



*White Mans Buffalo*  
oil, 1919, courtesy Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

## THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

Granville Stuart, a Virginian of Scotch descent, was one of the first in the Montana Territory to engage in the beef business. By 1880, overcrowding had already become a problem in the western part of the territory and in that year Stuart pushed one of the first herds into Central Montana. He wrote about the rapid transition that occurred:

*“In 1880 the country (central Montana) was practically uninhabited. One could travel for miles without seeing so much as a trapper’s bivouac. Thousands of buffalo darkened the rolling plains. There were deer, antelope, elk, wolves and coyotes on every hill and in every ravine and thicket. In the whole Territory of Montana there were but 250,000 head of cattle, including dairy cattle and work oxen.*

*In the fall of 1883 there was not one buffalo remaining on the range and the antelope, elk and deer were indeed scarce. In 1880 no one had heard of a cowboy and Charley Russell had made no pictures of them; but in the fall of 1883, there were 600,000 head of cattle on the range - the cowboy, with leather chaps, wide hat, gay handkerchief, clanking silver spurs and skin-fitting high-heeled boots...had become an institution.”\**

Russell knew Indian sign language well. The Indian on the left is asking “Buffalo?” The middle Indian is signing, “No” while the Indian on the left is saying, “I don’t believe it!”

\* (Granville Stuart, *Pioneering in Montana*, University of Nebraska Press, 1977, p. 187-188.)