EMPIRE BUILDER℠

Just a few generations ago, the route of the *Empire Builder*℠ was wilderness, roamed by Native Americans and buffalo. Later, fur traders and gold miners visited it. And still later, it was developed by merchants, timber men, farmers and – most dramatically – by railroaders.

In this northern plains country, the greatest railroader of all was James J. Hill, a freewheeling, big-dealing tycoon who linked St. Paul and Seattle with his Great Northern Railway. He acquired the land, built the tracks and even encouraged homesteading along the route. In the process, "Empire Builder" Hill came to govern the fate and fortunes of a good part of this powerfully beautiful area.

This guide is written from west to east. If you're traveling westward, just begin at Chicago or your point of origin and read the entries in reverse order. **AMTRAK® STATIONS** are indicated in capital letters to set them apart from towns and regions through which the *Empire Builder* travels but makes no stops.

Seattle Route:

SEATTLE The city was named in honor of Chief Stealth. Today Seattle is nicknamed the "Emerald City" for its easy access to pristine mountain wilderness and Puget Sound. Seattle is home to Microsoft and the tallest buildings on the West Coast. As you emerge from the mile-long tunnel, look to the left and you'll see the Seattle Waterfront where the famous Alaska Gold Rush began. On the right is the 605-ft.-tall Space Needle, symbol of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair.

Shilshole Bay/Ballard The bridge crosses over Salmon Bay Inlet. To the right are the Hiram Chittenden Locks (Ballard Locks) – the busiest locks in the United States. On the left is Shilshole Bay Marina, home to over 1,700 pleasure crafts. The statue of Leif Ericson is a tribute to the Scandinavian heritage.

EDMONDS This suburban depot continues to grow as a transportation hub. The trains stop next to the dock for ferries to Kingston on the Kitsap Peninsula. The train skirts Puget Sound for the next 15 miles. You can see the islands that dot the Sound, including Whidbey Island and Bainbridge Island, which are connected to the mainland by ferries.

EVERETT A popular port since its beginning, Everett is known for its fishing fleet and lumber and now as home to the U.S. Navy. Before the railroads linked these forests with the eastern states, Washington sawmills were already shipping boatloads of lumber to China, Australia and South America. The Boeing 747/767 assembly plant is located here, boasting the largest building (by volume) in the world. You might even see test planes overhead.

Skykomish Following the Skykomish River you can see Washington's famous pine fir forests. In the area are Prospector's Money Creek, Indian Falls, chute-shaped Sunset Falls, Table Rock and spectacular Mount Index.

Cascade Mountains For 65 miles east of Everett, the tracks have been climbing more than 2,800 feet in the Cascade Mountains. The best way to get through this spectacular mountain range is to go under it – which you can, thanks to the 7.79-mile Cascade Tunnel, bored under Stevens Pass 500 feet overhead and 4,061 feet above sea level. The tunnel is the longest in the Western Hemisphere, completed in 1929.

WENATCHEE The "Apple Capital of the World" grows more than 15% of the nation's apple crop.

Columbia Basin About ten million years ago, lava oozed out of the earth's crust here and covered the surrounding ancient mountains. The lava, in some places more than a mile thick, eventually cooled and became the largest lava basin in the country. During the night, the train stops at **EPHRATA** and **SPOKANE**.

Portland Route:

PORTLAND The Chinook Indians were the first to use the site of Portland as a port. It is said that homesick New England settlers flipped a coin to choose between Portland (as in Maine) and Boston (as in Massachusetts) for the name of their new city. Today, Portland, Oregon, calls itself the "City of Roses" because of its beautiful rose gardens.

In the heart of the Columbia River basin, Portland was the largest city in the Pacific Northwest when it was incorporated in 1851. With the completion of the railroad 30 years later, it became a supply center for the Klondike Gold Rush.

