

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



Nov-Dec 2008

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



Many Thanks to You All!

- Thanks to everyone for a very successful season at both our railways
- Come and enjoy an evening of fellowship and goodies at our annual holiday party on December 10th
- Mark your calendars and make plans to attend our annual meeting on March 12th
- Have a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



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Masthead Photo: Its Holly Trolley time! Here's No. 1300, the birthday girl, ready to make the next Holly Trolley run on 11-29-08. It's loads of fun watching the children and Santa on the Holly Trolley. (Jim Vaitkunas Photo)

Another Year, Thank You Very Much

Rod Eaton

Here we are, once again, at the end of our operating season—the 37th season for our Museum! Before we start discussing next year, I'd like to recognize some of our members who helped make this year successful.

Early this year, **Kirsten Jacob** volunteered to take on the responsibilities of Charter Agent. Throughout the season, Kirsten scheduled and coordinated over 40 charters on our two lines, generating more than \$2,600. Thanks, Kirsten.

Bruce Gustafson stepped forward last spring, volunteering to head up car cleaning. And thanks to those of you who helped sweep-out, wash-down, and shine-up our streetcars at Como-Harriet. Bruce has also become our eBay sales specialist, listing surplus photos and artifacts for sale on line. Thanks, Bruce.

Just because you live across the street from the Linden Hills station doesn't mean you automatically get a job. But **Erik Schwarzkopf** said he'd make sure the rails on our curves at CHSL received their weekly greasing. The result is quieter running, less wear, and happier neighbors. Thanks, Erik.

Charles Barthold again managed our station merchandise sales and found time to handle hat and personalized shirt and jacket orders for our members. Charles and **John DeWitt** added a PayPal feature to our web site store, allowing on line credit card sales. Thanks, Charles and John.

John Prestholdt and crew performed their streetcar maintenance and repairs wonderfully this year. Recalcitrant trolley poles, reluctant shaft brakes, the usual rusty nuts and bolts—they dealt with it all cheerfully (for the most part). Thanks guys.

Aaron Isaacs and **Keith Anderson** spent much of the summer and fall diligently pursuing the contractors, bids and permits required for the completion of our car-barn fire suppression and addition project. It's often been frustrating, but Aaron and Keith continue to follow up, dot eyes and cross tees. Thanks, Aaron and Keith.

I think one of our most under-appreciated jobs is Crew Caller. So I especially want to mention **Mark Digre**, **Jim Otto**, **Marv Krafve**, and **Jerry Olsen**. Next year when one of these guys calls, sign up for a shift or two, then tell them "Thanks."

Speaking of under-appreciated jobs, **Jim Vaitkunas** fills two—he maintains crew schedules for both lines, and he puts together our newsletter. I've filled in on schedule maintenance just enough to know how time-consuming it is. And we all enjoy the *Streetcar Currents*. Thanks, Jim.

Here's another job nobody wants, but one we can't exist without: Treasurer. Thanks **Scott Heiderich**. And thanks, also, to **Russ Olson** who keeps our books.

Dave French and **Clyde Hawkins**, our Training Department, did an outstanding job this year, streamlining our recertification process and working with new operators. Thanks to both of you.

As Superintendent, **Bob Johnson** continues to improve operations and community relations at the Excelsior Streetcar Line. Their Halloween and Christmas events generate community pride as well as museum profit. Thanks, Bob for a job well done.

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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

The museum's business address and telephone number is:

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Streetcar *CURRENTS*
 November-December 2008

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor
 Bill Graham—Distribution

Streetcar *CURRENTS* is the 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 January 20, 2009.

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

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 You can send input or enquiries by e-mail to: jvaitkunas@msn.com

From the Front Platform Dave French — Board Chair

Hi everyone! Perhaps, like me, you are a member of other non-profit historical organizations. I am a member of several rail and ship museums, historical societies, and collector organizations. I figure I've read a few hundred newsletters like our *Streetcar Currents* over the last 25 years. As Chairman of MSM, these newsletters are of particular interest to me now as I can get ideas of how other non-profits are dealing with the many challenges we all face. And yes, I admit it, sometimes I find ideas that I can plagiarize when I'm desperate to finish this column by Jim's deadline!



