Asa T. Hill

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Full Citation: "Asa T Hill," *Nebraska History* 34 (1953): 67-89

Tributes Included: William Duncan Strong, "Plainsman, Businessman, Scientist"
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Marvin F Kivett, "In the Field"

Cataloging Information:

Names: A T Hill, Zebulon Pike, William Duncan Strong

Archeological Sites: Hill Site (Webster County), Rygh Site, Dooley Site (Lost Creek), Burkett Site

Keywords: Pawnee [Indians], Hastings Museum, WPA (Works Progress Administration), River Basin Surveys

Photographs / Images: Asa T Hill; Hill excavating a prehistoric earthlodge floor in Franklin County, 1934; Hill camped at an early Pawnee Village site, Platte County, 1941; the Hill Site, Webster County, 1941; University of Nebraska archeological survey party, August 1930: A T Hill, Waldo R Wedel, Mike O'Heeron, Frank Morrison, W D Strong

ASA T. HILL

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November 29, 1871 – March 21, 1953

Asa T. Hill was born at Cisne, Illinois, November 29, 1871, and died at Los Angeles, California, March 21, 1953. He was appointed Director of the Museum of the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1933, a position which he held until 1949 when he was named Director Emeritus. He served as a member of the Executive Board of the Society from 1926 to 1951. He served as second vice president of the Executive Board from 1939 to 1940, and as first vice president, from 1940 to 1951, at which time he was named honorary vice president. Prior to his appointment as Director of the Museum, Mr. Hill for many years had been a successful business man in Hastings. In 1948, he was given the "Nebraska Builder" award by the University of Nebraska, in recognition of his role as the "father of systematic archeology in Nebraska." Mr. Hill's was indeed a remarkable career. To provide a record and testimonial, we present herewith accounts by five close friends and associates: Dr. William Duncan Strong, Loubat Professor of American Archeology, Columbia University; Dr. Waldo R. Wedel, Curator, Division of Archeology, United States National Museum; Dr. James L. Sellers, Chairman, Department of History, University of Nebraska; Charles C. Osborne, a business associate, Hastings; and Marvin F. Kivett, Director of the Museum, Nebraska State Historical Society.

PLAINSMAN, BUSINESSMAN, SCIENTIST

BY WILLIAM DUNCAN STRONG

In 1929, the science of archeology had barely extended to the Great Plains of North America. Scientific pioneers such as Robert F. Gilder, E. E. Blackman, and Frederick S. Sterns, had indicated that this vast, rich region, like most fertile areas in the post-Pleistocene world, had a notable prehistoric past. However, their work was scantily recorded in print and had received relatively little general scientific recognition. Coming to Nebraska in that year the writer, born in the far west but then coming from Chicago, sought out the leading Plains anthropologists, who (strange to say) mainly resided on both seaboards, and asked their advice as to a promising research program. He was told that the region seemed to have no time depth and that ethnological recovery of vanishing native cultures from living informants or acculturation studies, would seem more promising than any intensive prehistoric or archeological research.

The Fall term at the University of Nebraska gave little chance for such recommended ethnological work but we could check the nearby archeological leads on the Platte, Missouri, and Republican rivers. In the clear, crisp, Autumn week ends we surveyed these areas, turning leaves, cornshucks, and all that tall-grass plains beauty which Willa Cather has made immortal. There seemed to be archeology here but how to attack it was a problem the scant published literature did not solve.

In the Spring, we moved south to the Republican River and began work. Fortunately, while in camp on Prairie Dog Creek, we were visited by a man whom we had heard of, seen briefly, but could not evaluate solely on conversational, or a hasty Hastings' Museum visit, basis. However, when his car was parked, his tent up, and he told us to dig in the low mounds, rather than the so-called "house pit" depressions, we began to get results. Thus, we found rectangular

house floors, like those to the east earlier recorded by Sterns, with abundant pottery of a slightly different type. We were off on profitable research and A. T. Hill had opened the way. He did not open up easily. He was a hard nut to crack. In fact, no one ever cracked A. T. Hill. He gave us a long list of sites in several Nebraska counties as to sections; but the townships and exact locations he did not then reveal. Later, he took us to most of those we could not find, but only after he found out that actual excavation, and eventual scientific publication, not publicity or relic-hunting was our purpose.

This in 1929, was an unusual man with an unusual past and, a time-limited, but rich scientific future. Reared in Kansas, he was successfully hidden by his mother in a straw stack when Dull Knife's desperate, homing Northern Cheyennes came relentlessly north, outwitting various United States armies. He became, in time, a self-educated man and worthy scientist. With, at least part, of a grammar school education, he was early a market-hunter who in later years never fired (nor wished anyone else to fire) a gun at wildlife. He perforce followed the jobless crowds that "rode the rods" all over the middle and far west in the sad depression of his youth and, ever afterward, he limped from a badly broken ankle incurred when he was pushed off a crowded box car and no adequate medical, or other help, was given. He was also, at one time, an itinerant photographer and painter of old photographs. He later became a prominent business and family man, as a successful automobile dealer, well known and respected throughout the area once called the "Middle Border." It was in this period that he became, first, an "Indian relic" collector, and, as his collections grew and his interest deepened, a fine example of an amateur archeologist, for he became much more interested in the meaning of artifacts than in their mere possession. Thus, he inspired the founding of the Hastings Museum, read all the Plains history and ethnology available, and so became a true scientist. As Director of the Nebraska Historical Society Museum he did direct research, published important monographs, bought several historical sites, including the most important "Hill Site," which seems probably to be the

