

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

AND/OR COMMON

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1217-1219 Fourth Avenue, North

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Great Falls

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Montana

CODE
30

COUNTY

Cascade

CODE

013

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Great Falls, Office of the Mayor

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Great Falls

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Montana

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Cascade County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

none known

DATE

__ FEDERAL __ STATE __ COUNTY __ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	(house) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>1973</u>

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The original C. M. Russell property was approximately two lots, located in the middle of what is now a complex of art gallery, log cabin studio, house and park, occupying more nearly four or five lots. They face south onto Fourth Avenue North, a tree-lined residential street with most houses of a c. 1900 character, and are bounded on the rear by an alley which divides the block north and south.

With money inherited from his mother, in the 1900 the Russells built the house at 1219 Fourth Avenue North in Great Falls, a rather fashionable section of the town at that time. Their next-door-neighbors to the west were the Albert Triggs, who became close friends and patrons of Russell. Mr. Trigg was a well-educated Englishman who operated a saloon in Great Falls which Russell frequented and which often exhibited his works. Trigg's daughter donated her father's collection of Russells and other western art to a corporation which eventually tore down the Trigg House and the stable (which they probably shared with the Russells) and constructed the present modern brick art gallery on the site in 1953. A large wing, patio and stairways were added to this structure in 1969, which bring the new building to within feet of the original log cabin studio.

The Russell House is a frame one and a half story structure, clapboarded and painted white, a modest house, without any exterior ornamentation, but in good structural condition and very little changed since the Russells lived there. The house is L-shaped, with the entrance on the southeast, sheltered by a roofed wooden porch, with plain columns, railing, and steps, which stretches halfway across the front and wraps around the corner and part way down the east side.

The west side of the front projects several feet from the main facade for one and a half stories, marked by a small gable roof, and there is a one-story bay in the middle of the west side. The main north-south gable roof is intersected by a cross gable, because of the L-shape of the house, with a small gable framing one window on the west and a larger gable over the east side of the house. The windows are mostly one-over-one, double-hung sash, and there is a large square single pane window on the west living room wall and a rectangular horizontal stained glass window near the front entrance.

The house, when built in 1900 by the Russells was situated on approximately the same alignment from the street, and less than 20 feet from, where the log cabin studio was later situated, obviously for easy access between the home and workshop. The house was moved approximately 50 feet east and 50 feet north to its present site in the fall of 1973. The original back porch and a shed in the back yard were removed when the house was relocated. The Russell House, at its new site, was put on a very shallow excavation, with concrete footings and a pillar to support the fireplace wall. The City Park and Recreation Department maintains the exterior of the structure.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES house 1900-1926
 studio 1903-1926

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Charles M. Russell (1864-1926), a native of St. Louis, was born with the West in his blood, and became one of the most popular and successful American artists. Although born after most of the frontier had really been conquered, during his many years as a cowboy, he was able to witness and record the years of the open range and the cattle frontier, at a time when many other people were becoming interested in the heritage of the American West.

After years of riding the range, wandering and working across the northwest region, painting and modeling during his free hours, Russell settled in Great Falls, Montana, and devoted fulltime to his art. His major work included primarily oil paintings, but also pen and ink illustrations, watercolors and bronze sculpture. His art is particularly significant because of his personal experience with the subject matter he sought to document, and for the extraordinary care for exact details of western artifacts and landscapes.

In 1900 the Russells built this house at 1219 Fourth Avenue North, and three years later he constructed a log studio nearby. For the rest of his life, Russell did most of his major work in this studio, where he also entertained many friends. During the last 25 years of his life, Russell received full recognition as a major artist of the American West, and in later life commanded the highest commissions perhaps ever paid to a living American artist for his canvases.

The modest frame home of the Russells for 26 years has undergone practically no changes to its interior or exterior, but it was moved in 1973, after the owners were warned that such action would endanger its national historic landmark status. It is now located about 50 feet northeast of its original site. The log cabin studio received a major addition after it had become a Russell memorial, but before 1930 when it was opened to the public.

