

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



October 2007

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## Happy Halloween And Thanksgiving!

- *We still need you on those busy weekend shifts at CHSL*
- *Circle the ghost trolley dates on your calendar and plan to volunteer. The ghost trolley brings in over 15 percent of our total CHSL revenue annually*
- *Spread the word about our ghost trolley when you get the flyers*
- *Tell your neighbors and friends about the fall color on our line*
- *Attend our 2nd annual family picnic*
- *As Always HAVE FUN!*

## Inside This Issue

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>From the Front Platform</i>         | 2 |
| <i>MSM News Update</i>                 | 3 |
| <i>Wither our Museum?</i>              | 3 |
| <i>MSM Shop Update</i>                 | 4 |
| <i>Historian &amp; Archives Update</i> | 5 |
| <i>Excelsior News &amp; Notes</i>      | 5 |
| <i>Upcoming Events</i>                 | 6 |
| <i>Operations Notes</i>                | 6 |

**Masthead Photo:** Duluth St. Rwy. No. 78 (LaClede, 1893) and TCRT No. 1239 (TCRT 31st Street Shops, 1907) soak up the sun on July 19, 2007. No. 78 is semi-retired now but was out this day helping No. 1239 celebrate her 100th birthday. Both cars are still pretty spry for their ages, eh? (Jim Vaitkunas Photo)

## Up-coming Events

During my shifts last month, I watched people examine the Ghost Trolley poster on the Linden Hills Station bulletin board. It was clear that interest is high and that families, and especially the children, look forward to our annual event.

Since it falls in the middle of the week, we won't be running on Halloween night. Instead, we'll operate Thursday through Sunday, October 25 - 28. We're also shifting our hours a bit, starting at 6 PM and going until 9. This should make it easier for our crews to report after work.

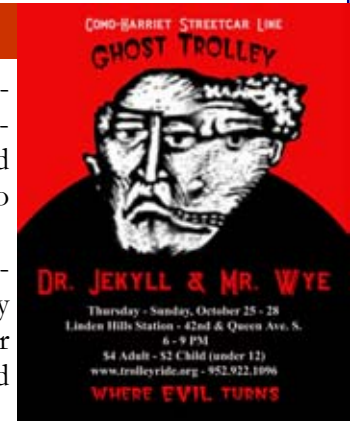
Dave French and Mike Helde have put their heads together to conjure up our "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Wye" theme. Which is which? What surprises await? Wait and see. Car operators have key roles to play in the drama, too. Shortly before the event, a detailed Operations Order is distributed to everyone involved. It's a lengthy document, but please take the time to read through it. With different people involved each night in a fairly complex operation it's important we all know what's going on. You don't want to leave Dave in the dark (read the Ops Order to learn how to prevent this).

Ghost Trolley requires a large group of volunteers each night. Fortunately, many of you have become regulars year to year, and several work more than one night. I think all agree it's a lot of fun. If you haven't been a part of the event in the past, give it a try this year. We're never too old to enjoy Halloween.

Although it may seem like the end of the season, we have more than a month of scheduled operation following Ghost Trolley. We'll be running weekends through the end of November. And on November 24th and 25th, and again on December 1st and 2nd, families will be able to "Ride the streetcar with Santa" at Como-Harriet's Holly Trolley.

Other rail museums draw large numbers of passengers for holiday-themed operations. Holly Trolley may never be as popular as Ghost Trolley, but given time to grow has potential to become a profitable Museum event. And although less labor intense than Ghost trolley, Holly Trolley still requires volunteers in a variety of positions--decorators, operators, station agents, snow clearers, Santa's helpers. I hope you'll consider lending a hand.

Speaking of annual events, our "Company Picnic" is coming up on October 13th. Last year we had a good turn out at the Excelsior carbarn. This year, I'm hoping to see even more of us at Como-Harriet. This is a nice opportunity to get together socially and share our streetcar passion with our families and friends. It's also a chance to meet Museum members you might not know well but with whom you share a common interest. So come, bring something to share, have a brat or burger, and enjoy the company. See you at the picnic. **Rod Eaton, General Superintendent**



## MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



The Minnesota Streetcar Museum is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization with the mission to preserve and communicate to the public the experience of Minnesota's electric street and interurban railway history. To accomplish this mission the Museum operates historic streetcars at two demonstration railways.

