

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Spring, 1990
Volume 25, Number 1



James J. Hill's yacht, the Wacouta of St. Paul. See Page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

Executive Director
Daniel J. Hoisington

Editor
Virginia Brainard Kunz

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gregory K. Page
Chairman of the Board

William S. Fallon
President

Richard Lee
First Vice President

Anne Cowie Wilson
Second Vice President

Robert Hess
Secretary

James P. Wicker
Treasurer

John Costello, Joanne Englund, Deborah Gelbach, Joan Grzywinski, Lorraine Hammerly, Craig Jilk, John M. Lindley, Frank Marzitelli, Dr. Thomas B. Mega, Richard T. Murphy, Sr., Marvin Pertzik, Douglas Skor, Robert O. Straughn, Stephen Urion, Gary Woeltge, Laurie Zenner.

EDITORIAL BOARD

John M. Lindley, chairman; Thomas H. Boyd, Thomas C. Buckley, Charlton Dietz, Craig Jilk, Thomas J. Kelley, Dr. Thomas B. Mega.

RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hal Norgard, chairman
Commissioner Diane Ahrens
Commissioner John Finley
Commissioner Ruby Hunt
Commissioner Duane McCarty
Commissioner Don Salverda
Commissioner Warren Schaber

Terry Schutten, executive director, Ramsey County

Ramsey County History is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright, 1990, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISBN Number 0-934294-00-3. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher.

Design by: Don Leeper, Stanton Publication Services; Little & Company

On the cover: The *Wacouta*, James J. Hill's yacht, passing through the locks at the Sault Ste. Marie, seen in the background.

Acknowledgements: Except for Page 9, photographs with the articles on James J. Hill and the yacht *Wacouta* are from the James J. Hill Papers in the James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, and used with the library's permission. Photographs on Pages 9, 12, 13 and 27 are from the Minnesota Historical Society's audio-visual collection. The photograph on Page 22 is from the Ramsey County Historical Society's photo collection. The photograph on Page 10 is from the Debs Foundation, Terre Haute, Indiana.

RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 25, Number 1 Spring, 1990

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 Railroader as Yachtsman
James J. Hill and the Yacht *Wacouta*
Thomas C. Buckley
- 12 Eugene Debs, James J. Hill and the Great Northern Railway's Strike of 1894
Tamara C. Truer
- 14-15 St. Paul and the 1940s Revisited in Pictures
- 20 The *Wacouta* in Two World Wars
- 22 Book Reviews
- 23 Cooper and Goodrich and the Famous Duel
- 24 A Matter of Time
- 27 What's Historic about this Site?

Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the "new" *Ramsey County History*. In 1987 the Society's Board of Directors established a task force to develop a strategic plan. One of the principal recommendations of that task force was to publish our magazine on a quarterly basis. For that purpose an Editorial Board was established and as a result of their efforts over a two-year planning period, we are proud and happy to present to you, our members and our readers, this new, enlivened format. You will note the additional new features, such as "A Matter of Time," Letters to the Editor, book reviews, descriptions of St. Paul's historic sites and other features.

We hope you will enjoy this new format, and request your comments and reactions to it. We also would like to remind you that we always are looking for manuscripts, for writers and particularly for reminiscences, those colorful and personal accounts of your experiences and memories of St. Paul and Ramsey County. If you would like to contribute to our new magazine, just call the editor.

—William S. Fallon

Railroader As Yachtsman, *James J. Hill and the Wacouta of*

Thomas C. Buckley

Somewhere around the turn of the century a wealthy, arrogant and distrusted oilman named Henry Clay Pierce was considering the purchase of a yacht. He asked New York financier and yachtsman John Pierpont Morgan, "How much does it cost to run a yacht?" Morgan replied to the nouveau riche upstart, "You have no right to own a yacht if you have to ask that question."

Morgan's response became his most famous quote and yachting's most often quoted cliché. For some it also has become a quick characterization of the attitude of Americans of old money toward those of newly acquired wealth, but for many more it has come to typify a style of conspicuous consumption seen as characteristic of very rich Americans from the late 19th century to the present.

Nothing came to better signify arrival among the super rich in the industrial age than the possession of a steam powered yacht like J. P. Morgan's sleek black yachts. Morgan cruised the waters of the Hudson River and the East Coast in a succession of three yachts; each was larger than its predecessor, and each was named *Corsair*.

Sailing those same waters of New York Harbor, Long Island Sound and the northeast coast, in those same days, was another yacht almost as large as Morgan's but owned by St. Paul railroad millionaire James Jerome Hill. The story of Hill and his yacht, the *Wacouta*, was in some ways similar but in other ways quite different than that of J. P. Morgan and the other big spending millionaires of the early 20th century. Its history provides an interesting glimpse into Hill's day-to-day activities and the way he was a part of, and stood apart from, the spirit and style of America's Gilded Age.

By the end of the 19th century, James J. Hill was best known as the man who completed a transcontinental railroad, the Great Northern, without direct subsidies from the United States government. He

had secured control of another transcontinental, the Northern Pacific, and was busy pushing settlement and economic development of the great northwestern region of the nation that stretched from Minnesota to the Pacific. Not as well known then, and even less well known today, was the fact that throughout his transportation career he had been intimately associated with waterborne transportation on rivers and lakes.

In the 1850s when he came to St. Paul he had worked with Mississippi river

steamboat companies. In the 1870s, before he went into railroading, he was in the steamboat business. His Red River Transportation Company eventually ran five steamboats and twenty barges between Breckenridge in western Minnesota and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In the 1880s his Lake Minnetonka Navigation Company operated a huge 300 foot excursion steamboat on the large lake of the same name. In the 1880s and 1890s Hill's shipping interests expanded to include most of the upper Great Lakes with the creation of the Northern Steamship Company. That company's fleet of six large freighters and two passenger steamers ranged across America's inland sea from Duluth to Buffalo, New York. By the end of the decade his maritime vision had extended to contemplate passenger



The Wacouta — more than fifty feet longer than Hill's Summit Avenue mansion in St. Paul. The yacht was 240 feet long, thirty-two feet wide and drew over fourteen feet of water. The official registered weight of the vessel empty was 803 tons, but fully loaded with furnishings, fuel and stores its full displacement weight was 1,136 tons. The Wacouta flag with its "red wing" flies from the top of the main (center) mast. The photo, taken after the 1901 renovation, shows the new rigging and pilot house.

St. Paul

freighters on the Pacific and yachting on the Atlantic.

At the end of the century, when James J. Hill began investigating the purchase of a yacht, his friend and business associate, J. P. Morgan, had just bought his third yacht, *Corsair III*. During the Spanish American War, Morgan sold *Corsair II* to the federal government. Before the war was over, Morgan decided to build a third. It was built with identical interior fittings, but at 302 feet it was 98 feet longer than *Corsair II*, and almost as long as the Navy's newest battleships.

The naval architect in charge of construction of *Corsair II* was given a book of check blanks and told to spend whatever was needed and not bother Morgan. In constructing *Corsair III*, a similarly cavalier attitude toward costs prevailed. Morgan wanted the carpeting to be identical to that on his previous yacht. When they found that the carpeting of *Corsair II* was no longer made, Morgan went to the great expense of having the old pattern set up at a carpet mill so he could tread on familiar carpets in his new yacht.

This was not the way James J. Hill entered East Coast yachting circles. He investigated the market for several years, then bought a six-year-old yacht that had steamed the equivalent of more than three times around the world. He paid 25 percent less than the asking price and 50 percent less than the construction price. After the purchase, Hill and his staff authorized every dollar that was spent for the operation and maintenance of the ship and Hill's staff accounted for every nickel, most of them begrudgingly.