Both structures are owned by the city of Great Falls and operated as museums, although the studio museum is city-operated, and the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs has assumed the job of refurbishing and interpreting the Russell House, long unappreciated by the city park commission.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately two acres

UTM REFERENCES

A

1,2	4,7,8	5,5,0	5,2	6,1	6,5,0
ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		

B

ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		

C

ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		

D

ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project; Ray Mattison 1963

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey - National Park Service

DATE

September 2, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

9/20/83

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

((NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS))

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

On the interior, to the southwest of the entrance on the first floor, is the living room then the dining room then kitchen, pantry and full bath at the rear. The front rooms are trimmed in darkwood, some of it fir. Exposed beams cross the living room ceiling and built-in furniture, also in darkwood,--a bookcase and matching mantel in the living room, a china closet with mirror in the west bay, and a seat framed by two windows near the staircase on the east end of the dining room, are all intact, as are some old lighting fixtures, old doors and old hardware.

The stairway to the second floor is at the east end of the house and leads to a fairly wide hall and four bedrooms and a bath. The house appears quite unaltered. There are no apparent alterations or partitioning of the original floor plan, and although all the Russell furnishings were sold or removed before the city acquired it in 1930, the built-in features and a number of old fixtures remain intact and in good condition. The house appears to be in good structural condition and is being gradually refurbished and refurnished by the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs who have opened it to the public.

Charles Russell built his log cabin studio in 1903 and from that time through two very productive decades until his death in 1926, he reportedly never finished a painting elsewhere. At one point he had the ceiling raised two logs to allow room for an especially large 12' by 24' canvas. The original log cabin studio was approximately 30 by 24 feet, of horizontal logs and mortar construction, with a gable roof, and a small storage area and rear entry near the house on the northeast end. A wide-roofed porch, without a floor, and supported by timber beams sheltered the front entrance and stretched the length of the south side. This original section of the museum, as constructed by Russell is apparently little altered.

The Russells reportedly had plans to build some sort of addition to the studio which were never realized before the artist's death in 1926. Sometime between 1926 and 1930 the city added a large room, for a "gallery" which runs along the west side of the building and at right angles to the original studio. It is at least as large as the one room studio of Russell's day, and constructed also of horizontal logs.

A large stone exterior chimney occupies much of the east end of the original section, and ends at the roofline. Beside the chimney on the south are two old birdhouses believed to have been hung there by Charlie Russell himself. Inside, the Charles M. Russell Log Cabin Studio contains many articles used by Russell in his work, a few personal items, and much of his collection of western and Indian artifacts which he used extensively as models and props in his art, plus a number of original Russell works.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

Along the front of the original Russell property on Fourth Avenue is a rock-faced gray stone wall several feet high and a stairway to the original location of the house. In the center of the wall is a diamond-shaped area on which Russell's initials and the outline of a cow's skull, which often accompanied his signature, are inscribed.

The Russell House is now removed to a site which was not part of the Russell property. The city bought and sold, and had removed, the c. 1930 house that occupied that lot until 1973, and tore down the shed at the rear of the lot. One house, an old nineteenth century structure, remains on the east end lot of the block, which the city hopes to acquire. As yet the old walks remain which led to the Russell house in its original location, but plans for Russell Park call for them to be removed and some new landscaping of the area has begun.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

Biography

Charles Marion Russell was born March 19, 1864 to a well-to-do family in Oak Hill, Missouri, who were active in public affairs and owned extensive farmland, and mining interests as well as one of the largest fire brick works in the country. Among his forebears, a great-grandfather, Silas Bent had been chief surveyor of the Louisiana Territory and great-uncles had established the famous Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River in 1828, and a number of others were prominent local public servants.

As a child and young man Charlie Russell lacked interest in any schooling except for western history and drawing and modeling, for which he showed an early aptitude. He was sent to a series of tutors and schools, including a short stay at a military school in New Jersey, with no change in attitude.

