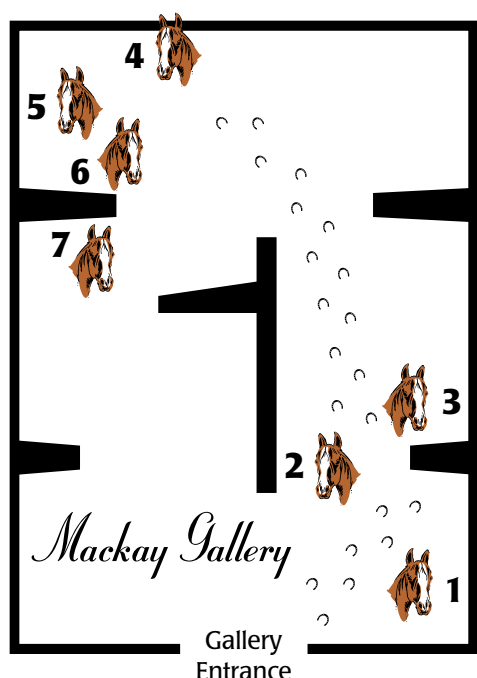




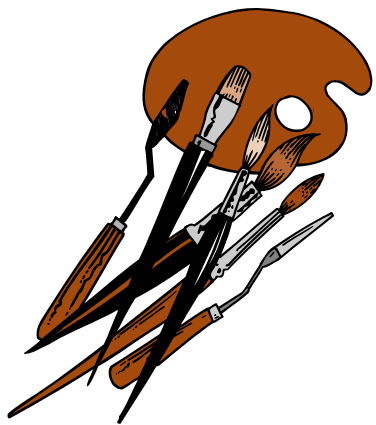
Follow me,
Monte—one of Charlie's
 favorite horses—and I will
 introduce you to the life and art of
 Charles Marion Russell. Trot in to
 the gallery and begin at the large
 photograph on the right.

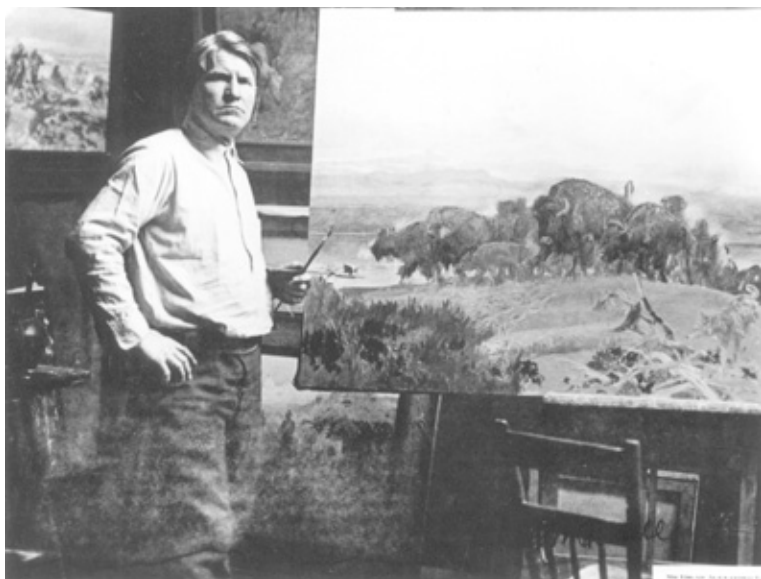


MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



*"Me and Charlie
 out for a ride."*

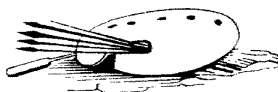




MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Charlie was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on March 19, 1864. When Charlie was growing up he read books about the West and dreamed of becoming a cowboy. At the age of 16, Charlie came to Montana to visit the ranch of a family friend. He fell in love with the land and the cowboy lifestyle and decided to make Montana his lifelong home.

As a cowboy Charlie had many jobs to do, but he always found time to sketch and paint. He found inspiration in the land and people around him. Charlie's paintings and sculptures have become very well known. He painted in watercolor and oil, created sculptures, and even completed a mural for the House of Representatives in the Montana State Capitol.