VANCOUVER Founded in 1824 by the Hudson's Bay Company, Vancouver was named for Captain George Vancouver, shipmate of Captain Cook and commander of the British expedition to chart the Northwest. Vancouver's shipyards serve both ocean-going and river vessels. Plum orchards and prune dryers are on both sides of the tracks. To the north is Mt. St. Helens, nearly 10,000 feet high, a volcano that was inactive until 1980.

Beacon Rock On the left, named by explorers Lewis and Clark, the 840-ft., 1,700-acre basaltic formation is said to be second in size to Gibralter. The rock was used as a guide by river voyagers for decades and by Native Americans for centuries. On the Oregon side of the river, several waterfalls are visible. The highest waterfall, Multnomah Falls, cascades 620 feet to the Columbia River.

Bonneville Dam More than a half-mile from end to end, this dam is one of the government's greatest power and navigation projects. In order to give salmon access to their breeding grounds, engineers had to build "fish ladders" (terraced pools) between the river level and the top of the dam. Salmon leap up the "ladder" to return to the upper Columbia River to where they were born. As the train passes the dam, you can look across to the beauty of Oregon. The mountains here range from 2,000 to 5,000 feet in altitude.

Columbia River Gorge The magnificent area you're traveling through is the 55-mile long Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, formed by the incredible strength of the Columbia River as it cuts through ancient lava rocks. Lewis and Clark were the first white travelers to explore this area. Settlers from the East traveling the Oregon Trail tried to brave the rugged river, and some settled along its banks.

BINGEN-WHITE SALMON The two adjacent towns were named by immigrants after Bingen, a beautiful town along the Rhine in Germany and the White Salmon River. This is the center of extensive fruit orchards. Across the water is the city of Hood River, Oregon.

Mt. Hood The highest mountain in Oregon at 11,235 feet is one of many peaks with perpetual glaciers and snowfields that mark the Cascade Range across Oregon and Washington.

Dalles Dam Dalles is the French word for "trough," and this area was so named because of the narrow and dangerous channel. The 8,700-ft. dam, which the *Empire Builder* follows for the next few minutes, created Horsethief Lake, which is used for fishing and recreation.The dam provides the area with irrigation water, hydroelectric power and a reservoir for water sports.

WISHRAM (The Dalles) Lewis and Clark visited this area, named for an ancient village where Native Americans gathered to trade for salmon. Wishram was once the thriving hub for the Burlington Railroad and one of the last Beaneries to be torn down in the nation. These food stops, built and operated by the railroad, acquired a mystique all their own.

PASCO Here in Pasco, Englishman David Thompson claimed the western lands for Great Britain with a simple message tied to a pole. England's claim didn't hold, and the United States finally took over the disputed territory in 1846. The town's name is said to be an abbreviated version of "Pacific Steamship Company." It is the farthest point up the Columbia River that can be reached by seagoing ships.

SPOKANE The "Monarch of the Inland Empire" lies in the midst of the country rich in productive farmlands, lumber and mining. Railroading was responsible for much of the city's early growth. Here the *Empire Builder* route (the Great Northern route from Seattle) joins the Portland route at Spokane. During the night, the train stops at **SANDPOINT** and **LIBBY**.

Time Change: Adjust your watches as you cross Pacific and Mountain Time Zones. If you're traveling east, set your watch forward an hour. If you're traveling west, set your watch back an hour.

Flathead Tunnel The seven-mile-long Flathead Tunnel, 42 miles west of Whitefish, is the second longest in the Western Hemisphere.

WHITEFISH Originally nicknamed "Stumptown" originating from logger heritage, this Alpine-style station matches the beauty of the area. Nearby is the popular Big Mountain ski resort. Located in the valley of Flathead National Forest, with its great recreational activities, the town is bordered by Whitefish Lake.

WEST GLACIER is the western entrance to Glacier National Park. Snowfall here averages 100-200 inches a year.