James J. Hill expected long term service on his investments, be they men, railroads or ships. Although his yacht was "previously owned," as they would say in more refined circles, it came with excellent credentials. The *Wacouta* began its



James J. Hill fishing at the River St. John, Quebec, Canada, in 1912. Motor launches from the Wacouta brought people and supplies fifteen miles up the St. John to the fishing lodge, while the yacht remained at anchor in the St. Lawrence.

seafaring existence as the *Eleanor*. It was built between 1893 and 1894 to the specifications of William Slater of Norwich, Connecticut. Slater, a descendant of the family that brought the textile milling industry to America, sought a yacht that could take his family around the world.

He examined shipyards in Great Britain and Europe and then decided to have his yacht built in America. It was to be built of steel, something relatively new to American shipbuilders. Only since 1883 had the government started modernizing the Navy

by replacing the wooden fleet with ships of steel. Slater chose to have his yacht built on the Kennebec River in Maine where wooden ships had been built since 1607, but where constructing vessels with steel hulls had been going on for less than a decade.

As a result of his decision to have his yacht built in his native land, Slater would pay 25 to 30 percent more than if he had built it abroad. The new ship was designed by Charles Hanscom, superintendent of hulls at the Bath Iron Works, and was the

Hill to page 6



The Hills and fishing companions. Third from the left is Hill's second son, Louis W. Hill; then former Secretary of War Daniel Lamont, James J. Hill, an unidentified man (possibly the chief steward), David Weed, and George F. Baker president of the First National Bank of New York.

Hill from page 5

first steel yacht and only the fifth steel vessel built by the company. It was equipped with an efficient triple expansion steam engine of 1,000 horse power to move its 1,136 ton, 240 foot steel hull at a speed of at least 14 knots. The bunker capacity enabled the ship to cruise 4,000 miles on coal. It also was equipped with a three masted bark rig and nearly 11,000 square feet of sails which alone could propel it at a speed of six knots. Appropriate to a ship of such size, it also carried seven boats ranging in length from 20 to 27 feet, two of which were equipped with engines.

William Slater, descendant of one of the oldest families of wealth in the new republic, equipped his yacht with features appropriate to social station and economic position. Hill, one of the most famous of America's new generation of millionaires, sought to secure a yacht appropriate to his substantial position and ever-expanding aspirations. The *Eleanor* carried accommodations for a captain, seven officers, fifteen petty officers and twenty-two crewmen, for a total complement of forty-five. Four small staterooms were built in the aft section for family servants.

The family quarters occupied a four-cabin suite on the main deck that included two private baths as well as a speaking tube and bell communication system to keep in touch with the captain and the servants. There were ten staterooms in total, with a combined capacity for sixteen passengers. The ship had six bathrooms, two of them in the family section, and eight water closets.

The formal dining room and main sa-

loon contained fireplaces of Venetian tile, and beyond the dining room was the social hall. All three large rooms were paneled in oak, and an elegantly carved stairway connected the dining room and social hall on the main deck to the main saloon and guest staterooms on the deck below. Decorative touches were provided by Tiffany lamps and "electrical ornaments," oak parquet floors, upholstered divans, oriental rugs and mahogany furniture.

Slater had the yacht equipped with special convenience features that appealed to the innovative James J. Hill. These included a dual electrical lighting system with two dynamos, each powering some 150 lights, and numerous electric fans; a novel new steam laundry with rotary washing machines and a drying room; a large refrigerator five feet deep running the full width of the ship and an ice making machine that were particularly attractive to Hill, the sport fisherman; and a storage and distribution system for hot and cold fresh and salt water that could both conserve on fresh water and provide salt water baths for health conscious guests.* The yacht also contained a large, well equipped galley with a three oven range that eventually would challenge the skill of several cooks to please the eating habits of the exacting Mr. Hill.

It was common at that time to name a private vessel for some favored female

**In 1900, when Anthony Drexel of J. P. Morgan and Company built his half million dollar yacht Margarita, he practiced oneupmanship on the Hill yacht by includ-*

member of the family and Slater did not break with that tradition. He named his gleaming white yacht, which had cost around \$300,000, after his daughter, Eleanor. On October 27, 1894, Eleanor, her parents, her governess, the family doctor, the family chef, and her father's private secretary set off on a three year trip around the world. On March 21, 1896, due to Slater's declining health, the vessel returned to Bath, Maine, after visiting Marsailles, Suez, Bombay, Singapore, Hong Kong, Yokohama, Honolulu, San Francisco, Valpariso, Montevideo and the Virgin Islands. Slater's health prevented further long cruises and in the 1897 and 1898 yachting seasons the ship was chartered by Colonel Oliver Hazard Payne, an oil, tobacco, and steel millionaire.

The first year Payne took a 16,000 mile cruise to the British Isles, on to North Cape to view the midnight sun, up the Baltic to St. Petersburg, and then back into the Atlantic. After leaving Bermuda they sailed through a hurricane before returning safely to the anchorage of the New York Yacht Club. Payne was so taken with the vessel and its quality that he first considered modifying it to his requirements and then decided to build his own. He contracted with the Bath Iron Works to build him a huge 330 foot \$450,000 yacht, similar in appearance to the *Eleanor*, which was completed in 1899 and named *Aphrodite*. It was when the *Eleanor* was chartered to Payne that Hill visited the ship.

In 1898 ownership of the *Eleanor* passed from William Slater to a formidable yachswoman, Mrs. James W. (Charlotte) Martinez Cardeza of Germantown, Pennsylvania. Mrs. Cardeza was described as, ". . . a master of both rod and gun, and has used both in many lands," as well as a skilled sailor who could ". . . calculate latitudes and longitudes, figure a dead reckoning, lay out a course and even take an observation." It was under her ownership that the command of the vessel was changed from Captain C. W. Scott, who had been associated with it since its con-

ing an electrical system to illuminate over twice the lights and an ice making machine that could produce 1,200 pounds daily.



James J. Hill (center) in Portland in 1910 with New York financiers Charles Steele (left) and George Baker (right), frequent guests on the *Wacouta*. Baker bought the yacht after Hill's death in 1916.

struction, to Captain David A. Weed, who would continue with the ship even after it was returned from naval service following World War I.

Under Weed's command and with Mrs. Cardeza's money, the *Eleanor*, like Morgan's *Corsair*, was not taken out of commission during the winter but maintained with a full crew aboard throughout the year to sail on short notice. Her most extensive voyage would be to the Gulf of the St. Lawrence for fishing and shooting. That voyage was a preview of many similar trips to come under her next owner, James J. Hill.

Hill Buys a Yacht

In June of 1900 Hill purchased the "previously owned" vessel for \$150,000. A variety of reasons motivated the cost conscious railroader to spend that amount, plus a

minimum of \$33,000 each year to maintain a ship more than a thousand miles away from his residence and center of business operations:

— Since the onset of the Panic of 1893, Hill had spent an increasing amount of time on the East Coast. The success with which the Great Northern Railway had continued to return a profit during the Depression, while other railroads had gone into receivership, made him a celebrity among railroad men and finance capitalists. He was consulted on the financial reorganization of the Santa Fe line and deeply involved in recommending measures to restore the historic and troubled Baltimore and Ohio railroad.

— He certainly could afford a yacht. In the eleven years between 1890 and 1901 his fortune had more than doubled, increasing from \$9,200,000 to

\$19,600,000. Over the next five to fifteen years it would be estimated at between \$60,000,000 and \$100,000,000. Men with far less had yachts of substantial size.

