



Quiet Day in Utica

oil on canvas, 1907, courtesy Sid Richardson Collection of Western Art, Fort Worth, Texas

HISTORY OF UTICA

Utica and the upper Judith River country were one of the last frontiers to be settled because of frequent Indian raids and the great distance from the protection of forts. Named after the hometown of many of its early settlers, Utica, New York, the town was established in 1880. Headquarters for the Judith Basin roundups, Utica was the liveliest place in Central Montana as evidenced by Charlie Russell's *A Quiet Day in Utica*. One of Russell's first studios was in the corner of Jim Shelton's saloon, one of four in this boisterous cow town.

Thomas Murray, early day resident of Utica, described the festivities:

“While ranchers and cowboys were at Utica figuring out the drive every spring and then again in the fall, they certainly took the little town to pieces and found out what made it tick. It was wild and wooly and full of fleas—Utica was—in the old days the cowboys used to ride right into the saloons, lasso the stoves and drag them to the street. They used to shoot bottles off the shelf. You can still find bullets in the thick walls of those old buildings.”*

Russell called the painting *Tin Canning a Dog*. Among the characters in the background of this painting are Russell himself, Jake Hoover, Milly Ringgold from Yogo Town and the owner of the mercantile, Charles Lehman.

*(Thomas Murray, *Utica, Montana*, Utica Historical Society, 1968, p. 23.)