ESSEX This small village features the quaint Izaak Walton Inn, a converted railroad bunkhouse named for the great English angler and author. We cross the Flathead River atop a high trestle. Look across the canyon and you may see mountain goats perched on the canyon wall.

EAST GLACIER PARK STATION Built in 1913, this station is near 50 "living" glaciers and 9,000 to 10,466-ft. mountains. The impressive timbered Glacier Park Lodge on the left, partially constructed from trees estimated to be 600 years old, was built by the Great Northern Railway to promote rail travel and to attract tourists to this beautiful area. We cross the Two Medicine River atop a high trestle.

BROWNING Headquarters of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation since 1895, Browning hosts the largest Native American Pow-Wow in North America each July. Here, also, is the Museum of the Plains Indians exhibiting the creative achievements of North American artists.

CUT BANK Twenty-five minutes west of Cut Bank, a monument to early explorer Meriwether Lewis memorializes his search for a pass through the Rockies. This area is most often noted for the coldest mid-winter temperatures in the country. Just west of Cut Bank, you'll get your first or last view of the Rockies. Sweetgrass Hills and the Canadian border, 25 miles to the north, can be seen from the train on the left.

SHELBY In the heart of Montana's oil-rich area, The World Heavyweight Championship fight between Jack Dempsey and Tom Gibbons was held here on July 4, 1923. However, days before the fight, Dempsey's manager, Doc Kearns, cancelled the match. The spectators cancelled their plans. But at the last minute, Kearns okayed the fight. Dempsey won – in front of just 7,000 fans and 17,000 gatecrashers – and Kearns slipped out of town with $300,000 cash. As a result, no prize money was awarded, and four Montana banks failed.

HAVRE An impressive, well-preserved Great Northern S-2 steam locomotive is on display at the station. This is a service stop, so you may have time to walk around a bit. Here you can step back in time and see the history of the early West come alive. "Beneath the Streets of Havre" is a turn-of-the-century business community located in what we might call an underground mall. Tour a honky-tonk saloon, an opium den that existed in earlier days, a Chinese laundry, an ethnic restaurant, a bordello and more. Native Americans once drove buffalo off the town's steep cliffs. Today, the cliffs provide a peaceful overlook. We follow the Milk River from Havre to Glasgow.

Bear Paw Mountains In 1877, after a 1,700-mile retreat, Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce Indians, recognizing the hopelessness of his position, surrendered to the U.S. Army in the Bear Paw Mountains (rear and to your right). Said Chief Joseph, "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever." Ft. Belknap Indian Reservation and Little Rocky Mountains are to your right.

Wagner In 1901, the same year the post office was established, Kid Curry, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid pulled one last job jumping the Great Northern's *Oriental Limited*. They blew up the Express car planning to swindle $40,000 but only ended up with a box of worthless paper. Watch for the *Empire Builder* headed in the opposite direction.

