

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



May—2011

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## Busy Spring in our 40th year

- *We've done a lot so far this year. But we can always use more help. Please help us out by volunteering for a special project when we send the call out.*
- *Many thanks to all our volunteers for your dedication.*
- *Thanks to all our members for your loyal support by renewing your Museum membership each year.*
- *We're still receiving donations to the Winona No. 10 fund and the Isaacs carbarn improvement fund. Please donate if you haven't done so yet.*



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**Masthead Photo:** Here's TCRT No. 1239 posing in 2004, right after the car was placed in service on MSM's Excelsior Streetcar Line. Built in 1907 at TCRT's 31st Street shops, No 1239 has enjoyed a renewed life since 2004 providing base service on ESL.  
(MSM Photo Archive)

## A Busy Spring

Bill Arends—General Supt.

Planning, preparation, maintenance and scheduling for the upcoming operating season are almost finished. As I write this, major projects are underway. The deteriorating platform at our Linden Hills station has been torn out; thanks to **Dave Irey**, it's been hauled away. A new platform is under construction under the leadership of **Ken Albrecht** and will be ready when we open for 2011 operations on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

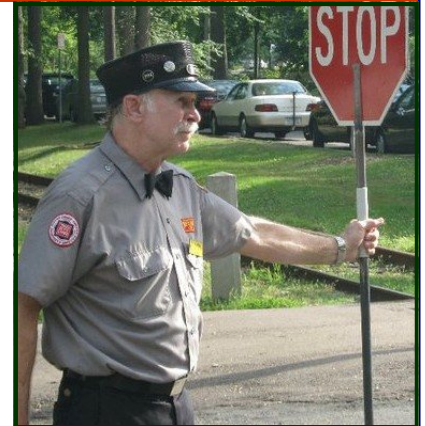
Two utility poles which were damaged during the winter at the Excelsior Streetcar Line are in the process of being replaced. Thanks to **Bob Johnson's** coordinating this project and **Scott Heiderich's** overhead wire expertise, our ESL line will be ready for operation beginning May 5<sup>th</sup>.

The interior of our Linden Hills Station on the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line is undergoing significant spiffing-up. In preparation for this project **Karl Jones** cleaned up the basement of the station and moved the furniture into the basement. **Eric Neumann** and **Jonathan Knisely** have spent countless hours dismantling the displays cases, cleaning and painting the walls, reassembling the displays and rearranging the floor plan. After the floors have been refinished, the furniture will be returned to the station with the new and improved Linden Hills station ready for the beginning of our 40<sup>th</sup> year of operations.

Another upgrade to our station at CHSL this year is a new and improved cash register. With barcode scanning capabilities, the operation of the cash register will be simplified. But like anything new, additional training is necessary. **Charles Barthold**, our Merchandise Manager, has programmed the cash register, prepared barcodes for the merchandise and provided training for the foremen.

Under the leadership of our team of trainers, headed by Training Superintendent **Chris Heck**, our foremen have been re-certified to operate the streetcars at both of our streetcar lines. The foremen will be re-certifying our operators on their first shift of operation this season. A big Thank You to all foremen for assisting with the operator re-certification process. With a significant number of people (25 to 30 at last count) expressing an interest in learning to become operators, the trainers are grateful for your assistance.

A lot of work remains to be done before we get our streetcars rolling for the season. A few more maintenance checks on the streetcars. Finishing touches on the platform and the Linden Hills station. Adjustments to the overhead wire where the new poles have been installed. But we're almost there. I'm looking forward to seeing my trolley riding friends again: **Hans, Clark, Samantha, Mason, Toben**, to name just few. See you in May. ☺



## 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 inter-urban 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**  
 May—2011

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor  
 Bill Graham—Distribution

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

Deadline for submitting items for the next issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** is May 20, 2011.

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**From the Front Platform — Thoughts on Our Museum**

Dave French — Chair, MSM Board of Directors

Hi everybody! In September, 1951 *Collier's Magazine* published an article entitled "How Mobsters Grabbed a City's Transit Line." The article opened by reporting that at a December, 1950 special meeting of the stockholders of Twin City Rapid Transit in Minneapolis, company president Charles Green was frisked by four off-duty city detectives and relieved of a revolver. Despite his indignant protests that "a certain politician warned a friend of mine I 'should be careful to look behind me.'" Mr. Green was forced to face his stockholders without his "nickel-plated gat" because Minnesota law prohibited carrying a concealed weapon. (By the way, if you would like a copy of this article, please contact me and I will mail it to you.)

