

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



April 2007

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## The 2007 Season is hard upon us!

- *Start talking up volunteering to your friends, relatives and neighbors*
- *If you recently joined MSM 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 a month!*

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**Masthead Photo:** TCRT No. 1239, beautifully restored, was out strutting her stuff at Excelsior during our 1st annual family picnic held on 10/15/06. What a beauty, eh? (Jim Vaitkunas Photo)

## We Have a new History Magazine !



After much discussion your Museum's Board of Directors has decided that we will publish our own quarterly magazine. The premier issue is due

out in late May or early June. This was a decision made with hesitation by some of us because it is a big step for our Museum to take. Luckily the editor of our magazine will be **Aaron Isaacs** who has had a great deal of experience and expertise in editing and publishing the joint MSM/MTM *Minnegazette* and the Association of Railway Museum's publication, *Railway Museum Quarterly*. Aaron writes:

Despite the *Twin City Lines* title of our new magazine, our new history magazine will cover electric railroading all over Minnesota, and even venture across the state line from time to time. There will be occasional railroad, bus and steamboat material, but 90 percent will be streetcars. Most of the subject matter will concentrate on Twin City Rapid Transit because there is so much available material. For that reason, it seemed perfectly reasonable to name it *Twin City Lines*. It also allowed us to modify the distinctive and familiar TCRT logo. Thank you **Rod Eaton** for stretching it lengthwise to better fit a magazine cover.

Another big reason why we felt that we needed to devote more space to electric railways was the amount of materials we had to leave out of the new book authored by **John Diers** and **Aaron Isaacs**, *Twin Cities by Trolley*. Although the book is the most comprehensive TCRT history since **Russ Olson's** *Electric Railways of Minnesota*, there was much we couldn't cover due to lack of space. The new magazine will go beyond the book with in-depth looks at the streetcar system. We'll really get into the different classes of streetcars, the stations (carhouses) and other facilities, the individual streetcar lines and all sorts of other juicy details. There will be regular features such as "then-and-now" photos, the Motorman's Grip (highlighting company paperwork) and vintage marketing pieces.

There will be more than just historic content. Because the magazine goes to public officials and other non-member friends of the Museum, the first couple of pages in each issue will summarize the latest MSM news. However, *Twin City Lines* isn't intended to replace or change the *Streetcar Currents*, which will continue. Long-time member and transit proponent **John DeWitt** will report on LRT and commuter rail transit news in the Twin Cities, bringing you behind the scenes info that doesn't make the newspapers.

So what happens to the *Minnegazette*? **Sandy Bergman** (production and layout) and Aaron will no longer be involved with it and we've returned all the railroad related photos and other materials to MTM. MTM wants to continue producing the *Minnegazette* and is looking for an editor. We wish them the best, because there are plenty of good railroad history stories to tell. And, just to clarify, you'll have to join MTM to receive the *Minnegazette* from now on. **Aaron Isaacs & Jim Vaitkunas**

**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**  
 April - 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 April 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)

**From the Front Platform**

*Jim Vaitkunas — Board Chair*

**The State of the Museum**

**T**his month my column will consist of a summarized version of the "State of the Museum" report I presented to the roughly 45 MSM members at our Museum's 2007 annual meeting held on Tuesday, March 13, 2007 in the historic TCRT Como Park waiting station in St. Paul.

**I**n my opinion the state of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum is good. Financially our Museum is solidly in the black with income easily exceeding expenses by a comfortable margin. This has allowed your Museum to set aside in 2006 over \$15,000 in funds to be used for future trackwork and to build a contingency fund for those times when we need some cash, for example, if we are offered an historic streetcar body and have to quickly remove it from the property. In our 2007 budget we allocated this same amount and will continue to do so to build up our strategic financial reserve.

