

# Russell's WEST

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THE C.M. RUSSELL MUSEUM MAGAZINE





# OBSERVATIONS

The Museum created a new hands-on family gallery as part of the Trails to the Future expansion campaign. Russell's West Discovery Gallery opened on December 15, 2001. This new Gallery is a very different kind of place for the Museum—it is a special interactive gallery designed for families to explore together through recreated environments, role playing with Western props, an art activity area, a CD-ROM computer station, and a special printed Family Guide to take home.

The Russell's West Discovery Gallery introduces an area in the Museum where it's OKAY to TOUCH! It is a place where families and children can discover for themselves some of the most important influences for Charles M. Russell as an artist, writer, and cultural historian of Montana and the West. We hope families will visit again and again to enjoy the variety of activities offered on a daily basis.

The exhibit areas in Russell's West Discovery Gallery explore the major themes and influences in Charles Marion Russell's work through recreated environments about early explorers and trading posts, Northern Plains Indian life and culture, cowboy life, wildlife, Russell painting "puzzles," a make-it-take-it activity area, reproductions of Russell sculptures for hands-on exploration, and a CD-ROM station with information about Russell and the West during the time Russell lived. The Gallery interprets a window of time between 1850 to 1880—a period of many transitions for the people and land of the West. There are several murals of Russell's work connected to the exhibits that help facilitate discussion and learning about how the people, objects, and activities portrayed are tied to things visitors can do themselves. Each of the exhibit areas has props and reproduction objects which visitors can use in the activities. Descriptive label copy helps to facilitate family and group programs and explains each of the activities.

The Museum would like to thank all the people, businesses, foundations, and organizations whose support helped make this Gallery possible! Funding for interpretive materials and the Opening Weekend Activities was provided by the James S. Fish Family Foundation. Additional support for the Gallery's development has been provided by the Sally Ann and Henry J. Peres Jr. Fund of the Museum's Educational Endowment. Funding for the Cowboy Camp area was provided by the Harding Family, in memory of Joan Harding.

Creation of the CD-ROM for the Gallery was made possible through the generous support provided by the James S. Fish Family Foundation, Ronald McDonald House Charities and Ronald McDonald House Charities of Montana, U.S. West Foundation, and an anonymous foundation donor. The publication of the Russell's West Discovery Gallery Family Guide has been made possible by a grant from the Joseph N. Blankenbaker Foundation.

And last, but certainly not least, we want to thank all the many donors to the Trails to the Future campaign, whose support enabled the expansion of the Museum to the marvelous facility we have today! All of these contributors had the foresight to envision the C.M. Russell Museum as a major arts and cultural center—not only for Great Falls, but for the whole state and nation. Our deepest thanks goes out to all of them!

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THE C.M. RUSSELL MUSEUM MAGAZINE  
SUMMER 2002

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C.M. Russell Museum  
400 13th Street North  
Great Falls, Montana 59401-1498  
TEL 406-727-8787 FAX 406-727-2402  
www.cmrussell.org

## THE CALL OF THE MOUNTAINS:

### Louis Hill and Glacier National Park

By Larry Len Peterson



(from left) Charlie Russell, Austin Russell (Charlie's nephew), Skookum, Marie Sappington (Skookum's mother) and Nancy Russell, circa 1913, courtesy of Jim and Fran Combs, Great Falls

The "Call of the Mountains" is a real call. For centuries man has been drawn to Glacier Country. Without a doubt, this land of pristine mountains, alpine lakes, and cascading waterfalls is a national treasure. From the beginning, artists have expressed its wonders in varied and effective ways. Some of America's most outstanding talents have answered the "Call" capturing in print, paint, photography, and three dimensional art the beauty of the land, its animals and native people. Charlie Russell spent every summer from 1906 to 1926 at Bull Head Lodge on beautiful Lake McDonald in the Park.

For good reason, George Bird Grinnell is known as the father of Glacier National Park. Grinnell, conservationist and editor of **Forest and Stream**, with tireless effort fought for Park status that finally came to fruition in. Along the way, he and other authors like James Willard Schultz, William McClintock, and Frank Bird Linderman captured a passing way of life. Some were educated at the finest schools in the East while the only education others received was that provided by growing up in Glacier country. Their rendering of Indian life had a broad appeal across an America that was nostalgic for the Old West. But books and magazine articles weren't enough. Some lectured





*George Bird Grinnell, the father of Glacier National Park, courtesy of the Glacier National Park Archives/ Glacier Natural History Association*

throughout America and abroad bringing to thousands the beauty of Glacier and its native people.