In March, 2011 I faced approximately 35 members of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum at our annual meeting which was held at the Firefighters Memorial Hall and Museum in Minneapolis. I gave my State of the Museum presentation and am pleased to report that unlike Mr. Green I did not feel it necessary to "pack a heater" for protection. For those of you who were unable to attend this informative meeting (and you missed a very enjoyable tour of the museum and a great presentation about streetcars in Duluth-Superior by Aaron Isaacs), here are some highlights of my presentation.

**What are we doing well?**

- MSM is doing a good job of fulfilling our vision to provide visitors with a vivid visual and emotional experience that educates and entertains them and encourages them to ride again and become members and volunteers.
- We are averaging about 41,000 riders a year for both of our railways. This is no great increase or decrease compared to the last several years.
- In 2005 when MSM was created, we had 208 members; we now have approximately 303, a 45% increase.
- In 2010 we trained 12 new Operators and five new members signed-up to help with the Winona No. 10 restoration project.
- We have over 9,600 photos in our collection and 1,135 are on the Minnesota Reflections website.
- We completed the 42<sup>nd</sup> St. grade crossing replacement and the installation of water service and sprinklers in the Isaacs Car barn.

**What are some challenges for MSM in 2011?**

- In 2010 we had enough Operators number-wise, but still struggled to fill some shifts to the optimum complement of four crewmember at CHSL and two crewmembers at ESL.
- More people now only volunteer one or two shifts per month rather than three or four as in past years.
- More people now do not wish to volunteer on second shift on weekends and holidays.
- Many Operators prefer to volunteer only on weeknights.
- Many Foremen will not sign up as an Operator.
- Many of our operating personnel now wait till the last minute to sign up for a shift.

The Operations Committee is studying these problems but the solutions may be hard to determine.

*(Continued on bottom of next page)*





## Excelsior Streetcar Line News and Update

*Bruce Kobs — Superintendent*

New for 2011 is the Thursday afternoon farmer market's move from Lyman Park, adjacent to ESL's Water Street platform, to the Mt. Calvary church's parking lot on George Street. The relocation is the result of the sale of a portion of Lyman Park to Hennepin County so they can build a new Excelsior Library. The library permit has been delayed because the city of Excelsior requested a change in the exterior design of the new library, but the Farmer's market move will still take place. Ridership on ESL for the farmer's market in 2010 was 1762, so we need to re-attract our ridership this year. Our streetcar tracks are located one and one half blocks from the new market location and cannot be seen from the new temporary location. Therefore, we will need to have a booth at the new farmer's market location in order to let potential passengers know about our operating location and encourage them to walk the extra distance to ride our car and take a carbarn tour. This change will require a three person crew for Thursday afternoons. If you are a retired volunteer, or a non operating person, we sure could use you on our Thursday afternoon streetcar crew.

Last winter a snow plow accidentally damaged a line pole at the Excelsior Boulevard end of our line. This required replacement of the pole and reattaching our overhead line. Thanks to **Bob Johnson** for his many hours of time contacting parties involved in this replacement. In a related matter, the ESL overhead trolley wire is in need of serious work. Starting this year, **Scott Heiderich** and **Mike Miller** will be heading up a crew to repair the overhead line at Excelsior this summer. Bruce Kobs will be calling every person on the Excelsior team to help accomplish this task. Please volunteer for some aspect of this very necessary project. If enough people are interested, a course will be taught on the science and maintenance of an overhead streetcar line. Ⓡ



## MSM News & Views — News of our Museum's Administration and Operations

*Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Secretary and Superintendent of Operations*

**Donations Received.** Many thanks to the following Museum members who have sent in donations over the last few months. (This is a belated thanks—I missed acknowledging all donations made in January.)

**General Fund:** John Cartwright, Sharon Deblieck, John DeWitt, Scott & Kathy Heiderich, Ed McGlynn, Bob Powell, Gerald Robertson, Dick Niemiec, Barb & John Risken, and Carl Barthelemy.

**Carbarn Improvement Fund:** John Heintl, Hal Johnson, Dick Levering, John Prestholdt, Jill Seinola, and Joe Plante & Eric Neumann.

**Winona No. 10 Restoration Fund:** George Ittner, Bob Johnson, and Marv Krafve.

**Special Thanks.** A very special thanks to the 20th Century Electric Railway Foundation (\$10,000) and the Winona Foundation (\$10,000) for their extremely generous support to the Winona No. 10 restoration fund. Also many thanks to the Weck Charitable Trust for their most generous donation to the general fund.

**Welcome New Members.** We offer a big **WELCOME** to the MSM family to the following new members: **Judge Peter Albrecht, Alan Beck, Lloyd Berger, Ben Franske, Andrew Balfour, Dich Rach,** and **Holly Wetzel.** All these new members are also enrolled in our Operator training course at CHSL. Ⓡ

**(From the Front Platform** *Continued from page 2)*

**G**ood news. Almost half of our active volunteers have less than 10 years of service. Hopefully they will stay active for years to come.

