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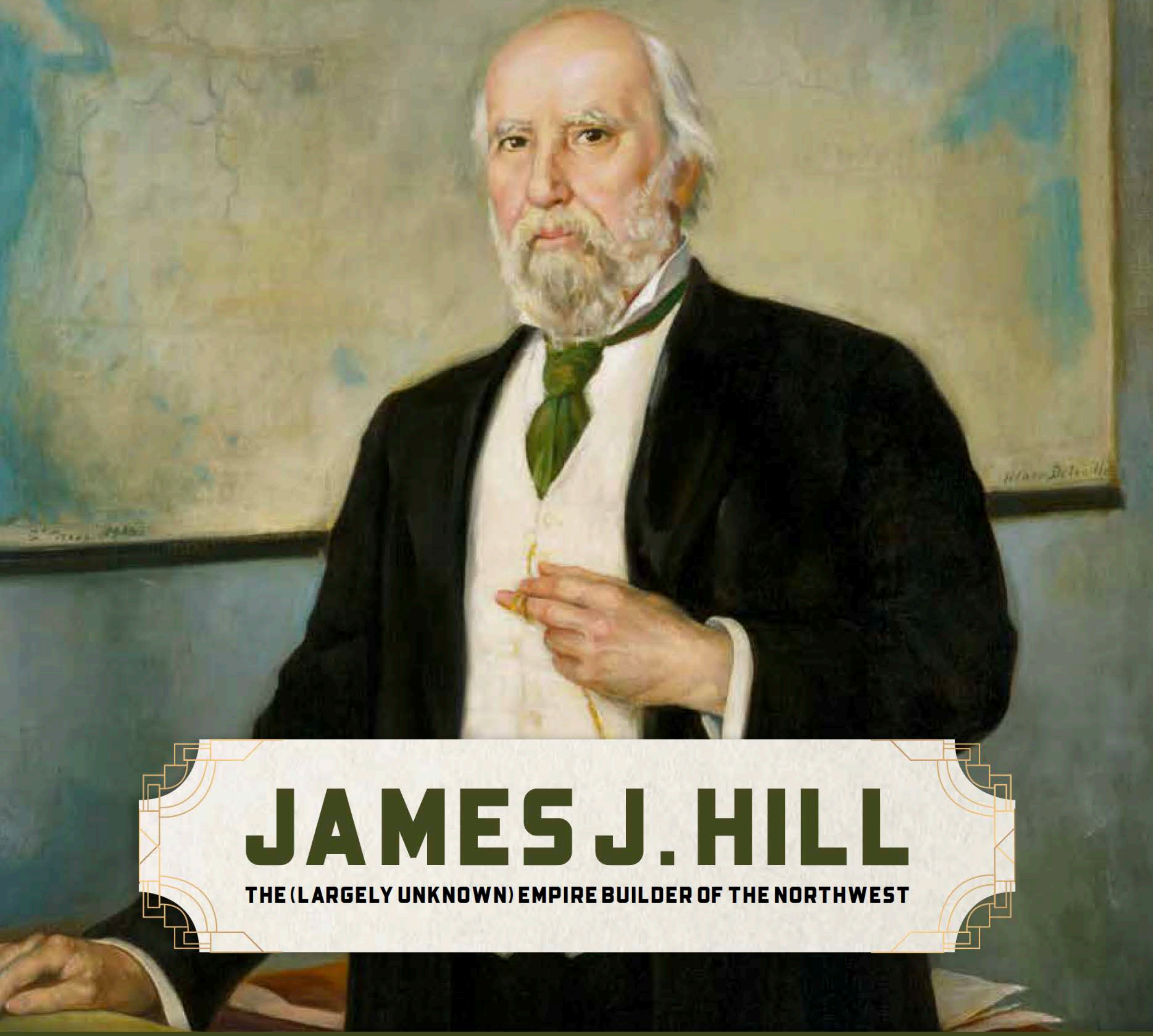

JAMES J. HILL

THE (LARGELY UNKNOWN) EMPIRE BUILDER OF THE NORTHWEST

Sweet Innovations: A Bite-Sized History of Seattle's Chocolate Industry

Roslyn Mining Strikes and a Growing Black Community

Libraries: Soul of the Community

A quarterly publication of the Washington State Historical Society

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THE (LARGELY UNKNOWN) EMPIRE BUILDER OF THE NORTHWEST

By Stephen Sadis

This article is based on excerpts from the script for The Empire Builder: James J. Hill and the Great Northern Railway, *a four-episode documentary produced by Stephen Sadis and Kyle Kegley.*

When the railroads ushered in one of the most transformative eras in American history, James J. Hill emerged as its unrivaled leader, building a transportation empire stretching across North America and on to Asia. Known as "The Empire Builder," Hill was a titan of industry who partnered with J. P. Morgan, faced off with Eugene Debs, and bested John D. Rockefeller and E.H. Harriman. He had relationships with seven presidents, shaped national policy, and transformed the Northern tier of the country. At the turn of the 20th century, James J. Hill was one of the most recognizable names in America, yet today his name often escapes recognition.

Background: Portrait of James J. Hill, 1913. Henry Caro-Delvaille, artist. Minnesota Historical Society, AV1991.85.57.

An indefatigable worker and a risk-taker, "Jim" Hill was endowed with exceptional intelligence, curiosity, and a photographic memory. Strong partnerships and good fortune played into his accomplishments, but the lion's share of his success came from his diligent research, keen attention to detail, and obsessive management. In 1878, he purchased a small, bankrupt railway in St. Paul and transformed it into the first transcontinental railway built without the aid of federal land grants. His Great Northern Railway (GNR) was a marvel of efficiency and engineering, adhering to his credo "the shortest distance, lowest grades and the least curvature we can build." Extending it to the Puget Sound was dependent on his foresight and ability to create markets as he built west.

The arrival and expansion of railroads across the country devasted many Native American Tribes, damaged the environment, and, as Hill would come to realize, enabled the rapid depletion of natural resources. Yet, Hill developed infrastructure that resulted in manifold benefits for hundreds of thousands of people across the country.

Hill's interest in the Northwest was not merely a railroad man's ambition to reach the Pacific. He saw in Washington State a wealth of untapped potential—vast forests, fertile valleys, and a deep-water port that could serve as a gateway to Asia. While his impact was felt across the country, his vision for Washington helped lay the foundation for the state's economic diversity and prosperity—effects that resonate to this day.