Pawnee village where Zebulon Pike first raised the American flag over the Kansas-Nebraska region. It was on the basis of excavations in this privately-owned site, and with A. T. Hill's financial assistance, that Waldo Wedel laid the basis for the direct historical approach to Pawnee and, incidentally, to central Great Plains archeology.

It is not the purpose of this brief appreciation to accurately record either the rich life, or the varied works, of A. T. Hill. Rather, it is a pleasurable exercise in memory, of episodes that marked a strong character who followed the great tradition of the Great Plains and, thereby, was necessarily unique. A. T. Hill was rough and gentle. He treated New Yorkers, or other "know-it-alls" roughly. It is even said he made them camp on dung-heaps so they could really savor what archeology meant. The writer does not know about this. However, he remembers when we were camping on the west side of the Missouri River at the Leavenworth Site (Arikara, ca. 1823) A. T. decided that it was time that "The Survey" re-cross "the Wide Missouri" and see what was on the other side. The river is broad here, and, at the time, swift, and, as usual, muddy; so he stripped to shorts, pulled out a relatively sound cotton-wood log and, pushing it ahead of him, drifted down and across the viscous (and at times vicious) stream. The fact that he could not swim, was not young, and had his bad leg, made no difference. The Survey followed. Thus, for us, was discovered the Rygh Site (pronounced "Riggs") which, whether "proto-Mandan" or something else, is, in its seven foot deposits, very important. The writer, who at the time (1932) was away recording the "Mother Corn" ceremonies of the Arikara at Fort Berthold Reservation, presumes that he floated back. Perhaps Mike O'Heeron had a boat by then? There were no local ferries. Personally, the writer wonders whether he would have swum the river with its currents, eddies, and drift-barricaded shores. A. T. did—and brought all the boys over and back—*"que hombre!"*

Only those who once dug with A. T. Hill can tell you what a "dornick" is. Yet, today, the writer understands that these rough stones that the Indians once "threw at dogs,"

are scientific objects carefully catalogued and cared for by a paternalistic government. As for A. T. Hill—he was one of the great Plainsmen. Many of us, who regard ourselves as scientists, owe a vast debt to his hardily acquired and effectively transmitted knowledge. In him Nebraska has known an industrial and scientific pioneer of whom the state can be very proud.

PIONEER NEBRASKA ARCHEOLOGIST

BY WALDO WEDEL

My acquaintance with A. T. Hill began on a hot dusty Nebraska afternoon in mid-July of 1930. The University of Nebraska Archeological Survey party under Dr. W. D. Strong was uncovering a pithouse at the Dooley Site on Lost Creek, a few miles southwest of Franklin. Mr. Hill had been expected for some time; but among the student diggers no one was quite prepared for the energetic and sharp-tongued business-man-turned-archeologist who hurried across the field to see what our shovels had turned up. Our top shovel hand, a strapping Irishman named Mike, was pitching his dirt high and far beyond the edge of the excavation and over the nearby creek bank, making certain it would not have to be handled a second time. To Mr. Hill, this was unjustifiable exhibitionism; and his annoyance increased as he approached the red-shirted college boys toiling under the Nebraska sun, only to find that the red shirts were not shirts at all but a deep coat of tan!

Equally clear in my mind is the way he promptly seated himself on the edge of the diggings and began asking pointed questions concerning our methods and our findings. We soon realized that, despite his lack of formal training, he had learned a great deal through years of digging and from pondering the varied results of that digging. Before he left, he pointed out that "my friends call me A. T." Moreover, he had offered me my first paying job in archeology—that

of studying and classifying his private collection of Pawnee materials. The two weeks so spent, topped off with a personally conducted three-day motor tour of the Pawnee village sites along the Platte and Loup rivers, tremendously increased my respect for him and his fund of information on the history and archeology of this important Nebraska tribe.

It is significant, I think, that Mr. Hill's interest in archeology began not in mere antiquarianism—that is, in a desire to collect and hoard relics, but in a definite attempt to find the answer to a historical problem. Long an avid reader in the history of the West, he was an interested spectator in 1906 when the Kansas State Historical Society unveiled in Republic County, Kansas, its monument commemorating Pike's visit a century before to the Pawnee village on the Republican. Not convinced that the correct location had been marked, Mr. Hill re-examined all the pertinent literature and decided that the village in question must have been situated some distance farther west and north. He thereupon began a search of the Republican Valley in southern Nebraska—a search that occupied practically all of the time he could spare from his highly successful business of marketing cars out of Hastings. Not until the early 1920's, however, did he finally locate an Indian village site in the correct location and of the proper period. Convinced from the literature and the results of personal excavations that what is now known as the Hill Site, in Webster County, Nebraska, was indeed the true location, he purchased the property. More extended investigations since, by the University of Nebraska Archeological Survey, the Historical Society, and through personally financed efforts over a period of many years, have removed virtually all doubt as to the correctness of his identification.