Kurt Voss, Ship's Administrator for the SS *American Victory* in Tampa, FL (www.americanvictory.org) wrote a thought-provoking column for their newsletter *Steaming As Before*. He reflected on the differences of opinion that inevitably arise when you have smart, dedicated, passionate volunteers who love their museum and who also have strong personalities. Sometimes those of us in leadership positions are called upon to mediate these arguments. He remembered some advice given to him many years ago by his former boss when he took over at another museum. Kurt writes:

He told me I would be faced with many difficult decisions. He said that if he honestly reduced everything down to what was best for the ship, he always found the answer looking right back at him. That advice has never failed me.

So, give it a try. When the inevitable differences of opinion arise, or when you wonder why "they" are doing it a certain way, ask yourself, "What's best for the ship?" See if things don't make a little more sense.

I think Kurt is absolutely right. Just substitute "MSM" for "the ship" and these sage words apply 100% to our museum. I know when I am faced with difficulties at MSM, it can seem overwhelmingly complicated, plus there are my own feelings and emotions and those of others to deal with that can cloud the issue. But I am going to try and remember to think "What's best for MSM?" and stay focused on that question until I can resolve the problem. I would, however, add one proviso to this solution. While we are figuring out "What's best for MSM" we must always, always remember to be kind and respectful to each other. In an organization this size, it is certain that there will be another volunteer or two we don't agree with, or whose person-

ality conflicts with ours, or we just plain don't like them. Let's remember to treat that person gently and to think carefully about not only *what* you say or write, but *how* you say or write it. What result do you want from this communication? What's the most likely style to help them understand your position? *Again, what's best for MSM?* Be assertive in saying what you want, but also do it respectfully and remember that most MSM operations go forward on consensus, not by ordering someone to do it "my way or the highway." And when you just cannot reach that consensus, don't be afraid to ask for help from your museum's officers and directors. We're here to serve you, to "do what's best for MSM" always.

Finally, when it comes time for me to give thanks on November 27th, tops on my list will be to give thanks for all of you. It is *you* that makes MSM such a great museum. Oh yes, the trolleys are nice, but without *you* they are cold lifeless artifacts worth very little. **Thanks everyone!** ☺

MSM News & Views*Aaron Isaacs—MSM Historian*

Isaacs Carbam Improvements Update. After months of planning and fund raising, implementation of the Isaacs carbarn sprinkler project has begun. The first step, completed during the week of September 8th, was the installation of sprinkler plumbing inside the carbarn by Midwest Fire Protection.

The next step is to remove the earth along the east (Lake Harriet) side of the carbarn. This will lower the grade of the embankment to the level of the carbarn/shop floor. Along the third of the wall closest to the Linden Hills Boulevard bridge, the excavator will lower the ridge that rises toward the bridge. All this grading is necessary for three reasons.

1. It will permit contractor United Water & Sewer access to the east side of the carbarn for trenching the water and sewer lines.

2. It will prepare the site for future construction of a speeder shed, restroom and shop expansion along the east wall.

3. It will eliminate a “hangout” for teenagers near the bridge by cutting down the ridge. The Park Board has made this a requirement for their approval of the project.

The grading has been preceded by removal of the railroad tie retaining wall in front of the carbarn by museum volunteers. The existing overhead wire pole will remain in place, although its guy wire will have to be relocated.

Grading will require the removal of a large amount of dirt. To avoid the added expense of trucking it away, it will be used to fill the area between and alongside the rails of the siding and the main track south of the carbarn switch. To prevent drainage problems and ballast contamination, a geo-textile mat will be laid down first. The track will be filled to the bottom level of the rail head and compacted. This will once again permit vehicles to drive up to the carbarn doors, yet it will give us the option to top off the raised area with bricks or gravel.

The contract for grading has been awarded. However, the work is being delayed by the paperwork required to get multiple permits from the Park Board, City of Minneapolis Public Works and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

Once the grading is complete, United Water & Sewer will bring in the water from Queen Avenue and make the sewer connection. That is a major piece of work, and is the most expensive part of the project.

The contractor must drill a vertical shaft in Queen Avenue, tunnel under the tracks in front of the carbarn below the frost line, and dig a slit trench along the east wall to the carbarn entry point. The end of the water line will emerge from the shop floor where the old composting toilet used to be (it has been disposed of).

For a while we thought the sprinkler system “tree,” which sits on top of the main water line, would have to be located in the new restroom, to be constructed as a building extension outside the east wall. No longer required for the sprinkler project, the new restroom construction can be delayed somewhat. We’ll see where the budget is, following the completed sprinkler hookup. Then the construction of the restroom, speeder shed and expanded shop will be approached as a separate, new project.