JIM HILL'S VISION FOR THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Jim Hill's decision to build his railroad to the Pacific around 1889 was not without its critics. Heading west from Minnesota, Hill's railroad would have to cross hundreds of miles of mostly unpopulated plains and find passage through two mountain ranges: the Rockies and the Cascades. In addition, competing transcontinental lines—the Northern Pacific and the Union Pacific/Central Pacific—had already crossed the country to the north and south of his planned route. *The New York Times* declared, "no sane man could think of paralleling these lines without inviting bankruptcy," dubbing the notion, "Hill's Folly." But Hill, with intimate knowledge of the landscape and a vision for efficient, low-cost transportation, was undeterred.

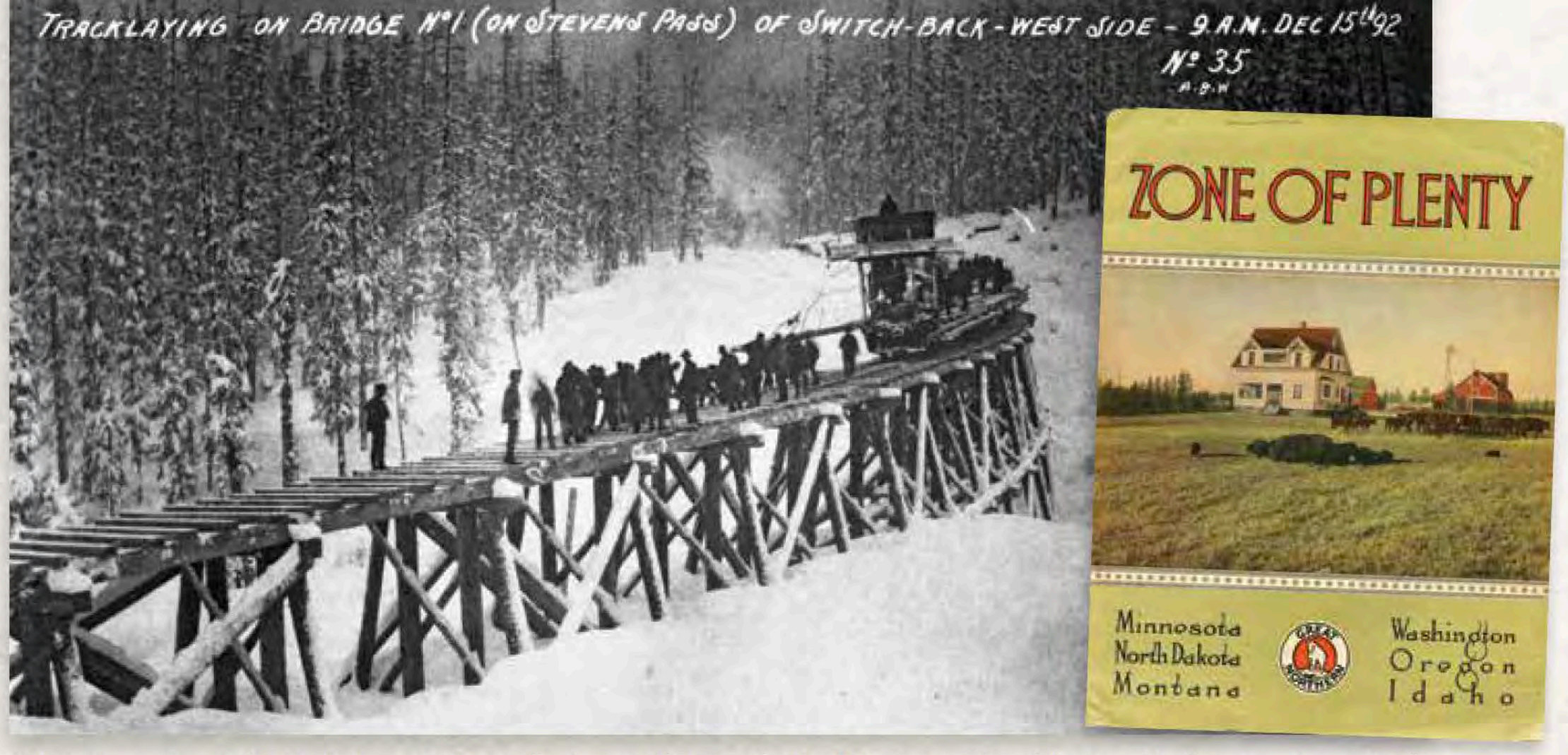
TOP: Great Northern Dock, Smith Cove, Seattle, Washington. color halftone print based on an Asahel Curtis photograph. GNR's Oriental Limited train in the foreground; steamships *Minnesota* and *Dakota* at the dock. Printed postcard circa 1910. Courtesy Amon Carter Museum of American Art, P1976.48.1576.

RIGHT: *Across America via Great Northern Railway, Northern Steamship Co.*, 1899. This book detailing routes from Buffalo, New York to Duluth, Minnesota via Hill's steamboats on the Great Lakes, and west from Duluth to Seattle via his railway. Hill's transportation and shipping network extended to Asia and Europe. Published by Rand McNally and Company. Washington State Historical Society, ID 2005.148.1.

Jim Hill's choice of Seattle as the western terminus of the Great Northern Railway was a pivotal moment for the relatively small city with a population of around 40,000. To pave the way for the Great Northern's arrival, Hill enlisted the help of local power broker, Judge Thomas Burke. Burke, described as "shrewd, pugnacious, diligent and fiercely loyal," worked behind the scenes to acquire land and rights-of-way for the railroad. This included the purchase of 65 acres of land along the foot of Magnolia Hill and 140 acres of tide flats south of downtown Seattle.

Hill's vision extended beyond merely reaching Seattle. He saw the Great Northern as a catalyst for development across the territory. He envisioned branch lines serving the fertile valleys of central Washington, allowing farmers to send their produce to distant markets, similar to his approach in Minnesota. He foresaw the growth of the timber industry, with the Great Northern transporting lumber from Washington's vast forests to markets across the country.

Railroads encroached on Native American territories and undermined the sovereignty of Native nations. They brought buffalo hunters and settlers who squatted on Native lands, and disrupted Native resources and cultures. By 1913, the GNR made the trip from St. Paul to Spokane in just two and a half days and the US government had opened many reservations to settlers, including the Spokane and Colville reservations. Below, two Native Americans sit near the framing of a sweat lodge in Marcus, Washington, circa 1912. In the background, a GNR bridge spans the Columbia River. Frank Palmer, photographer. Washington State Historical Society, ID 2019.3.1.17.