Mr. Hill's now generally accepted success in this matter stimulated him to an even more active search for pre-white remains in the Nebraska region. In the course of frequent business trips out of Hastings—trips which took him to all parts of central and western Nebraska and into northern Kansas—he was constantly on the lookout for archeological

sites and collections. From all parts of this territory, over the years, information went into the "little black book." There were at least two such books, the earlier one unfortunately dropped overboard during a fishing trip and was irretrievably lost with its fund of notes and memoranda. One of the constant delights of traveling his territory with him was his practice of driving a few miles off the highway up some small creek valley to point out village locations and burial grounds that "we just must dig sometime." The information and insights thus imparted decidedly outweighed the rigors of the drive—rising with the sun, traveling and observing so long as there was a ray of sunlight, and partaking of meals consisting of a can of tomatoes, or of sausage, bread, and water.

I suppose that only a bare handful of those now active in Plains archeology realize how virgin the field was during Mr. Hill's early days. None of the state institutions of the 1920's was actively interested in archeology; and apparently no one, in or outside the region, realized the abundance and variety of archeological remains scattered throughout the prairies and plains westward from the Missouri River. A story told me more than once by Mr. Hill well illustrates this point.

In the early 1920's, on one of his trips to the East, Mr. Hill made a special point of contacting an eminent anthropologist in one of our largest natural history museums. Here he reported his discovery of rectangular pithouse villages, of pottery, stone, bone, and shell artifacts, and of corn, beans, and other indubitable evidences of prehistoric agriculture. He told me with deep feeling of the unexpected reception he was accorded—it couldn't be true, Plains Indians lived only in tipis or in circular earthlodges, and anyway, everyone knew that no farming Indians had ever lived west of the Pawnee villages in Nance County. It is pleasant to add that Mr. Hill's understandable disappointment with professional anthropologists was partially dissipated when he carried his story, pictures, and potsherds to another nearby institution, where he was welcomed and encouraged with

suggestions as to how he might improve his methods and increase his knowledge.

Until the 1930's, Mr. Hill's explorations were generally limited to small scale operations—week-end digging at sites within striking distance of Hastings, and tests at numerous other sites while on the way to or from some business appointment in his "territory." Even so, he built up a considerable collection of well documented materials, housed for many years at the Hastings Museum and there available for examination and study by qualified persons. Despite the unavoidably piecemeal nature of his work, Mr. Hill convinced himself of the former existence of not one, but several, native peoples or cultures in the region. By the time systematic archeology on a staying basis was initiated at the University of Nebraska, he was aware of the distinctness from one another of the historic Pawnee, protohistoric Pawnee, Upper Republican, Dismal River, and Woodland cultures. His aversion to setting down in print what he had seen or inferred deprived him of his full measure of recognition beyond a relatively limited circle of workers. Unfortunately, too, it has resulted in the loss of a great deal of information over and above that imparted throughout the years to his co-workers and associates.

Establishment of the University of Nebraska Archeological Survey in 1929, and the showing of sustained interest by its director, Dr. Strong, in Mr. Hill's findings, was a source of great satisfaction to the latter. It was a characteristic gesture on his part, though, conditioned by earlier contacts with professionals, that he approached the new organization with caution. The first list of sites he furnished the Survey was an impressive one. It included land coordinates for locating all sites listed, except that the range numbers in each case were scrupulously omitted! These were supplied only after he had an opportunity to meet the Survey director face to face, and form his own opinion concerning him.

With his appointment in 1933 as Director of the State Historical Museum and Field Archeology, Mr. Hill was at last able to widen and intensify his activities. It was my privilege to participate in the first two field expeditions he

"A. T." in the Field

Top: Excavating a prehistoric earthlodge floor in Franklin County, 1934.

Center: Camped at an early Pawnee Village site, Platte County, 1941.

Bottom: The Hill Site, Webster County, 1941.

sent out. The first one, in 1933, was a modest and short-lived operation on Medicine Creek, utilizing in large part Mr. Hill's own well-worn field gear. In the following year, 1934, a larger and better equipped party worked at various sites in the Republican Valley, as well as in Kansas on the Solomon River near Minneapolis and on Paint Creek near Lindsborg. In 1935, field work was carried on in southeastern Nebraska, including near Rulo the first Oneota culture site systematically investigated west of the Missouri. In 1936, researches were centered on Pawnee sites in the lower Platte-Loup area in and about Nance County; and in the following summer, the work was carried down the Platte and along the west bank of the Missouri to the Kansas line. Taking advantage of relief funds available through WPA in 1938, Mr. Hill extended the Missouri River survey northward along the west bank from Omaha to Sioux City. In 1939, his parties worked on the Loup River in central Nebraska, as well as at Ash Hollow Cave and on Stinking Water Creek in the western part of the State. In 1940, he returned to the lower Loup River area, with additional explorations in Chadron State Park. Before the growing war clouds put a halt to field work in 1941, his parties had worked several Woodland and other sites in the Platte County area.

