

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Summer 2010

Volume 45, Number 2

*“A Rented House Is Not
a Home”*

Thomas Frankson:
Real Estate Promoter
and Unorthodox Politician

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As part of his campaign to promote travel to Glacier National Park on the trains of the Great Northern Railway, Louis W. Hill hired Winhold Reiss (1880–1953) to paint portraits of the Blackfeet Indians who lived in that part of Montana. This 1927 portrait shows Lazy Boy, Glacier National Park, in his medicine robes. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON DECEMBER 20, 2007:

The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program of presenting, publishing and preserving.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

James J. Hill built the Great Northern Railway as a freight line to carry America’s cargo. But his son, Louis W. Hill, attracted passengers to take the train to a new, grand destination: Glacier National Park. This issue contains an excerpt from the Ramsey County Historical Society’s new book, where Billie Young and Eileen McCormack tell the fascinating story of how the younger Hill developed the park as a tourist mecca, complete with Swiss-chalet-style housing, luring vacationers to its grand vistas. The article also delineates Hill’s complex relationship with the Blackfoot tribe, whom he simultaneously took advantage of and supported as he sought to popularize the park’s Indian heritage. For a perspective on Native Americans in Minnesota history, read Mary Lethert Wingerd’s new book, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*, insightfully reviewed here by Professor Gwen Westerman. We are lucky to have Wingerd as a member of the Editorial Board of this magazine. This issue also contains Roger Bergerson’s biography of the Midway area’s real estate developer and politician, Thomas Frankson, and Maya Beecham’s vignette of the St. Paul Police Department’s famous “Black Maria,” horse-drawn paddy wagon, which is still available for public viewing. Enjoy!

Anne Cowie, Chair, Editorial Board

“He Had a Great Flair for the Colorful”

Louis W. Hill and Glacier National Park

Biloiné W. Young with Eileen R. McCormack

In the first decade of the twentieth century Louis W. Hill, second son of the “Empire Builder,” James J. Hill, was prepared to launch the program that was closest to his heart and would forever identify him with a national icon—Glacier National Park. Louis had been born in St. Paul in 1872 and educated at home by a tutor until his father decided that he needed more formal instruction. Consequently Louis and his older brother, James Norman, were sent to Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire and then on to Yale University. Louis graduated from Yale in 1888 and immediately began an apprenticeship with his father’s railroad, the Great Northern. In 1907 James J. made Louis president of the Great Northern, thereby starting to turn over management of the elder Hill’s railroad interests to his son.

Louis’ campaign meshed the interests of the Great Northern so closely with his own passion for the mountains and the outdoors that it would forever be impossible to separate the two. What Louis now undertook drew on another part of his nature—one hidden from those who knew him only as a determined competitor in the ruthless, cutthroat world of railroads.

For there was another Louis; Louis the romantic, the dreamer, a man who, though his playing of a violin sounded more like noise than music, would take his instrument with him on camping trips to serenade the mountains. There was Louis the no-nonsense executive who, under cover of darkness, would slip across the yard from his house at 260 Summit Avenue in St. Paul to his father’s mansion bearing his oils and brushes and, alone in the gallery, spend hours copying the masterpieces his father had brought there from Europe. There was Louis, the Yale sophisticate and multimillionaire who, though he exploited them for the benefit of tourists, also forged true and deep friendships with elders of the Blackfeet Tribe and captured their essence in his photographs.

Lastly, there was Louis the promoter. Louis now had a project that was his

alone, not his father’s, not the Eastern bankers’, but his and his to carry. Utilizing the resources of the Great Northern, he would make Glacier Park the symbol of America—the mountain vastness every patriot would vow to see first.

Author Biloiné W. Young and re-

searcher Eileen R. McCormack have prepared the first book-length biography of Louis W. Hill, which is titled *The Dutiful Son: Louis W. Hill; Life in the Shadow of the Empire Builder, James J. Hill*. This article is excerpted from portions of two chapters of their new hardcover book, which will be available to the public in September 2010. The book will be for sale from the Ramsey County Historical Society, which is also the publisher.