Just before his 16th birthday Charlie set out on a trip west with family friend Wallis (Pike) Miller, his parents hoping this would cure their son's wanderlust. Charlie and Pike traveled by rail, then horseback through what was then still unsettled Montana territory, with open range, unexplored wilderness and most people and freight arriving by steamboat up the Missouri to Fort Benton. Custer's Last Stand only four years before and Chief Joseph's long retreat ended three years before, left the Indians still considered dangerous. Numerous military installations throughout the central Montana territory were the only form of authority over the far-flung frontier settlements and mining camps. Some huge herds of wild buffalo remained but a few scattered cattle ranches were organizing--the days of the open range were already numbered. The mountains, prairies, abundant game, open spaces and cowboy life were all that young Russell had expected and more, and it became his country for the rest of his days.

Russell began his working experiences in the West with a very short stint on a sheep ranch in the Judith Basin owned partly by Pike Miller, but he wrote that he "did not stay as the sheep and I did not get along well." He soon met Jake Hoover, a trapper and spent the next two years with Hoover hunting, trapping, selling bear and elk meat to the settlers and sending furs to Fort Benton to trade. He moved on to cowboying--at first night herding horses, as a general cowboy for outfits in the area--for the next 11 years.

All these years Russell painted, sketched and modeled what he saw around him during much of his free time, at first probably mostly for his own entertainment, or for cowboy friends who admired them. James Shelton, a saloon-keeper in Utica, Montana, gave Russell an early commission--for a decoration for his establishment, completed with available materials--a pine board and house paints.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

In 1885 Russell completed his largest canvas to date, "Breaking Camp," which he quietly sent off to be exhibited at the St. Louis Art Exposition of 1886. This out-of-state display of his work attracted attention in some local Montana papers which quickly led to more publicity for him and his work in Montana circles. Most of his work at that time was given or sold to friends and hung in bunkhouses, saloon walls and storefront windows. Russell made a trip east to St. Louis to visit his parents and also William Niedringhaus, a prominent St. Louis merchant and former ranch-owner and several times boss of Russell. Niedringhaus commissioned Russell to do a series of paintings, for an unnamed price, the subjects to be of Russell's choice. This commission marked a change of career for Charlie, as painting now became his primary occupation and livelihood, though he continued to ride the range part-time, and summers.

The disastrously hard winter of 1886-^{which}7 destroyed the cattle business as it was set up on the open range, ironically helped Russell's artistic career by providing him with a wealth of dramatic subject matter which he drew as it was happening. The boss of the O-H Ranch had Charlie help describe the plight of his dying cattle herd by painting a small watercolor, "Waiting for a Chinook, or the Last of Five Thousand."

Russell spent the winter working in a studio he set up in the small town of Cascade, upriver from Great Falls. In Cascade, Russell completed the Niedringhaus commission and also did several watercolors and an oil for his friend John Beacom, as illustrations for a series of Blackfoot legends he had written, and these were published the next year. Painting much of the time during the next two years, Russell completed more than 40 watercolors and 20 oils. Charlie continued his life as a cowboy on the range summers.

In September 1896 Russell, then 31, married Nancy Cooper, age 17, whom he met while she was visiting mutual friends in Cascade. They first lived in Cascade, but soon moved to Great Falls where they rented a small house south of Central Avenue. Nancy Russell became her husband's business manager and agent. She is often credited with influencing Charlie to paint on a regular and fairly consistent schedule, and in later years she managed all the business--located commissions and arranged for his exhibits. In 1900 the Russells built their home on Fourth Avenue North, adjoining the property of Mr. and Mrs. John Trigg, who became close friends and patrons. Three years later they constructed a log cabin studio very close to the house on the west, where Charlie could do his work and often entertained old friends.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

Charlie Russell was always popular as a good storyteller and naturally became the center of any crowd. In time he wrote down some of his yarns, and illustrated them with his own paintings or sketches. The first published was a fictitious account of trappers in Blood Indian territory, inspired by his own experiences, accompanied by three illustrations, in the April 1897 issue of Recreation. This was also perhaps the first opportunity Russell had for professional and critical comment of his work. Later Russell continued his yarns in "Rawhide Rawlins" stories and a book Trails Plowed Under, characterized by his personal style of spelling and grammar.

Charles Russell was entirely self-taught and unschooled as an artist, and probably considered unorthodox in technique. He began basically as a storyteller, and always retained a documentary interest in his subject, and the details of the western scene in particular but the tone of his work was rather nostalgic. Melton wrote of Russell's work, "consistently and most significant is the extensive and accurate detail,"--all props are correct and often copied from models from Russell's own collections.