Indians Discovering Lewis and Clark

Oil on Canvas, 1896



MACKAY COLLECTION, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Why do you think Charlie gave the painting this title? Who are the main subjects of the painting?

What emotions are their faces and bodies expressing? What do you think they are feeling?

Charlie often included a white horse in his paintings to draw focus to the rider. Look at the white horse and see how the horse's body posture reflects that of his rider.

Charlie painted numerous scenes from the Lewis and Clark Expedition—many of them from the Indians' point of view. He did this to draw attention to the fact that this was the Indians' land, and the white men were merely passing through.

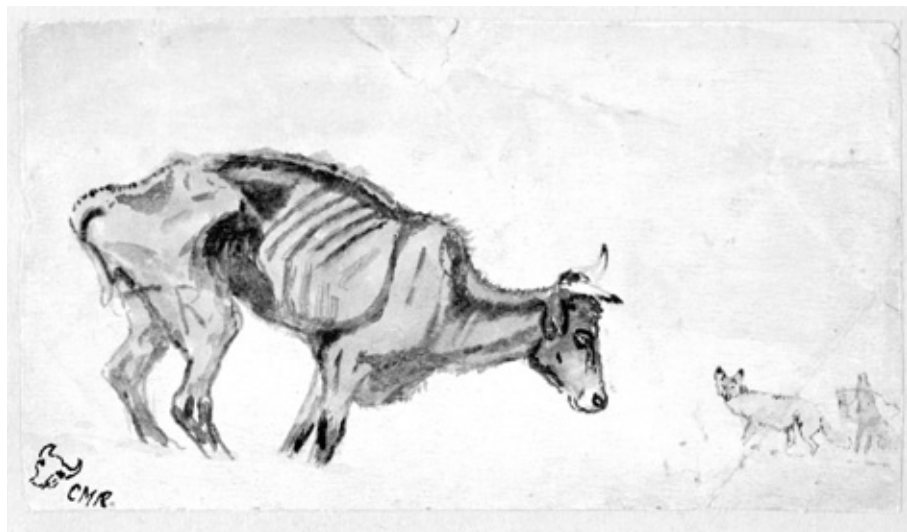


Waiting for a Chinook (The Last of 5000)

Watercolor, 1886

This was one of Charlie's first paintings. What is going on in the painting? What message do you think Charlie was trying to convey in this painting?

During the hard winter of 1886-1887, Charlie was a cowboy for the OH ranch, owned by Helena butchers Louis Kaufman and Louis Stadler. Mr. Kaufman wrote Jesse Phelps, the head cowboy, to ask how his cattle were surviving the extremely difficult winter weather. As Jesse was composing his reply, Charlie painted this watercolor on the bottom of a box of shirt band collars, to be included with the letter. Charlie vouched that when Kaufman received the painting, he "got drunk on the strength of the bad news." Many ranchers lost up to 80% of their herds that winter. The picture, which was originally titled *Waiting for a Chinook*, and later given the subtitle *The Last of 5000* by someone else, appeared in many newspapers around the country to show the plight of the cattle industry. As a result, Charlie became well known.



3



Inside the Lodge

Watercolor, 1893



BEQUEST OF MAUD & FLORENCE FORTUNE, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

What is going on in this painting? Can you identify some of the items used in daily Indian life in the tipi?

Of the 4,000-plus works produced by Charlie, only 300 or so depict women, and most of these feature Indian women. He did many scenes of domesticity and tranquility that emphasize the matriarchal side of tribal life. Charlie painted mothers involved in the early training of their sons, an area that others have generally assigned to the fathers of the tribe. See also *Indian Hunters' Return*, *Squaw Travois*, and *Keeoma #3* for depictions of Indian domestic life.

4



The Roundup #2

Oil on Canvas, 1913

What is going on in this painting? Look at the upper right corner—what are those cowboys doing? What sounds do you hear from the roundup in the painting? Do you see the dust clouds behind the front herd—what do you think is causing them? Have you ever been to a roundup?