LEFT: Laying track on Bridge No. 1, Stevens Pass, switchback, west side, December 15, 1892. Construction of the Great Northern extension to Seattle slowed substantially due to the winter weather and steep terrain of the Cascades. Anders B. Wilse, photographer. Washington State Historical Society, ID 2013.0.184.23. RIGHT: *Zone of Plenty* booklet about industries and agriculture in each state along the Great Northern's route. Circa 1928. Washington State Historical Society, ID 1997.10.98.

As construction of the Great Northern Railway pushed westward in the early 1890s, Hill's dream of reaching the Pacific was becoming a reality.

THE GREAT NORTHERN REACHES SEATTLE

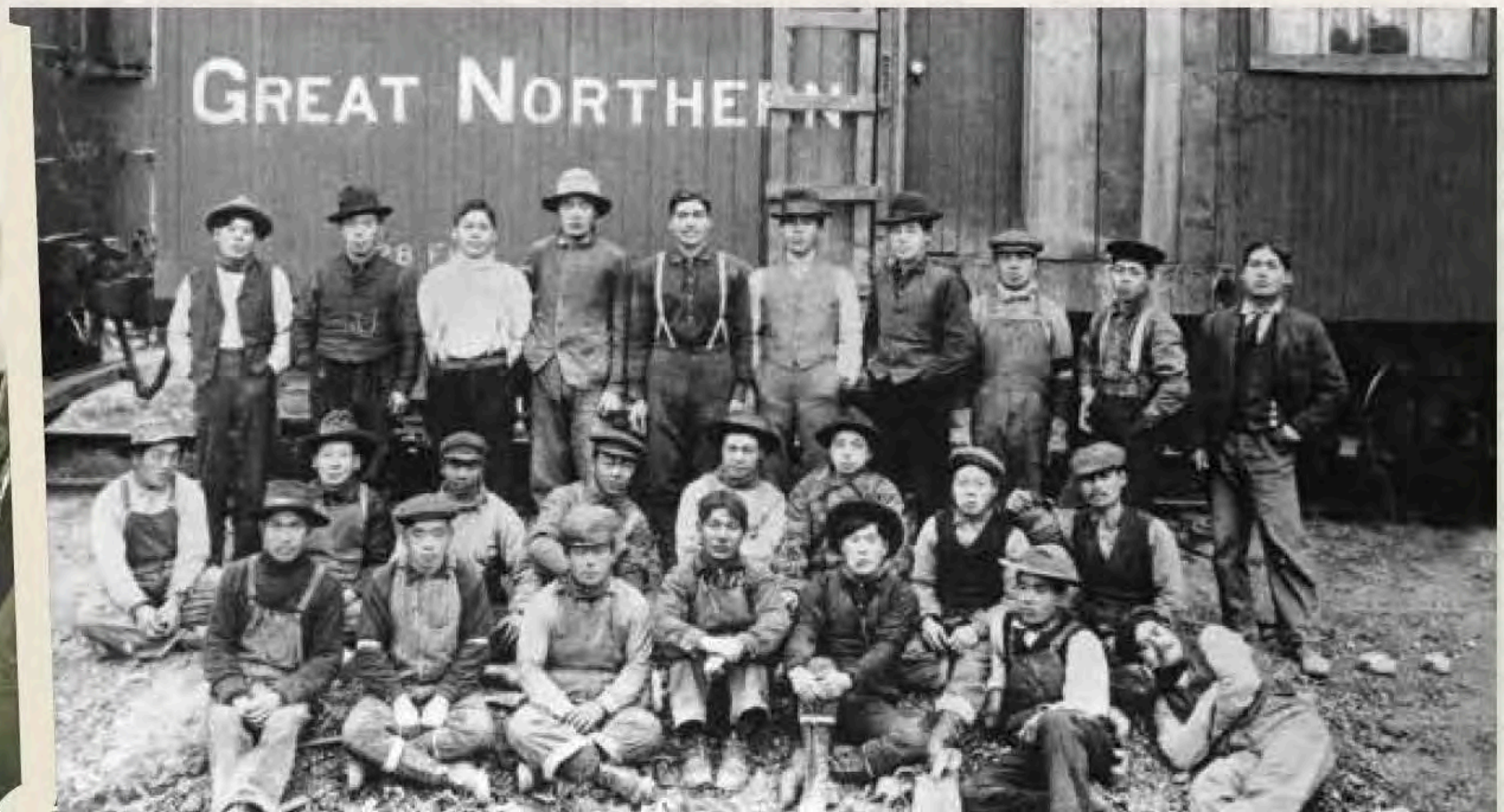
The construction of the Great Northern Railway's Pacific extension was a monumental undertaking, fraught with engineering challenges and financial risks. Nowhere were these challenges more apparent than in the final push through the Cascade Mountains to reach Seattle.