**C**an we push forward to install a bathroom in the Isaacs Carbarn before we start the building expansion? As your Board Chair, I would like to pursue this in 2011 for the health and safety of our volunteers.

**W**here are the leaders? We have several leadership vacancies right now, including Chief Mechanical Officer and Chief Engineer. Some have stepped up recently to fill critical jobs. Many thanks to: **Keith Anderson**, our new Treasurer; **Bill Arends**, our General Superintendent; and, **Kristin Bender** who is now our bookkeeper. We need more members to "take their turn" in a leadership position. How about **YOU**?

In 2011 the Board will spend less time dealing with routine operational issues which should be handled by the Superintendents. Your Board will spend more time on long-range planning, fund raising, and the recruitment of MSM officers.

**C**onclusion: **MSM is financially sound and continues to grow and try new events to keep our customers coming back and attract new riders. Thanks to all of our members for making it happen!**

See you on the car! Ⓡ

**What's Happening?**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| May 5  | Beginning of ESL's operating season                                       |
| May 7  | Beginning of CHSL's weekend service                                       |
| May 7  | Streetcar cleaning at CHSL. Cleaning starts at 9 AM at the Isaacs carbarn |
| May 13 | Beginning of CHSL's daily service   |
| May 29 | Classic automobile & truck rally at CHSL 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM              |
| May 30 | Memorial Day "early bird" service at CHSL starts at 9 AM                  |

**Shop Update** — News from our George K. Isaacs and Excelsior Carbarns

John Prestholdt — MSM Shop Foreman

We were fortunate to be able to have the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board help us clear the near record snow fall from the car barn leads and switch in early March, 2011. This allowed us to swap No. 1300 and No. 265, getting No. 265 into the warm barn so we could begin its preventive maintenance. As soon as the car was in the barn we found a big problem: the trolley retriever bracket, screwed to the back window sill, had both screws (no lag bolts) rusted completely through. Thanks to **Mark Brothen**, **Jim Willmore** and **Ken Albrecht**, we dug out the bolt parts, replaced them with a threaded insert and threaded rods, and filled the hole with epoxy, allowing the retriever to be re-attached and the PM to continue.

Now for the big project for the year. As some of you know, the platform at CHSL's Linden Hills station was built in 2006 from **Ken Albrecht's** plans and was to be used only for two or three years. For the last two years I have been having **Jim Otto** replace boards almost every Tuesday morning to ensure that the platform is safe. Well, starting Tuesday, April 11th the Tuesday crews from CHSL and ESL combined to remove the old platform untreated wood down to the foundation ties and rebuild the platform from the ground up. From ESL we had **Ken Albrecht**, **Howie Melco**, **Scott Ingram**, **Steve Mages**, **Mark Brothen**, **Marv Krafve**, **Dick Zawacki**, **Jim Peshong** and **Tom Magruder**. The CHSL Tuesday crew consisted of **Jim Otto**, **Scott Heiderich**, **Bill Arends**, **Dennis Stephens**, **Neil Howes**, **Keith Lindberg**, **Russ Isbrandt**, **Dave Irey** and **John Prestholdt**. Most of the ESL crew are all new members, so a special thanks to them as well as a big thank you to all who worked on this important project. Hopefully the project will be completed by the time this issue of the *Currents* is sent out, since the weather has been a problem this spring. *(Be on the lookout in the next week for a special photo supplement showing the progress on the platform project. Ed.)*

As all who have operated at CHSL know, the old platform was able to "eat" tokens from anyone who might drop them, so we all knew we might find the proverbial gold mine under the boards. Well we didn't find enough to pay for all the screws and lumber, but it was a nice haul. We found over 190 tokens (with a lot more blown-away into the woods when we used the leaf blower to clean out the area) and over \$3.30 in coins. We had a lot of trouble finding these coins among the five-year accumulation of leaves, gum wrappers, and just general dirt. The tokens that are still in good shape will be put back into circulation while the change will go into the pop fund we have in the CHSL refrigerator. I also thank **Dave Irey** who was able to dispose of most of our old scrap wood by bringing it the Jordan Threshing Show grounds for them to use as fuel for their steam tractors later this summer. A great way to conserve our costs and reuse some of that old scrap wood. ☺

Training  
2011

Training in 2011 has begun. **(Above Left)** Here's the first group of Foreman involved in recertification training. Training Chief **Chris Heck** is standing in the aisle. **(Above Right)** The group of new Operator trainees listen attentively as Chris talks about what to expect. *(Both photos by Jim Vaitkunas)*