James J. had little interest in passenger traffic on the railroad—unless the individuals carried in the railroad’s cars were immigrants who would populate the farms and towns along the line. Louis saw further. “The railroads are greatly interested in the passenger traffic to the parks,” he said in a speech to the first national parks conference. “Every passenger that goes



Louis W. Hill and others standing by an automobile stuck in the mud at Glacier Park, Montana. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



St. Mary Chalet in Glacier National Park. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

to the national parks, wherever he may be, represents practically a net earning.” Louis also differed from his father over the scenic value of the western terrain. James J. once remarked, “We don’t want to spend millions of dollars developing Rocky Mountain scenery.” Louis believed differently. Scenery mattered a great deal to Louis as did the majesty of the mountains. He suspected a great many others might feel the same if they were given the opportunity.¹

Louis was well aware that in 1870, as the Northern Pacific railroad was making plans to extend itself through Montana, Jay Cooke had grasped the potential value that lay in the little-known region of the Yellowstone. As a result of Cooke’s careful lobbying and support by the head of the United States Geological Survey, President Ulysses S. Grant, on March 1, 1872, had signed the act that created the first national park and, incidentally, provided the Northern Pacific with a spectacular tourist attraction. As boys, James Norman and Louis visited Yellowstone with their tutor and came back amazed at the geysers.

Louis wanted the Great Northern railroad to also have its own national park.

He believed that he had the site for such a park in the spectacular mountains that thrust themselves into the sky on either side of Marias Pass in northern Montana. All that was needed was for Congress to create the park. Louis had an ally in George Bird Grinnell, a man of means who was also an author, sportsman, and explorer. Grinnell had explored northwestern Montana in 1885 and gained national recognition and applause when he reported on vandalism and poaching in Yellowstone. Grinnell’s efforts brought the U.S. cavalry to Yellowstone’s rescue in 1886.

Grinnell lobbied Congress extensively for the park, as did Louis, but so circumspect was Louis that no piece of paper has yet been found among his papers outlining his activities. He was acutely aware that, should he appear to be in the least interested in the project, a skeptical Congress would note that the Great Northern line paralleled the proposed southern boundary of the park giving the line a monopoly over passenger traffic. Taking his cues from his father, Louis covered his tracks in Washington while using his influence to gain supporters for the park. Congress introduced a bill

authorizing the establishment of Glacier National Park in 1908 but did not pass it into law until two years later in April of 1910.

Louis’ Vision for Glacier

With the signing of the bill, Louis sprang into action. In addition to the famed mountain chalets of Switzerland, with which he was acquainted, Louis had two examples in the American West to use as models for Glacier’s tourist development. One was the Santa Fe railroad which began actively promoting tourism in the Southwest in 1901. With the Grand Canyon as its premier attraction, the Santa Fe ran a branch line from Williams, Arizona, to the south rim of the canyon where it built an elaborate tourist infrastructure. The Santa Fe hired architect Charles Whittlesley, who had trained under Louis Sullivan, to design a lodge known as “El Tovar” on the rim of the canyon. Working together, the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe produced a romanticized tourist experience. Capitalizing on the presence of the Pueblo Indians, Mary Colter, an architect from St. Paul, designed a building at the canyon for the Harvey Company that was modeled after Hopi structures at Oraibi, Arizona.

Louis’ second inspiration was Old Faithful Lodge at Yellowstone, paid for by the discrete but steady financing of the Northern Pacific. Designed by architect Robert C. Reamer and built in 1903–04 at the edge of the Upper Geyser Basin, the lodge was constructed of native materials; rough-hewn lodgepole pine and stone. The lobby soared seven stories and housed an eighty-five-foot-high stone chimney, connected to eight blazing fireplaces.

Impressive as El Tovar and Old Faithful lodge were, they were not nearly as elegant or dramatic as the hotels Louis would build for Glacier. Though the investments made by the Santa Fe and Northern Pacific railroads for tourist facilities at Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon were substantial, they were paltry compared to what Louis Hill was prepared to spend on Glacier.

Louis had a vision. He saw the park catering to well-to-do, recreation-minded

tourists—people who were accustomed to visiting the Alps of Switzerland. At the beginning of the century, the perception of wilderness was as an antidote to the overly civilized, a cure for the spiritual decay believed to be associated with populous cities and modern industrialized society. Elites wanted to “rough it,” to experience the romanticized wilderness as a retreat from societal corruption, a refuge from the accelerating urbanization of America. Louis’ goal was to persuade the Easterners who presently went overseas for recreation and rejuvenation to, instead, experience the mountains of their own country—mountains as grand as and more lofty than anything in Switzerland.

He began by inviting newspaper columnists from the Twin Cities to tour the site of the park with him. One who went was a writer who wrote a column titled “So What” under the pen name of “Paul Light.” Light wrote about his experience. “We slept in tents. The high altitude made the nights cold. Most of us would crawl from our blankets in the morning with teeth chattering and rush to a fire the guides had made. But Mr. Hill would stride out as if the temperature were in the 90s. He’d walk to the edge of a lake which was almost cold enough to have a sheet of ice on its surface. Then he’d calmly dive into the water—stark naked—and dare the rest of us to come in. None accepted. . . . He had a great flare for the colorful. He designed, I believe, the bright red and white blankets that make you think of Glacier Park whenever you see them.”

