

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



February 2007

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## Calling all Volunteers

- *Start talking up volunteering to your friends, relatives and neighbors*
- *If you are a newly joined MSM member consider volunteering with YOUR Museum*
- *New Operator Training will start in mid-April at both CHSL and ESL*
- *We also need people in our shop and on the line*
- *We will continue our Wednesday afternoon ops at CHSL*
- *Many thanks to each of you for volunteering in 2006—see you in 2007!*

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**Masthead Photo:** TCRT No. 359 glides to a halt at the Linden Hills Boulevard stop of the Como-Harriet line ca. 1951. This photo was taken at approximately the north end of our Isaacs carbarn. (MSM Photo Archives)

## General Superintendent's News and Notes

**“Como-Harriet Streetcar Line -- George K. Isaacs Carbarn.”** This spring we'll have a dedication ceremony, but the sign is over the doors now, so I'd say the name is official. Of course, it's been George's carbarn for a long time. Ask any of the guys who work there. Putting his name over the doors seems only right.

I stopped in the barn one morning last week to see how the crew was doing with No.1300. They had the front end open, and everyone seemed pleased that time hasn't been too unkind. There's some damage, of course, but nothing our guys can't handle. But look beyond the dust and the rust and you find yourself one hundred years in the past. This is the technology, the materials, and the craftsmanship of a century ago. This old streetcar was once part of a bright and exciting future. It played a major role in the history of the Twin Cities.

The purpose of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum is to preserve this history, share it, and make it relevant. That's a tall order for a relatively small museum. Fortunately, we make up in enthusiasm what we might lack in numbers.

There was a lot of discussion last summer about the shortage of streetcar operators. The simple truth is we could use more operators. Jim Otto reminded me that the pool he calls for scheduling has been shrinking each year for the last few years. If you know of anyone who might be interested in becoming an operator, please talk to them. Running streetcars is undeniably fun. But I think most operators equally enjoy delivering their standup at the end of the line.

Over the past few months we've gained a number of new members. I encourage them, and everyone else, to consider becoming active volunteers. We'll conduct new operator training sessions this spring. And there are many other ways you can put your talents and interests to good use. I mentioned the repair work underway on No.1300--you don't need to be especially handy with tools to help out. In the Excelsior shop, Winona No. 10 is slowly being transformed from cabin back to streetcar. Restoration work will be gearing up this spring, and again, no special skills are required to help out with this exciting project.

There are many other ways you can pitch in. We want to hold a 100th birthday celebration for No. 1300 next year, and we have a carbarn to dedicate this spring. A volunteer survey will come your way soon. But there's no reason to wait. If you'd like to discuss possibilities or get your name on the operator trainees list, contact me at rpeaton@comcast.net or 763 576 0608. **Rod Eaton—General Supt.**

## Membership Renewals

**During the period February through May over three-quarters of our memberships come due for renewal. To speed up the process and prevent excess postage costs we ask that when you receive your renewal notice to please return it with your dues payment as soon as you can. That will save your Museum costs to send out 2nd and 3rd notices.**

## 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*  
February 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 March 20, 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 inquiries by e-mail to: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)

**Sprinkler System Update**
**Keith Anderson**

**M**SM recently completed the installation of a sprinkler system at the Excelsior car barn under the direction of Bob Johnson. We did this to provide protection from fire, since the contents of our car barns (historic streetcars) are truly irreplaceable. Fires have destroyed important collections at other museums around the country.

Now we're turning our attention to the facilities at the Como Harriet Line. This site is more difficult because we don't have a water main running right next to the building like we did at Excelsior. We need to connect to a water main at least six inches in size to provide sufficient flow to our system that will be installed in the Isaacs car barn. At CHSL we have two possible water main service options. The first is to connect to a water main in Queen Avenue at the top of the retaining wall. The second is to connect to a water main south of the bridge on Linden Hills Blvd. We've discussed both options with the City Waterworks personnel and with construction contractors. Both options are expensive, but we've tentatively settled on the first option because we think it will be less costly.