All of this work produced a great mass of specimens, photographs, maps, and other records pertaining to most of the principal archeological horizons of the State. In addition, Mr. Hill found the time and opportunity to visit digs in neighboring states, thereby acquiring a broader fund of information for himself and at the same time imparting helpful suggestions and viewpoints to other workers.

The war years were not easy ones for Mr. Hill's restless spirit. Field work was impossible, and he devoted much time to various museum matters and to study of the great collections accumulated in previous years. Many of the young men who had worked with him were in the armed services or otherwise connected with military activities, and he followed their careers and achievements with deep personal interest.

With termination of the war, Mr. Hill was impatient to resume field work. He welcomed establishment of the River Basin Surveys, with its Missouri Basin headquarters in Lincoln, and gave freely of his wide business and archeological experience in the planning of the basin-wide program. From the files of the Historical Society he made available much unpublished information for use in preparing reports and appraisals requested from the Smithsonian by the National Park Service and other federal agencies. In 1947, and again in 1948, before Federal funds were made available to cooperating State agencies for salvage archeology by contract, Mr. Hill led field parties of the Society to the Medicine Creek area and carried out extensive village site excavations. The information thus gained, as well as that from short reconnaissance trips to other proposed and potential reservoir sites, was always available to the River Basin Surveys.

Mr. Hill's interest in specimens and collections, as I have already intimated, was always secondary to his concern over house types, community patterns, mode of life, and cultural sequence and chronology. He developed an uncanny knack for locating habitation sites, and an enviable skill in their excavation with limited manpower and time. He had a rare ability to get along with property owners and collectors, and for persuading these and other casually interested local persons to lend a hand with the heavy work during his rapid investigations. In this day of large scale operations, supported in relatively generous fashion by State and Federal agencies, it is easy to forget the handicaps under which Mr. Hill, like pioneers everywhere, carried on much of the work that was so basic to Nebraska prehistory.

When this writer's particular interest in the relationships of man to climate and environment in the Plains was first voiced, he found a most responsive and intelligent discussant in Mr. Hill. Together, we drove through a variety of localities in the dry years of 1936-37, viewing the effects of drought and grasshoppers—in Scott County, Kansas, in the Republican, Platte, Loup, and other valleys in Nebraska, and in the Dakotas. Mr. Hill's firsthand familiarity with drought, crop failures, and their human aftermath, his boyhood rec-

ollections of unsuccessful attempts by the settlers to establish eastern corn varieties in western Kansas, and his general insights into the practical problems of human adaptation to the Plains environment were most enlightening.

He had a keen interest, too, in how and why the Indians did things. I well remember the unrestrained pleasure he showed when, in his field camp at the Burkett Site in 1940, I tested a paddle-shaped transversely grooved buffalo shoulder blade just taken from the diggings and found that we could duplicate the familiar ridged surfaces found on Pawnee pottery and whose method of manufacture had long puzzled us. Similarly, at one time or another over the years, he sought to determine just how or for what practical purpose various implements or pottery features were used.

The rigors of boyhood on a western Kansas farm and his subsequent successful career in a highly competitive business field, of course, strongly conditioned the attitudes and values he exhibited in camp and fieldwork. His early operations were usually on a shoestring basis, financially; and this, plus his business acumen, made him a shrewd bargainer at the country grocery or hardware store. But, while he haggled about a few cents "overcharge" on a case of tomatoes or sack of potatoes, he purchased without a protest all the film, plotting paper, and other technical equipment his archeological helper insisted was necessary.

Believing the laborer should be worthy of his hire, Mr. Hill insisted on a full day's work. He was usually up at the crack of dawn, when the unmuffled rattle of tinware in the mess tent and his pithy comments over a reluctant cookstove apprised all in camp that it was time to be up and doing. He took an exceedingly dim view of complaints about the inconveniences of camp and field life. His own philosophy on this score—archeology first, personal comfort second—was revealed to me on my first trip to the forks of the Dismal River with him in August 1931. Hill and I were wading down the knee-deep stream, reveling in its coolness and searching with our eyes for archeological features in the banks high above us. Hearing an exclamation, I turned to see Hill shoulder deep in the water. Cameras, rifle, and everything else

he carried—entrusted to him because my hands were to be free for climbing the bank if anything of promise showed up—were thoroughly watersoaked and filled with fine sand. He had stepped into a large underwater spring, whose upwelling current was strong enough to keep his head above water. Speedily fished from the chill spring waters, he spurned my suggestion that we return at once to camp for a change of clothing, and we continued our inspection of the river banks to the destination originally selected.

One of the basic tenets of Hill's philosophy was concisely set forth in our 1934 camp on the Republican south of Franklin. Camp had been enlivened by a family of five raccoons, donated by a visitor. The largest and quickest of the brood, a female, I took as a mascot for the summer. She quickly learned that most of our party were easy marks for the begging approach at mealtime. This, however, was generally unsuccessful with Mr. Hill; and on one occasion, when she stubbornly insisted on begging rather than performing for her supper, Mr. Hill scornfully observed: "Sometimes you get things given to you, but most generally in this life you have to work fur 'em."