Light also wrote about touring the park site on horses. “I don’t think anyone in the party except Mr. Hill and the guides had been on a horse in years. None had ever ‘enjoyed’ such a long, rough trip. I made up my mind I wasn’t going to let our host know how badly my bones creaked. Whenever he was near I sat erect despite my creaking muscles and saddle sores. One day he looked us all over and remarked that I was the only one who liked the horseback riding. But my fortitude brought results. We made another trip to the park the following year. ‘I remember how you were fond of riding in the mountains,’ Mr. Hill said when he is-



Forest Lobby of the Glacier Park Hotel in Glacier National Park. Kiser Photo. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

sued the invitation. “So I wanted you to go to the park with me again.”²

The federal government had little money to spend on the development of Glacier. Ten days after approval of the bill creating the park, Congress appropriated a paltry \$15,000 for construction of trails and roads. Not to worry. In the park’s early years, Louis was to spend ten dollars for every dollar the federal government invested. As he explained to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch*, “a series of roads should be established throughout the park with Swiss chalets scattered here and there, making a

veritable American Alps. . . . The lodges would be located only far enough apart so that a man on foot even could make the trip and obtain sleeping accommodations” and that “hotel accommodations of a more prestigious type or tents for the most modest could also be furnished.”³ Louis envisioned Glacier Park as being something akin to his own “gentlemen’s club,” open to all the right sort of people, with accommodations available for every taste and economic level.

In 1912 Louis complained that the government had squandered half of a \$65,000 appropriation for roads by managing to



Glacier National Park in Montana and Waterton National Park in Canada. The combined parks are shown as the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Map by John Hamer.

build fewer than two and a quarter miles. He then stepped in and, with his own equipment, built fifty miles of roads over mountainous terrain in less than seven weeks. Hill had another confrontation with the Department of the Interior (the National Park Service was not created until 1916) when he chanced to wonder aloud why no trees grew on the bald top of Mt. Henry. He was talking with Mark Daniels, newly named general superintendent and landscape engineer for all of the national parks. Daniels, perhaps wanting to please Louis, offered to spend \$5,000 of the meager \$30,000 total park appropriation to plant trees on the mountain top to see if they would survive. Louis was furious—certain that anyone so foolish as to offer to spend one-sixth of Glacier’s total appropriation on trees for the summit of Mt. Henry—was totally incompetent and

complained bitterly to Washington about Daniels.

Despite occasional missteps, the Department of the Interior embraced Hill’s overall plan. The park was divided by the elevation of the Continental Divide with park headquarters on the western side at Lake McDonald. The Interior Department asked Louis to take over the development on the east side of the divide. Louis formed a wholly-owned subsidiary, the Glacier Park Hotel Company, and began construction on two enormous luxury hotels as well as a series of back-country chalet developments.

In a frenzy of effort, reminiscent of his father’s drive in 1879 to get the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba to the Canadian border or the Great Northern to the Pacific, Louis completed a major part of his tourist hotel and transportation network in

three years. This was despite the fact that the tourist and construction season in that mountainous region was, at best, barely six months long and often, due to early snows, far shorter. In 1913, when the Glacier Park Lodge was finished, visitors could disembark from the Great Northern train at the newly named Glacier Park Station (now East Glacier), be greeted by welcoming Indians in full regalia, walk a short distance along a flower-lined path, and enter the jaw-dropping Glacier Park Lodge. From here visitors could travel by horseback, stage, or launch to a variety of Swiss-style chalets in remote backcountry locations. Between 1910 and 1913, Louis personally selected the sites for and built chalets at Belton, St. Mary, Going-to-the-Sun, Many Glacier, Two Medicine, Sperry, Granite Park, Cut Bank, and Gunsight Lake.

Supervising Every Detail

Glacier Park Lodge featured a “forest lobby” that was 200 feet long and 100 feet wide supported by tree trunks four feet in diameter that towered upward for three stories. The giant logs had been brought from Oregon, one log per railway car. The whole was decorated with Blackfeet Indian rugs, Japanese lanterns, oak furniture, and an open campfire burning on a bed of stones. A Japanese couple served tea from a rustic log cart in the afternoons. Louis had supervised every detail, chosen the sites for the hotels, selected the Swiss-style outfits for the staff, picked out the bulbs that bloomed in the flower gardens, even gave his attention to the kinds of soap dishes in the rooms.