If George Bird Grinnell is the father of Glacier, then Louis Hill is the godfather. His father, James J. Hill, was one of the richest and most powerful men in America who through tireless effort created the Great Northern Railway. Seeking his own legacy, Louis spent much of his time as President of the Great Northern building lodges, chalets and other infrastructure that represents man's presence in the Park as we know it today. Hill, somewhat of an artist himself, recruited dozens of artists to create work to adorn the buildings and to publicize the attractions of Glacier. Hundreds of promotional brochures, advertisements, and memorabilia were distributed throughout the country to attract tourists to the area. Early on, the preferred method of transportation there was the Great Northern's Oriental Express. As competition from auto travel squeezed

profits, the Great Northern added the luxurious Empire Builder.

With initial service in 1929, the Empire Builder, was without doubt one of Louis Hill's finest triumphs. It allowed travel across the Northwest in a style and elegance that no other rail service was able to offer. When Louis Hill took over for his father, the Great Northern precedence for excellence did not falter. However, Louis's real interest lay not with arrival and departure times, but with developing the infrastructure necessary to lure rail travelers and other tourists to Glacier National Park. With rail lines in place, and passenger trains comfortably transporting sightseers, it was up to him to make certain the Great Northern Railway played a substantial role in making the Park accessible by constructing the necessary roads and bridges, horse and hiking trails, chalets and lodges. These improvements came with considerable cost, but it was



*Louis Hill, 1916, courtesy of Trails End Collection, Van Kirke and Helen Nelson, Kalispell*

hoped that in the long run, the company would realize a tidy profit. It was obvious to Hill; just entice more and more visitors. Aware of the need to increase public recognition of Glacier, he began commissioning artists for advertising campaigns. Although many gifted individuals worked on various projects, four men in particular became forever linked with the Great Northern and Glacier National Park. Painters John Fery and Winold Reiss, and photographers Fred H. Kiser and Tomar Jacob Hileman received the most recognition for their unique depictions of either the scenic splendor of Glacier or the native Blackfeet who lived nearby. Unfortunately, many artists went uncredited for their work, but they left their mark on a large body of material published by the Great Northern Railway.

Perhaps to appease his father's concern over the railroad's increasing involvement in Glacier National Park, Louis Warren Hill once stated, "we wish to get

out of it and confine ourselves strictly to the business of getting people there."

Despite his words, Glacier had already stolen his heart, and Louis was not about to abandon it. Indeed, it was his father's initial influence that prompted legislation finally securing National Park status for Glacier in 1910. As with the Canadian Pacific Railway in Banff and the Northern Pacific in Yellowstone, the Great Northern maintained complete control over Glacier.

Hill was born the second of three sons to one of the richest and most powerful families in America. Educated at Exeter and Yale, he joined the Great Northern Railway in 1893, became its president in 1907, and served as chairman of the board from 1919 to 1930. Hill created the Glacier Park Hotel Company to oversee expanding tourism, and as president of this subsidiary, he began improving the roads, trails, and bridges on the east side of the Park. Taking advantage





*Iceberg Lake, John Fery. 52" x 58." oil, courtesy of Bill Healey, Jackson, Wyoming*

of the spectacular scenery, Hill chose locations for hotels stating, "The work is so important, I am loath to entrust the development to anybody but myself." Ten hotels and chalets were planned in and around Glacier; including, Midvale, McDermott Lake (now Swiftcurrent), Belton, Sun Point, Cut Bank Creek, Granite Park, St. Mary Lake, Gunsight Lake, Sperry Glacier, and Two Medicine Lake.

First to be completed was the Glacier Park Lodge in 1913, with easy access to the new Glacier Park railroad station. Located within the Blackfeet Reservation, the 155-room hotel became the starting point for Great Northern tour packages of the Park. The massive structure was modeled after the giant timbered Forestry Center constructed for the 1904-1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon.

Elderly Blackfeet marveled at the hotel's giant fir and cedar columns and promptly named it Big Tree Lodge. The hotel was billed as "one of the most novel and interesting institutions of its kind in the country."

The lodge was barely opened to guests before enlargement became necessary. Between 1913 to 1914, an annex building, power plant, employee's quarters, laundry, and expanded dining room were constructed. The Lodge facilities were further expanded in 1929 to include tennis courts, croquet grounds, a putting green, and a nine-hole golf course at the cost of nearly \$100,000.