If sufficient funds are available, two additional projects will precede any building expansion.

1. The east wall concrete blocks are deteriorating badly and quite a few need replacing.

2. The security fence at the rear of the shop is inadequate to keep out intruders and should be replaced.

More planning is needed to finalize the design of the carbarn expansion along the east wall. We need to determine the dimensions of the speeder shed, restroom and shop expansion. The shop expansion should probably include an office and file area. It could also involve expanding into the already-graded area behind the shop. Because there isn’t enough money for all these improvements, they will have to be staged.

The restroom is the top priority. It will provide relief for our volunteers. It will have a janitor’s sink, so the car cleaning crews will have access to water. We may even equip a speeder flat with a water tank, to eliminate the present practice of hauling water to the flower garden from the Lake Harriet pump.

All these possibilities will be discussed thoroughly this winter, with plenty of opportunity for input from MSM members. The committee appointed by the Board to manage the project is Chief Engineer **Keith Anderson**, **Bob Johnson**, **Aaron Isaacs** and Shop Foreman **John Prestholdt**.

Historian Update

Speaking Engagements. Recently I’ve given talks to the Robbinsdale Historical Society, a Central Corridor LRT vendor conference and the Interdisciplinary Transportation Student Organization (ITSO) at the University of Minnesota. **John Diers** has given a

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Shop Update

John Prestholdt—Shop Foreman

While the Tuesday and Saturday crews at CHSL didn't have any crises with which to contend this season, we still did a lot of work on all three of our operating cars. On No. 265 and No. 1300 we installed new trolley wheels and trolley bases, replaced worn brake shoes, rebuilt both brake valves, repainted most seats and copied and replaced several car cards. We also had the rear circular seats on No. 265 and two of the peanut seats on No. 1300 re done with new rattan by an outside company since none of us have tried this process before and time was getting short. On No. 265 we added a new set of heaters to the motorman's position in the car, repaired the gate side destination sign box and all the side vent windows to stop water leakage. After messages from the Seashore Trolley Museum about motor problems, **Neil Howes** and **Walt Strobel** tested all our streetcar traction motors using a special device called a Megohmmeter, or "megger." The purpose of this device is to check the insulation of our large traction motors. On PCC No. 322 we did quite a lot of work on the braking problem, which was caused by a brake relay part falling off and shorting out some other relays. This re-enforced our need to make sure we get all fasteners as tight as possible.

All this, as well as the required yearly checks, were done by our crews totaling around 15 people. If **YOU** would like to help and see how our cars really work, please come down to the CHSL barn on Tuesday or Saturday mornings or E-mail me at jprestholdt@comcast.net for another time. ☺

(MSM News & Views Continued from page 3)

presentation to the Scott County Historical Society, for Scott County Libraries, and to a senior's group in Burnsville.

More Photos for the Archive. **Russ Isbrandt** made available for copying 18 TCRT color slides from the estate of the late Kurt Petersen. All are new to the MSM collection.

My project to scan St. Paul *Pioneer Press* streetcar photos at the Minnesota Historical Society has resulted in the addition of 57 photos to the MSM archive, at no cost to the museum. More will follow.

John Diers and I recently visited the county historical societies in Brainerd, Sauk Rapids and St. Cloud, yielding another 20 previously unknown (to us) photos of the Brainerd and St. Cloud systems.

Minnesota Reflections Viewership Plateaus. **M**As has been previously reported, MSM's collection of 803 photos are the most viewed on the Minnesota Reflections website. The number of page views increased every month from their introduction in August, 2007 (2254 page views) until July 2008 (355,395 page views). That was the peak and since then it has bounced around between 276,000 and 352,000 page views.

Wirth Park Shelter Stalled. It had been hoped that the Wirth Park streetcar shelter would be moved to the Como-Harriet line this year. That now appears unlikely. The Park Board staff approached the management of Lakewood Cemetery, which expressed concern that the shelter would block the view from the cemetery. We don't know if that's the final word on the subject. Hopefully, it will be resolved by

next spring.

Overhead Wire Truck Relocated. Most members may not realize that our Museum owns a TCRT overhead wire repair truck. The cab-over 1938 Ford has a customized body designed to transport overhead wire components, and a hydraulic lift to raise a wood platform to overhead wire level. It survived the streetcars because the platform came in handy to change light bulbs inside Snelling Garage.