**COMO-HARRIET STREETCAR LINE**  
**Excelsior Streetcar Line**

For more information on our Museum, our collection of historic streetcars and our demonstration railways, visit our website:

[www.trolleyride.org](http://www.trolleyride.org)

The museum's business address and telephone number is:

P.O. Box 14467, University Station  
 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467  
 952-922-1096

**Streetcar CURRENTS**  
 October - 2007

**Streetcar CURRENTS** is a periodic newsletter for the members and friends of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

Deadline for submitting items for the next issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** is November 15, 2007.

Please send items to editor Jim Vaitkunas at the following address:

155 Chaparral Dr.  
 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9774  
 You can send input or enquiries by e-mail to: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)

**From the Front Platform**

Jim Vaitkunas—Board Chair

**Do You Matter as a Volunteer?**

(This month's column continues my "train of thought" with regards to volunteering with our Museum.)

First off, I invite you to read and contemplate the mission statement in the box directly to the left. Back in 2005 when the MSM was being formed from the old MTM Traction Division, your Board developed a vision and mission statement. The Board then reaffirmed the basic goals established by the then Traction Committee several years ago. (Go to our website [www.trolleyride.com](http://www.trolleyride.com) and in the organization documents section click and read the two documents that contain this basic information: *Organizational Memo* and *Goals, Objectives and Long Range Plan*.)

As a Board we needed to do all this preliminary work because in order to adhere to good business practices, everything the Board and the Museum does needs to conform with these basic governing guidelines. If we do anything that somehow doesn't support the mission and goals of our Museum then we need to question why we are doing that activity.

Now, you may be asking yourself: "How do I as a Volunteer fit into the overall scheme of things?" In other words, does the valuable time you spend as a volunteer at Lake Harriet or Excelsior matter to the Museum? Of course, the answer is obvious—You do matter, regardless of how much time you spend volunteering for your Museum. Here are just a few examples to illustrate the point I am trying to make.

- If you are a volunteer on a streetcar crew that means we can run a streetcar and maintain our schedule which, in turn, means we meet one of our prime goals. Oh, and by the way, as a result of operating we collect the revenue we need to pay the bills so we can meet our goals. If it wasn't for our operating crews our Museum would cease to operate and even exist.
- As a follow-on to the previous item, how about our crew callers? The job sounds mundane but if it weren't for **Mark Digre**, **Jim Otto** and **Marv Krafve** we'd have no schedule and would be dead in the water. Schedule minus crew = no income. The math is pretty basic.



• Is car cleaning important? You betcha! Our mission states that we are to preserve our historic artifacts. MSM is a living history museum and our exhibits are our streetcars, our track, the overhead trolley wire, etc. When we clean our cars and work on our track we are fulfilling our mission.

- How about the guys in our shop? That's an obvious one. Performing periodic maintenance ensures that we are preserving our historic streetcars so our visitors can enjoy them and learn a little bit about our transit past.
- Then there are folks like Membership Services chair **John DeWitt**, **Scott Heiderich** our Treasurer and **Russ Olson** our accountant. These guys do very necessary things that must be done so we can meet our goals.
- How about our Museum's leaders like **Rod Eaton**, **Bob Johnson**, **Bruce Kobs**, **John Prestholdt**, **Aaron Isaacs**, **Louis Hoffman**, **John Diers** and several others (I apologize if I left someone off this list—this is only to illustrate my point). Without their day-to-day leadership and volunteer work much of what you see and enjoy as a member would not happen and we'd be in tough shape as an organization.

Bottom line? As a volunteer you do matter. We do need you. And thank **YOU** for volunteering with MSM.