**T**here is a question about the adequacy of the water pressure and flow in this water main, however. A preliminary flow test seems to show that there's insufficient volume, perhaps because the pipes are scaled up or because there's a valve closed in the vicinity. We're working to resolve that question. Assuming we can solve the pressure and flow capacity question, the project will involve connecting a service line to the water main in Queen Avenue, at a point just north of the north end of the Isaacs car barn. Then the contractor will dig a shaft about 35 feet deep and 3-5 feet in diameter on the east side of the street, with a caisson boring rig. Next the contractor would excavate a pit at the north end of the car barn and push a casing west to intercept the shaft. A six inch water main would be installed in the shaft and casing. The water line would enter a small service room built into the northeast corner of the car barn. The service room would contain the valves and sprinkler equipment. The project also would involve running a sewer line down the hill to a sewer main located in West Lake Harriet Blvd. This would allow us to have running water in the car barn with a sink and a flush toilet. Boy, would that be a plus!

**N**ow, hold onto your hat! We have preliminary cost estimates for this, and they total about \$100,000! We're working on engineering questions and starting to plan a fund raising operation.

**Excelsior Report**
**Bob Johnson & Bill Graham**

**T**he Excelsior Streetcar Line completed 2006 with good growth in the charter and special run segments of our business. Special runs are specially negotiated for other organizations in support of their activities. In 2006 we supported the International Furnishings and Design Association (IFDA) as part of their restoration of an 1890's home in Excelsior. Guests received a ticket for the streetcar as part of their registration fee. We also ran No. 1239 in support of the Excelsior/Lake Minnetonka Historical Society (ELMHS) Halloween ghost trolley. The ELMHS put

up activity tents, furnished costumed riders for the streetcar and decorated the line. These special runs are a very important part of our business, contributing about half of our total rider ship revenue for the year when combined with other charters.

**T**CRT No. 1239 ran most of 2006 giving Duluth No. 78 a well-earned rest in the car barn. The new wheels under No. 1239 performed well and the car is a popular attraction. No. 78 has been a mainstay at Excelsior since it was transferred to Excelsior from

*(Continued on page 5)*

**MSM News Update****Louis Hoffman — Senior Superintendent**

**N***ew Memberships and Donations.* We welcome new members **George Bergh, David Brostrom, Donald Christle** (former motorman at East Minneapolis and Nicollet Stations), **Mary Ann Corbey, Bob Erickson, Gary and Sandy Foss, Dutton Foster, Bruce Gustafson, Martha Head, Bob Kroening, Harry Lee, Bob Mirick, Bruce Smith, and Lawrence Wagner.** These new memberships bring the total number of members to 238.

**W**e also 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. This year's Annual Appeal is dedicated to the Car barn Security Fund. With a complete security system (protection from both fire and intrusion) installed and operational at the Excelsior Car barn and Shops, attention now focuses on the George K. Isaacs Car barn and Shops at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. The Isaacs complex has an aging but functional intrusion protection system but no protection against the ravages of fire, deadly fire that has devastated two other trolley museums in the last few years. Complicating the project—and adding substantially to the cost of the Isaacs complex upgrade—is the need to bring city water into our hard-to-reach location. See Keith Anderson's column on page 2 for details on the complexity of this important project.

To date, we've received \$17,688 from 49 members and friends to the Car barn Security Fund, the General Fund, for the George K. Isaacs sign above the car barn doors, and for our membership in the Excelsior Chamber of Commerce: **Ken Albrecht, Doug Anderson,** matched by the IBM Foundation, **Bill and Rose Arnds, Tom Beaumont, Douglas Beedon, Ray Benzen, Jr., Kathleen Best, Glen Bottoms, Erik Brom, David Brostrom, Mary Ann Corbey, Virginia Isaacs Cover, Kent and Shari Deblieck** (in memory of the long-time member and volunteer **Harold Daland**), **John DeWitt, Blair Dollery, Rod Eaton, Steve Eberly, Bob Erickson, Dennis Fischer, Charles Fritzen, Karen and Will Graham, Scott and Kathy Heiderich, Louis Hoffman** (in memory of his father, **Seymour Hoffman**, Chicago Transit Authority badge No. 4418), **Aaron Isaacs** (in memory of **Seymour Hoffman**), **Russ Isbrandt, Bob, Kirsten, Andy, and Erik Jacob, Bob Johnson, Hal and Katie Johnson, Kelly Klecker and Amy Skare, Bruce Kobs, George Kotsonas, Mark Krafve, Thomas Lowry, Charles McCarthy and Flauren Ricketts,**

**Bob Mirick, Gary Neunsinger, Russell Olson, John Prestholdt, Fred Raiche, Judge James and Leanna Rogers Clifford Scholes, Andrew Selden, Dennis Stephens, Martin Van Horn, Dave VenHuizen, and Sven Wehrwein.** That leaves nearly 200 members from whom we haven't heard!