After the line truck was donated to the Museum by Metro Transit, it was stored inside a small building at the US Army's New Brighton Ammunition plant until a change in federal policy forced its removal (along with all the rolling stock stored there by the Minnesota Transportation Museum). For the last several years, it was stored inside a large warehouse at N. 7th Street and Lyndale Avenue, owned by Metro Transit. In October, we got word that the building was scheduled to be demolished. **Phil Epstein** arranged for the truck to be stored at Richfield Bus Company in Bloomington, and it was moved there on September 25th.

TCL Special Issue Sells Out. *Twin City Lines* magazine is normally available only to MSM members in good standing. An exception was made for the Summer 2008 issue, which celebrates the centennial of TCRT No. 1300. At Rod Eaton's request, 200 additional copies were printed and sold for the nominal cost of \$1.00. The idea was to educate the public, but we sold them out and cleared \$100 over our cost.

Why not sell every issue of TCL? We don't want to undercut membership. To avoid doing so, we'd have to charge \$7.50, which seems a little steep for a 24-page publication. That said, maybe it's worth a try. ☺

Pumpkins & Ghosts? It Must be October

Rod Eaton—Gen'l Supt

It's one thing to grow 300 pumpkins of assorted sizes and shapes, but it's another thing entirely to get them from Mankato to the north end of the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. But **Ken Albrecht**, assisted by **Jim Willmore** and several others, managed to do just that. After being trucked to the carbarn, the crop traveled the last mile on flats pushed by speeder. At the north end, **Scott Heiderich** and **Dave Irey** constructed fencing to define our event area and keep children safely inside.

On Saturday, October 25, Farmer Ken's Pumpkin Patch was ready. **Bill Arends**, **Aaron Isaacs**, and Farmer Ken himself were ready to assist children in choosing a pumpkin to take home. And **Angela Friedrichs** was armed with face paint and temporary tattoos to amuse children waiting for a ride back to the station. The day was beautiful. Now, would anyone make the trip?

By the end of the afternoon, we had carried almost 600 riders and about 240 pumpkins had gone home with happy children. We received many, many compliments from delighted families.

Sunday turned cold and damp. But even with poor weather, we managed to sell the remaining pumpkins. Thanks to **Rick Krense**, who spent most of the afternoon at the Pumpkin Patch huddled in his car trying to stay warm, and to **Paula Herzog**, who applied tattoos in the station. (Rick went on to spend a cold, damp night as Ghost Trolley crossing guard.)

All in all, our first Pumpkin Patch event was a success. With a few small improvements, I expect it to be on our October schedule again next year.

Halloween actually got off to a fun start several days before the Pumpkin Patch when about a dozen volunteers gathered at the carbarn for a streetcar decorating party. **Mike Helde**, **Rolly Ehrenberg**, **Bernie Braun**, **Bruce Gustafson** and his son **Eric**, **Keith Anderson** and his friend **Leslie**, **Scott** and **Kathy Heiderich**, **Bob Bayers** (and Ollie), and **Bill Arends** made TCRT No. 1300 and DSR No. 265 fiendishly festive.

As he does every year, **Karl Jones** decorated the Linden Hills station and platform area. And **Scott Heiderich**, with assistance from "Electric" **Mike Miller**, wired the tent with lights. **Dave Irey**, **Bill Arends**, and Scott's brother **Jon** were also on hand to lend a hand.

Dave French and **Mike Helde** were frightful--in a really good way! (see photo below)--as Dr. Frankentrolley and his assistant, Igor. **Kathy Helde** played the Wolfman and her friend, **Chrissy Senko**, was Dr. Frankentrolley's monster. And **David Gepner** was great as the frantic "Streetcar Official." We've become accustomed to the terrific job Dave and Mike do each year. They obviously enjoy their roles, and they make the performance seem effortless. But they begin preparations weeks before opening night, working on lines, assembling costumes and props, and planning lighting and effects. Ghost Trolley wouldn't be Ghost Trolley without their contribution.

Ghost Trolley is labor intensive, requiring a large operating crew each night. But again this year, all positions were filled with enthusiastic volunteers. Its fun and incredibly gratifying to see everyone working together to make the event successful. Thanks to all of you, and special thanks to Lead Foremen **Bill Arends**, **Keith Anderson**, **Jerry Olsen**, and **John Dillery**. ☺



Please mark Wednesday, December 10th on your calendar and plan to attend our Museum's annual holiday party at the Isaacs carbarn, Linden Hills (Minneapolis). This fun evening starts at 7 PM—nothing formal planned, just some nice treats (provided by the attendees) and good fellowship. If you attend we ask that you also bring some canned goods for the local food shelf—this has been a yearly tradition here at MSM.