**MSM News & Views**

*Louis Hoffman — Senior Superintendent*

**N***ew Members.* Since the last issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** we gained 2 new members. A big welcome to **Raymond Gulsvig** and **Ron Wasem**. And a big **THANK YOU** to **Louis Hoffman** who upgraded his membership to Lifetime Member status.

**D***onations Gratefully Received.* We thank the following members and friends for their donations to the 2006-2007 Annual Appeal and for other worthy causes that support the Museum’s many activities: **Cliff Scholes, John Prestholdt, Louis Hoffman, Phil Settergren, Diane Utech Ubl**, new member **Raymond Gulsvig, Bob Powell**, and the **Weck Family Foundation**.

**R***idership Update.* Museum statistician and Como-Harriet Chief Cashier **John Prestholdt** reports the following statistics for Como-Harriet:

|              | Total         | Paid          | Trips        | Charters  |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
| May          | 4,148         | 3,047         | 291          | 3         |
| June         | 5,657         | 3,944         | 443          | 6         |
| July         | 7,263         | 5,193         | 373          | 10        |
| August       | 4,885         | 3,553         | 339          | 5         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>21,953</b> | <b>15,737</b> | <b>1,446</b> | <b>24</b> |

“Total” includes all regular (including all pass holders)

and charter passengers. “Paid” refers to passengers riding using a token.

August ridership at Lake Harriet was depressed by rain. Four days, including two weekend days, were completely washed out. In addition, August ridership is generally lowest of the summer months because of the State Fair and the run-up to the start of the school year. But now the good news: we had a stellar Labor Day weekend (details in next month’s *Streetcar Currents*), carrying more than 1,600 passengers!

**E**xcelisior Superintendent **Bob Johnson** reports the following statistics for Excelsior:

|              | Paid         | Free       | Total        |
|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| May          | 429          | 167        | 679          |
| June         | 534          | 106        | 640          |
| July         | 811          | 206        | 1,017        |
| August       | 754          | 189        | 943          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2,528</b> | <b>751</b> | <b>3,279</b> |

There were three rain-out days at Excelsior, but only one fell on a passenger-rich Thursday, when ridership is higher because of our neighbor, the Excelsior Farmer’s Market. Thus, August at ESL was fairly strong.

Thanks to Bob and John for compiling these statistics.

**Whither Our Museum?**

*Louis Hoffman — Senior Superintendent*

**H**ow many of you ever stop to think about the future of our Museum? There are two trends that deeply concern those of us in MSM “management.” They are, of course, static ridership levels at levels lower than Como-Harriet’s salad days in the 1970s and 1980s and the aging of our volunteers.

Some time ago, we surveyed our passengers about how they found out about us. About half were previous riders who mostly lived in Linden Hills and southwest Minneapolis. About half saw the streetcar while visiting the park and decided to take a ride. Almost none came because they saw publicity. That’s consistent with our anecdotal experience—our paid ads in the *Southwest Journal*, publications for parents with children, and the railfan press have generally not produced any measurable results. And it’s not clear that free publicity is any better. This isn’t to say that there isn’t a marketing strategy that’d work. But we haven’t found it.

So why has ridership leveled off in the low to mid thirties? My theory is the changing demographic of Minneapolis. While Minneapolis’ population has been stable during most of our time at Lake Harriet, the number of families with children has dropped. Minneapolis has one of the highest numbers of house-

holds without children of any American city. When families leave Minneapolis for the suburbs, to find that large house and yard and for “better” schools, they don’t just cross the border to Edina or Saint Louis Park anymore. It’s farther out. And transplants from other cities quite often settle farther out and have little reason to come to the City. Add that to the declining numbers of people who actually remember streetcars in the Twin Cities and I think the answer to our question is clear: our market is farther away and smaller and people aren’t going to drive in from Eden Prairie for a fifteen minute trolley car ride.

So what’s the solution? Museums around the country, some of whom are seeing similar trends, rely increasingly on charters and groups and special events. The Halloween Ghost Trolley is a key segment of our revenue stream. This year, the Holly Trolley will return. Please do your share to make these events successful by volunteering. Not just to operate but to help create the “complete experience.”