— Since he had celebrated his twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in 1892, he had thought of spending more time with his wife and family. A yacht would provide a means to combine his business trips to the East Coast with short vacations with his wife and family. A large yacht would be more appropriate for such activities than swaying about in a railroad car, for even though he had a private car it became rather cramped when filled with friends or members of his large family.

— Some thought had been given to his semi-retirement from business and taking a trip about the world. Under such circumstances, a yacht would be most useful for a man who was accustomed to setting his own schedule. Even when that did not prove possible, a long cruise to the West Indies and the Mediterranean was contemplated.*

— Hill had enjoyed fishing and shooting, particularly fishing. In 1888 he became a member of the Restigouche Salmon Club along with his financier friends, George Stephen of Montreal and John S. Kennedy of New York. Hill paid \$3,750 to join the club as well as annual dues of \$350 to fish for Atlantic salmon on the Restigouche River in New Brunswick. A yacht would provide a faster, more convenient, and independent means to explore the tributaries of the St. Lawrence for that favored fish.

James J. Hill was not an impulse buyer, but a comparison shopper. Unlike the big spenders immortalized by Lucius Beebe who spent money with abandon, Hill carefully considered his purchase for nearly three years before becoming a yachtsman. In the fall of 1897, after several communications about the availability of the *Eleanor*, Hill asked the man in charge of its construction, Charles Hanscom, to supply him with more information about the ship.

Hill to page 8

*It was noted in a New York newspaper that Hill planned to take his friends, J. P. Morgan and Archbishop John Ireland, on a cruise to the Mediterranean in 1901.

Hill from page 7

He sought details on such features as the size of her frames, method of construction, speed under various conditions, and estimates of her daily or monthly expenses. Hanscom communicated much positive information about the ship, including the fact that she had steamed 75,300 miles without a mechanical breakdown and had reached a speed of 14.5 knots although, ". . . it was claimed she did not do her best." However, Hanscom had designed the yacht and could be expected to be biased.

Unsatisfied, Hill sought more information from men better known to him. In March of 1898 he received a report from his close friend, Henry W. Cannon, a shrewd, scholarly chap who was president of the Chase National Bank. Cannon sent the master of his yacht, Captain Miller, to inspect the *Eleanor* as well as other vessels available for purchase. Cannon reported that Miller believed the *Eleanor* was too big and costly to run, and recommended the *Au Revoir*, some fifty feet shorter.

That same month Hill sent his own man, James Brodie, east to examine the *Eleanor*. Brodie was a trusted employee who a decade earlier had designed and supervised the construction of the headquarters building of Hill's St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad. Brodie went aboard the *Eleanor* at Tebos dock and yacht basin in Brooklyn and examined the ship from bow to stern. On March 18 he sent Hill a detailed description of everything on the ship down to the thirty-nine Winchester repeating rifles, thirty brass box hilted Navy cutlasses and two one-pounder Driggs and Schroeder rapid fire swivel guns that he found aboard.* He found the vessel in good order and estimated that it could not be replaced for \$220,000, although the asking price was \$200,000.

Both Hanscom and Cannon sent Hill reports on the monthly operating expenses of the *Eleanor* that ranged from \$5,500 to \$6,000. Hill knew something about the cost of operating ships since his Northern Steamship Company had been operating steamers on the Great Lakes for a decade. Hill noted that the monthly expense of the *Eleanor* was nearly double the cost of operating his 3,000-ton, 315-foot, 1,500-

horsepower lake freighters. Hanscom replied that Slater operated the yacht extravagantly with a crew of forty, and was of the opinion that the cost could be reduced to \$4,000 per month.

It can fairly be assumed that James J. Hill, the man who ran one of the most cost effective railroads in the nation, was confident he could operate the yacht for substantially less than the old-money aristocrat, William Slater, the high living bachelor, Oliver Payne, or the roaming yachtswoman, Charlotte Cardeza. And as it turned out, for most of the years he owned the ship the yearly costs were 50 to 75 percent less than those of the previous owners. Those percentages do not take into account the inflation factor, which would make Hill's savings even more impressive.

Hill felt he would get more comfort out of the *Eleanor* than any ship available, but he was not about to pay \$200,000. His first inclination was to offer \$125,000. The offer accepted was \$150,000, but that did not include assuming the additional cost of Mrs. Cardeza's employment contract with the ship's captain and chief engineer, which ran into mid-March 1901. Mrs. Cardeza was obliged to pay the captain's wages except for the time Hill used the vessel.

On June 14, 1900, James J. Hill purchased the yacht *Eleanor* from Mrs. Cardeza for \$150,000 with the understanding that the name was to be changed. Hill chose to name the vessel *Wacouta*, a word in the Dakota language meaning "red wing." The name would be an appropriate recognition of the language of the Indian

**Slater had the vessel built for a voyage around the world and that meant sailing through the pirate infested East Indies and other dangerous waters. He was not going to take his family into such waters without the capability to repel boarders. Hill kept the armament since he also planned to sail to similar places.*

***J. P. Morgan took great care in selecting the name of his yacht. Since he believed himself to be related to the famous English pirate, Sir Henry Morgan, he chose Corsair, a name associated with the pirates of North Africa. The name was one many of*

people native to the country through which Hill had built his railroad, and the relatively fast speed of the vessel which was reported capable of speeds over 14 knots. The official pennant of the *Wacouta* displayed a red wing on a white background.**

The day following the official purchase of the yacht, instructions were sent to Edward T. Nichols, secretary of the Great Northern Railway in New York City who handled the purchase, to register the yacht's home port as St. Paul, since it was Hill's residence. The following month the *Wacouta* arrived at Duluth, as close to St. Paul as it would ever come. The following year Hill planned to bring her to Duluth again, but the voyage did not take place. In later years there were inquiries about the appropriateness of registering the ship as "home ported" in a place where it had never been and where it was never planned to go. The answer came back that it was to continue to be registered at St. Paul. The Coast Guard never required that it be registered in New London, where it usually was anchored, or in New York City, where Hill maintained a residence.***

Enter the Toomeys

Much has been written about the fact that meticulous attention to small detail helped John D. Rockefeller build Standard Oil into one of the world's most efficient business organizations. James J. Hill was of the same style. It was evident in his first businesses and continued when he became a multi-millionaire. He had an amazing capacity for detail and kept more than a half dozen clerks and secretaries busy verify-

Morgan's contemporaries thought appropriate to his style of operation on Wall Street. Hill gave his yacht a name with a less sinister connotation.

****The Wacouta never could have reached St. Paul. The ship required a minimum depth of 14.5 to 15 feet of water to avoid grounding. The Mississippi was not maintained with even a nine-foot deep channel until the 1930s, by which time the Wacouta, then named the Athinai, was sailing the Mediterranean and Aegean seas.*



John J. Toomey, who was James J. Hill's confidential secretary. St. Paul Dispatch photo.

ing facts and checking costs. While Hill was directly concerned with the major expenses of the vessel, he had two assistants who demanded cost accountability down to wiping rags and left-over cigars. Furthermore, although Hill had a competent staff in the Great Northern Railway's New York office who were capable of keeping track of the management and operating costs of the *Wacouta*, virtually all such matters were handled from St. Paul where he could keep on top of them.

The men to whom he delegated most of this duty were the meticulous and indefatigable Toomey brothers. The Toomeys kept both telegraph companies and the Post Office busy handling a constant flow of inquiries and responses that went between the St. Paul headquarters of the Great Northern Railway and the *Wacouta*, wherever it was. Their supervision was so regular, detailed and unrelent-

**William C. Toomey left Hill's employ in 1904 for strictly personal reasons. His stressful family life included marital difficulties with his wife, who eventually would be jailed for check forging.*

ing that the ship might just as well have been located in the Mississippi River within sight of Hill's bedroom window at 240 Summit Avenue.