The painting is twice as long as it is high, creating a strong horizontal line broken by a V-shaped grouping left of the center. This draws your attention to the action at the bottom of the “V.” Also, notice how Charlie placed one white-spotted steer in the group of red steers in the foreground. This is also an artistic device to focus your attention on that part of the painting.

Charlie’s friend Malcom Mackay commissioned this painting, but when he received it, Mackay sent the painting back to Nancy asking if Charlie would put his “Lazy EL” brand on one of the steers. **Can you find the steer with the brand?**





Charles M. Russell and His Friends

Oil on Canvas, 1922



MACKAY COLLECTION, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

This painting is a self-portrait—who is the main subject of the painting? Who are Charlie's friends? Identify all of the different colors that Charlie used in this painting—how many can you find?

The painting has a three-dimensional look to it, with distinct fore-, middle-, and backgrounds. This makes the painting come to life and appear as if you are viewing the landscape in real life.



*A U.S. Postage Stamp
commemorating the
Montana Centennial
in 1989.*

What is the difference between the painting and the stamp?

Hint: Look on the right side.

6



Bronc to Breakfast

Watercolor, 1908

What is happening? What are some of the expressions on the faces of the cowboys? What thoughts might be going through their minds?

Imagine you are one of the cowboys in the painting. What do you hear? What do you smell?

Charlie is on the right side of the painting wearing a red bandana. By putting himself in his paintings, it was his way of saying that he had actually experienced the event depicted. Cow-camp life was one of Charlie's favorite subjects and, as a former night wrangler, something he knew a lot about. For other images of cow-camp life in this exhibit see: *When Horse Talk War There's Small Chance for Peace* and *Laugh Kills Lonesome*.





Watercolor, 1908

Who was York? What do you think the Indians might be doing to him? Can you find other members of the Corps of Discovery in the painting?



GIFT OF THE ARTIST, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

York, Captain William Clark's slave, traveled to the Pacific Ocean and back to St. Louis with the Corps of Discovery. Many of the western Indian tribes had never seen an African-American person before York. Because of his dark skin color, some believed that he might have special powers, while others—like the Indians in this painting—believed that he was just painted black and tried to rub the color off of his skin.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was one of Charlie's favorite subjects. Despite the fact that his paintings were based on passages from the explorers' journals, Charlie's reconstructions of the expedition are filled with inaccuracies reflecting his tendency to depict western Indians in clothing and accoutrements of the 1880s, instead of the period of the painting subject. The background of this painting is a Mandan Indian lodge. Charlie borrowed the composition from a lithograph by Swiss artist Karl Bodmer.

At Home Activities



MACKAY COLLECTION, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Be A Trapper Too!

Can you list the pieces of clothing I am wearing? What tools would I need to be a fur trapper? *Hint: I'm wearing some of them.*



The Trapper,
Pen & Ink, 1901.

The Cowboy Life for Me!

What do you think the camp cook made for dinner? What types of food and dishes would he keep in his chuck wagon?



MACKAY COLLECTION, MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Laugh Kills Lonesome. Oil on Canvas, 1925.



At Home Activities

An Artist is Born!

Imagine that you are an artist like Charlie. Select a subject to paint: a landscape, a ranch scene, an historical event, an Indian encampment, or something else. Answer these questions before you begin to paint.

Who/what is the main subject of the painting?

Who/what is interacting with the main subject?

What is going on in the foreground? Middle-ground? Background?

What time of day is it?

What is the weather?

What sounds or smells might be suggested by the painting?

What color combinations might you use to create the mood of the painting?

Now that you have considered these questions, get some paints and paper and start painting. Maybe someday your artwork will end up in a museum like Charlie's!



Thanks for traveling with me to see Charlie's artwork. I hope you enjoyed your visit. Come back and see us again soon. I have included some activities for you to do at home, so you can be an artist like my friend Charlie.

Visit us at: www.montanahistoricalsociety.org



2003