**B**ill Graham and Aaron Isaacs will be contacting tour bus operators over the winter in an attempt to boost our charter business. To date, we’ve had 24

*(Continued on page 4)*

**Shop Update***John Prestholdt — Shop Foreman*

The crew at the carbarn is finishing the painting of No. 265's seat backs and is starting the "peanut" seat cushions. We will need to wait until after the operating season to work on the seats in No. 1300.

After re-examining the roof of No. 265 we determined that the roof canvas is not where the leaks are coming from, so we will not need to do a complete re-roofing. Instead we will be working on the 8 window vents in the clerestory to correct some problems from the original restoration and eliminate the roof leaks.

Since my retirement from Alina in 2005 I have been working on getting a complete inventory of our streetcar parts that **Karl Jones** started several years ago. While we still get donations (and they are welcome and appreciated), I have most of the over 400 parts identified, and now need some extra help sorting through some of them. We have over 40 roll signs to identify, several interior mirrors, external mirrors, headlights, etc that we need to look at and either combine into complete items, or separate into spare or replacement parts and scrap things we can't use. Anyone interested in helping work through this inventory please give me a call at 952-922-7413.

*(Whither our Museum? Continued from page 3)*

charters this year. Twenty years ago, we had years with more than ninety. Getting back to that number would bring in about \$4,500! You can help boost our charter business in two ways:

First, we need a new charter agent. The charter agent returns calls, responds to e-mails, set up the details of charters, and handles the minor paperwork. It's not hard. But if we're going to grow our charter business back to where it was and even bigger, we need a competent volunteer to handle it.

Second, generate some charter business! Encourage your kid's or grandkid's teachers, Boy or Girl Scout units, recreation centers, and youth groups to come for a ride. Encourage groups at your church to come for a ride. You get the picture. But consider this: if each of the Museum's nearly 300 members generated only one charter, that'd be nearly 300 charters and about \$20,000 in income!

On the volunteer front, there are lots of great sources for recruiting volunteers. But, as usual, there's a shortage of volunteers to do the legwork. Are you in a group? Is there a group that you have coffee with regularly? Why not invite them down for a look-see? Are or were you in sales? Consider whether you can help us recruit new members and volunteers. One effort that's paid off is our new volunteer orientation program. Unlike the old days, where you joined and were on your own, our volunteer coordinators are following up with new members and volunteers to

solve problems before they result in a disgruntled new member leaving over something that could be fixed. Thanks to **Mike Helde** and **Kathy Kullberg** for developing and implementing this important new program. The important thing to remember is that your Museum isn't facing these issues alone.

First, these are trends that other Museums are also experiencing and through our membership and participation in the Association of Railway Museums, we can learn from our peers. A contingent of MSM'ers will be heading east soon to attend ARM's annual conference at the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum in Washington, Pennsylvania.

Second, your Museum is on very solid grounds financially. Our "independence" has saved substantial sums of money in vastly reduced administrative and insurance costs. Revenue remains strong. We're saving for the future, setting aside ten percent of income each year for emergencies, opportunities, and rebuilding our track in forty years or so. And we're setting aside \$5,000 every year for periodic professional track maintenance. Aside from that, the budget is balanced with some operating money even available for restoration, normally a "capital" cost. So while you shouldn't fret too much, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't consider helping with our charter, special events, and volunteer recruitment initiatives and that you shouldn't write a check to our capital campaign to provide complete security to our carbarns and streetcars.

And how about an extra shift per month?