More than twenty years have elapsed since my first meeting with Mr. Hill on the banks of Lost Creek. Looking back over those years of association, and leafing through a thick file of correspondence that passed between us, I am particularly impressed with the profound and lasting imprint left by this rough and ready figure on Plains archeology. Always ready and eager to extend a helping hand to a struggling beginner, he touched—and often deeply influenced—the lives of most of the professional archeologists active in the Plains in the past two decades. Lacking academic training, he generally shunned formal recognition of his accomplishments by educational institutions. Yet, he possessed a strong sense of problem, and of personal and professional integrity. The desire to know, which lies at the root of all science, burned no less strongly in him than in those he helped on their way to a professional career.

To those of us fortunate enough to have worked intimately with Mr. Hill in field and laboratory, his passing

brings to a close relationships we shall always cherish. We remember him as A. T., the grand old man of Plains archeology, and wish him "Happy digging."

AND THE NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BY J. L. SELLERS

THE bereaving loss of his lifetime companion led A. T. Hill to give up his home and business in Hastings and remove to Lincoln in 1933. This circumstance proved to be a Godsend to the State Historical Society. The great depression which had started with the stock market crash four years earlier was at its worst. The Society's budget had been sliced by a desperate legislature; and the Society's staff was reduced to a mere cadre. The late Dr. Sheldon had just secured from his good friend, Governor Arthur Weaver, new quarters for the Society on the ground floor in the newly finished west wing of the state capitol.

The Society had never displayed in more than a symbolic fashion its varied collection of museum materials. Now at last, with new quarters to occupy in the best location in the Capitol, Dr. Sheldon secured without price, in the person of A. T. Hill, the best museum pioneer in the Missouri Valley.

A. T. Hill turned from his successful career as a business man and salesman to his lifetime avocation of anthropologist and museum builder and director. He transformed the Society, with Dr. Sheldon's help and encouragement, from a library and research institution into a broadly appealing educational display of historical materials, and instituted at the same time his extensive surveys and excavations of archeological materials. He brought to the Society and put on display his own unsurpassed Pawnee collection which he later gave to the Society. The collection alone established the Nebraska museum as of first importance to students of plains archeology. He put on display for the Society a line of historical work which the Society had heretofore been

unable to exploit and which has the greatest public appeal.

A. T. Hill's coming to the Society coincided with the beginning of the New Deal when the Federal government under the leadership of President Franklin Roosevelt was creating jobs for the unemployed. With limited funds of his own for supplying equipment he was able to put people to work conditioning museum material and building display cases and equipment. In like manner he financed excavating expeditions and got his work underway. The results of his efforts soon convinced members of the legislature that they must make him a small special appropriation for his museum work in order to get the larger federal grants by which the work was carried forward.

The depression and war years represent a difficult time for the Nebraska government and taxpayers. They represent years of rapid advancement and great accomplishments for the Nebraska Historical Society. Dr. Sheldon and A. T. Hill presented numerous work projects which brought federal grants and revolutionized the Society's holdings and working materials. The newspapers and many books and pamphlets were bound, and much indexing was completed. The museum materials were repaired, conditioned and displayed. Indian sites were surveyed, mapped, and much excavation was carried on. All of these was the result of the planning and supervisory work of Dr. Sheldon and A. T. Hill. Neither could have done it without the help of the other.

Mr. Hill's work won him a place on the Historical Society Board of Directors and he was made Director of the Museum. In the last months of Dr. Sheldon's life Mr. Hill became indispensable to the Society. He carried on the business management, which he had taken over some years before, and after Dr. Sheldon's death in November, 1943, assumed general supervision of the Society's work. He accepted this added responsibility very reluctantly. His genuine interest and devotion was in the field of archeology and the museum.

Mr. Hill supervised the work of the Society until August, 1944, when he and President Lawrence persuaded J. L. Sellers to assume part of that responsibility. That arrangement prevailed until James C. Olson was released from mili-

tary service in March, 1946. In 1949, Mr. Hill was succeeded as Director of the Museum by Marvin F. Kivett.

To know A. T. Hill was to trust him. His honesty, his direct methods, his confidence in the worth of what he did always made the Society friends and strengthened its position in every official way. He secured gifts, and each donor had faith that his trust was well placed. He was a pillar of confidence with the legislature and helped to secure the levy for our building.

For whatever progress the Society has made since his retirement from its active direction his successors will be first to proclaim their deep indebtedness for his direction and advice. We can look at the Nebraska State Historical Society in its new building and say that the "Nebraska Builders Award" was never more appropriately bestowed than upon Asa T. Hill.

BUSINESSMAN, FRIEND

BY CHARLES C. OSBORNE

In his business life, the late A. T. Hill was the exemplification of an all-around salesman. His schooling in the art of salesmanship began in the horse and buggy era, but his accomplishments reached full fruition in the new automobile age. I had the great pleasure of knowing A. T. Hill well. In the preparation of this account, however, I have been assisted by several of Mr. Hill's business associates in Hastings.