**H***oliday party.* The Museum's annual holiday party, in addition to allowing members to share holiday cheer, resulted in the donation of 59 pounds of food and \$45.00 in cash to the Joyce Uptown Food Shelf. Thanks to everyone who pitched in.

**H***olly Trolley in 2007 anyone?* Our Holly trolley 2005 experimental didn't repeat in 2006—our plans were a bit too big for the first year of a new event; it didn't do very well considering the resources that we expended (although it did make a handsome profit even with less-than-expected ridership), and was very volunteer-intensive. In addition, there were weather-related operational issues that we overcame and that we'd need to plan for in the future. But it lacked the "critical mass" that the Halloween Ghost Trolley has and that any such endeavor needs.

Next year, there's some thought to having a three-day Holly Trolley on the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend (we operate on Saturday and Sunday anyway) and possibly the following weekend in connection with holiday-themed activities in the Linden Hills neighborhood. Now we need to think about the entertainment end of it. Any potential Santas, Mrs. Clauses, elves, or other thespians out there? One of the biggest shortcomings of the 2005 Holly Trolley was the lack of a coherent theme and of entertainment a la the Halloween Ghost Trolley.

The 2006 Halloween Ghost Trolley provided about fifteen percent of our income. If we could build up to the same for Holly Trolley, say over five years, there'd be that much more money for restoration and other worthy causes. Just think—about one third of our income from only seven or nine days of work! This is an expensive hobby that we have. There's always the pressure for more money for this worthy project or that worthy project. And many of us are bemoaning flat ridership. This is something that we can easily do to build up ridership and bring in money.

You may think, or even say, "Great idea! Someone should do it." But the last time we checked, there's no one with the name "someone" in the membership directory! Let that someone be *you*!! Share your ideas

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Shop Update

John Prestholdt — Shop Foreman

In early December we received a new sign for the car barn. One of George Isaacs's daughters, Virginia Isaacs Cover, donated the additional sign that identifies the car barns officially as **The George Isaacs Carbarn**. On January 9th, due to the warmer than usual weather, this sign along with the CHSL sign were mounted on the barn. Thanks to **Roy Harvey** for fabricating the mounting brackets and to **Aaron Isaacs**, **Russ Isbrandt**, and **Phil Settergren** and **Keith Lindberg** for helping get the signs onto the roof.

Also on December 9th we moved Duluth No. 265 back into the ready barn (even though we still have several wooden parts out for refinishing) and moved TCRT No. 1300 back into the maintenance barn to finish its re-siding. We did find several spots where there might be leaks on No. 265 and hopefully have fixed them. Now we will be working on the front section of No. 1300.

While we have two great crews on Tuesdays and Saturdays I would like to get some more people involved with the restoration and general servicing of the cars. So if anyone would like to start an evening work time, like Wednesday evenings, please send me an E-mail at [jprestholdt@comcast.net](mailto:jprestholdt@comcast.net) or call me at 952-922-7413. Note the evening can be almost any evening, not necessarily Wednesday.



**Men at work!** Aaron Isaacs (left) and Russ Isbrandt are on the roof while on the ground are Phil Settergren (L) and Keith Lindberg after installing the sign on the front of the Isaacs carbarn. (John Prestholdt photo)



**Progress on No. 1300.** Tom Fairbairn (left) and Russ Isbrandt have been part of the crew making good progress on the front end work of No. 1300. (Jim Vaitkunas photo)



**Winona No. 10 Update.** The car is a shell right now except for the floor boards. A lot of the wood is already finished and in storage. Are you interested in helping put the car back together? (Jim Vaitkunas photo)