Many Glacier Hotel was soon under construction on the east shore of Swiftcurrent Lake. Louis’ absorption with the work at times reached the point of obsession. On every trip west, he stopped at Glacier, sometimes for hours, other times for days, to check on progress. During the construction phase, he instructed the project manager to give him weekly updates and to send photographic evidence of the building’s progress. Louis insisted on participating in all decisions, no matter how minor. On December 12, 1914, he wrote, “Advise me regarding the type of flooring being considered for below the main lobby.” On December 17 he wrote,

“See me regarding layout plans for the kitchen.” Later notes instructed the manager to check with Louis about the hotel furniture, the location of hot water pipes, the skylight, and the size of the chimney in the dining room.⁴

In the fall of 1913 Louis drove his car over a primitive road to the village of Waterton, Alberta, Canada, just across the 49th parallel and stood on a 100-foot bluff overlooking the length of Waterton Lake. The area had only recently been declared a Canadian Park. Upper Waterton Lake ran north and south from Canada into Montana and was framed with mountains rising almost perpendicular from the water. The view was stupendous. Here, announced Louis, was the site of his next hotel—to be called the Prince of Wales. Building the hotel in an isolated wilderness site, buffeted by winds of up to eighty miles an hour, with inadequate roads, would test Louis’ resolve and his workers’ stamina. Because World War I, in which Canada would be immediately involved, was but a year away completion of the hotel would be delayed until 1927.

Ralph Budd, Great Northern’s president, cannily made the announcement of the hotel’s imminent construction while on a trip to New York. Budd well knew that Easterners were the primary customers for the Great Northern’s tours to Glacier Park and would also have the sophistication to catch the unspoken message that a resort hotel in Waterton could legally sell alcoholic beverages. Since 1919 the United States had been enduring the “Great Experiment” of prohibition. The United States was legally “dry,” but Canada was not. Louis and his fellow Great Northern executives saw the building of the Prince of Wales hotel north of the 49th parallel as a way to lure thirsty travelers to Glacier National Park where they could easily cross the border to quench their thirst at another spectacular Great Northern hotel. By building his new hotel at Waterton, Louis and the Great Northern could get around Prohibition.

At first the Many Glacier Hotel design was to be used for the new hotel, but then Louis changed his mind. Soon he was sending the architect, Thomas McMahan, lengthy letters with orders for design



Band members welcoming guests to Glacier Park Hotel, Montana, in 1913. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

changes. Many were ahead of their time, as the recommendation that “wall plugs should be provided [in bedrooms] for flat irons and curling irons. Nearly all women carry them with them nowadays.” Other instructions totally disrupted the construction schedule and radically altered the building. Louis wanted the Prince of Wales to look like the Swiss chalets he knew in Europe and, in part, he succeeded though the roof lines that ultimately resulted had no real Swiss equivalent. The most extensive change he ordered was the creation of a fifth floor in the east and west wings, which substantially increased the number of hotel rooms but required the removal of twelve dormers and extensive rebuilding of the roof. Louis also relocated the elevator and changed the dimensions of the gift shop.⁵

The Prince of Wales Hotel went from a low, four-story structure with 300 rooms to a massive seven-story European chalet with dormer windows and steep, gabled roofs. The hotel became a towering monument, a structure dwarfed only by the soaring mountains that surrounded it. The interior of the hotel’s lobby rose the full seven stories and windows that were two stories high on the south side looked out on the seven miles of the lake. The largest frame structure in Alberta, the Prince of Wales hotel was as much of an attraction

as the astounding scenery it was meant to show off. The smallest detail reflected Louis’ care and attention. In December 1926, he called on six executives to meet with him to choose furniture, chinaware, blankets, lights, and floor coverings—even decide on the number of seats in the tap room.⁶

On July 4, 1931, the Rotary Clubs of Montana and Alberta met in a joint session at the Prince of Wales hotel and passed a resolution that began the process of establishing the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. After being passed by the Canadian Parliament and then signed by President Herbert Hoover, the park, in 1932, became a reality.⁷

Yellowstone Park had only one distinctive structure, Old Faithful Inn, while the Grand Canyon had two, El Tovar and the copy of a Hopi pueblo a few yards away. Glacier featured a single architectural theme throughout the park and a system that encouraged visitors to leave the luxury of the hotels and personally experience the American Alps. As they were built, each hotel was sited to take advantage of a different, yet dramatic, mountain backdrop; every room in every hotel boasted a view of the mountains. Glacier Park and Many Glacier hotels were the core structures with their associated log and stone chalets and tent camps



