



Katherine Lacaze

The Columbia River Maritime Museum's exhibit 'Twin Palaces of the Pacific' includes a model of the S.S. Great Northern.

Museum offers a glimpse of travel aboard a luxury liner

'Twin Palaces of the Pacific' exhibit shares story of two ships

BY KATHERINE LACAZE

Travel back in time at the Columbia River Maritime Museum to when the forgotten town of Flavel, four miles downstream

of Astoria, provided port to the world's two fastest luxury liners — the S.S. Great Northern and S.S. Northern Pacific.

The museum's recently opened exhibit, "Twin Palaces of the Pacific," follows the

journey of these grand ships, which established a contiguous route between San Francisco and Portland.

"Being able to go from Portland to San Francisco, partially by railway and partially by luxury liner, would've been a more luxurious and faster way to go," said assistant curator Matthew Palmgren.

Both ships were built in 1914 by William Cramp & Sons Ship & Engine Building Co. in Philadelphia on behalf of James J. Hill, an aggressive and keen transportation mogul from St. Paul, Minnesota, dubbed "The Empire Builder." Hill operated railroads in the Pacific Northwest at the time.

Hill wanted to extend his railway down the coast to San Francisco to provide transcontinental travel in time for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915 but he ran into opposition from competing railroads.

Not to be deterred for long, Hill responded by commissioning his "Twin Palaces of the Pacific" to serve travelers instead.

"The steam ship company was an extension of his business empire," said museum curator Jeff Smith.

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