Robert Taft, wrote that Charles Russell also belongs to the western story post-1900, rather than before, although his earliest illustration in Harper's Weekly and Frank Leslie's Weekly Newspaper appeared in 1889, "Russell, however, was not as prolific an illustrator as Remington and his fame rests largely on his many canvasses done after 1900."

Russell is usually considered among the best known names in western artists, especially along with those of Schreyvogel and Remington, who specialized in late nineteenth century views. Russell is often compared with his contemporary Remington, and of this Taft wrote the since Russell had spent most of his life in the west, "As a result his work is frequently more exact as far as detail goes than was that of Remington who was primarily interested in action."

During the 1880s there was a rising tide of interest with some romantic backward glances, in the plains country and the Rocky Mountains, reflected for example in the increasing number of publication features on the West, and during this period the first of the western illustrations of Frederic Remington and Charles Russell appeared in major publications. The time was opportune for those who could recall and recapture the life of the West just past. In this Russell was

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 5

extremely fortunate in timing. In an article, "Charlie's Place in Western Art" Terry Melton wrote that Charlie Russell "dealt with essences of the West coupled with a nostalgic documentation of an era which he had largely missed... and always wished he had not."

By 1903 Charles Schatzlein of Butte was acting as Charlie's agent and selling a good number of paintings. On a trip east to St. Louis, Russell offered several works for exhibition at the St. Louis World's Fair opening the next spring, and "Pirates of the Plain" was accepted. After Christmas the Russells continued east for their first trip to New York City. There, successful illustrator John N. Marchand, who was reared in Kansas and had met Charlie in Montana the previous summer, fulfilled his promise to introduce Russell to some leading publishers including the art editors of Scribner's, McClures Outing and Leslie's, all of whom promised to use some of his work.

Using Marchand's studio as headquarters, Russell made the business and social rounds with Marchand. Wearing his usual outfit including red sash and cowboy boots, Russell visited New York, meeting many artists, publishers, celebrities and others, some of whom, like a then little-known comedian, Will Rogers, became close friends.

In 1890 his portfolio of oils "Studies of Western Life" was published in New York and in February 1907 his first one-man show opened, in a church in Brooklyn, New York, arranged by its pastor who had visited Great Falls the year before. For Nancy Russell this was the beginning of a career of exhibit arrangement and for the next 20 years she siezed every opportunity to display and sell her husband's art.

Three Russell bronzes and two paintings were displayed at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909, and another group of paintings were exhibited that year at the Montana State Fair. In 1910 George Neidringhaus showed a group of ten oils and 11 watercolors in St. Louis, with prices ranging from \$500 to \$900. Russell's first major New York City show "The West that Has Past" was held in 1911 at the Folsom Galleries, and included 13 oils, 12 watercolors and 6 new bronze sculptures. The show attracted considerable audiences and press coverage, including nearly a full page about the "cowboy artist" in The New York Times.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 6

As Russell was growing a national reputation, the State of Montana awarded him a commission in July 1911 for a monumental painting for the wall of the House of Representatives for the State Capitol. Often called Russell's masterpiece, this painting was of Lewis and Clark's meeting with the Oollashoot Indians. The year 1912 marked Russell's second major show in New York City and first in Canada, in Calgary, Alberta as part of the first Canadian bronc-riding and roping show. Many distinguished Canadians and Englishmen attended and some enthusiastically proposed a London Show of Russell's work, which came about in 1914, after another Canadian exhibit at the Winnipeg Stampede. The London show was held at the Dore Galleries, where both the 25 works and the artist himself, conspicuous in his usual cowboy outfit, complete with red sash, attracted much attention, including that of some European royalty, and a number of paintings were sold "at excellent prices." Russell's whole exhibit was shown in the Anglo-American Exposition beginning May 1914, also in England.