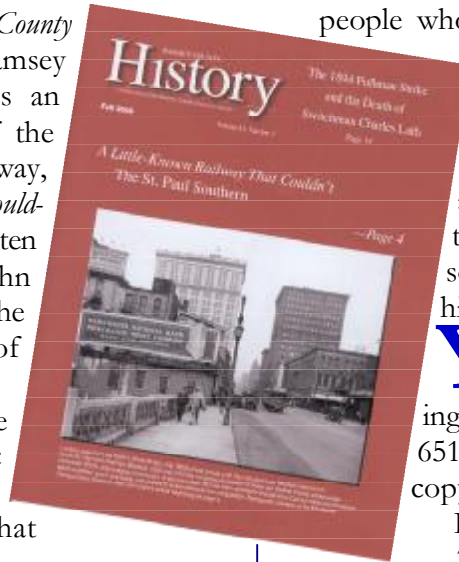
**A glimpse into the past!** Here are some of the items found in the wall space of Winona No. 10. Gum wrappers, Prince Albert cigarette papers, a lunch bag, the token and dime. One wonders the story behind these long-lost items.

## Saint Paul Southern Electric Rwy. History

The Fall 2006 issue of *Ramsey County History*, the journal of the Ramsey County Historical Society, features an excellent article on the history of the Saint Paul Southern Electric Railway, titled: *A Little known Railway that Couldn't—The St. Paul Southern*. It was written by our Museum's Historian, John Diers. John is a former Chair of the MTM Board, long-time member of MTM and member of MSM.

The well-written article tells the tale of this interurban electric railway that ran from St. Paul to Hastings—a pathetic railway that probably should not have been built.

The article is especially interesting as it has a fine series of photos. It also contains anecdotes from



people who remember the line when it operated giving a unique insight into the life and times of the little line.

The article is highly recommended to all who don't know much about this obscure line (one of only two true electric interurban lines in Minnesota) and who want a concise and good history of the St. Paul Southern.

You can get a copy of the Fall 2006 Issue of *Ramsey County History* by going to their website [www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com) or call 651-222-0701. MSM Members can order a copy (they're \$8 each + postage) from:

Ramsey County Historical Society  
323 Landmark Center  
75 W. Fifth Street  
St. Paul, MN 55102

### (Excelsior Update Continued from page 2)

the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. As time is available No. 78 will receive some long overdue maintenance.

We are in discussions with the ELMHS regarding a joint effort to beautify our line. A ticket booth from the old Excelsior Amusement park has been restored as part of the effort. Our main goal is to improve the appearance of our Water Street platform to make it more attractive to visitors.

Sincere thanks to the operating and restoration personnel that supported ESL in 2006. We ran on time and did not have to cancel due to lack of volunteers. Restoration of Winona No. 10 made good progress. I appreciate the contribution of these dedicated people. I look forward to the coming season.

### Winona No. 10 Update

The woodwork from Winona No. 10 is just about finished. **Bob Dumas** and **Larry Wagner** finished taking out all the removable woodwork from above and below the windows, and **George Ittner** has finished stripping and repairing it. The only remaining woodwork are the outer faces of the two bulkheads. Larry figured out how to completely bare the inside surfaces of the exterior steel side sheeting. This will permit the lower five inches to be cut away and replaced so that corrosion can be eliminated.

Ever wonder what you might have found if you could go through the pockets of Winona residents of 75 years ago? **Bob Dumas** was sifting through the filth and debris behind the floor kick

boards and found some really fun stuff. There was a streetcar token labeled "Mississippi Valley Public Service Co." which would date from 1926 or later. Even more interesting was the Mercury Head dime with the inscription "One Dime" and the numeral "9" still visible on the back. It's worn so that the rest cannot be read. Any guesses how old it might be?

Bob also recovered a packet of roll 'em yourself cigarette papers in a red "Prince Albert Tobacco" cover, all in quite good condition. There were many sticks of very tired chewing gum, quite a few of which had been torn in half. In Depression times, Winonians would have wanted their gum to stretch as far as possible. Wrigley's Spearmint and "Black Jack" licorice flavored gum appear to have been the favorites. (See the photo on page 4.) Winona may have had a hobby shop in those days, because two small airplane propellers made of balsa wood were found. Neat stuff, eh?