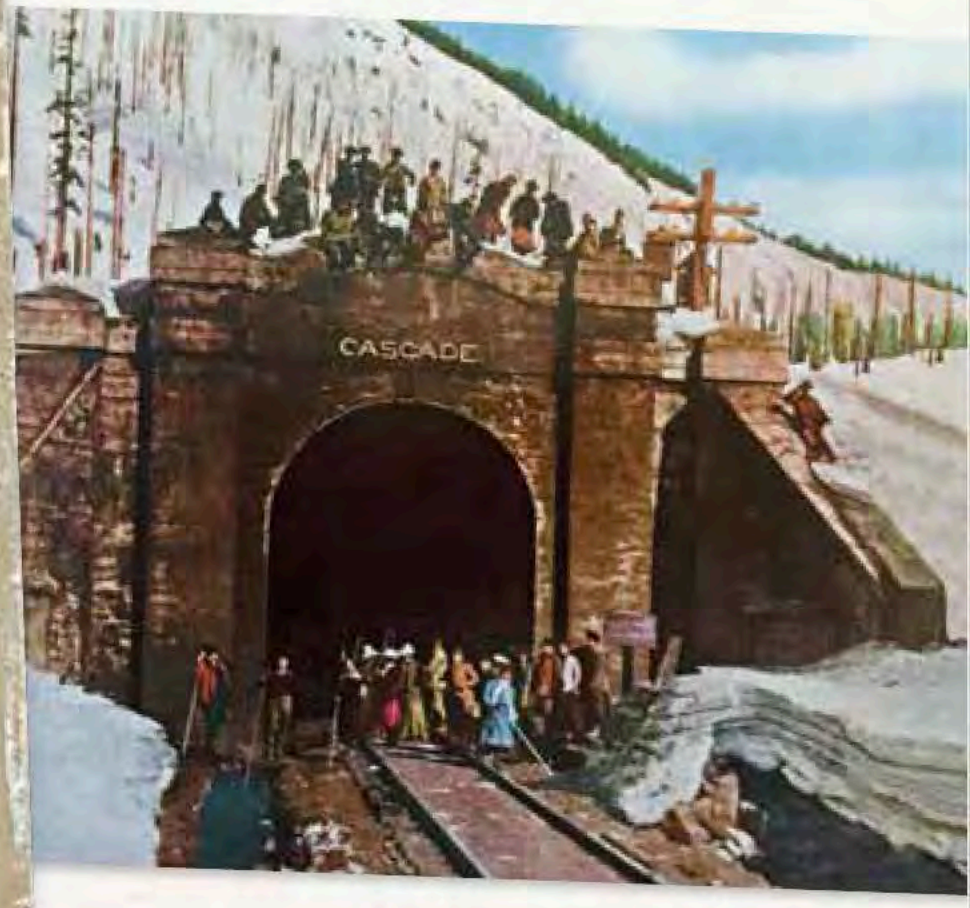
One of Hill's judicious decisions was hiring surveyor John F. Stevens to determine the optimal route for the extension. In 1889, Stevens had re-discovered the long-forgotten Marias Pass, identifying a viable path through the Rockies. Then, after months of exploring various routes through the Cascades, Stevens sent his assistant, Charles Haskell, on one more trek. Fortune shined on the young surveyor who found the lowest route and named it Stevens Pass.

Railroad construction through the Cascades required herculean efforts and was a stark contrast to the progress made across the Great Plains. While crews could lay up to eight miles of track per day on the flat prairie lands, construction in the mountains often slowed to mere feet per day. Crews working in harsh conditions built massive trestles and carved railbeds into steep mountainsides.

Much to Hill's frustration, the mountain route could not be built without a series of switchbacks to scale the elevation. Switchbacks were every railroad man's nightmare. They required trains to be broken into seven or eight cars and pushed back and forth over the pass in a time-consuming manner. It contradicted Hill's credo of efficiency and made the Cascade crossing one of the most difficult and expensive segments of the entire transcontinental route.

LEFT: John Frank Stevens worked as James Hill's trusted engineer and surveyor for the Great Northern Railway, and Stevens Pass is named in his honor. Hill later recommended Stevens to take over as the chief engineer to complete construction of the Panama Canal. John F. Stevens Papers, GTM-910726, Box 7. Georgetown University Library Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Washington D.C. RIGHT: James Hill worked with the Oriental Trading Company to recruit and bring men from Japan to construct spur lines beginning in 1899. Courtesy Wing Luke Museum, 2000.015.057.





LEFT: Workers posing inside the Great Northern Railway Cascade Tunnel above Wellington, Washington, circa 1898–1899. Construction tools including metal braces, hoses for pneumatic drills, and a wheelbarrow are visible. When it was completed in 1900, it was the longest tunnel in the world, and another engineering triumph directed by John Stevens. Washington State Historical Society, ID 2010.185.4612B. RIGHT: Postcard of the entrance to Great Northern's Cascade Tunnel, 1900. Courtesy Stephen Sadis. BELOW: Driving the last spike connecting the Great Northern Railway from Seattle in the west to St. Paul in the east. Scenic, Washington, January 6, 1893. Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society, YR1956.7896.

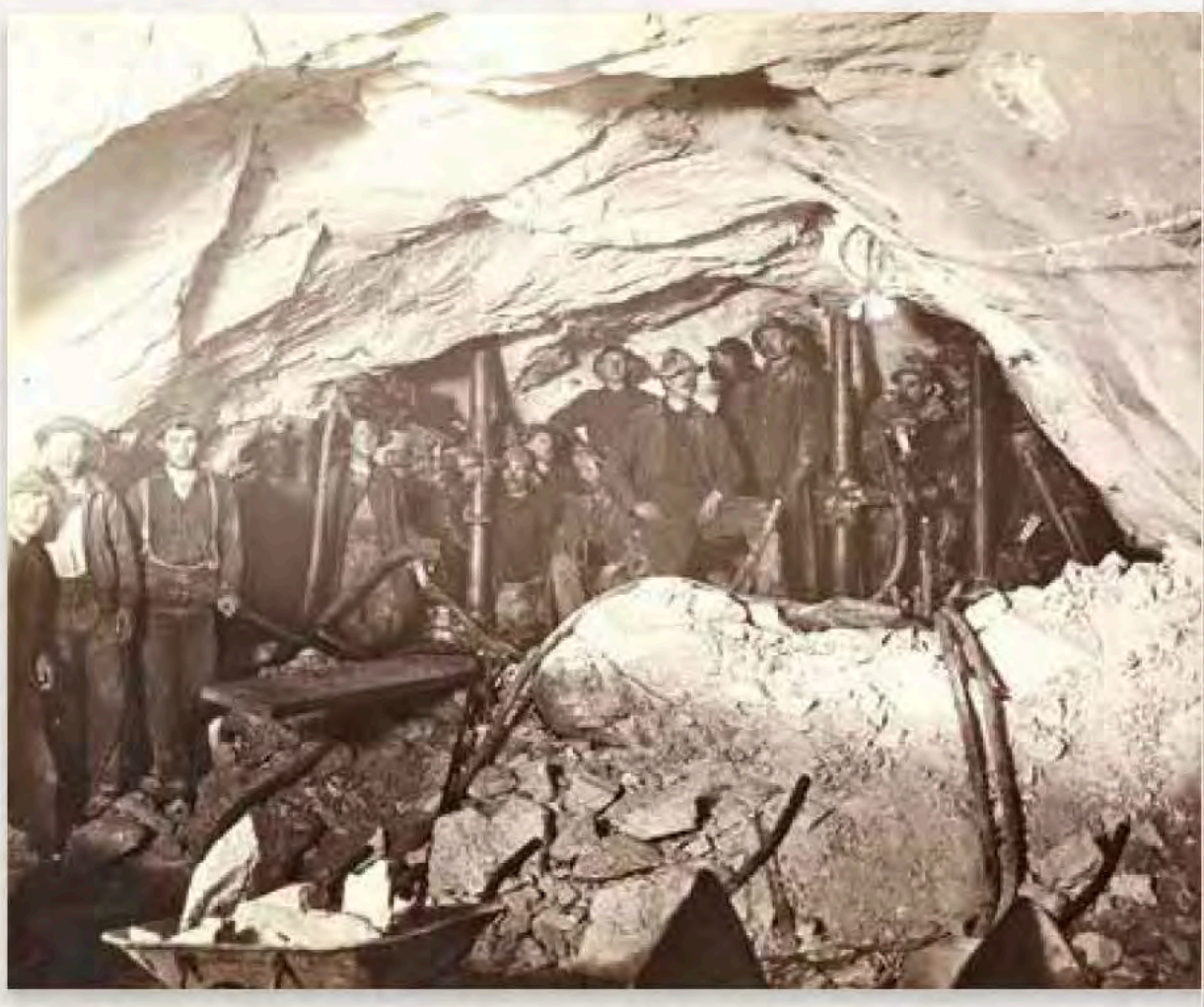
On January 6, 1893, just west of the town of Scenic, Washington, two superintendents took turns driving home the final spike that connected the eastern and western sections of the Great Northern. Revolvers shot into the air amid the cheers of 200 rail workers, marking a moment that crystallized Hill's longtime dream of a transcontinental railway of his own. A week later, the first passenger train left St. Paul for Seattle. Traveling up to 60 miles per hour, it pulled into the temporary terminal at Smith Cove four days later.