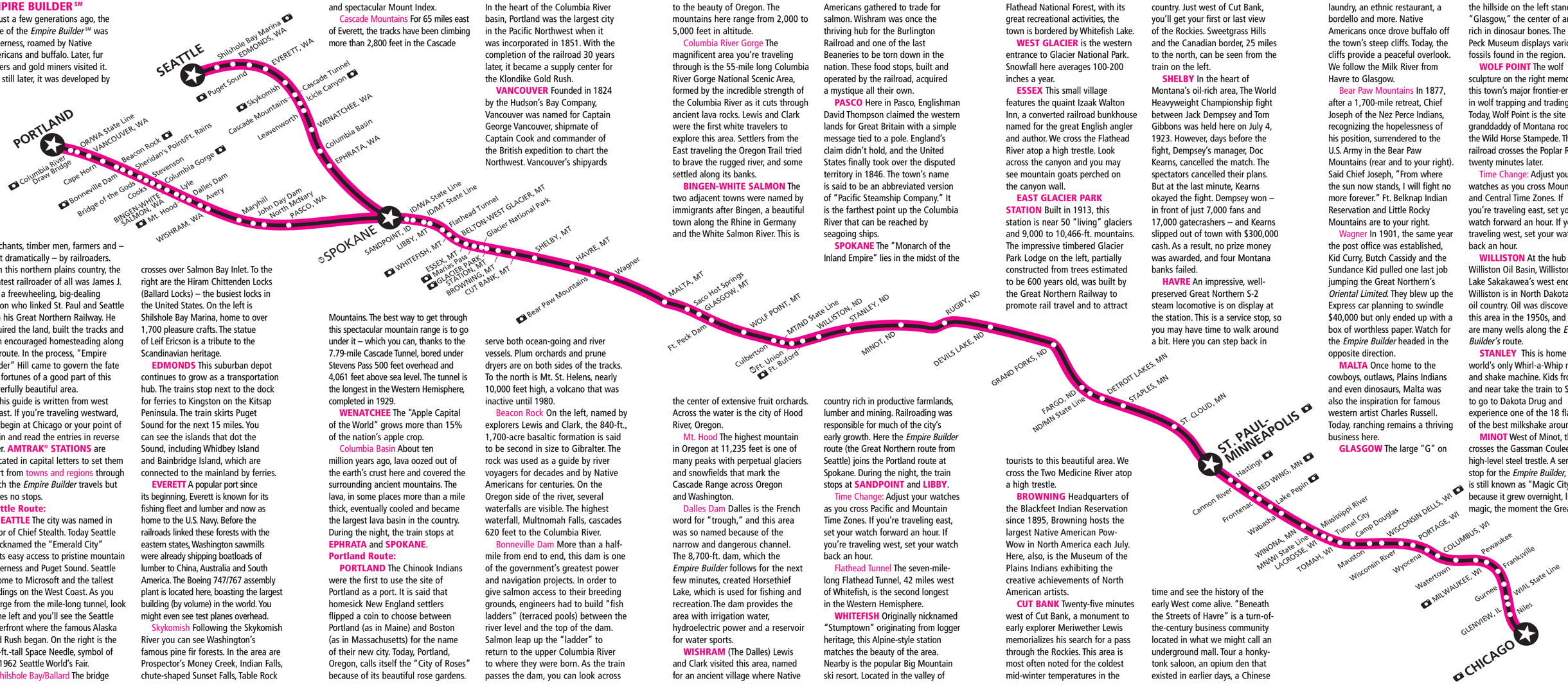
MALTA Once home to the cowboys, outlaws, Plains Indians and even dinosaurs, Malta was also the inspiration for famous western artist Charles Russell. Today, ranching remains a thriving business here.

GLASGOW The large "G" on the hillside on the left stands for "Glasgow," the center of an area rich in dinosaur bones. The Ft. Peck Museum displays various fossils found in the region.

WOLF POINT The wolf sculpture on the right memorializes this town's major frontier-era role in wolf trapping and trading. Today, Wolf Point is the site for the granddaddy of Montana rodeos – the Wild Horse Stampede. The railroad crosses the Poplar River twenty minutes later.

Time Change: Adjust your watches as you cross Mountain and Central Time Zones. If you're traveling east, set your watch forward an hour. If you're traveling west, set your watch back an hour.

WILLISTON At the hub of the Williston Oil Basin, Williston, on Lake Sakakawea's west end, Williston is in North Dakota's rich oil country. Oil was discovered in this area in the 1950s, and there are many wells along the *Empire Builder's* route.

STANLEY This is home of the world's only Whirl-a-Whip malt and shake machine. Kids from far and near take the train to Stanley to go to Dakota Drug and experience one of the 18 flavors of the best milkshake around.

MINOT West of Minot, the train crosses the Gassman Coulee on a high-level steel trestle. A servicing stop for the *Empire Builder*, Minot is still known as "Magic City," because it grew overnight, like magic, the moment the Great