A plan is being drafted that will lay out the remaining work to be done on Winona No. 10. With woodwork out of the way, work can begin on the carbody itself. The tear-down stage is about finished. Stripping, repairing, painting and building a replica Type 46 truck are ahead of us. Then the final work to fabricate the seats and put in the electrical and mechanical components.

Boy, it sounds like a lot—and it is. We sure could use your help to continue progress on Winona No. 10. If you are interested, call **Bill Graham** at 952-688-7255. Help make our history come alive!

**What's Happening?**

February 17	<b>MSM Board Winter Planning meeting</b>
March 13	<b>MSM Annual Meeting—7:00PM to 9:00 PM—Como Park streetcar station, St. Paul. Formal Announcement forthcoming</b>
April	<b>Streetcar Operator and Foreman training and recertification begins. Schedule to be announced</b>
May 5	<b>Begin weekend operations at CHSL and ESL</b>
May 18	<b>Begin daily operations at CHSL</b>

**(MSM News Update** *Continued from page 3)*

with us and, most importantly, let us know how *you* can help. Be part of that critical mass.

**R**eindeer Run Trolley. In our continuous quest to gain added revenue, at the last minute, we decided to operate during the Lifetime Fitness Reindeer Run, a race around Lake Harriet on December 2. The plan was to operate from 10:00 a.m., one-half hour after the race started, until business petered out. It was a cold day—the morning low was in the single digits. And business didn't peter out since there wasn't much to start with. Lessons learned include the fact that there weren't a lot of families with children (although enough for a few healthy trips given that there were about 5,000 runners), runners don't often have money on them (nowhere to carry it), and a streetcar ride isn't what many runners have in mind after a race (especially when they're sweaty and it's in the low double-digits at race-end). Still, we've approached the race promoters and sponsor Lifetime Fitness and proposed that, next year, the streetcar operate from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. to shuttle passengers to and from Lake Calhoun (parking in Linden Hills is horrendous during the race) and offering free rides to all runners with Lifetime Fitness promoting streetcar rides as part of the race promotion and paying us per passenger at a group rate. If the Holly Trolley returned, as outlined above, it could be extended to the weekend after Thanksgiving too. We think, and the race promoters agree, that the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line could make the Reindeer Run into one of the most unique running experiences in the world – after all, how many races feature a streetcar ride?

**N**otes from the Boardroom. The Museum's Board of Directors, which meets quarterly,

held its annual budget meeting on Saturday morning, December 9th at the Linden Hills Community Center. The Board adopted a balanced budget for 2007, with revenues and expenses budgeted for \$81,450. This budget estimates income conservatively and covers all anticipated operating expenses based on past budget history and planned changes. To balance the budget, the amount of operating funds dedicated to the restoration of Winona No. 10 was reduced and, at some point, continued work on this worthy project will require donations from members and friends. Before reviewing and adopting the budget, the Board also approved a set of budget principles that include:

Setting aside ten percent of income every year into a reserve fund for emergencies, opportunities, and long-term physical plan renewal needs (like rebuilding both streetcar lines in about forty years!). The Board has not, at this time, established a firm policy setting forth what these funds can be used for and under what circumstances. There was also a discussion of capping the amount of money set aside. But since it's only been done for one year and the amount of money in reserve is far from excessive, it was decided to defer that conversation until there was something approaching "too much money!"

Setting aside \$5,000 every year into a short-term track reserve fund that would be used, about every three to five years, to tamp, line, and level the track, to keep the recently completed work at Como-Harriet and the not-that-old railroad at Excelsior in top-notch condition.

Budgeting \$1,000 per year for a General Superintendent contingency fund.

Complete minutes of all Board meetings, as well as the Museum's By-laws and other important documents, are available at the Museum's website, [www.trolleyride.org](http://www.trolleyride.org).

The Railroad Club at the University of Minnesota is putting on the third annual **Gopher Rail show**. It is the group's biggest fundraiser with a full day of train photos and movies on the big screen. It's coming up on February 24th re on the East Bank of the UofM's Minneapolis campus. Much more info is on the club's website at [www.gopherrail.org](http://www.gopherrail.org). It will be bigger and better than ever before.