William D. and John J. Toomey had come from Montreal to work for James J. Hill. John arrived in 1888, after business experience with the Grand Trunk Railroad in Canada, and William came a few years later in 1891. At the time Hill purchased the yacht, William was senior in position and handled most of the details concerning the vessel until early 1904. From 1904 until the yacht was sold, it was supervised by John. Both of the Toomey brothers were more than nit-picky bookkeepers; they were trusted confidential secretaries who moved on to become involved in some of Hill's ancillary enterprises. William began as an employee of the Great Northern and left at the end of 1897 to work directly with Hill on "outside affairs." He was elected president of Hill's Mille Lacs Lumber Company in 1898, and president of the Great Falls Water Power and Townsite Company in 1902.*

John J. Toomey served the Hill family and its business interests even longer, more than forty years. He assisted in administering the estates of both James and Mary Hill, was on the board of directors of Hill's First National Bank, the United Securities Company, a family holding company, and the Northwest Trust Company. From 1900 until more than a year after Hill's death, the captain and stewards, insurers and claimants, ship chandlers and builders, grocers and coal dealers, government officers and prospective buyers, all dealt with William D. and John J. Toomey.

The man aboard the *Wacouta* who bore the brunt of the continual and insistent inquiries from the Toomeys was the yacht's captain, David Weed, a master mariner from Rockland, Maine. He took command of the *Wacouta*, then the *Eleanor*, when the original master, Captain Scott, left to personally supervise the construction of Oliver Payne's new yacht, *Aphrodite*. When Charlotte Cardeza took over the vessel, she hired Weed. Weed and his family had lived in Rockland from at least the early 1890s, and he maintained his residence there under the previous owner of the yacht. But by the end of the 1901 yacht-

ing season the demands of supervising the yacht for Hill and illness in his family made it more convenient to relocate to New London where he maintained a residence for the rest of his life.

Cost-conscious Toomeys

For four years Captain Weed explained and instructed William Toomey on the costs and operations of a ship. When John Toomey took over his brother's supervision of yacht expenses, the good captain had to start all over again. For example, in March of 1902 William Toomey wrote to Weed that Hill wanted him to arrange for a crew so that the best men didn't get away. In May he wrote chiding Weed for hiring a full crew when he hadn't yet been told the date when the yacht was to be put into active service for the 1902 yachting season. Weed explained to Toomey that yachts one fourth the size of the *Wacouta* required a full crew and six weeks to complete their painting and varnishing, and that big yachts like Morgan's *Corsair* and Payne's *Aphrodite* had it done by outsiders and required two months. In early 1904, John Toomey took over and Weed had to periodically thereafter justify the number of men hired in the spring to prepare the yacht for the coming cruising season.

It was customary for yacht owners to provide clothing for their crewmen. This included more formal attire for social occasions and visits by important guests. In addition, the men had work outfits, often old uniforms that had become worn or soiled or were left behind by former crewmen. The thrifty Toomeys, ever aware of their cost-conscious boss, periodically required the captain to justify such costs. Annual costs for the uniforms of the *Wacouta's* crew generally ran less than \$1,700.

In the spring of 1901, William Toomey believed the expenditures excessive until Captain Weed supplied him with costs for the other yachts. Uniforms on the *Corsair* and *Aphrodite*, which carried about ten more crewmen than *Wacouta*, cost their owners \$2,865 and \$4,137, respectively. The owner of the yacht *Narada* with a crew of thirty-eight, the size of the *Wacouta's* for that year, spent \$2,374.50. From 1902 to 1915, the last year Hill used the yacht, the crew numbered from thirty-two to

Hill to page 10

Hill from page 9

to thirty-three for a further cost saving in crewmen's uniforms.

In the summer of 1904, John J. Toomey, then in charge of the yacht's accounts, would question the expenditure of \$1,734.80 for uniforms. Weed noted that while prices had increased over the past five years the expenditure was only up some \$60 and he failed to see what needed to be explained. At the close of the 1911 sailing season Toomey raised the issue again. Since uniforms on high class Great Lakes steamers, presumably like Hill's *North West* and *North Land*, were used for two or three seasons, Toomey felt the same should be true on the *Wacouta*. Weed pointed out that the uniforms of the *Wacouta* sailors were frequently subjected to salt water when the men splashed about in small boats. Such normal activities caused more rapid deterioration of the cloth.

Furthermore, other yachts paid their best men an extra \$5 per month to get them to return, but that was not done on Hill's yacht. New uniforms served as an inducement for recruiting a crew, since returning crewmen could use last year's outfits for everyday activities. Weed's clinching point was to note that the courts had decided that clothing was considered part of a sailor's salary and to keep the clothes aboard when the men left at the end of the season could cause trouble with the law.

John Toomey's concern over the crew's wardrobe costs extended right down to their slippers and sneakers. At the conclusion of the 1907 cruising season, Toomey questioned the propriety of purchasing seventeen pairs of fancy slippers and fifteen pairs of sneakers for the crew. In addition, he couldn't understand why the crew's sneakers didn't last a full season and had to be replaced at the end of July. Weed responded that sneakers were necessary to save the wooden deck from getting marked up from the nails in the men's shoes and they simply wore out from extensive use. Toomey did not appreciate Weed's matter-of-fact responses, and Weed's comment that the slippers were for the stewards department brought a testy recommendation from St. Paul that Weed investigate a possible surplus of extravagant footwear in that unit.

The fishing trip to the River St. John commenced without fail every June as soon as Hill received word that the salmon were running. Telegrams flashed back and forth between St. Paul and the yacht noting the exact times he and his party would depart for the trip and when it was expected the yacht would be at Montreal or other harbors to pick up Hill and his guests.

In early May, 1914, John Toomey was annoyed when Weed reported that the steam boat inspector for the port of New London had been aboard and decided that the yacht's main steam pipe had to be

replaced. This was no small task and Toomey chided Weed for not detecting the problem earlier, particularly since the fishing trip had come to be about the only use Hill made of the vessel. Weed patiently explained to Toomey that the pipe was as good as it had been when the yacht was built twenty years earlier, but that conditions had changed. The pipe had not been subjected to annealing, the repeated process of heating and slow cooling to reduce the brittleness of the metal.

If the steam in the pipes was to be kept at a pressure sufficient for a 10-knot speed, the pipe would be satisfactory. However, Hill wanted a yacht speed of at least 12 knots to avoid delay, and for such a speed a stronger steam pipe, less likely to explode, was required. Toomey, sensitive to Hill's desire for speed, accepted the explanation and by June 3 the yacht was ready to steam north for the annual rendezvous with the salmon.

In incident after incident Weed was able to coolly explain the reasons for his actions, but the Toomeys were ever vigilant and ever sensitive to their responsibilities and prerogatives as confidential secretaries and guardians of the Hill treasury. However, Captain Weed was a man of some position and self confidence. He occasionally displayed annoyance at what he certainly must have considered pesky letters over trivial details. In the spring of 1901, with an ailing wife and large family to think about and enjoying sufficient confidence from Hill to supervise the renovation of the yacht and command it on a cruise to Washington, D.C., he set about to clear the air with William Toomey.

After responding with more explanations about yacht bills, he stated in his clear but ungrammatical style, ". . . a yacht has to be in good condition all season. Mr. Hill would not want me to let his yacht go behind now she is in good condition. I am doing the same as if I was paying for them [the bills] myself. You remark that if Mr. Hill were to look over these bills he would be displeased. I wish to say if Mr. Hill is displeased the way I have been managing for the yacht, that I have been doing my best and would not care to remain here if he is not satisfied."