The year 2006 witnessed quite a number of successes of which we all can be proud. These major accomplishments are:

- Held our 1st annual family picnic
- Installed ESL sprinkler system
- Wednesday CHSL ops a success
- Successful ghost trolleys
- CHSL interpretive signs put up
- CHSL "art deco" poster printed
- Track rebuilding project finished
- No. 1239 returns to service at ESL
- Work on Winona 10 re-starts
- Increased merchandising

These accomplishments clearly indicate the amount of hard work, perseverance and dedication of our over 100 volunteers as well as other MSM members who maybe didn't donate time as a volunteer but did contribute through donations and prompt payment of their members dues.

**W**hile we certainly should be proud of the accomplishments our Museum has enjoyed during 2006 and also 2005 when we became an independent Museum (Boy, what a busy 2 years, eh?), we do have some challenges facing us in the immediate future and for the long term. These are:

**M**aintaining Ridership. While ridership at the Excelsior Streetcar Line seems to have stabilized at around 5,500 annual passengers, ridership at

the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line has declined over the last 10-15 years to around 30,000 total annual passengers. (This is a trend that is prevalent among most smaller all-volunteer museums like ours, so we are not unique.) I won't go into all the possible factors contributing to this decline. Your Board recognizes the problem and will try, within our means (i.e., financial and personnel), to stabilize our ridership. Some ways to increase revenue are through special operations such as streetcar charters (we desperately need someone to market charters at both ESL and CHSL) and in other operations where we can charge a premium fare such as the Holly Trolley.

**O**perator Recruiting. We can't run streetcars without qualified operators. Over the last few years attrition in our Operator rolls (caused by deaths, people moving away, some simply dropping out) has been such that at the moment we have barely 50 Operators on our rolls when we really need around 70 Operators to comfortably fill our schedules without having to ask our current volunteers to work extra or reduce CHSL crew sizes on weeknights. This is something that we all need to work on. We all need to spread the word that we're an all-volunteer group and it's fun to operate our streetcars while also ensuring the continuance of almost-lost skills.



Photo by Don Curry

## MSM News Update

## Louis Hoffman — Senior Superintendent

**N***ew Memberships and Donations.* We thank **Bruce Kobs, James Quale and John Larkin** for upgrading their membership to lifetime status. The total number of members is now 237.

We 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: **Myles Jarrow, Bill Olsen, Phil Settergren, Ben McPheeters, Jim Otto, Angela & Bud Goldstein and Betty & Earl Anderson.**

To date, we've received \$17,858 from 56 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: That leaves nearly 200 members from whom we haven't heard! We still have a long way to go to raise the funds to install the sprinklers in the Isaacs car barn at Lake Harriet. Please give now and help us preserve our priceless streetcars.

### From the Board Room - *Louis Hoffman, Secretary*

**T**he February Board of Directors meeting was devoted primarily to the Board's Annual Planning Retreat. The Board discussed the two primary issues facing the Museum – the need for more members and volunteers and the need to increase ridership. On the membership and volunteer front: The Museum will continue to partner with other regional railroad and traction organizations to get membership information to their members (and information about membership in those organizations to you) in an effort to build our membership base closer to 300 members.

**John Diers** and **Rod Eaton** will spearhead an effort to bring the Museum's educational and operational missions to community education programs on streetcar history and motorman training. John has already done a streetcar history program for Washburn High School community education and thinks that it will bring in several members and volunteers. In addition, **Bill Graham** has done a more focused program in the Lake Minnetonka area.

**A** group of volunteers organized by **Aaron Isaacs** is calling all local members who aren't currently volunteers, including former volunteers, to find out what their interests and talents are and to try to slot them into a volunteer position. When this was done in the early 1990s, it resulted in about 15 new volunteers.

The biggest change will be a "mentoring" program developed and overseen by **Mike Helde, Aaron Isaacs,** and **Kathy Kullberg** that will work with and

follow new volunteers to ensure that their questions are answered and that they are being incorporated into the Museum's volunteer corps. The goal of this program is to fully welcome new members, make sure that their volunteer experience is good, and ensure that they don't get "lost."