What's Happening?

December 6 & 7	Holly Trolley featuring Santa Claus at CHSL 1-4 PM
December 10	Annual holiday party at Isaacs Car barn, Lake Harriet, Minneapolis—7 PM to 9 PM
March 12	MSM Annual Meeting, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, Minn. 7 PM
April	Training and recertification sessions—schedules to be announced
May 1	Start of ESL operating season
May 3	Start of weekend operations at CHSL

Excelsior Streetcar Line News & Notes*Bob Johnson & Bruce Kobs*

The Excelsior Ghost Trolley. The Excelsior Streetcar Line in cooperation with the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society operated a Ghost Trolley Friday and Saturday, October 24 and 25. For the first time we operated two streetcars during a special event. The sequence of operation put TCRT No. 1239 parked closest to Water Street followed by DSR No. 78. New this year was a 104-foot picket fence at the Water Street stop, which acted as a safety barrier for the crowds.

We loaded 78 passengers for each series of runs to Excelsior Blvd. The operating crews for Friday and Saturday were **Marv Krafve, Teresa Babler, Clyde Stephens, Denn Evans, Todd Bender, Clyde Hawkins, Chip Kempainen, Bob Johnson** and **Bruce Kobs**. As the cars proceeded to Excelsior Blvd., sixty volunteers of the historical society staffed scenes along the right-of-way which included a pumpkin patch, a dentist pulling teeth on patients, brides looking for husbands, a baseball team, Dracula with live corpse stepping out of a coffin, hobos under the bridge, trapeze acts hanging from the bridge overhead. At the end of the line witches, with a large fire under a witches cauldron, would board the stopped streetcars to add excitement to the passengers.

At the Water Street end Gary's Auto had a stage on which a talent show entertained the waiting passengers. A record 1,411 passengers rode the ESL Ghost Trolley during the two nights.

Thanks to our ESL Volunteers. Another ESL operating season is now over and we would like

to offer our sincere gratitude to those volunteers who supported us "above and beyond" by activities in addition to regular streetcar operations. High on the list are those volunteers that have come out to decorate our streetcars for the special events. Thanks to **Teresa Babler, Denn Evans, Mike Corbett, Steve Hamberg, Marsh Ginthner, Todd Bender, Bruce Kobs,** and **Darlene Johnson** for spending the hours necessary to create a festive presence of our cars.

Bruce Kobs managed the construction of the new fence along the track at ESL's Water Street terminus. This fence is an excellent crowd control feature and also has improved the appearance of this end of our line. The fence was funded by a generous grant from a senior home and a donation from the Excelsior and Lake Minnetonka Historical Society.

Thanks to **Ken Albrecht, Tom Fairbairn, Jim Willmore, Marsh Ginthner** and **George Ittner** for their dedicated work on Winona 10, and their willingness to pitch in when emergency maintenance and repairs have been necessary. And thanks to **Clyde Stephens** and **Chip Kempainen** for taking care of routine maintenance of our two ESL streetcars.

Thanks to **Bill Graham** who on one day's notice repainted the new door on the car barn. Bill has also been working on refurbishing a headlight for Winona No. 10 and fabricating a new one for No. 1239.

Many others have contributed during the season that we failed to mention in this report. All of you contributed a lot of effort and I regret any omission, which is accidental. ☺

(Thanks to all... Continued from page 1)

Our security expert, **Karl Jones**, makes many unplanned trips to the barn to straighten out security issues. And this summer, he researched and procured our new radios. Thanks, Karl.

There are several members who are always involved, always available when called, always ready and more than willing to participate and contribute. **Ken Albrecht, Bill Arends, Bob Bayers, Tom Fairbairn, Roy Harvey, Dave Irey, Kay Kullberg,** and **Jim Willmore** all come to mind.

And I know there are others I've inadvertently left out. The fact is, the museum wouldn't work without the time and talent, consideration and contributions of all of you. So thanks, everyone, for another great year. ☺

A special photo supplement, with photos supporting some of the articles in this newsletter, will be sent to all who have e-mail addresses in a week or so. Be on the lookout for it.