### **Is There Something New in Your Life?**

Have you just moved? Did your move cause your phone number to change? Did you finally upgrade to hi-speed internet? No, I'm not trying to pry into your personal business. However, if you have had any of these changes then please let us know so you won't miss an issue of this newsletter or the *Twin City Lines* history magazine. Please send us your updates: call or e-mail **John DeWitt** (612-338-1871) or [jdewitt@comcast.net](mailto:jdewitt@comcast.net); or, call or e-mail **Jim Vaitkunas** (952-688-7255) [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com) *Thanks!*

## Historian & Archive Update

Aaron Isaacs — Museum Archivist

**Twin Cities by Trolley Selling Well.** The new book *Twin Cities by Trolley* has sold better than expected, over 4000 copies so far. As a result, a second printing of 2500 copies has been ordered. To date, MSM has sold over 520 copies. Of those, 375 were advance sales, and the rest were sold at the Linden Hills depot, at author book signings or through the MSM website. If you haven't purchased a copy, please do so through MSM, so the proceeds go to the museum.

**ERA Headlights Features the Twin Cities.** The Electric Railroaders Association, a trolley railfan group headquartered in New York and active since the 1930s, has just published its latest issue of *Headlights* magazine, and the *Twin Cities* is featured prominently. There is a lengthy article on the Hiawatha Line, multiple photos of MSM's operation, and some excellent vintage TCRT photos. Copies are available for \$10 through ERA at P. O. Box 3323, New York, NY 10163.

**MSM Artifacts on Display at the Bakken.** The Bakken Museum of Electricity, located on the southwest side of Lake Calhoun, has a new exhibit entitled "Electrifying Minnesota." It features historic artifacts from the MSM collection and will be on display for the next two years. MSM and the Bakken are looking to cooperate on more programs in the future, since both deal with electricity and are located so near one another.

**EBay Sales Agent Needed.** Last year the call went out for a volunteer to sell surplus MSM

photos and other items on EBay. **Rick Anderson** volunteered, but he is no longer able to serve as our agent. We need a new volunteer, someone who is familiar with EBay. If you're interested, please contact Aaron Isaacs at [aaronmona@aol.com](mailto:aaronmona@aol.com).

**Fargo-Moorhead Photos Added to MSM Collection.** **John Diers** and **Aaron Isaacs** recently traveled to Fargo-Moorhead to look for previously undiscovered photos and information on the streetcars that served those border cities. This is even more important now that MSM owns Fargo-Moorhead Birney #28. They visited Moorhead State University, Clay County Historical Society and North Dakota State University. The trip yielded 29 photos, almost all previously unknown to MSM. Look for these in a future issue of *Twin City Lines* magazine.

**Price of Como-Harriet Book Reduced.** The 64-page book *Como-Harriet Streetcar Line-A Memory Trip Through the Twin Cities* has been reduced in price from \$12.75 to \$10.00. If you or someone you know doesn't have a copy, it's the perfect Christmas stocking stuffer. Buy it at the Linden Hills station or through the MSM website.

**Valuation Reports Donated.** **Russell Olson** has donated eleven volumes of valuation reports prepared for TCRT in 1920 and 1922. The reports count and describe every asset owned by TCRT. They are an invaluable resource for anyone researching the company's history.



## Excelsior News and Notes

Bob Johnson—Superintendent

For several years ESL has worked in partnership with the Excelsior and Lake Minnetonka Historical Society. Our cooperation has been beneficial because each year our income from this event has increased and is now one of our major fund raising activities. We not only run No. 1239 during this event, we also bring No. 78 out of the barn and decorate it as a static display that has a ghoulish crew and strange, scary passengers. This year we will be running from 5 PM until 8 PM, on Friday October 26 and Saturday October 27. Based on our past experience, there will probably be extra run or two after 8 PM to accommodate possible additional passengers. We will also need volunteers to decorate the car on Friday from 1 PM until 4 PM and others to clean up and put away equipment on Sunday from 1 PM to 4 PM.

This year some exciting changes are planned. This year we are encouraging our members to participate as families. We hope your spouses or significant others join in the festivities, and the kids are invited as well. We need more volunteers to help this new expanded event be successful.

For the first time this year, a theme unites the various activities. The activities will be designed around a specific time frame in Excelsior history. Some figures that will be present may be interpretations of prominent citizens of the period. The time in history is based partly on the decade of the 1940's.