**O**n the ridership front **Rod Eaton** and **Louis Hoffman** agreed to revise the Holly Trolley. Initial plans are to operate from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. on the Friday to Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend and possibly the following weekend in connection with events in Linden Hills and the Lifetime Fitness Reindeer Run. We know what operational issues there are because of the cold and snow and what worked and didn't work in 2005. Despite what didn't work, it's important to remember that the 2005 Holly Trolley turned in a profit of about \$1,200.

**O**ther ideas were discussed but no one volunteered to lead them. A prime example is reaching out to child care centers, park and recreation centers, schools, and senior citizen groups and residences to augment our charter and group business. This involves mailing and follow-up calling. There was discussion that, generally, most railroad museums are experiencing "flat" ridership levels and that those that are seeing increases are seeing them because of charters, group visits, and special events.

**A**s announced on page one, the Board also decided to end joint publication of the *Minne Gazette* with the Minnesota Transportation Museum. The Museum will publish and **Aaron Isaacs** will edit a new quarterly magazine called *Twin City Lines* that will focus on streetcar and electric railway history. It will include some boat, bus, and railroad content and will include major museum news. This new magazine will let Aaron do in-depth coverage of streetcar issues not permitted by the current *Minne Gazette* format. The mostly monthly *Streetcar Currents* will remain the primary source of Museum news and will be e-mailed or mailed as always.

Complete minutes of all Board of Director meetings are available at the Museum's website, [www.trolleyride.org](http://www.trolleyride.org).

### *Twin Cities by Trolley* book Update

The new TCRT book will be delivered to us from the printers on or about May 1st. Copies will be mailed and will also be available for pick-up shortly after that date. Stay tuned for more info.

Shop Update

John Prestholdt — Shop Foreman

Progress on the front-end work on TCRT No. 1300 has gone faster than most of us had expected. All the new siding has been installed and a first coat of yellow paint has been applied. The big "wooden" bumper has been installed and has been bolted to the frame. By the time you receive this issue of the Streetcar CURRENTS we will have attached the metal covers onto the wooden bumper. One thing to notice is a new rubber bumper located in the center of the big wooden bumper. A new one has been fabricated and mounted by Dennis Stephens of the Saturday crew. Thanks Dennis for some great work. We still need to get the final coat of paint on the wood and metal parts, reinstall all the small pieces of the car and do some pre operations maintenance and service to No. 1300 but should have it ready by the start of CHSL's operating season (May 5th) if not before.

The completion of the work on No. 1300 means that several of the Tuesday crew will be turning their skills to Excelsior to work on Winona No. 10. We are always looking for help so if working on our restoration project or simply general streetcar maintenance sounds interesting to you please contact me to see were you might be able to help. My home phone number is: 952-922-7413.



**Front end exposed!** Last fall here's how No. 1300's front end looked after the wood siding came off. We found a lot of wood rot and rusty steel that our shop forces treated and replaced. (John Prestholdt photo)



**Almost Finished!** The rebuilt front end of No. 1300 is almost done. Still to come is installation of the "golden glow" headlight and the rubber bumper on the front end. (John Prestholdt photo)



**Shop Work never ends!** Or—if it's not one thing, it's another department. No sooner did the major work get done on No. 1300 than our shop forces started work on refinishing pieces of Duluth No. 265 that were showing signs of wear and tear. Here we see some of the wood ends of No. 265's "peanut seats" being refinished. (John Prestholdt photo)



**A sure sign of spring!** After the spring freezes and thaws are over out comes the evidence that at one time dinosaurs roamed the land. Here we see two rails peeking through the broken pavement at the intersection of Xerxes Ave. and 50th St., about a mile away from our CHSL line. This is the leg of the wye where the **OAK-XERXES** cars reversed course for the trip back to downtown Minneapolis. (Aaron Isaacs photo)

Archives and History Notes

Aaron Isaacs — Museum Historian

**M**SM photo archive joins Minnesota Reflections. All across Minnesota are small county, town or independent historical societies and museums like MSM, each with its own photo collection. Until now, if one wanted to see their photos, it required an in-person visit. Now the power of the internet is bringing the best photos from these collections together for all of us to enjoy at a single website: <http://reflections.mndigital.org/> It's called the Minnesota Reflections project, undertaken by the Minnesota Digital Library and financed by federal grants.