The lobby of the Prince of Wales Hotel, Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta, Canada. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

that were located within an easy day's ride. By maintaining the architectural uniformity of the Swiss chalet theme, guests felt they were someplace special. "It created a sense of place in a region of immense proportions."⁸

Louis' "See America First" Campaign

Though Louis is credited with having coined the phrase, "See America First," it was first used in a 1906 travel conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. One hundred twenty-five delegates gathered to promote travel to the West and hear Utah Governor John C. Cutler proclaim, "You will carry forward a work that has as its very base the inculcation of patriotism, the love of native land." It was Louis, however, who popularized the phrase and made it the trademark of his Glacier Park campaign. The "See America First" slogan, along with the white Rocky Mountain goat emblazoned on Great Northern cars rumbling throughout the nation became among the most recognizable images in all of American advertising.

Where the Northern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads had promoted the exotic nature and foreignness of their attractions at Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, Louis promoted Glacier as the essential American experience. Americans could affirm their patriotism by seeing America

first at Glacier. Here they could relive the story of the American frontier, encounter non-threatening Indians, imagine themselves as the Anglo-Saxon pioneers who had conquered the distinctly American landscape. Europe may have its monuments, but only America had the West of mountains, cowboys, and Indians.⁹

Louis shrewdly enlisted the Blackfeet, representatives of America's first people, remembered for their encounter with Lewis and Clark, in his campaign to present Glacier as the ultimate American experience. Visitors were to embrace Indian culture, meet welcoming Indians as they got off the train, follow Indian guides into the mountains, sleep (for 50¢ a night) in wood-floored Indian teepees on wilderness trips. Fully half of the promotion for Glacier Park featured the Blackfeet who were always identified as "the Glacier Park Indians."

Never mind the fact that, at Louis' insistence, Blackfeet Indians who wanted to be employed at Glacier Park had to wear the Sioux-style headdress in which the feathers were swept back instead of the "straight up," traditional, feathered headdress of the Blackfeet. Louis and his publicity department made certain that only poetic, peaceful images of Indians were promoted in films shot in the park. Glacier Park Indians were pictured, not as the blood-thirsty savages of western

pulp fiction, but as strong, gentle people whose way of life was peaceful and close to nature.

Louis had been a boy of sixteen when his father successfully concluded two years of negotiations in Washington that resulted in the northern Montana tribes ceding over three-fifths of their existing reservations for white settlement. The same legislation granted Hill a right-of-way easement for the railroad through Blackfeet lands that cut the reservation in two. In 1895, to avoid starvation, the tribe had sold the mountain portion of its land to the U.S. government for \$1.5 million dollars, leaving the tribe's remaining land lying along the eastern border of what later became Glacier Park in a strip extending north to the Canadian border. When Louis decided to build his Glacier Park hotel at the railroad stop on the eastern side of the park, he discovered that the site was on Blackfeet, not National Park, land. Though inconvenient, this did not present Louis with much of a problem. He had Montana Senator Joseph Dixon rush a bill through Congress authorizing the United States to sell Louis 160 acres of Blackfeet Reservation land at \$30 an acre.¹⁰

No one was looking too closely at abuses of native people. The Blackfeet could clearly see that Glacier Park promised them an economic opportunity and, because they had little choice, most embraced it. Soon Blackfeet Indians were driving tourists around in open buses, having their pictures taken with visitors, camping on the lawn in front of the lodges, and guiding hikers into the hills. The park provided employment for Indians and developed a market for their few arts. In 1912 the Blackfeet adopted Louis into their tribe, giving him the name of Crazy Grey Horse. Following the ceremony Hill sent a telegram to an assistant. "For the chiefs and others who took me into their tribe would like to present them with a large red steer. Will you make the purchase and send me bill. Also let them know who presented it. L.W. Hill."¹¹

Despite occasionally evidencing a patronizing attitude toward Indians, Louis genuinely liked the Blackfeet. In 1912 he took a delegation to Chicago to attend the Minnesota-Chicago football game

and, while there, promote Glacier Park. In 1913 he took a group of Blackfeet to New York City to participate in the Great Northern exhibit at the annual Travel and Vacation Show. For twelve days the Indians camped in tepees on the roof of the McAlpin Hotel and during the day performed war and other ceremonial dances every half hour at the show. So many people came to see the Indians perform that on the last day organizers had to move them to another venue because of the crush of the crowd. Hill also took Blackfeet chiefs to the Shriners' convention in Atlanta, the Rose Festival in Portland, to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, to Washington D.C., where they visited the Library of Congress and appeared with the president on the steps of the White House.