Toomey responded in a more subdued tone two days later: "I have never heard



Stern of the *Wacouta* of St. Paul. Although the fully loaded yacht drew nearly fifteen feet of water below the waterline, too much to steam up the Mississippi, it was registered with its home port listed as St. Paul.

Mr. Hill say he was dissatisfied with your services, and it would be out of place for me to say so. At the same time he expects me to watch the expenses. My only object in writing was to receive an explanation so I would be in a position to enlighten you." The correspondence thereafter was more subdued between the two.

Two years later when the captain asked Toomey for a recommendation from Hill so that he could apply for a position as captain on the yacht of the notorious Henry Clay Pierce, Toomey on his own initiative got him to stay. The position as captain on the Pierce yacht paid \$3,000, \$1,000 more than Weed was making. Toomey pointed out the convenience of the *Wacouta* position which kept Weed in New London most of the year and close to his family and made a private agreement to raise his salary to \$2,400 per year if he would stay on the *Wacouta* and pay no attention to future vacancies aboard other yachts. Weed agreed.

When John Toomey replaced his brother, a strained relationship again became evident. Captain Weed on more than one occasion had to point out to John that he evidently didn't know a great deal about the operations of a ship. However, John Toomey waited for his chance to get back at Weed and it came when a discontented engineer asserted that graft and nepotism had been taking place aboard the yacht.

The alleged graft centered around the use and purchase of coal aboard the *Wacouta*. In December 1905, the chief engineer, C. W. Suttle, wrote to James J. Hill that he had saved Hill more than the amount of his wages through his conservation of coal supplies, but that Captain Weed submitted bills for more coal than actually was put aboard the ship. He further charged that Weed couldn't explain some repairs he intended to make, and when he, Suttle, wouldn't go along with a forty-ton discrepancy between the coal purchased and the coal put aboard, he was fired. He charged that Weed replaced him with the untrustworthy assistant engineer, a Weed relative named Bray, who would do anything for Weed, "even to locating fast women for him."

Captain Weed sent detailed letters to Toomey concerning Suttle's efforts to stir up trouble after he was not kept on as chief

engineer. Weed went further and filed charges against Suttle with the Masonic Lodge in Camden, Maine, Suttle's place of residence. Nothing came of Suttle's charges but it did provide John Toomey with the opportunity to institute a program for the annual accountability of all coal used on the yacht. Captain Weed was asked to examine his 1905 records and maintain detailed accounts every year thereafter on coal consumption. He sent annual reports to St. Paul of the coal available at the beginning of the season, amounts used when in port and at sea by the various engines, miles steamed at sea, and the amount of coal remaining at the end of the season. Questions about coal use were added to the previous and ongoing questions about coal prices.

Saving On Wages

James J. Hill expected full service and loyalty from his employees whether they worked on his railroad or his yacht. And, in the case of the *Wacouta's* Chief Steward L. Byrne, it extended to a time when he no longer was in Hill's employ. At the end of the 1900 cruising season, most of the ship's crew were discharged, including Byrne. Captain Weed had gone to rejoin his family in Rockland, Maine. Byrne reported to E. T. Nichols that an engineer had seen a man named Sanford leave the ship wearing a Mackintosh coat belonging to Louis W. Hill, and he also believed that Sanford had taken two revolvers. When William Toomey found out about it, he asked Byrne to do all he could to retrieve the stolen items. At the same time, John Toomey refused to pass on to Hill, Byrne's request for a letter of reference on the grounds that the family was not satisfied with the operation of the steward's department.

At that point one would have expected Byrne to have terminated relations with the Hills and their secretaries. However, the conscientious—or intimidated—Byrne kept on the case. Early in November he reported to William that he had tracked down Sanford and had retrieved Louis Hill's Mackintosh and one revolver, but that the remaining gun was in the possession of another sailor then at sea.

When the receiver of stolen goods returned to New York, Byrne tracked him down and the second revolver was turned

over. By early December Captain Weed could report that all items had been recovered; however, he was instructed by William C. Toomey not to rehire Byrne. The position taken in St. Paul was that retrieving stolen goods did not compensate for running an unsatisfactory department, which was seen as the basic problem leading to the theft, and therefore it didn't warrant a recommendation.

Because of the discontent with the operation of the steward's department, it was decided to relieve Captain Weed of the responsibility of hiring a new chief steward for the upcoming season. That matter would be handled from St. Paul. The man selected was W. E. Meagher, a dining car conductor on one of the Great Northern passenger trains. Meagher proved to be a tireless correspondent. He kept the Toomeys informed of numerous activities aboard the ship and relieved Captain Weed of much paper work. However, he wasn't sufficiently skilled to handle such a vital matter as securing a cook acceptable to Mr. Hill.

In January, 1902, Meagher was sent to Seattle at the direction of Hill to see about securing three Chinese cooks. When a proper wage could not be agreed upon with Gee Hee, a Chinese employment agent who had provided other workers for the Hill transportation system, Meagher traveled back to St. Paul and hired some men from the railroad dining cars. He later reported that the officers were pleased when they heard he was not returning with "Chinamen cooks."

However, the crisis in the kitchen was not solved. James J. Hill was not pleased with either the culinary skills of Charles Acheson, the chief cook Meagher had brought from the Midwest, or the man who replaced him. Meagher's support of Acheson and his efforts on his behalf were annoying. Meagher complained that his task was impossible. Louis Hill had told him that he didn't like the same food his father enjoyed, and Meagher found it difficult to please both of them, as well as the guests. In mid-summer he sought to hire some first class cooks in the New York area but found the best ones were already employed at resorts. Besides, James J. Hill delivered himself of the opinion that no New York

Hill to page 16

Hill from page 11

cook was equal to the woman who was his cook back in St. Paul.

At William Toomey's suggestion, Chef Acheson was sent back to the railroad. But to add frustration to discontent, the beleaguered Meagher had to battle with the cost conscious Toomey to secure a railroad pass so that Acheson could get back to St. Paul. Since Acheson wasn't currently employed by the railroad they wouldn't give him a pass. Toomey told Meagher to take the matter up "with Mr. Hill." Meagher got the pass when he pointed out that he'd had to promised the cooks free return transportation to St. Paul to get them to join the crew of the *Wacouta*. However, Acheson didn't get his pass until early September, a month-and-a-half after the effort to remove him began.

In spite of the fact that Hill and Captain Weed had complemented Meagher on other aspects of his stewardship, Meagher chose not to return to work on the Great Northern and left on amicable terms. Toomey would later accord him the rare honor of writing him a letter of recommendation, something not normally done for former employees. And, if he ever found out, it could be assumed he derived satisfaction from the fact that his successor, a man named Ross, was also unable to satisfy Hill.

By the end of the 1905 sailing season, the *Wacouta* had a chief steward that Hill liked, a man named McClelland. However, good men like McClelland were hard to keep when other yachts offered more money or year around employment and McClelland went elsewhere. The following year the steward was Joseph Cragin who also measured up to Hill's expectations, but they couldn't get him back for the 1907 season because he was also a skilled electrician and obtained more permanent employment at the Boston Navy Yard. But, at the end of that year he was ready to return to the *Wacouta*.