The Seattle Times December 21, 1895, paper reflected on the significance of Hill's accomplishment, declaring, "The building of the Great Northern Railway from the Great Lakes to Seattle has been one of the great accomplishments of this busy century . . . The benefits conferred upon the city, by inaugurating further reduction in carrying rates, has added much to the future hopes of our people and the prosperity of the entire state."

The switchbacks remained a bone of contention for Hill, creating bottlenecks that hindered the efficiency of his line. Traveling just these three miles in the winter could take as long as 36 hours. Hill knew a more permanent solution was needed, and set his sights on building a tunnel through the mountain. In 1897, he tapped John Stevens to take on the monumental engineering challenge. The press again dismissed the idea as another instance of "Hill's Folly."

The tunnel would span 2.6 miles and drop 250 feet from the east end to the west. Stevens launched a crew of 800 men, working in three eight-hour shifts, seven days a week, from both ends of the tunnel, excavating an average of 16 feet per day.

In January 1900, after nearly three years of grueling work, the two sides met. The result was nothing short of an engineering marvel. The vertical and horizontal alignment of the tunnel were off by less than half an inch, an extraordinary



feat of precision then and even by today's standards. The Cascade Tunnel was the longest in the world and eliminated nine miles of track. Traveling *through* the mountain versus *over* it reduced the trip to Seattle by at least six hours.

DEVELOPING WASHINGTON'S INDUSTRIES

While the arrival of the Great Northern Railway had an immediate impact on Seattle, Jim Hill's influence on Washington's economy extended far beyond the city limits. His strategic vision and business savvy played a crucial role in developing three of the state's most important industries: timber, agriculture, and international trade.

LEFT: Weyerhaeuser Lumber Company mill at Everett, Washington, circa 1900. Washington State Historical Society, Great Northern Railway Historical Society Collection, ID 2010.185.481. RIGHT: Timber baron Frederick Weyerhaeuser, solicited by James Hill to purchase timberland and develop the industry in Washington. Undated. Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, George Grantham Bain Collection, ID ggbain 05198.

TIMBER

Before his rails reached the Puget Sound, Hill asked the state's leading timber producers to recommend a cargo rate to carry their lumber to the Midwest. With the going rate at 90 cents per hundred pounds, the timbermen cautiously suggested 60 cents. "Sixty cents!" Hill exclaimed, "They're crazy. At that rate they could not compete with southern pine. Unless I move that crop, I might as well not have built the railroad." To everyone's disbelief, Hill countered with the unbelievably low rate of 40 cents. As Clarence Bagley noted in his seminal history of the city, "Seattle lumbermen were astounded. The result of this sweeping cut was magical; the woods became alive, and instead of the empty cars going eastward they were soon coming westward. [It was] the lowest rate ever given in the world under anything like the same conditions."

In 1900, Hill orchestrated what was then deemed as the largest private land transaction in American history. On a cold winter night, he invited his next-door neighbor and friend, Frederick Weyerhaeuser, to his St. Paul home to discuss a business proposition.

Already a successful timber baron in the Midwest, Weyerhaeuser was running out of forests to harvest in the Great Lakes region. Hill offered to sell him 900,000 acres of Washington State timberland—forests that Hill had acquired through his control of the Northern Pacific Railway.

The two agreed on a price of $6 per acre, or $5.4 million (equivalent to $183 million today). Weyerhaeuser put up one-third of the financing, while the rest of the shares were said to be purchased by nearly every major timber operator along the Mississippi River.

The impact of this transaction was immense. Within a few years, Weyerhaeuser had become the largest lumber producer in the world, operating out of Everett, Washington. The town, which had struggled during the economic depression of the 1890s, was transformed into a booming industrial center, dubbed the "City of Smokestacks" and the "Pittsburgh of the West." By 1910, Washington had become the nation's leading lumber-producing state.