The Blackfeet joined in the campaign to promote the park. Fred Big Top, who accompanied Louis to Chicago, later wrote him in November 1912, "Like the people here in Chicago and same way the people here like us very much . . . our friend, White Calf, give speech about our beautiful Glacier Park. All people glad to hear White Calf speak . . . and lot of people promise they come visit us next summer. I think we do big business. Sure was glad to meet them all and will help all I can to get them to come to park."

Louis maintained his contact with individual Blackfeet who wrote frequently and, in return, received timely replies from him. One writer noted that, as requested, he had met a railroad representative at the Poplar, Montana, depot "with my full dress with my war paint on so my picture could be taken by Mr. Smith who represents the moving pictures that were at Glacier Park last fall." He added, "I am having the real Custer battle painted by an Indian who was right on the ground and when it is finished I intend to give it to you." Jim Big Top, who signed his letter "from your poor Indian friend," wrote Louis in December 1912 "I received your letter on 27. I was very glad to get it. It made me feel very proud to get a letter from you. I was very thankful to get that box you sent me. I think about it every day."

John Two Guns White Calf of Browning, Montana, wrote in December



Louis W. Hill with Two Guns White Calf at Glacier Park, Montana, 1925. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

of 1912, "I arrive home well and found every thing alright. . . . We had a council last night and after it was over I got up and gave a long speech about the trip and what I have seen at the Land Show. And also told the people that you have treated us fine." Louis had business cards printed for each of the Blackfeet who traveled with him. On the left of the card was a sketch of a tepee with the logo of the Great Northern Railway. Centered on the card was the Indian's name, his job (ranger, dancer, chief of medicine men)

and "Glacier National Park, Montana" for an address. At the bottom of the card was the phrase, "Meet me at Glacier National Park next summer."¹²

Louis was aware that many of the Blackfeet people faced daunting economic conditions and sent boxes of food and clothing from time to time. The Indian agent at Browning, Montana, was often pressed into service to distribute Louis' gifts. Louis wrote him, "I am having sent, by freight, a case containing a few packages of clothing and shoes for



Painting by Louis W. Hill of Iceberg Lake in Glacier National Park, Montana. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

some of the older Indians; Medicine Owl, Chief Black Bear, Jack Big Moon, John Ground, Two Guns, Many Tail Feathers and Mountain Chief. I shall be very glad, if not inconveniencing you, if you will arrange for distribution of these packages when received. Yours truly, L.W. Hill.”

Individual members of the tribe felt free to ask Louis for help and he often gave it. “I have a letter of appeal from Three Bears,” Louis wrote to the Indian agent, “asking for some groceries, etc. I am having a box sent direct from Schoch’s Grocery Store, St. Paul, to Three Bears, in your care, by express, and shall be glad if you will see that Three Bears gets it, but say nothing to any of the other Indians, as if they hear of it, they will all be after me. I wish you would also ask Three Bears not to mention to the other Indians that I have sent anything.” Louis’ cautions did

little to reduce the Indians’ appeals to him for assistance.¹³

Louis had been interested in the objects of Indian life from the days of his first visits west. Serious collecting of Blackfeet and other Indian artifacts began, however, with his Glacier Park involvement. He purchased many of the items in his collection from dealers who had acquired authentic Indian clothing and artifacts as a sideline to their regular business. In November 1912 Louis purchased approximately forty items from Fred R. Meyer of Buffalo, New York, whose principal business, according to his letterhead, was the vending of “Fresh, Salt and Smoked Meats.” The items included a buckskin coat for \$15, a beaded gun cover for \$50, two saddle blankets for \$35, three necklaces for \$60, a war bonnet for \$25, and a baby board for \$15. The next year Louis bought eight more

items from Meyer including a buckskin dress, a beaded dress, and a rawhide medicine case.¹⁴

When word got around that Louis was interested in items of cultural or archaeological interest owners of unusual items contacted him. Octave Fortine of Trego, Montana, wrote Louis in 1914 that she had a collection of mastodon bones “and would like to dispose of them. They are at the Lewis Hotel, Lake McDonald.” Louis wrote back on June 22. “Will you please advise me what you consider this collection worth? I shall probably have a chance sometime this summer to see them while I am out there.”¹⁵

Another of Louis’ vendors was Mrs. A.J. Gregory of Poplar, Montana, who sold him a complete Indian outfit for \$250. Louis had no hesitation in suggesting changes in garments that did not, in his opinion, look sufficiently Indian. He wrote Mrs. Gregory in February 1912 about a shirt he had purchased from her. “Do you know of any Indians who can do porcupine quill work? If so, I should like to have some of the bead work on the man’s shirt taken off and porcupine quill work put in its place. The large star and crescent are not quote appropriate on an Indian shirt. Yours truly, L.W. Hill.” Louis’ collection eventually included more than 400 Indian items including clothing, jewelry, bags, musical instruments, gun cases, blankets, moccasins, and pipes.