Born at Cisne, Illinois, on November 29, 1871, Asa T. Hill was the eldest of six children of David D. Hill and Angenora Leak Hill. The Hill family moved to Logan in Phillips County, Kansas, in about 1875. The Hills went back to Illinois after a short time in Kansas but soon returned to the Sunflower State to remain.

As a child, A. T. Hill apparently had experiences common to so many of his time and place. Raised in a sod pioneer home with a moderately large family coming along after him, there was little opportunity for leisure on the part of the oldest son. Neither was there much opportunity for formal education. A. T. never finished the fourth grade. No apology is needed for this. His accomplishments in the two widely separated fields of business and archeology bespeak his powers of mind and application.

One of A. T. Hill's outstanding characteristics was an insatiable curiosity. At a quite early age he left home and in one manner or another saw a great deal of the western part of the United States. He engaged in a wide variety of activities. Among other things, he hunted quail and chickens for the market. In later years A. T. excused his excellence as a game shot by explaining that as a professional hunter in his youth, he could not afford the luxury of wasted shots. He applied for and obtained a job as 2nd cook at a mining camp in Jimtown, Colorado. Upon arrival at the camp, he discovered that the 2nd cook was the dishwasher. He sold kitchenware and utensils from door to door and town to town. He developed one pursuit at which he was quite successful whenever other sources of income failed. This was the selling of large colored portraits to effectively flattered individuals whose likeness A. T. was certain must be preserved for posterity. Urged on by his curiosity concerning places and people, Mr. Hill covered much of Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and California.

A. T.'s manner of travel was often based on expediency rather than custom. On one such occasion, he jumped from a moving freight and severely injured an ankle. This injury bothered him all his life and became more troublesome in his later years. At the time of this accident, A. T. was accompanied by two young friends. These two left A. T. near the railway and went into a small town nearby to obtain some remedy for the pain he was suffering. After quite some time, the friends returned empty-handed. They explained that they had given their problem to the local druggist who was uncooperative, they being without funds. The friends were

determined to pay their respects to the tight-fisted druggist but were uncertain as to procedure till they happened to see him leave the rear door of his store and retire to a building equipped with the usual outdoor plumbing. The young men forthwith approached the outhouse from the rear and in a quiet manner. With a concerted push, the building was heaved over on its face and the druggist was effectively trapped within. While A. T. could not benefit from the druggist's supplies, his pain was eased by the knowledge of the man's discomfiture. Pain was lessened by the story that the druggist must have been unpopular locally as the townsmen took an awful measure of time before heeding his cries of rage and supplication, and effecting a rescue.

On occasion Mr. Hill was back in Logan, Kansas, perhaps helping his father run his threshing rig. A. T. was often found at this work in northwestern Kansas and southwestern Nebraska.

Eventually the Hills, father and son, entered the mercantile field in a joint enterprise. They operated a general store in Logan. This venture did not prove successful, largely it is thought, because the Hills were a bit too openhanded in extending credit.

The general store having failed, A. T. was out of a job. He proceeded with characteristic directness and advertised in an Omaha paper. An automobile dealer at Fairbury took him on. His assets at the time consisted of a wife and two small boys, Buryl and Dave. The daughter, Aletha, was born later in Hastings. He was thirty-nine years old and starting all over. He showed aptitude in his new venture and his handling of customers interested Mr. A. H. Jones who was the distributor handling the line which Mr. Hill was selling. Mr. Jones offered him a job. His reply was characteristic. He said his Fairbury employer had taken him on when he needed a job and under no circumstances would he leave this employer as long as he was needed there. That closed the negotiations for a time as A. T. Hill never sold a loyalty short. Subsequently the Fairbury employer went out of business and Mr. Hill's next location was in Hastings where he began a twenty-three-year active association with the

A. H. Jones Company. His parting with them was characteristic. He came in and asked for an indefinite leave of absence for the stated reason that he was not earning the money he was being paid. This was in the early '30s and business was terrible.

During his tenure with the A. H. Jones Company, the automobile business underwent a considerable change. Originally the manufacturers were engrossed in problems of production without too much attention to sales in the field. These sales, in general, were handled through distributors who normally had sizable defined territories to which the factory gave little detailed attention as long as the distributor produced. The salesman in those early days had to be versatile. He had to sell at retail for his employer. He had to help the dealer make retail sales and he had to sell wholesale to the dealer. That was Mr. Hill's beginning job. In the course of time he moved up to the position of wholesale manager over a territory into which paved roads had only begun to penetrate and at a time when the automobile was not the dependable vehicle it has since become. The business was seasonal. In the nearly quarter century of Mr. Hill's employment, there was a great development both in the roads and in the vehicles. He quit his job at a time when he could look back over twenty-odd years of progress but with far horizons still existing. He quit against his employer's urging, notwithstanding that business was bad. He had worked through these years with a pioneer's willingness, without thought of hours or conditions. He had the urge toward success borne out of efforts in many lines, still looking for the rainbow's end. It is fine now to be able to say that he left under conditions wherein he had no fears for his financial future. He quit with a ripe experience in his contacts with men. He was a mature product of a man who had started as a boy, had tried his skill at many things and had finally arrived at what is generally known as success.