Any small historical society can submit its 500 best photos. They will be professionally scanned. Low resolution scans are placed on the Minnesota Reflections website, where they can be searched by subject, date and keyword. The owner of the photos receives free scans, both high and low resolution. Other than the labor to compile and caption the photos, there is no cost to their owner.

As MSM's photo archivist, I saw this as a great opportunity to get a significant number of our photos scanned for free and made accessible to the public, so I applied last fall. We've now been accepted. I compiled an initial list of 570 photos. The Minnesota Digital Library assigned retired Minnesota Historical Society Photo Curator **Bonnie Wilson** to work with me. Bonnie has been a good friend to the museum over the years. We went through the photos and whittled them down to about 450. As this is written, the scanning is just being completed. The next step is to transfer the caption data from my FileMakerPro database to an Excel spreadsheet.

Sometime this spring, the photos should be accessible on the Minnesota Reflections website, and there should be a link to it from the MSM website.

**G**eorge K. Isaacs car barn sign. George's daughter Ginnie, who lives in New York, offered to fund a new sign, so everyone will know that the Linden Hills car barn is now named in honor of George. The last time she visited Minnesota, she met with her brother **Aaron Isaacs**, **John Prestholdt** and **Roy Harvey** to discuss sign design. They agreed to purchase a new sign to match the existing "Como-Harriet Streetcar Line" sign that hung over the car barn doors. Formerly centered, the old sign has been moved over the shop door and the new sign over the ready barn door. The manufacturer was Signarama, the same company that produced the interpretive

signs installed this year. **Roy Harvey** fabricated the brackets and both signs were hung in January. There will be a dedication ceremony later this year.

**S**treetcar Employee Records Donated. For years, **Larry Rolf**, Metro Transit's training manager has safeguarded a card file that records the history of each streetcar and bus operator badge number. TCRT (and later Metro Transit) recycled badge numbers when employees left service. When operators left service, they would assign the lowest available badge numbers to new operators. There is a card for each badge number, and some go back to the 1890s. Some numbers were assigned to a dozen or more operators over the years.

The cards are now in a file cabinet in Aaron Isaacs' basement. He is working on a project to link them with photos in the MSM collection of the same operators. This is a joint undertaking with the Minnesota Historical Society. They have the employee work history cards that we donated to them some years back. The cards contain the employee's name, badge number, start and end dates, work location and some other stuff. People use them to research their family histories. The goal is to link them to a photo of that same person, one they've probably never seen. When I get done with this, they will be able to do it on the internet. The value of these newly donated badge cards is that they tell us which employee had the badge number when. If we can date the photo accurately, we can put a name to the motorman who appears in the photo.

| Issued   | Number                        | Date Returned | Remarks   |
|----------|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| 3-9-91   | Waltz, Joe.                   | 7-1-31        | Pensioned |
| 1-11-34  | Streu, Ernie L.               | 4-8-34        | Laid off  |
| 10-29-42 | Paffrath, Lowell R.           | 11-21-42      | Res.      |
| 1-16-43  | Jarrett, Jr. Talley H.        | 6-14-43       | Res.      |
| 8-6-43   | Olsen, William J.             | 7-3-45        | Res.      |
| 10-26-45 | Edge, Alison, J. Miss.        | 8-30-46       | Res.      |
| 1-18-47  | Paine, Donald. (Pare Coll.)   | 8-16-47       | Res.      |
| 4-25-47  |                               |               | See 4805  |
| 9-13-47  | Carlson, James A.             | 6-12-48       | Dis.      |
| 8-7-48   | Mc Mellon, Arthur T.          | 1-25-49       | Res.      |
| 3-11-49  | Engle, Louis P. (Art to Lake) | 12-30-49      | See 1878  |
| 9-9-57   | Kuhn, Wayne R.                |               |           |