Fifty miles north of Glacier Park Lodge, the picturesque Many Glacier Hotel rose on the shore of Lake McDermott at a cost of \$500,000. Completed in 1915, the new hotel boasted 162 rooms, including

eight luxury corner suites, all featuring steam heat and telephones. By the end of its first season, nearly half of Glacier's 13,465 visitors used its accommodations. Even Louis Hill and his family spent most Augusts there hiking, riding horses, fishing, and painting. Its popularity proved so great that in 1917 an 80-room annex was added, making Many Glacier by far the largest hotel in Montana. With the 1927 completion of the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton Lakes National Park, the Glacier Park Hotel Company could provide lodging for 2,061 overnight guests along the Parks' eastern half.

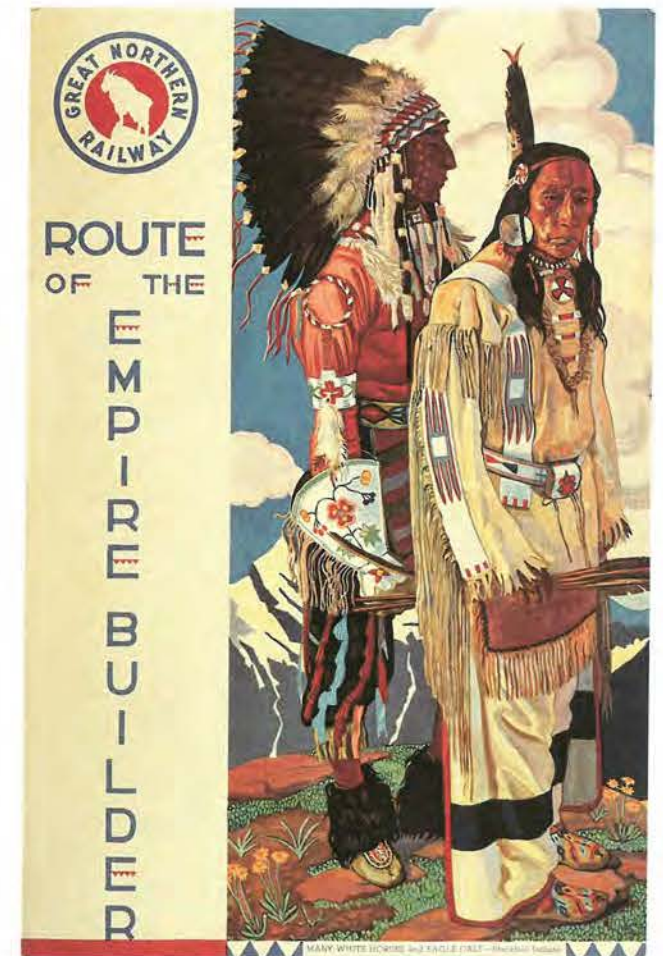
In order to have a greater presence within the Park on the west side, Hill contemplated buying the Lewis Hotel on beautiful Lake McDonald. John Lewis, a Columbia Falls attorney purchased the property in 1914, and it was a favorite tourist destination and watering hole for noted westerners including artist Charlie Russell, humorist Irvin S. Cobb, and writer Frank Bird Linderman. In 1930, the railroad negotiated the purchase of the hotel at a price close to \$300,000; five times its original cost, later changing its name to Lake McDonald Hotel.

Between 1910 and 1929, the Great Northern Railway spent \$2.3 million developing the Park. With this large investment, Louis Hill naturally took an active role in Park promotion. Painters, photographers and authors were provided free transportation and lodging in the Park while they searched out material for proposed advertising. Some of America's top artists produced paintings to adorn postcards, stamps, playing cards, brochures, luggage stickers, books, coins, maps and guidebooks; virtually anything to promote Glacier. The slogan, "See America First," along with the symbol of the Park, a Rocky Mountain goat, became popularized throughout the nation. Paintings and photographs were hung in every Great Northern Railway facility. With over \$300,000 spent annually on tourist promotion, advertisements continually appeared in magazines, and when an important event like the 1915 San Francisco Exhibition took place, the Great Northern was careful to ensure passengers were routed through Glacier National Park. Although some may dispute the numbers, one Park historian calculated that in the early years the Great Northern "spent almost \$10 there for every one spent by the government" and Louis Hill "did more than any other to put Glacier National Park on the map."