In late 1907 President Roosevelt pulled many ships out of East Coast Naval bases to send the battleship fleet on a goodwill tour of Latin America, and eventually around the world, and the Boston yard didn't have as many ships coming in requiring electrical attention. Since Cragin hadn't returned, Hill decided he wanted a



Louis W. Hill, Jr., youthful fisherman, swathed in mosquito netting.

man named Keene. However, by the 1910 season Cragin was back aboard. In 1909 Hill was pleased with the food prepared by the cook and wanted Weed to secure his return although it was made clear that Hill didn't want him badly enough to raise his salary. The man had been paid the appropriate wage for a chief cook and Hill saw no reason to go higher, so Hill did not get the cook he wanted.

James J. Hill was very much aware of wage rates and their relationship to the reduction of operating costs, whether on railroads or yachts. When the yacht cruised the Great Lakes in 1900 the crew numbered forty-two, as big as it would ever be under Hill's ownership. With such high labor costs the crew's wages were lowered to the scale appropriate for seamen on the Great Lakes and labor troubles developed, but a major walk out was averted by Captain Weed. The only crewmen who appeared to have accepted the wage reduction were the Chinese laundrymen.

This motivated Hill to secure more Asians for the crew, most specifically Chinese cooks, as well as reduce the crew to thirty-eight for the 1901 cruising season. Yet when Meagher was sent to Seattle to hire them, a combined salary difference of \$25 per month stood between what Gee Hee, the employment agent, wanted and what Hill would authorize for the services of

three men. Gee Hee pointed out that \$175 per month for a good cook and two assistants was what the Seattle ocean liners were paying. However, Hill was hiring men for an Atlantic yacht and would pay no more than \$150 per month.

Instead of yielding, Hill paid the greater cost of sending Meagher from St. Paul to Seattle and back to hire cooks who were brought off the Great Northern's dining cars. At first glance the Midwestern leader of cost conscious railroad efficiency appeared to be penny wise and pound foolish, but such was not the case. There was a well worked out, stratified wage system in railroading that paid more to Americans and immigrants from western Europe than to those from eastern or southern Europe. Furthermore, men from Europe were paid more than those from Asia.

While they sought to save money on the wages, they were not adverse to spending it on the mustard spoons. After the Great Lakes cruise of 1900, the *Wacouta* steamed back to New London to be taken out of commission and renovated in accord with improvements discussed among Hill, Captain Weed and Charles Hanscom. Hanscom had left the Bath Iron Works to establish the Eastern Ship Building Company in New London. Most of the china, silverware, linen, liquors, etc., was taken off the vessel, inventoried, crated, and

stored in Duluth. Early in 1901, the crates were shipped east and their contents restowed aboard the yacht. Much correspondence was exchanged between St. Paul and New London regarding the departure and arrival of various crates, particularly concerning seven boxes of liquor which were a month overdue. When they did arrive, four bottles of claret had been drained and one bottle of champagne was missing.

Among the other items that failed to reach New London were four mustard spoons. In the spirit of the cost conscious Toomeys, the conscientious chief steward, Meagher, proposed that since they had an abundant supply of sixteen small coffee spoons some of those could be substituted. William Toomey took the matter up with Hill and advised Meagher, ". . . not to carry our economical ideas too far . . . as it would displease Mr. Hill very much to find that coffee spoons were being used for something for which they were not intended; and again it would not be in keeping with the other appointments on the yacht." Ten days later Meagher reported to Toomey that he had gone to Tiffany and Company and spent four dollars on four silver spoons that matched the mustard pots.

Early in 1913, as Captain Weed began his annual task of securing a crew for the upcoming sailing season, he wrote John J. Toomey informing him that crewmen were scarce. He investigated the wages on other yachts and reported that over 80 percent paid their seamen \$35 per month in contrast to *Wacouta's* \$30 wage; which hadn't changed in thirteen years furthermore, crewmen on lowly tugboats and barges were paid a \$35 wage. However, the wage was not agreed to and he secured an inexperienced crew to work the deck.

In 1914, on renewing his proposal for a

wage increase, Weed told Toomey of Hill's displeasure with the deck crew from the previous summer. The task of unloading people and goods for the annual fishing holiday at the River St. John took longer than normal in 1913. James J. Hill, ever anxious to get fishing, was displeased with the performance and suggested that they send for some sailors from the Great Lakes. In spite of Weed's arguments, Toomey was unsympathetic toward Weed's problem because he found it easier to hire men of any class in St. Paul in 1914 than he had the previous year; in addition, Toomey had read that eastern wages were in decline. The records do not indicate whether the wages were increased, but they do show that crewmen were partially compensated by a varied diet. The inventory of groceries in the crew's galley did not contain the exotic foods served the Hills and their guests, but it was well stocked. While there were occasional inquiries about the overall expenditures for food, there is no record of Hill or the Toomeys objecting to the array of food served. The crew's mess included twenty-one varieties of fruit and vegetables (canned, fresh and dried), pickles, seasonings, soups, fresh, dried and canned fish, corned beef, cheese, and twenty-two kinds of spices.

Cruises of the *Wacouta*

The first two years Hill owned the yacht, 1900 and 1901, saw its most extensive use. The first year was distinguished by extensive cruising from New England to Lake Superior. In the late spring James and Mary Hill went abroad. James J. returned early to take care of business and sail on the *Wacouta* for his annual fishing vacation on the River St. John. Mary returned to America from Europe on July 14, sailing appropriately on the trans-Atlantic liner *S. S. St. Paul*, and rejoined her husband in New York. Five days later the Hills reached Buffalo to cruise back to Minnesota on the *Wacouta*. A good many members of the Hill family boarded the ship and enjoyed a pleasant cruise to Duluth.

July and August were marked by a number of trips about Lake Superior that took the senior Hills and some of their long time St. Paul neighbors sightseeing to the Apostle Islands as well as across the lake for

some fishing. Louis Hill and his friends took the yacht for a cruise along the North Shore to Isle Royale and had just arrived when a steam valve gave way, killing two seamen. The yacht made a quick return to Duluth. Sailing as the guest of Charlotte and Ruth Hill that summer was Louis' future wife, Maud VanCortlandt Taylor.*

In early September Captain Weed took the *Wacouta* down the lakes to Detroit where he picked up James J. Hill and his eldest son, James Norman Hill, who had not had an opportunity to sail with the family earlier in the summer. In mid-September, after the more portable valuables were unloaded and crated, the ship again sailed down the lakes to return to the Atlantic and winter renovation. The lake cruise had been well received and colorful, but with labor problems, accidental deaths, customs difficulties, increased insurance costs and underwater damage to the ship, it wasn't something to be repeated without careful consideration.

During the winter months in New London, Hanscom and the Eastern Ship Building Company completed \$21,450.80 worth of renovations and repairs to the ship, the first since it left the shipyard in 1894. The most notable was a reduction in her sails and rigging from that of a square rigged bark to a fore and aft rigged schooner. Such a change required fewer sailors to man the ship, and since Hill seldom used it for leisurely cruising the 11,000 square feet of sails were largely superfluous.** A full head of steam was required to get to the mouth and valley of the St. Lawrence River when the salmon run began. The other notable exterior change was on the open bridge deck. A proper pilot house was built which included cabins for David Weed and the first and second officers.

Interior changes included Hill's directive to replace the steel bathtubs with porcelain tubs. New carpets were installed after being selected by Hill, but he ordered pre-made carpets and did not copy J. P. Morgan's extravagance of having special looms set up to duplicate an extinct pattern. Hill proposed changes in the water closets and the installation of an automatic oiling system in the engine room. Hanscom advised against the latter since the

Hill to page 18

*When Louis and Maud were married the following year, they spent part of their honeymoon on the *Wacouta*.