It is difficult to adequately characterize such a man as A. T. Hill. There were so many facets to his personality. In speaking at Mr. Hill's funeral service, Dr. S. G. Kessler made reference to a statement to the effect that most people

were born into this world as individualists but that by the time their days had run, the exigencies of life had beaten the majority into a state of conformity. He continued with the observation that Mr. Hill was born into this world as an individualist and when he left the world he was still an individualist.

A few anecdotes might help clarify the picture of A. T. Hill as a person. During his early days in the automobile business, A. T. was working in the Seward area. He had occasion to cross a certain wooden bridge frequently. The bridge was decrepit and A. T. considered it unsafe. In fact, he was quite irritated. One dark night some unknown agency fired this bridge and it was completely destroyed.

A few years later when out on territory, A. T. checked into a certain hotel one evening. He presently became engrossed in his hobby and was using acid to clean up some artifact or relic. He inadvertently spilled acid on the desk and marred the top. When checking out in the morning, A. T. told the management of the accident and asked that he be advised as to the "expense necessary to refinish the top." After some consideration the hotel people named a figure and Mr. Hill paid. Two weeks later he registered again at this same hotel and through sheer coincidence was placed in the same room as he occupied before. The table top had not been refinished. He was not pleased and so informed the management. They advised that he had paid for the damage and that they were satisfied. A. T. was not satisfied. He could not accept the hotel people's view that it was their option as to whether the desk top was refinished or not. That was not the argument. He checked out of the hotel and at the first opportunity gave his road men instructions that thereafter they were not to patronize the hotel in question. After all, those particular hotel people were not honest.

If, from the foregoing, you conclude that Mr. Hill was completely severe and arbitrary, you would be wrong. He was a pleasant traveling companion and often as fun loving as any college sophomore. In 1931 when he was a dignified sixty years of age, Mr. Hill and one of his territory men visited a restaurant in Curtis, Nebraska, seeking breakfast.

By way of a bit of home grown entertainment, A. T. raised a question with the waitress as to the propriety of charging fifteen cents for a half grapefruit when the grocery store across the street boldly advertised three entire grapefruit for but twenty-seven cents. The waitress took a rather flip view of the profound economic problem that has been broached and as a result A. T. advised his companion that they might not order grapefruit. On completing their meal these two grown men appropriated a goodly portion of the restaurant's sugar in a paper napkin. They crossed the street, purchased three grapefruit and returned to a seat on the curb in front of the restaurant. Here with due solemnity, the two peeled, sectioned, sugared and devoured their grapefruit.

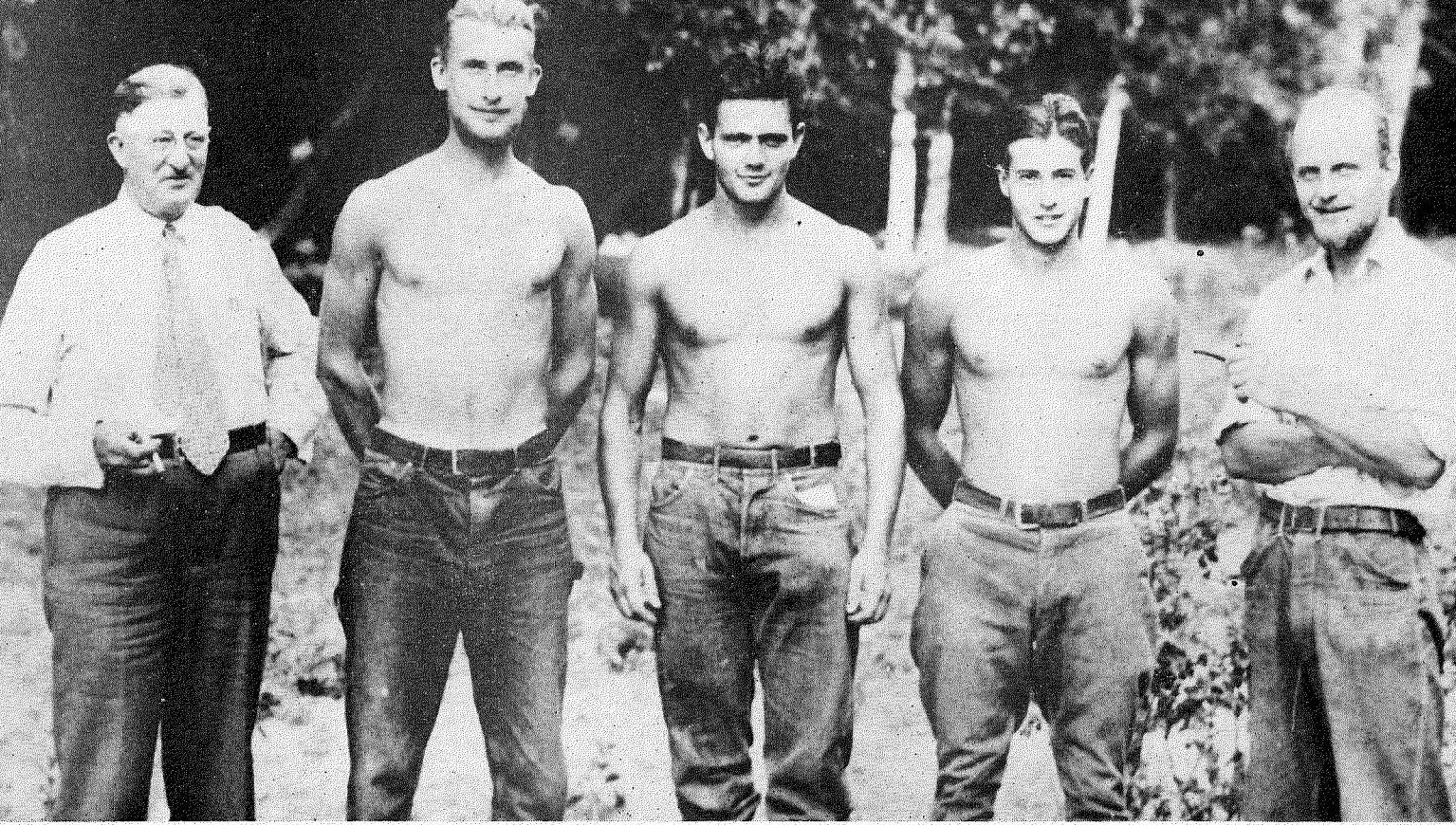
A. T. Hill was not a conformist and no doubt is causing a certain amount of puckish commotion in his present Happy Hunting Grounds.