Painting Glacier Park

In addition to gathering all kinds of Indian artifacts and painting various scenes at the park when he could find time, Louis hired professional artists and photographers to capture the scenery and people of Glacier. Among the artists most identified for their work in the park are the painters Julius Seyler (whose wife was a sister of his brother-in-law Egil Boeckmann), John Fery, Joseph Scheuerle, and Winhold Reiss and photographers Fred H. Kizer and Tomar Jacob Hileman.

Fery worked for Louis from 1910 to 1913 creating 347 major oil paintings for an average price of \$31.70. In addition to the fee per painting, Fery received an annual salary of \$2,400, space for a studio and lodgings in the Seymour



German artist Winold Reiss painting a portrait of a Blackfeet at Glacier National Park. Photographer Charles B. Woehrle, 1936–39. Private collection.

Hotel in St. Paul. Fery's landscape paintings were soon hanging in Glacier Park Lodge, and in agents' offices and depots from St. Paul to Seattle. Though Fery averaged about fourteen outdoor scenes each month, Louis was critical of his output, prompting Fery to leave Glacier to work for the Northern Pacific Railway painting scenes of Yellowstone. In 1925 Fery returned, accepting a contract that required him to produce four to six large canvasses monthly for the same salary he had received fifteen years earlier. When Fery's studio burned down, destroying a number of paintings he had completed, Louis showed little concern for the art-

ist's plight and delayed for months before making his final payment to the aging Fery.

Louis' uncharacteristically hostile and inconsiderate treatment of Fery, who was an extraordinary landscape painter, raises a question. Could Louis have been, even subconsciously, resentful of Fery's talent? Both men painted landscapes. But it was Fery who had the classical education from art academies in Vienna, Dusseldorf, and Munich; it was Fery's paintings that received acclaim from art critics; Fery who could devote himself full time to his art while Louis, if he wanted to paint, had to do it in the middle of the night

or borrow time from a myriad of other commitments.

Louis was far more generous to another of the noted painters of Glacier, Winold Reiss, than he was to Fery. Reiss fell in love with the American West as a boy in Germany and came to the United States hoping to paint the Indians. He was disappointed, on disembarking, not to find Indians on the streets of New York. Reiss eventually made his way to Montana where he worked for Louis for ten years, painting portraits of the Indians in brilliant pastel and tempura instead of oils. His pictures sold for \$500 to \$1,500 and for thirty years were reproduced on the calendars that the Brown and Bigelow printing company made in St. Paul. Louis, who did not use pastel nor did he paint Indians himself, purchased at least eighty of Reiss' paintings.¹⁶

Joseph Scheuerle, who was also born in Austria, gained Louis' approval for his paintings of the Plains Indians and, most especially, for the cartoons he sketched. Louis used some of them for advertisements for the park and wrote to Scheuerle, "The average public is more certain to be reached by subjects of humorous nature than by always depending on the scenic feature. The combination [animals, people, scenery, Indians and humor], however, is a strong one." Scheuerle designed the mountain goat logo popularized by the Great Northern as well Louis' personal Christmas cards.¹⁷

The artists and photographers who worked for Louis carried his message of seeing America first to every place people lived and gathered. The pictures hung in hotel lobbies, banks, offices, and clubs. When reproduced on calendars, they graced kitchen walls, the milking parlors of barns—even the insides of rural out-houses. To everyone who saw them, they promised escapes from the mundane, a dream vacation among exotic Indians and cloud-draped mountains.

Louis did not neglect the influence of writers and the press. Among the writers he brought to Glacier Park were John Asanger, Guy Wiggins, Grace Flandreau, and Mary Roberts Rinehart. He gave all of them free room and board at the hotels or camps while they wrote about the park. Louis also went to great lengths to

cultivate writers from the major metropolitan newspapers, offering to them free accommodations and rail fare to Glacier. W.A. Ireland, of the *Columbus Dispatch*, of Columbus, Ohio, wrote Louis on September 13, 1912, after touring the park. "We feel that we are greatly indebted to you for showing us the way to a glorious outing. . . . After saying goodbye to you at St. Mary's camp we went to Red Eagle for three days and then came back and made the circle from the east through McDermott and over Swift Current and back around over Gun Sight. It surpassed anything that I had seen up to date in mountain scenery. . . . Will have something of a publicity nature to show you shortly which I trust will prove interesting."¹⁸