Despite a dedication to the Park, Louis Hill and the Great Northern never realized any profit from their operations. The Glacier Park Hotel Company showed losses every year from 1914 to 1929. Further complicating its position was the fact that while visitation increased five-fold from 1914 to 1929,

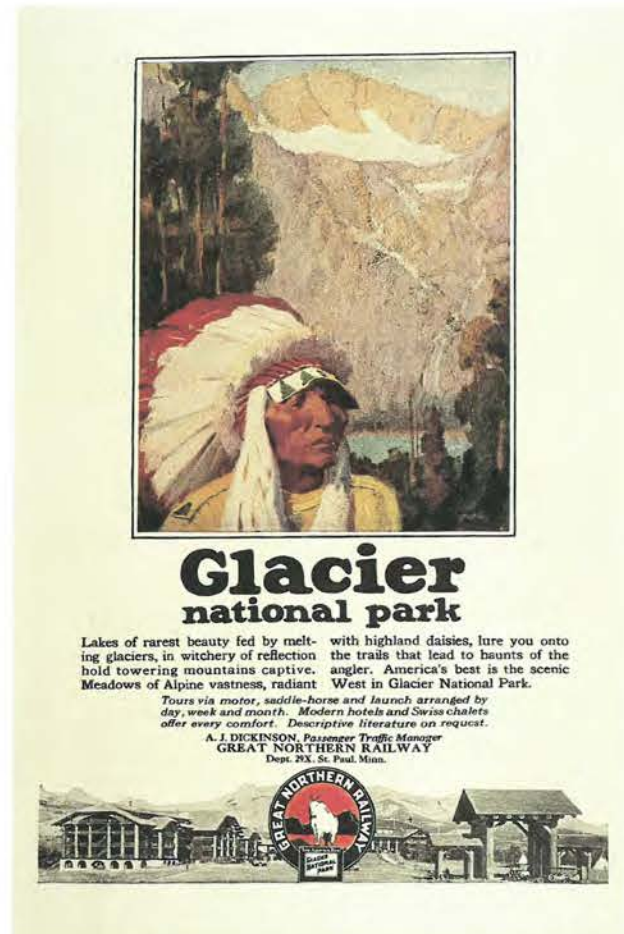
tourists increasingly traveled by automobile rather than by train, with traffic increasing from 881 vehicles to 49,750 by 1929.

After World War II, Louis Hill's Glacier dream started unraveling. The unprofitable chalets were sold, forced to close, or simply torn down. Even though Louis Hill never anticipated losses from the Glacier Park operations, they were somewhat tolerable for the Great Northern because of the prestige from its association with the National Park. In addition, the enormous body of art commissioned by Hill and purchased by the Great Northern was a tangible asset. When considering his legacy, this great collection of art is often overlooked.

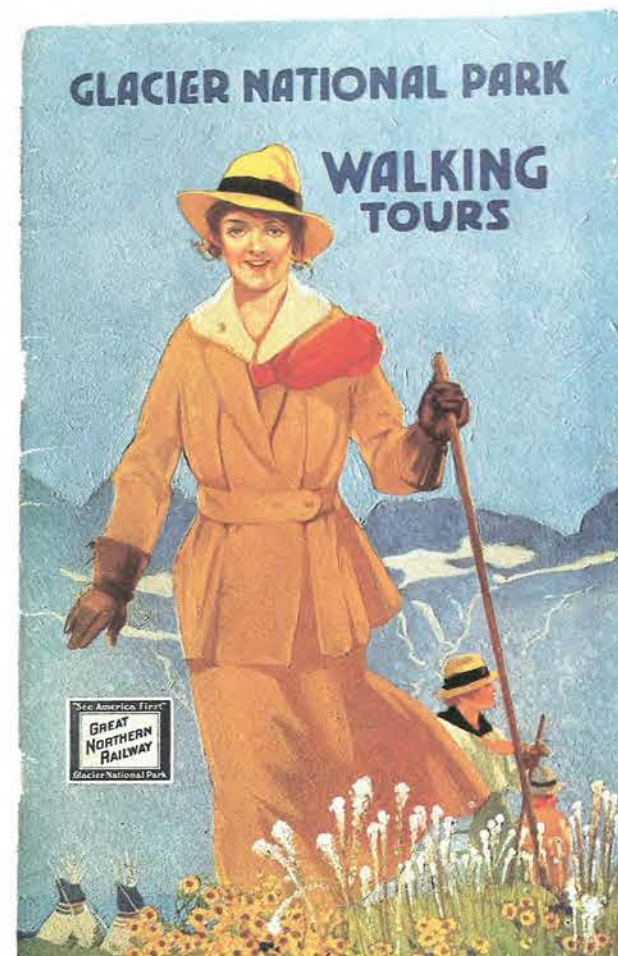


*Cover of Great Northern Railway dining menu with Many White Horses and Eagle Calf-Blackfeet Indians, Winold Reiss, circa 1930s, courtesy of the Big Sky Collection, Larry and LeAnne Peterson*