IN THE FIELD

BY MARVIN F. KIVETT

I first met A. T. Hill in 1933, shortly after he became associated with the Nebraska State Historical Society as Museum Director. As a school boy I had brought archeological materials from the Weeping Water Valley for the experts in Lincoln to identify. I was somewhat disappointed when he showed little interest in the beautiful stonework but wanted to see the small pottery sherds. This was a new approach to Nebraska archeology since earlier investigators had relied mainly on the stone work for classification of the cultures.

In May 1935, I joined a field party working under Mr. Hill's direction south of Lincoln. I began to get some idea of his field camp when he wrote me to travel light, bring only one blanket, since I would probably want to sleep on the ground. Fortunately I didn't follow his advice on bedding since the spring of 1935 was wet and cold. This earlier



University of Nebraska Archeological Survey Party, August, 1930.

Left to right: A. T. Hill, Waldo R. Wedel, Mike O'Heeron, Frank Morrison, W. D. Strong.

work was mainly in the nature of a survey with a week or slightly longer being spent at a particular site. The time had not yet arrived for the extensive excavation programs which came with the larger labor forces under the WPA.

A. T. Hill believed that every man should be self-sufficient in the field. He started early to convert each of his boys into cooks. Anyone who was not happy with the cooking was invited to take over. Plain food consisting mainly of beans, bacon, and corn meal in various forms was supplemented with such wild fruits as could be gathered during the evenings or very early in the morning. The matter of eating was not permitted to interfere with the important business of digging. One of his favorite stories concerned the horse stealing Pawnee Indians who would travel to New Mexico on foot with only a handful of corn for nourishment.

It was during these years that Mr. Hill began to build up an effective organization and field records for the next five years when federal funds became available in the form of labor. The summer field season, which he believed should last from March to November, was far too short to accomplish all that he had planned. Often he supplemented the limited field funds from his own finances in order that some additional field work might be carried on. Although the additional manpower provided by the federal government was welcome, he resented the loss of direct control and the flexibility of his field parties.

His major problem throughout the period was Pawnee archeology. He never failed to be annoyed when a federal regulation provided men in one county but would not permit their transportation into an adjacent area where a good Pawnee site was situated. His disregard of federal regulations usually worried everyone except A. T. When he could no longer stand such "impractical" regulations as a forty-hour week or an eight-hour day, he would gather up his mobile field equipment, two or three students and set out to "check a site." His greatest pride in field work was the excavation of earthlodge floors. If the final measurements did not indicate a careful Indian architect he was not pleased.

A. T.'s final field season was spent in the Sandhills of Hooker County on the Middle Loup River. This valley, and that of the Dismal River to the south, were always close to his heart. Although he was ill, he was happy. With a small crew working he sat on his little stool at the dig and carefully checked every potsherd as it came from the ground.

Numerous publications which are listed at the conclusion of this article have resulted from the field work carried on by Mr. Hill. More will be written in the years which are to follow. Among these will be several papers devoted to Pawnee archeology. Familiar terms to students of Central Plains archeology are Dismal River, Oneota, Great Bend, historic Pawnee, Upper Republican, Ash Hollow Cave, Lower Loup, Woodland, Pike Pawnee Village, Glen Elder, and many others to which Mr. Hill's field work contributed. The terms may be changed or others added, but the basic work will stand.

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