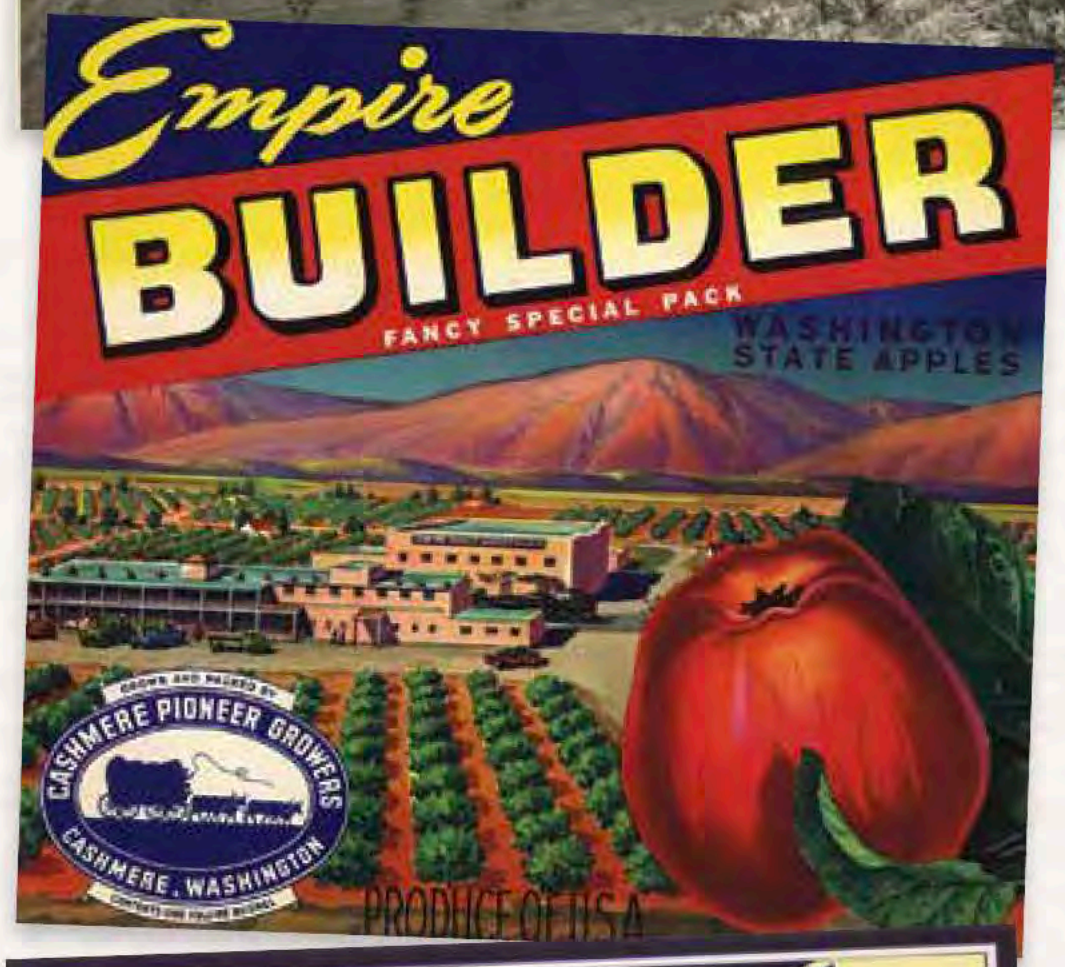
AGRICULTURE

Beyond the state's vast forests, Hill recognized the agricultural potential of central Washington and turned his attention to the town of Wenatchee. Located at the confluence of the Wenatchee and Columbia Rivers and surrounded by rich volcanic soil, Hill proclaimed that the land "will surely flow with milk and honey." To realize its potential, Hill personally invested in the Wenatchee Water Power Company and the Washington Canal Company. By 1900, these two ventures were supplying water to some 12,000 acres of prime orchard land.

These efforts transformed Wenatchee from a barren landscape into the "Apple Capital of the World," producing 25–30 percent of the nation's apple crop today. This agricultural boom extended beyond apples, diversifying Washington's agricultural output and establishing the state as a major food producer.

Hill's efforts to promote irrigation extended beyond his own investments. He helped establish the National Irrigation Association and lobbied for federal support of irrigation

Great Northern Depot, Everett, circa 1910, with locomotive 905 on the track below. Washington State Historical Society, ID 2008.209.1.



projects. Hill's advocacy played a crucial role in the passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act in 1902. This legislation funded irrigation projects in 20 western states, including Washington, ultimately turning more than 10 million arid acres into productive farmland.

Hill also invested in the development of better crops, establishing a test farm about 12 miles north of St. Paul. He brought samples of soil from across the west, testing different varieties of corn, wheat, and other crops in varying conditions. The Great Northern sent special train cars to towns along its lines, serving as mobile "agricultural colleges" with educational displays and experts teaching farmers the latest practices.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

In the late 1880s—before Hill had even extended his railway out of Montana—he sent agents to Japan, China, and Korea to assess business opportunities. He was convinced that the future of farming in the American Northwest depended on finding new markets throughout Asia.

In 1896, he partnered with Nippon Yusen Kaisha to establish a regularly scheduled shipping line that linked his railway from Seattle to Yokohama, Japan. Traveling eastward, Hill's steamships carried Japanese passengers and freight that included tea, silk, and furniture. His railroad hauled the imported goods to merchants across the country. But to make his maritime venture profitable, he needed to fill his ships as they traveled westward, as well.

Having solidified his confidence in the Asian market, Hill established the Great Northern Steamship Company. He commissioned the construction of two colossal ships, the *Minnesota* and the *Dakota*. Completed in 1903, the *Minnesota* was longer than two football fields and could carry 1,400 passengers and 28,000 tons of freight; the *Dakota* was of a similar scale.

Just as he did with the timbermen of Washington, Hill offered extremely low shipping rates to the flour mills in Minnesota and increased the state's flour exports to Asia by 67 percent. He also shipped copper from Montana and apples from Washington. In a bold move to open new markets, Hill offered to ship American cotton to Japan for free if they would try it. Within two years, the South was shipping 20 percent of its cotton to Asia.

The chairman of Seattle's Chamber of Commerce stated that "more has been done by the Great Northern to open up, develop, and extend our transpacific trade than by all other agencies

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Crates of produce from Wenatchee on the Great Northern platform, Wenatchee, circa 1915. Washington State Historical Society, ID 2006.0.268.

