



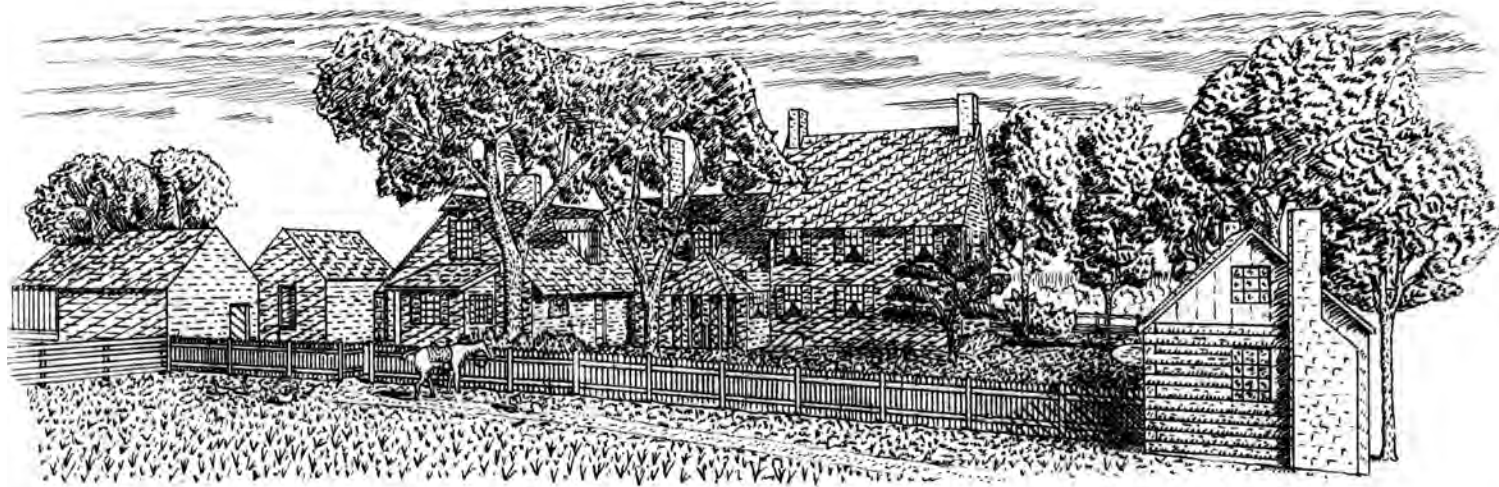
*St. Louis*, steel engraving by Frederick Hawkins Piercy

# CHARLIE RUSSELL

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## TALE-TELLING COWBOY ARTIST

Sometimes Charlie Russell played hooky from school. He sneaked down to the busy St. Louis, Missouri docks to hear frontier stories about gun-shooting bandits, grizzly bears, and hungry wolves. As gold seekers, fur traders, and pioneers stepped aboard paddleboats heading up the Missouri River, Charlie longed to go, too. The next day his teacher would always whip him for skipping school, but he kept dreaming of the West.



Charlie was born during the Civil War, on March 19, 1864, to Mary and Charles S. Russell in St. Louis. On his pony, he played “Settlers and Injuns” with his sister and four brothers.

*Russell residence*



*Bear*, by Charles Russell



*Untitled (Horse Scratching Ear)*, by Charles Russell

His family owned a company that made bricks from clay. At the plant, Charlie dug small lumps of clay from the earth to make animal figures. The workmen came from England, Ireland, and Scotland. He copied their way of speaking and made his family laugh.

His teachers didn't think it was funny when he drew pictures instead of doing his schoolwork. Charlie liked history and adventure stories but hated math. He talked other boys into doing his homework and paid them with clay or wax figures.



*Six Reins to Kingdom Come*, by Charles Russell

When he was fifteen, Charlie announced he was going West. His parents got a job for him on a sheep ranch. They thought he would return after a summer of hard work. Charlie had other ideas.

In his suitcase, Charlie packed a box with pencils, brushes, watercolors, crayons, and a tin of beeswax for shaping small figures. He rode a train and a stagecoach over 1,800 miles to Montana Territory.