**The only account I have run across of the use of the sails was that of Mrs. Georgiana Slade Remy, grand daughter of the Hills. As a young girl she took a cruise on the yacht with her parents and grandparents. She recalled experiencing such heavy seas off the New England coast that Captain Weed used the sails to steady the ship.

Hill from page 17

engine room had plenty of space for manual oiling and it would not reduce the size of the engine room crew but only the amount of work the men had to do.

Proposals for changes below the waterline included Hill's suggestion that the propeller be changed in the hope of increasing the speed, but Hanscom believed it would increase by only one-third of a knot and recommended against it. Some years later they would again look into replacing the ten-foot-in-diameter propeller with one of eleven feet to achieve an increase in speed. Such advice built Hill's confidence in Hanscom whose shipyard had been selected to construct Hill's huge new Pacific Ocean passenger-freighters the *Minnesota* and *Dakota*.*

Hill also had the five horse power steam engine in one launch replaced with a six horse power naphth engine to increase its speed. Much attention was given across the years to the power launches aboard the *Wacouta*. They were important during the annual fishing trip in moving people, gear and salmon between the yacht and the lodge, several miles up the River St. John.

Underwater damage had been done to the keel during the summer cruise on the Great Lakes at the Rapid Plat Swifts. Repair required towing the *Wacouta* over to the Morse Iron Works and Dry Dock where the keel was straightened and a bill for \$1058.10 was presented.

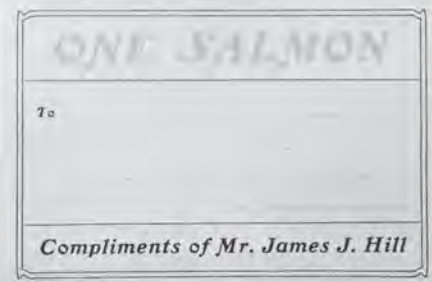
The cruising season began earlier than normal in 1901. Although the newspapers indicated that the *Wacouta* would be sailing south to the West Indies and on to the Mediterranean, such was not the case. Captain Weed took the ship south from New London, along the east coast and up Chesapeake Bay to Baltimore. At Baltimore on March 24, Mary and Ruth Hill joined the ship after a ride down from New York City in the private railway car of

Frederick Douglass Underwood of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Mary thought the renovated yacht looked "most attractive" but the cruise was delayed a day due to fog in Chesapeake Bay. The fog provided Captain Weed with time to find replacements for the ship's firemen. Chief Steward Meagher reported they had left the boiler room saying they ". . . could not stand the work". The *Wacouta* eventually steamed back down the bay and up the Potomac River to Washington, D.C., where it anchored near the Washington Navy Yard.

Mary and Ruth Hill spent a week on the yacht awaiting the arrival of "papa." Their days were spent sight seeing and visiting with friends like Mrs. William Merriam whose husband, the former governor of Minnesota, was in Washington serving as head of the United States Census. Finally on the evening of April 1, Hill arrived, delighted to be back aboard the yacht, and they steamed down the Potomac and into Chesapeake Bay.

At the entrance to the bay they anchored at Fortress Monroe, adjacent to Norfolk. There they visited with Daniel Lamont, president of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and his family who were vacationing at the Chamberlain Hotel. After two days of rain and rough weather they steamed back up the Chesapeake and the Potomac to Washington. At that point the Hills left the ship and took the railroad back to New York with Hill continuing on to Boston.

Captain Weed took the *Wacouta* back to New London and on up to Montreal in mid-June to receive Hill and his fishing party. It seems quite remarkable that Hill had any time to travel on the yacht that spring and summer for that was the period when the railroad and investment group associated with Edward Harriman and Jacob Schiff set out to challenge Hill and J. P. Morgan for control of the Northern Pacific. Hill's



Shipping label for salmon from the St. John. The salmon were frozen in Wacouta's large refrigerator, packed in wooden boxes affixed with labels partly printed in salmon pink, and shipped to Hill's family and friends. Family members received two salmon and business associates and friends like J.P. Morgan and President Taft received one each.

visit with Daniel Lamont at the Chamberlain undoubtedly was concerned with more than the choppy weather at the mouth of the bay. Nevertheless, on June 16, Hill set off for his annual fishing trip and by the Fourth of July the yacht was back in New York's East River to put on a fireworks display for New Yorkers in celebration of Independence Day.**

By mid August much of the Hill family, including "papa," was back aboard and ready to spend two weeks cruising the New England coast. When they reached Bar Harbor they entertained Edward Harriman and his wife and had more pleasant weather to socialize with the Lamonts. On August 28 the *Wacouta* was back in New London to go out of commission for the season. The Hills set off across the Thames River to Groton and the Eastern Ship Building Company. There they viewed the progress of Hanscom and his associates toward completing the largest ships then built in America, the new trans-Pacific steamers of Hill's Great Northern Steamship Company, the *S.S. Minnesota* and the *S.S. Dakota*.

At the River St. John

The years after 1901, were marked by cruises of the Hill family aboard the *Wacouta* along the New England coast; however, those cruises were sporadic. The only predictable cruise of the vessel was to the St. Lawrence River in late spring with a return in early summer. That cruise took

*Hanscom noted that the forward part of the *Wacouta*, the crews' quarters, was exceedingly dirty and full of bed bugs and roaches. He proposed it be fumigated. This was done then and at the end of every sailing season as long as Hill owned the ship.

**The St. Paul Pioneer Press reported on July 6, 1901, that the *Wacouta* anchored in

the East River at the foot of East 26th Street, and that before coming ashore Hill told the captain to lay in a big supply of fireworks and blaze away all evening. Rockets, roman candles and "pyrotechnic wrinkles" blazed away from the ship all evening until midnight for the enjoyment of patients at Bellview Hospital and thousands of folks along the river.



Hill's fishing lodge, on River St. John, built in 1901 and still used by the Hill family.

Hill, his family and his guests to fish for Atlantic salmon in the River St. John, or Riviere Ste. Jean, in Quebec. In 1899 James J. Hill had secured exclusive rights to fish the river, for which he paid in excess of \$3,000 per year.

In May and early June, from 1900 through 1915, telegrams would flash from Hill's man at the river to St. Paul on the condition of the salmon run. Then telegrams would flash to Captain Weed in New London to have all in readiness. In most cases Hill and his party would meet the yacht in Montreal and sail from there down the St. Lawrence to the St. John. However, there were occasions when Hill and/or his fishing guests would sail from New London.

Captain Weed was given detailed instructions, via the Toomeys, to load the *Wacouta* with everything from plaster of paris for making casts of prize-winning fish, to specially built fresh water tanks, to new power launches. Also included would be instructions to purchase one barrel of candy and one barrel of cookies to be divided and packaged, by the steward, sometimes mixed and sometimes separate, in one or one-half pound paper bags. Those bags of goodies were for the children at the River St. John, many of whose parents were employed by the Hills as guides during the fishing expeditions, or as workmen and watchmen at other times of the year.

The *Wacouta* would anchor in the St.