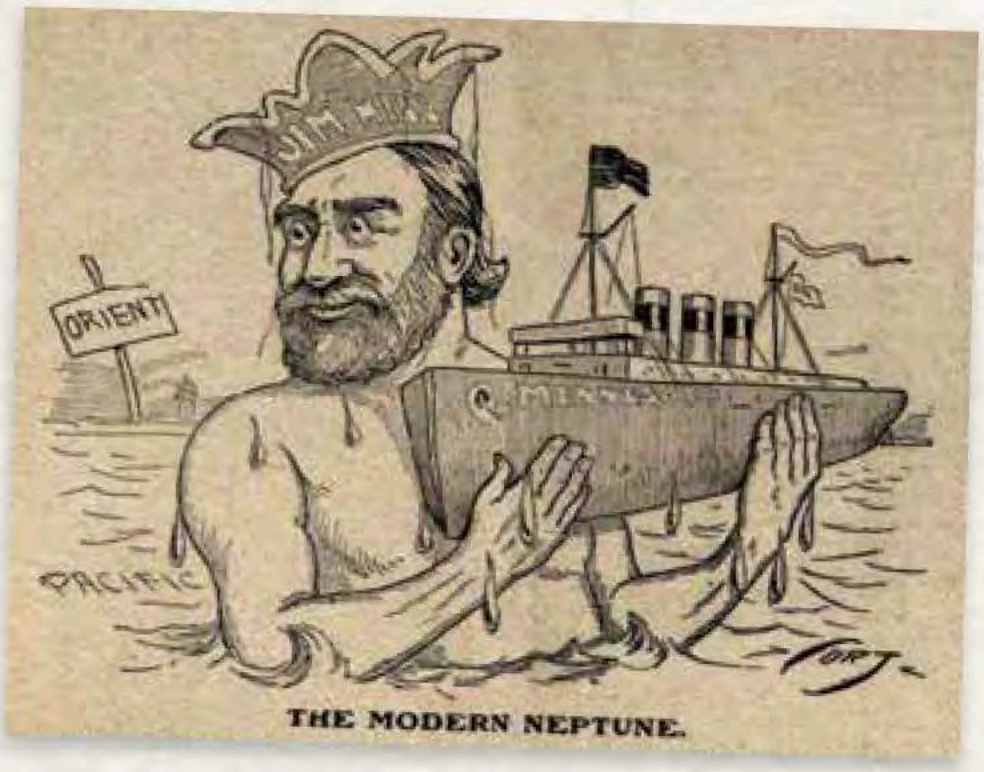
Wenatchee Valley orchards, 1909. Kiser Photo Company. Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society, locator no. Louis W. Hill 5702.

In Wenatchee, James Hill incentivized growers with cash prizes to produce bigger and better varieties of apples, some of which were named in his honor. Courtesy Stephen Sadis.

TOP: *Steamship Minnesota in Seattle Harbor,* oil painting by Dusan Kadlec, circa 1905. Courtesy Marine Arts Gallery, www.marineartsgallery.com. BELOW LEFT: The *S.S. Minnesota* head on in open water circa 1904–1905. Washington State Historical Society, ID 2010.185.47601. BELOW RIGHT: A newspaper cartoon indicating the stature of James Hill, drawn as "The Modern Neptune," wearing a crown and holding the Minnesota. A sign reading "Orient" is in the background. Published in *Great Falls Daily Tribune*, April 19, 1903.

combined." Seattle's demographics would be impacted, as well. Between 1880 and 1910, Seattle's Asian population grew from 550 to 4,237, a trend that would continue, making the Asian community the largest minority population in the city.

While Hill's transpacific shipping venture eventually faced challenges, including new federal rate regulations and the sinking of the *Dakota* in 1907, his efforts laid the foundation for Seattle's enduring role as a major international port.



INFRASTRUCTURE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

As Seattle grew in importance as an international port, its civic leaders were embarrassed by the depot that greeted its railway passengers. *The Seattle Daily Times* called it "a disgrace to the city of 100,000 people." Hill and civic leaders decided that a grander station should be built at the southern edge of the city.

In 1903, construction began on a tunnel beneath Seattle that would connect the waterfront to the new depot and railyards. Excavating an average of eight feet per day, it would be the tallest and widest railway tunnel in the country when it was completed. The dirt extracted from the tunnel was transported to the south end of the city, where it was used to fill in the tide flats. This massive earth-moving project created valuable industrial and commercial land in what is now known as the SODO (South of Downtown) district, and dramatically extended Seattle's urban footprint.

LEFT: Construction of the Great Northern tunnel under Seattle, January 19, 1904, built in partnership with Northern Pacific Railway, to prevent congestion downtown and provide access to the new King Street Station. The project employed 350 people. Small rail cars carried dirt from the excavation to fill in the tide flats at the southern end of the city. At a mile long, it was the highest and widest railway tunnel in the United States when it was completed and is still in use today. Asahel Curtis, photographer. Washington State Historical Society, ID 1943.42.4387. RIGHT: King Street Station Depot, Seattle, Washington, November 6, 1913. The station opened on May 10, 1906, and served Great Northern Railway and Northern Pacific Railway. By purchasing market shares, James Hill and J.P. Morgan had gained control of the Northern Pacific in 1895. Asahel Curtis, photographer. Washington State Historical Society, 1943.42.28444.

Rising above the environs, King Street Station was the tallest building in the city when it was completed in 1906. Designed with a clock tower inspired by the Campanile di San Marco in Venice, King Street Station served as a grand gateway to the bustling town. It symbolized Seattle's emergence as a major metropolitan center and remains an iconic landmark to this day.

Meanwhile, east of the Cascades, Hill found an ideal location to build additional railroad facilities, announcing to Spokane's 20,000 residents that given the right inducements, he could foresee spending nearly a million dollars there. It was not long before Hill was given right of way through downtown Spokane and land to the northeast for a Great Northern railyard. Within three years, a town appropriately named Hillyard dotted the map. Many of its 500 residents were immigrants and roughly three-fourths were employed at the Great Northern's growing facilities.

CONSERVATION AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Throughout his career, Jim Hill was a catalyst for industries that tapped into the nation's natural resources. However, as the 20th century dawned, he grew increasingly concerned about the sustainability of these practices. He pored over reports from across the nation detailing diminishing soil production, salmon depletion, and dwindling mineral deposits. He also assessed the remaining stands of the country's timber.

In 1906, Hill presented his findings at the Minnesota State Fair, stating: "The sum of resources is simple and fixed. From the sea, the mine, the forest, and the soil must be gathered everything that can sustain the life of man. We have come to the point where we must regard the natural resources of this planet as a common asset and study their judicious use."

TOP: Great Northern Railroad shop carpenters, 1910. Courtesy Northwest Museum of Art and Culture, Charles Libby Collection, L87-1.17648-20.

BOTTOM: James Hill's wife, Mary, seated in front and holding an infant. She is surrounded by five of their nine children and multiple grandchildren. Courtesy of the Hill family.

LEFT: Great Northern's "See America First" campaign sought to increase awareness and appreciation of the country's natural beauty by encouraging those with means to travel across the US rather than vacationing in Europe. On this postcard, travelers ride on the back of an observation car on the Oriental Limited, a passenger train offering luxurious travel between Chicago and Seattle. Washington State Historical Society, Art Dwelley Collection, ID 2003.2.1.47. RIGHT: James Hill speaking at the Oregon Trunk Railway Golden Spike Ceremony in Bend, Oregon, 1911. O. Hedlund, photographer. Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society, locator no. James J. Hill 362.