The following years major one-man shows of Charles Russell's work were held in Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks, in Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Saskatoon, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and in Washington, D.C. In 1926 E. L. Doheny of Los Angeles asked Russell to do two panoramic paintings, each 20 feet by 30 inches for his home. Nancy Russell arranged this commission for \$30,000. Russell was able to demand probably the highest prices of any living American artist up to that time, for the last two decades of his life. Such commissions relieved their financial worries, after 1919 the Russells spent part of each winter in California, and Charlie especially loved to spend time at his cabin at what is now Glacier Park. In California Nancy Russell discovered an enthusiastic market for Charlie's work among members of the movie colony such as William S. Hart, Douglas Fairbanks, Noah Beery, Harry Carey and old friend Will Rogers.

In 1923, back in Great Falls, an attack of rheumatism curtailed Charlie's activity, though he finished some large works that next year. He developed a goiter problem and then was found to have a weakened heart, which caused his death, at home, October 24, 1926.

During his lifetime Russell had received popularity that few living American artists experienced up to that time, and he was especially beloved in Montana. From his adopted state--in which he lived while it developed from territory to state, for 46 years--he was awarded the fourth honorary doctorate given by the University of Montana, had schools, parks and streets named after him, and is properly appreciated in several art galleries devoted to his work, and in Statuary Hall of the U.S. Capitol, there is only one statue representing Montana, and that is of Charles M. Russell.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 7

C. M. Russell House and Studio -- History since becoming N.H.L. December 1965

The Charles M. Russell Home and Studio were studied by NPS Historian Ray H. Mattison as part of the Historic Sites Survey in August 1963, under the subtheme, Painting and Sculpture, and subsequently designated as a national historic landmark by the Secretary of the Interior, December 21, 1965.

It was while arrangements were being made for delivery of the landmark plaque and for a presentation ceremony that the NPS was first informed of plans to demolish the house, purportedly to make room for a parking lot--a purpose which later changed several times. The Montana State Historical Society opposed the action, but the city officials, led by the mayor, and certain interested parties in Great Falls, sent letters to Secretary of the Interior Udall utilizing a whole series of arguments as to why the house should be razed.

The mayor wrote that, "close, old-time friends of the Russells, the Park Board, and the City Council unanimously agreed" to seek demolition of the house from the estate trustees. The oft-quoted arguments to prove the insignificance of the house ran the gamut from the fact that the Russell furnishings are gone, to the belief that the Russells did not use the house much, to the house detracts and is a fire hazard to the log cabin, to "Charlie hated the house," to, and perhaps the most telling, that the studio (which is altered), and the modern gallery (non-historic) which is soon to be enlarged, "would both be enhanced greatly by the removal of the nearby house." One letter explained that since the gallery was planning to build a new wing, and the city is obligated by the 1928 agreement with the Russell family to "preserve a park-like appearance," the house had to be moved so that the city could extend the grass and landscaped area over the present home site to replace that lost to the gallery addition.

The National Park Service during the next few years sent several inspectors to the site, and apparently the city misconstrued some of their comments as official positions sanctioning some of their plans. However, official letters from the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service offices both in Washington and the Midwest Region consistently encouraged preservation of the house. When the Russell Park Commission claimed to have received the impression from one NPS inspector to the site that moving the house would be a good alternative, this

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 8

was clearly contradicted by several NPS communications to the city officials, notably one by Merrill D. Beal, Acting Director of the Midwest Region, August 17, 1972, which stated, "The final determination arrived at is that if the house is moved from its original location, both the home and the studio would lose their national landmark status."

Meanwhile, in what was perhaps an oversight, but an unfortunate premature action, the national historic landmark plaque was sent to the mayor's office in October 1966, --much to their surprise since the status of the house and landmark in general were very much uncertain. The plaque remains in a city vault. Meanwhile also, U.S. Senator from Montana, Mike Mansfield and other local citizens, notably the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs and the Montana Historical Society, voiced opposition to the destruction of the home of one of Montana's most famous citizens.

April 25, 1972, Historical Architect Charles Lessig and William Harris, Superintendent of Custer Battlefield, made an inspection of the Russell site and filed a thorough report which included the description of, and plans for, the site, as well as meetings with various factions. The Federation of Garden Clubs membership had taken a strong stand against demolition by holding up the original legal agreement which required the city to maintain both Russell structures. They were willing to assume responsibility for refurnishing the house and opening it to the public, and wanted it to remain in its original location, but were intent on saving the house, and cooperated with the city's compromise of moving it approximately 50 feet north and east of its original stand. City plans at that time were to purchase two remaining residences on the block to the east of the Russell house, to demolish them, and convert the whole to a Russell Park.