Lawrence and usually remain there for the duration of the "fish kill," since the yacht was too big to sail up the River St. John. Occasionally Captain Weed would steam upstream or across the river to pick up supplies or late arriving members of the fishing party. However, the yacht largely served as a floating packing plant. Light draft, powered launches from the yacht would transport people and supplies fifteen miles up the St. John to the site of the fishing lodge and bring back fish to be frozen and packed aboard the ship. The large refrigerator and icemaking machine aboard the yacht operated continuously to receive the fish that came in by the hundreds. The number of fish "killed" generally ranged from over 200 to as high as 753. The refrigerator aboard the yacht could freeze thirty fish at a time, but it took forty-eight hours to freeze them sufficiently to be packed safely in wooden boxes and shipped to Hill's family and friends.*

In 1901, Hill built a two story, eight bedroom, log lodge with a broad screened

*The condition of the frozen fish on arrival in St. Paul, or their other destinations, was the subject of much correspondence over the years. Testy notes would be sent from St. Paul to the yacht in New London or New York inquiring about conditions of packaging, the quality of the specially made boxes and the dates of shipment if the Toomeys received word that the fish were spoiled on arrival.

porch on high ground sloping down to the River St. John. In the morning Hill and his guests would set out in canoes with guides paddling at the bow and stern. In the afternoons the canoes would return with the catch of the day to be measured, weighed, catalogued and then sent out to the *Wacouta*. Detailed records were kept of the fish caught by each member of the party, not just to satisfy Hill's passion for detail, but also to satisfy the regulations of the Canadian government. The afternoons, evenings and rainy days provided time to read, sing or make plans for the future.

The fishing vacation was made in predominantly male company, with the number ranging from seven to nine. Hill brought along his sons, sons-in-law, grandson Louis Hill, Jr., friends and business associates. The guest list occasionally included such notables as former President Grover Cleveland and the governor general of Canada, Lord Grey, and his family. George Baker of the First National Bank of New York and the last American owner of the yacht, was a frequent guest, as was Daniel Lamont of the Northern Pacific Railroad.**

Because of the advanced age of many of the guests, Hill always included a doctor in the party, usually his friend Dr. George Stewart of New York. One such aged fisherman was Samuel Thorne who had been an investor in Hill railroads from the beginning and was on all the *Wacouta's* trips to the River St. John from 1901 through 1912. On those later excursions Thorne was in his nineties; he didn't make the trips in 1913 and 1914 due to a heart attack, but he was back in 1915 for what would be his and James J. Hill's last outing together. Thorne suffered another heart attack on the trip and died on July 4 at age 79.

Hill to page 21

**James and Louis Hill generally surpassed all others in numbers of fish caught. However, Lord Grey's daughter, Sybil, also proved to be a successful fisherperson. Young Louis Hill, Jr., caught fifty salmon on his first trip in 1912 and returned in 1914, with less luck, catching only twenty-six. John J. Toomey made the trip in 1903, but didn't catch any fish until 1910, when he caught seven.

ship owners, Apostolos Ringas and Dimitri Polymeros. They converted the yacht into a passenger ship, added several small staterooms and increased her passenger capacity from sixteen to ninety-three. The ship's name was changed to *Athinai*, and it operated out of Piraeus, the port for Athens. The *Athinai* provided regular service along the mainland coast and islands of Greece ranging from Thessaloniki in the north to Argostoli on the west. By 1929 she was one of several converted yachts that merged into Hellenic Coastal Lines, and ten years later became

part of Hellenic Mediterranean Lines, a company that exists today.

In early 1941, Hill's former yacht was once again actively involved in a world war. In the fall of 1940 Italy invaded Greece and the *Athinai* and other vessels of the merchant marine came under tighter control by the Greek Government. The following spring, Hitler decided to send the German Army and Luftwaffe to the assistance of the Italian forces embroiled in Greece. On Palm Sunday, April 6, the Germans launched a combined land invasion and air attack on Greece. German

planes attacked the *Athinai* and set it on fire. The fire was put out and the ship sailed west a few days later to the port of Itea where it was attacked again on April 22 and sunk. The ship was raised by the Italians and used for transportation purposes during the war. In 1942 the *Athinai* was renamed the *Palermo*, and commissioned into the Italian navy. When Italy left the war in 1943, the *Palermo* steamed the Adriatic as a commercial vessel. On May 27, 1944 she struck a mine and sank ten miles off Piran on the Yugoslavian coast.

Hill from page 19

And his old friend Jim Hill died the following spring. He was 77.

The Tentative Yachtsman

When James J. Hill passed away, his heirs had little use for the yacht and put it up for sale. The yacht was uniquely Hill's and reflected his style of work and recreation. No aspect of its operation and expense was too trivial to escape scrutiny, as delegated through his personal secretaries. While the evidence does not show Hill's personal involvement in demanding direct accountability for such mundane items as a missing one-half-inch wood chisel or white lead costing one-and-three-quarter cents more in New York than in St. Paul, such inquiries reflected an approach that existed in the operation of his business.

Hill's railroad survived the panic of the late 19th century when others failed largely because he was knowledgeable about the most intimate aspects of the transportation business from market potential to track laying, from bridge building to the coal consumption of locomotives. That interest in knowing about transportation details on land extended to transportation on water. He displayed a key interest in the details of construction and operation of ships whether it was his yacht or his passenger-freighters.

Hill was one of the men characterized in the post-Civil War era as a self-made millionaire, rising from obscurity to prominence and great wealth in one lifetime. Unlike J. P. Morgan and many of his later associates, Hill did not come from a family with money. He was the product of a

thrifty farm family of Scots-Irish ancestry that settled in Upper Canada, fifty miles west of Toronto. He did not build his fortune by wasting money, and he did not forget the virtues of thrift, like a number of his fellow "new millionaires," when he had secured surplus funds to spend on homes, trips, and ships. Yet he was in the ranks of the wealthy, counted many of them as his friends, and sought their support. Yachts were a significant part of the social and business style of the East Coast where Hill spent an increasing amount of time. Yet there is little evidence that he ever used it for anything more than short vacations. Had it been used for business conferences, long cruises and elaborate entertaining, Hill might have lavished money on the *Wacouta* the way associates like Morgan and Payne spent money on their yachts.

James J. Hill was a workaholic. One of the characteristics that stands out in going through his papers is the extent to which he was constantly on the move. The only vacation in which he regularly indulged himself was the late June—early July fishing trip to Quebec. The newspapers as well as Mary Hill's diary noted how rested he looked when returning from those trips. For that necessary diversion from business the *Wacouta* was integral, and explains why he kept the yacht for so many years after the projected world, Caribbean, and Mediterranean cruises never materialized.

In 1912 Hill stated that "Most men who have really lived have had, in some shape their great adventure. This railway is mine." Had his entrance into the Pacific maritime transportation business been more successful in those years, his in-

volvement with the sea would have been a more positive extension of his great railway adventure. And the *Wacouta* undoubtedly would have played a more extensive role in his life, moving him about on his own tight time schedule between Pacific ports as the railroad took him between continental depots. Had his suggestions for canals from Lake Superior to the Mississippi river and from the Mississippi to the Gulf ever materialize, the "*Wacouta* of St. Paul" could indeed have reached St. Paul.

SOURCES

The major sources for this article are contained in the James J. Hill Reference Library. They are the Wacouta and St. John's River subgroups of the James J. Hill Papers and the Mary T. Hill Diary and John J. Toomey subgroup of the Louis W. Hill Papers. Other sources included James J. Hill and the Opening of the Northwest by Albro Martin, Bath Iron Works, The First Hundred Years by Ralph L. Snow, The Luxury Yachts by John Rousmaniere, The Great Pierpont Morgan by Frederick Lewis Allen, Pierpont Morgan and Friends by George Wheeler, and correspondence and interviews with James J. Hill's grandchildren, Louis W. Hill, Jr., and Maud Hill Schroll. A fully annotated copy of the article with footnotes is available at the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. 5th Street, St. Paul, Minn. 55102.



Henry H. Sibley's house at 417 Woodward, St. Paul, from the 1874 Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota, published by A. M. Andreas.

R.C.H.S.
RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society
323 Landmark Center
75 West Fifth Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Paul MN
Permit #3989