**What a neat coincidence!** Here's a sample of the employee badge record card. On the top is the number **4** and below are the dates and names of those who were issued this badge number down thru the years, in this instance starting in 1891! Interestingly, the holder of badge number **4** starting on 8-6-43 is our very own **Bill Olsen** who worked for TCRT as a Conductor while attending the University of Minnesota. Wow!

***What's Happening?***

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| April     | Streetcar Operator and Foreman recertification begins. See special supplement included with this newsletter for the schedule |
| May 3     | Begin Thursday afternoon operations at ESL   |
| May 5     | Begin weekend operations at CHSL and ESL   |
| May 18    | Begin daily operations at CHSL   |
| May 19-20 | Linden Hills festival—2-car operations at CHSL both afternoons   |
| May 28    | Memorial Day—CHSL special early bird operations begin at 9:00 AM   |

**General Superintendent's Notes***Rod Eaton—General Supt.*

All the snow has finally melted off of my garden railway, so spring must be here. That puts the start of streetcar operations right around the corner. At this time of year our first order of business is the continuing recruitment and training of new operators. The first session of the "Class of '07" is scheduled for Saturday, April 14. Right now, there is a small number of enthusiastic folks eager to begin. But there's always room for more.

**Jim Vaitkunas** e-mailed recruiting posters, and he'd be happy to resend one to you. Put it up where you work, where you shop, at your church, club, or anywhere people will see it. But posters and press releases can only do so much. If you've been talking to someone about becoming a Museum member and streetcar operator--or thinking about doing so--now's the time to follow up. Talking to your friends about the fun and rewards of streetcar operation is the best recruiting method possible. In fact, a couple of our new trainees are friends of existing members who encouraged them to join.

Don't worry that it's too late for a new volunteer to get involved in "spring training." We're looking at ways to continue to attract and train new operators throughout the year. One idea is to offer a "hands-on" experience at special Car barn Open Houses. These periodic events will make it easy for someone to see just how much fun it is to run a streetcar (under safe, close supervision). The hope, of course, is that some of these people will become active new members and volunteers.

With the start of a new season, our Crew Callers will become busy organizing schedules for our Como-Harriet and Excelsior railways. Each year, it seems, there are fewer operators to call. That's the reason we're putting so much emphasis on recruitment. But we can ease the operator shortage a bit if we all help out. If each of us took just one additional shift this season, it would make a difference.

On the subject of Crew Callers, you can help Jim and Mark out by returning their call. And you don't need to wait for their call—Mark and Jim will be happy to talk to you anytime.

We can look forward to having No. 1300 back on track this summer. The shop guys have done a wonderful job finishing the major body repair work. You'll find some new merchandise has been added to the assortment offered at the Linden Hills Station--thanks Charles. One of these new items is the new major book *Twin Cities by Trolley*, by **John Diers** and **Aaron Isaacs**. It should be a big seller, and thanks to John and Aaron, the Museum makes a nice profit on our sales.

We're also looking at ideas to increase revenue, including encouraging more Wednesday afternoon group sales, finding ways to promote streetcar charters, adding Santa to the Holly Trolley, and creating new special events like a Moonlight Ride and a Family Fun Day. If you have ideas or are interested in working on these projects, please let me know.

***See you soon at Lake Harriet!***

**Wanted! ebay Trader**

MSM has a large number of items we would like to sell on-line. There are surplus copies of historic photos and artifacts such as out-of-state tokens, used books and slides, etc., that could bring the museum much-needed revenue. But someone has to do the work of placing them on eBay and running the sales. It'll take only a few hours a week. Can you help? If so, contact Aaron Isaacs at 612-929-7066 or aaronmona@aol.com