At the Water Street end of our line a short play will be running on a stage. A playwright is writing the play with various characters patterned after real persons

(Continued on page 6)

**What's Happening?**

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| October 13                       | MSM annual family picnic at Como-Harriet Streetcar Line— 12N to 2:00 PM+ |
| October 20                       | Streetcar Cleaning at the CHSL Isaacs car barn—9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon     |
| October 25-28                    | Ghost Trolley at CHSL—6:00 PM to 9:00 PM                                 |
| October 26-27                    | Halloween Trolley at ESL—5:00 PM to 8:00 PM                              |
| November 23-24                   | Santa trolley at ESL   |
| November 23-24 &<br>December 1-2 | Holly Trolley at CHSL  |

**CHSL & ESL Operations Notes***Jim Vaitkunas—Ops Chief*

The October 2007 Operations Schedules for CHSL and September-October 2007 ESL operations schedule are included with this issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS**. If you see a vacancy that needs filling (note that there are several shifts at CHSL and ESL that are in the red or yellow zones) please contact Jim Vaitkunas ASAP by either a phone call (952-688-7255) or e-mail: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)

If you would like to volunteer to operate on a shift even though there is a full crew shown on the schedule of operations, please call the Foreman and talk with him about it. We can especially use you on those busy weekend shifts at CHSL and the Thursday afternoon shifts at ESL.

Remember that you must inform your Foreman of all substitutions or if you are forced to cancel your shift and please inform both Foremen if you swap shifts.

**Crew Calling.** Just a quick reminder that as a courtesy to our hard-working crew callers, when you hear their message on your answering machine please take a few minutes right then to call them back and let them know that you got their call and that you are able to work on a specific date. If you can't volunteer this time please call and let the crew callers know that, too. That'll keep them from wondering whether you ever got their phone call or not.

**Halloween Ghost trolley.** Our crew callers will be calling you very soon to fill the schedules for the ghost trolleys at both CHSL and ESL (see the dates above) and to fill the November schedule at CHSL. Crew requirements at CHSL is a minimum of nine and at ESL four crewmembers. If you have a moment in the next few days, please call our crew callers and let them know which dates you'd like to volunteer. That will save a lot of time, missed calls, you and the crew callers playing phone tag, etc. It will also allow us to do some operational planning a little earlier than we usually do.

This is the last monthly issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** you will receive. Starting in November the Currents reverts to its "off season" publication schedule when it is issued roughly every other month. Look for the next issues of the Currents around December 1st, February 1st and April 1st. Got photos to share? Send them to me and I'll put them in.

**(Excelsior News & Notes** *Continued from page 5)*

from the period. The Historical Society is recruiting most volunteers, but if you are interested you can volunteer to help out.

Our No. 1239 will be decorated and will run during the event. We will have a four-person crew. In addition, at least one volunteer, in makeup, will be guarding No. 78 which will be outside on a car barn yard track. The historical society will have a person in costume riding No. 1239. This person will be entertaining the riders and pointing out scenes along the way.

Along the line, several points of interest will be set up. A boat and lake area may include a Halloween volunteer rowing the boat. A ghostly baseball game may be taking place. Hobos may be under one of the bridges over our line. Some ghosts and goblins may be waving to the passengers from the balcony of the senior residence next to our car barn. Further along our track, a witch's brew will be in place with a cauldron and a fire.

**The Schedule**

Please mark your calendar and sign up for one or more of the shifts we will be running:

**Friday, October 26**—1 PM to 4 PM: Decorate cars and prepare for the event.

**Friday, October 26**—5 PM to 8 PM: Halloween event with No. 1239 and No. 78

**Saturday, October 27**—5 PM to 8 PM: Halloween event with No. 1239 and No. 78

**Sunday, October 28**—1 PM to 4 PM: Remove and store decorations. Clean-up streetcars.

Please note the run times on Friday and Saturday are the advertised times—we may run a little later depending on the patronage.

**W**e need **YOU** for what is turning into the premier annual event at ESL. Please volunteer in one of the exhibits and call **Bob Johnson** at 952-937-9378. Our crew callers will be contacting you for assignments to operate No. 1239.