Mr. Harris' report also discussed the good physical condition of the Russell house and refuted the arguments of the Park Commission that the house was a threat to the studio, or that removing the house would serve any preservation or economic purpose. However, it would fit into the park designer's plan, which Harris had inspected and discussed with city officials. This report also recommended removal of NHL status should the house be moved, and further stated the opinion that the log cabin studio would not appear to merit NHL status alone.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 9

Blanche Schroer, historian on the Landmark Boundary Team, visited the site on September 7, 1975, and met with Marie Knutson of the studio interpretation staff and Mrs. Stevenson who represented the Park Department, as well as members of the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs, the Flowergrowers, who were proceeding with a restoration (or refurbishing) of the now relocated Russell House. Mrs. Stevenson, representing the Recreation and Park Department superintendent Thomas Sullivan reported that city plans call for removal of the old walks around the site-- which now evidence the original location of the house. The Flowergrowers reported that a house and shed on that lot to the east of the original Russell property had been bought by the city and torn down to move the Russell House. Since the move the city had repainted the house but had not replaced the windows on the rear, many of which were broken during the move, and remained boarded over. The Garden Club, under the direction of Mrs. Swann had nearly completed repainting and papering and furnishing with period pieces the living room and dining room and the first floor and they keep the house open to the public on a limited schedule. As of July 1976, work on the kitchen is complete and work is beginning on the second floor.

Relandscaping of the area began in the spring 1976. The east wing of the gallery (1969) is now surrounded with an expensive patio and stairway which extend to within feet of the old log cabin studio. The affect of the whole complex closely unites the modern brick gallery to the now close-by log cabin studio, and isolates the original Russell house off to the east. A look at earlier photographs indicates how considerably the historic arrangement and character of the site has been altered and lost.

The original Russell property is located in a pleasant residential area of tree-lined streets and houses of a c. 1900 character. Proceeding easterly from the corner of 12th Street and 4th Avenue, the city has rather drastically altered the historic setting in which Charles Russell lived and worked 1900-1926, in the name of a memorial park to the artist. The site of the home of Albert Trigg, Russell's neighbor, good friend and benefactor is now the modern Trigg-C.M. Russell Gallery. The log cabin studio (1903-1926), with a major addition by the city after the artist's death, is in its original location. The artist's house (1900-1926) has been moved approximately 70 feet to the northeast of its original site. A shed and house located east of the Russell property have been torn down. The whole complex is being redesigned and landscaped with new walkways and new vegetation, which will probably further disguise the changes which have been made.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

Frederic G. Renner, introduction to Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture in the Amou G. Carter Collection, Austin: University of Texas, Press 1966.

C. M. Russell Log Cabin Studio (catalog) with articles by Dan Cushman. Frederic G. Renner and Terry Melton. Great Fall, Montana n.d.

Robert Taft, Artists and Illustrations of the Old West 1850-1900. New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1953.

Ramon Adams and Homer Britzmon, Charles M. Russell; the Cowboy Artist. Pasadena, 1948.

Harold McCracken, Portrait of the Old West. New York, 1952.

Field trip by B. H. Schroer, September 6, 1975

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Charles M. Russell House and Studio

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

The national historic landmark boundary is coterminous with the lines of the central three lots on the north side of the block of Fourth Avenue North. Any feature not described as historic within this report, does not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.

The national historic landmark boundary has been drawn to enclose the C. M. Russell house and studio,--the two basic elements of the landmark. However it has been extended beyond the two lots which the Russells owned in the middle of the block on the north side of the 1200 block of Fourth Avenue North, to include one more lot to the east, where the Russell House has been resited. Thus the three middle lots of the five in the block comprise the landmark area. The modern C. M. Russell Museum on the west end of the block is non-historic and is not included within the landmark area. Other park facilities which do fall within the boundary, but are not described as historic within this report, do not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.