Both the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *Dispatch* covered the presence in the city of newspaper editors from Chicago who were on their way, as guests of Louis W. Hill, to tour Glacier. The *Pioneer Press* writer noted, "The close relation between Chicago and the whole Northwest was the main theme yesterday noon at a luncheon at the Minnesota Club given by L.W. Hill to a group of Chicago newspapermen en route to Glacier National park." The affair was labeled a "See American First

Powwow of Chicago-Twin City medicine men."¹⁹

The *Dispatch* declared that "The Twin City today is dedicated as the real gateway for 'See-America-First' tourists. Chicago, Minneapolis and St. Paul newspapermen comprise the first party in a series of tours which Louis W. Hill, president of the Great Northern Railway, believes will attract attention to the real wonder spots of the Northwest. . . . The party will be joined in Glacier National Park by E.A. Seavolt, moving picture expert, to take connected action photographs. In order to get this material, the party will push farther into the government preserve than any exploring party has yet been."²⁰

By plastering the mountain goat logo on all the Great Northern's rolling stock, or buying ad space for "See America First" promotions in newspapers around the country, or participating in the Glidden National Auto Tour from St. Paul to Glacier in 1913, or holding a seventy-fifth birthday party for his father at Glacier and inviting all the men who had worked for the Hill railroad for twenty-five years or more to attend, throughout his life Louis, the promoter, kept urging Americans to see Glacier Park and to appreciate the

grandeur of the Rocky Mountains. In 2010, as Glacier celebrates its centennial, the United States and its northern neighbor, Canada, can take pride in the vision that Louis Hill had of what this national park might become and ensure that future generations will visit and treasure the American Alps.

Author Biloine (Billie) Whiting Young holds a B.A. degree in English and Journalism from the University of Kansas and a M.A. in Communications and Latin American History from the University of Illinois, Urbana. A resident of St. Paul, she is the author of numerous journal articles and more than a dozen books. She is the recipient of the 2010 More Award given by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons for excellence in orthopedic reporting. This is her second article published in Ramsey County History. Eileen R. McCormack was the associate curator of the Hill Manuscript Collections in St. Paul. She holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in American History, Museum Studies, Women's Studies, and Historic Preservation from the University of Minnesota. McCormack also lives in St. Paul and has previously published two articles in this magazine.

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2. "So What" by Paul Light, *St. Paul Dispatch*, April 1948, Private Collection.

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5. Ray Djuff and Chris Morrison, *High on a Windy Hill: The Story of the Prince of Wales Hotel* (Calgary, Alberta: Rocky Mountain Books, 1999), 58.

6. Louis W. Hill to Ralph Budd, William P. Kenney, Albert Hogeland, Howard Noble,

Thomas McMahon, and W.R. Mills, December 17, 1926, LWHP.

7. Hanna, 172.

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9. Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 2001), 26.

10. Guthrie, 45.

11. Louis W. Hill to Major Lohmiller, October 5, 1912, LWHP.

12. Fred Big Top to Louis W. Hill, November 28, 1912; Jim Big Top to Louis W. Hill, December 29, 1912; John (Two Guns) White Calf to Louis W. Hill, December 18, 1912, LWHP.

13. Louis W. Hill to Indian Agent Browning,

Montana, February 17, 1920; Louis W. Hill to I.T. Whistler, January 24, 1916, LWHP.

14. Itemized invoice from Fred R. Meyer listing purchases by Louis W. Hill, November 11, 1912; Louis W. Hill to Fred R. Meyer, January 13, 1913, LWHP.

15. Octave Fortine to Louis W. Hill, June 1914, LWHP.

16. Larry Len Peterson, *The Call of the Mountains: The Artists of Glacier National Park* (Tucson, Ariz.: Settlers West Galleries, 2002), 56-58.

17. Joseph Scheuerle (Cincinnati, Ohio: Cincinnati Art Galleries, November 2000), viii.

18. W.A. Ireland to Louis W. Hill, September 13, 1912, LWHP.

19. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 11, 1911, Newspaper clippings, LWHP.

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German-born artist Julius Seyler (1873–1955) spent the summers of 1913 and 1914 at Glacier National Park, where he painted landscapes and portraits of Blackfoot Indians. His landscape, **Many Glacier Valley**, was completed in 1914 and was used to promote travel to the Park. Painting reproduced courtesy of the William E. Farr Collection. For more on Julius Seyler and Louis W. Hill's work in the creation and development of Glacier Park, see page 3.