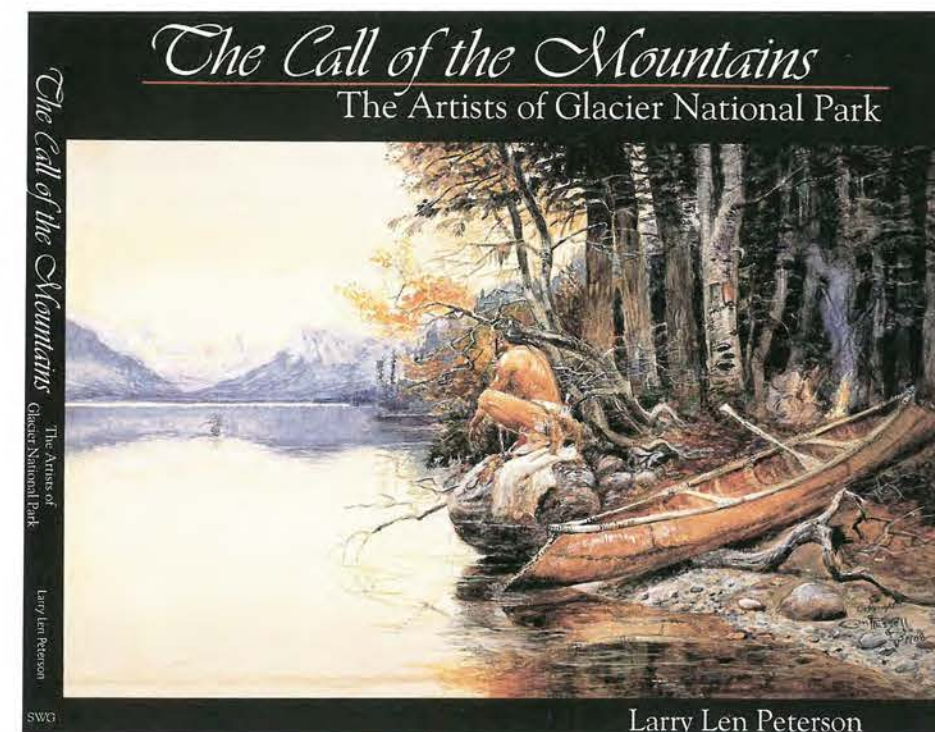
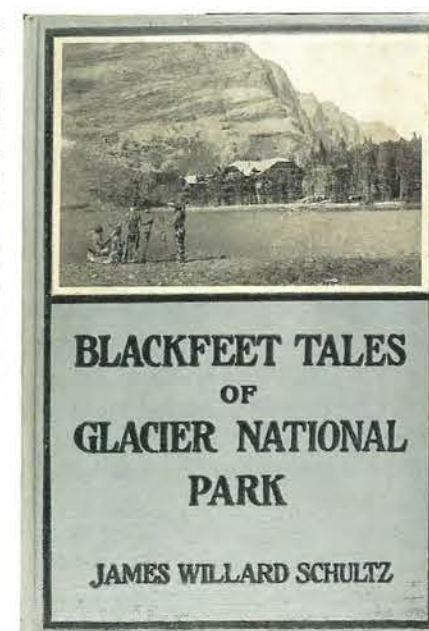


Great Northern Railway Glacier National Park advertisement, 1921, courtesy of the Big Sky Collection, Larry and LeAnne Peterson



Great Northern Railway brochure cover, 1915, courtesy of the Big Sky Collection, Larry and LeAnne Peterson

*Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park* by James Willard Schultz, dust jacket, 1916, courtesy of Trails End Collection, Van Kirke and Helen Nelson, Kalispell. Roland Reed photo of Glacier Park Hotel, East Glacier. The book was dedicated to Schultz's patron, Louis Hill. Schultz wrote, "True friend to my Blackfeet, and the one who has done more than any other individual, or any organization, to make the wonders of Glacier National Park accessible to the American people."



Front cover of *The Call of the Mountains: The Artists of Glacier National Park* featuring *Land of the Kootenai*, 1908, Charles M. Russell, watercolor 14" x 20," courtesy of the Big Sky Collection, Larry and LeAnne Peterson



Back cover of *The Call of the Mountains: The Artists of Glacier National Park* featuring *Home of the Blackfeet*, 1938, Maynard Dixon, oil 30" x 40," courtesy of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum

Larry Peterson grew up in Plentywood, Montana and is a frequent contributor to "Russell's West" magazine. He is past Chairman of the National Advisory Board to the Russell Museum and has made important art donations to the Museum. His books, *Charles M. Russell, Legacy* (1999) and *Philip R. Goodwin: America's Sporting and Wildlife Artist* (2001) won the prestigious Western Heritage Award for best art books from National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City.