This shift in Hill's thinking was an astonishing tack for a man who had spurred so much industrial growth. But his concern was not just environmental; it was practical. He understood that the sustainable use of resources was necessary for the long-term success of his railroad and for the nation. His son, Louis, who had become president of the Great Northern in 1907, also took an interest in land preservation and was a driving force in the creation and development of Glacier National Park.

President Theodore Roosevelt asked Hill to speak at the Conference of Governors in 1908, a landmark event focused on conservation. Addressing governors from all fifty states, Hill asked, "When will we take up in a practical and intelligent way the restoration of our forests? When iron and coal are taken from the earth, they can be used only once. Yet we still think nothing of consuming this priceless resource with the greatest possible speed." Hill implored the audience, "It is time to set our house in order; to make men realize their duty toward coming generations."

A year later, the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (AYPE) opened on the University of Washington's campus grounds. Hill was invited to give the keynote address on the opening day, an honor that recognized his extraordinary impact on the growth and development of the Northwest. Engaging a crowd of 20,000, Hill spoke of his optimism for the city's future; "You will never again know isolation. The spaces once separating you from the rest of the country have been conquered." Then, he offered a note of caution:

> *Your great forests are falling. Will you realize what this country [will] become when stripped of its forests; the washing away of the soil, the inevitable changes in climate when the forests have gone? Take care of your soil and it will take care of you and sustain and increase your prosperity forever. What are you doing to keep the salmon and other fish of this coast not merely from extinction but as a permanent source of wealth? These questions are especially proper for you, who are guardians of the last remnant of our continental wealth.*

Peering back more than 115 years, Hill's remarks about climate change and depletion of natural resources are strikingly prescient and underscore the depth of his foresight. Two months after his keynote speech, a towering bust of Hill was unveiled on Minnesota Day at the AYPE.

END OF THE LINE

In May 1914, Jim Hill boarded the Great Northern in Seattle for his last trip across the country. Looking out the window over the 1,700-mile journey, he must have been proud as he passed the dozens of towns and cities he helped bring into existence and the countless people who called these places home. At a speech celebrating his retirement, Hill reflected, "I feel that a labor and service so called into being, touching at so many points the lives of so many millions, have been the best evidence of its value. Most men who have really lived have had in some shape their great adventure. This railway is mine."

Two years later, Hill was struck with a fever from a severe infection caused by an abscess. Doctors William and Charles Mayo traveled from their clinic in Rochester to perform surgery at Hill's Summit Avenue home in St. Paul, but it was too much for his 77-year-old body. He passed on Monday, May 29, 1916, surrounded by his loving wife Mary and all nine of their children. Minnesota's governor stated, "The greatest constructive genius of the Northwest is gone," and ordered flags at half-staff. It was the first time the state's flags were lowered to honor a private citizen. Throughout Minnesota, public schools, banks, and theaters were closed, while across the country and the world, his passing made headlines.

On the day of his funeral at a coordinated time, Hill's empire came to a standstill. Every part of his enterprise—every train across the country and every steamship on the Pacific Ocean and Great Lakes—came to a halt for a full five minutes of silence in his honor.

TOP LEFT: James Hill at a shipyard in New London, Connecticut, 1902. Edwin Levick, photographer. Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society, locator no. Louis W. Hill 4746. BOTTOM LEFT: At the 1909 AYPE, the unveiling of *The Empire Builder* bust created by Finn Haakon Frolich. The bust was originally installed near present day Drumheller Fountain on the University of Washington campus; it was later relocated near the entrance of More Hall where it still stands. O.T. Frasch, photographer. Courtesy David Chapman. RIGHT: Documentary filmmakers Stephen Sadis (right) and Kyle Kegley (left), stand with the Hill bust outside of More Hall. Unfortunately, there is not a nearby plaque to explain the story and stature of the Canadian-born, Minnesota-based James Hill. Courtesy of Jean Sherrard.

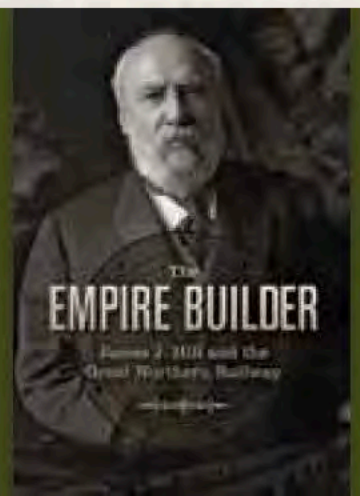
Alden Blethen, publisher of *The Seattle Times* wrote, "Through the farsightedness of Mr. Hill, the wonderful development of the Northwest has been made possible. Coming generations will write as the epitaph of James J. Hill that he was not only the shrewdest businessman of his day, but that he was the greatest empire builder that the United States has ever known."

The Great Northern Railway's legacy lives on as part of BNSF Railway, formed in 1995 through a merger between the Santa Fe Railway and all of Hill's lines, which included the Great Northern; the Northern Pacific; the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy; and the Spokane, Portland, and Seattle Railway.

BNSF remains one of the largest freight railroad networks in North America, with Seattle as a key terminal. The rail lines that Hill built still serve as crucial arteries across the state and to Pacific ports. Moreover, the *Empire Builder*, Amtrak's long-distance passenger train that began service in 1929, continues to run from Chicago to Seattle/Portland and largely follows the path of Hill's Great Northern.

On the University of Washington campus near the entrance of More Hall (home to the College of Engineering), Hill's 18-foot bust and pedestal continues to cast a shadow across campus. Every day, thousands of students and faculty pass by, unaware of who James J. Hill was and the profound impact he had on shaping the very world they inhabit.

Jim Hill saw potential where others saw obstacles, envisioning a future for the Northwest that seemed "folly" to many of his contemporaries. His Great Northern Railway became the lifeline that fed the Pacific Northwest, transforming it from a remote frontier into a thriving economic powerhouse. He was a catalyst for industrial development and, later, an unlikely advocate for the sustainable use of our natural resources. The modern-day ports bustling with international trade, the lush orchards of central Washington, the towering forests that still define the landscape—all bear the imprint of Hill's influence. James J. Hill may no longer be a household name, but his profound legacy endures in every aspect of life in the Pacific Northwest. ✪



The Empire Builder: James J. Hill and the Great Northern Railway is airing on Cascade PBS and the Cascade PBS app. The broadcast schedule can be found online at https://video.cascadepbs.org/schedule.

For more information about Stephen Sadis, the documentary, and DVDs, go to https://GreatNorthernFilmworks.com.