

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



October 2008

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



## Help out with our Special Events!

- Volunteer to help fill the crew requirements for the various events
- When you get the promotional flyers for the special events put them up in as many locations as you can
- Encourage your friends and neighbors to attend the special events or just to ride on the weekend



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**Masthead Photo:** This is the beginning of our Museum. Here is a shot of No. 1300 taken in April, 1963 on the yard tracks of the Minnesota Transfer Railway in St. Paul, approximately where the current Amtrak station is now located. This photo shows an early test run of No. 1300 using the "portable" power supply shown at the rear. Note that the volunteers have yet to finish painting No. 1300—there's no number on the car's side yet. (MSM photo archive)

## General Superintendent's Notes

Rod Eaton

I spoke with **Dave Irey** the other day and asked if he'd be interested in coordinating a car show event for us again next summer. Fortunately, he is. So look for another afternoon of Classic Cars and Streetcars on our June 2009 schedule at Como-Harriet. It should prove to be as popular as this year's.

You've heard talk about the importance of special events as a way to raise awareness and income. I think we all recognize the success of our annual Ghost Trolley. It not only generates revenue, it's also a lot of fun for us and the community. **Dave French, Mike Helde**, and others are working to create another entertaining program to amuse and amaze. There'll be more detailed information coming to those of you who volunteer to operate, sell fares, flag the crossing, and do all of the other tasks necessary to make Ghost Trolley work. Your enthusiasm and support are essential.

Our first ever Pumpkin Patch event, running Saturday and Sunday, October 24 & 25, gives children the opportunity to ride to the end of the line where they'll get off the car and choose their very own Halloween pumpkin to take home. I've already mentioned that **Ken Albrecht** grew pumpkins especially for our event. **Ken, Jim Wilmore**, and others are now preparing to transport the pumpkins to Linden Hills prior to that weekend. One of our new members, **Paula Herzog**, has expressed interest in doing face-painting. But lots of organizing and planning still remain. And although the streetcar crews will be covered by our regular Saturday and Sunday schedule, we'll need a few additional volunteers to help out at the patch.

This was the second summer for our monthly Moonlight Rides. Ridership remains spotty. Like regular revenue service, weather plays a critical role. The June and September evening rides suffered from rainy and unpleasant weather. July and August, however, were quite successful: 14 passengers in July and 22 in August. And although even 22 seems like a small number, at the event fare of \$5 per passenger, that's the equivalent of a normal load of 55. Another way to look at it is about the same revenue as two charters. Total Moonlight Ride income was \$250.

Next year, it would be fun to partner with one or more Linden Hills restaurants in promoting our Moonlight Rides. Couples could have dinner, then end the night with a romantic streetcar ride.

Playing somewhat off the Moonlight Ride, how about a PJ Party for young children and their parents? Kids would come in their pajamas and, together with their favorite stuffed toy, have milk and cookies on the platform. The streetcar would stop at the north end (or the barn) and someone would read a bedtime story. An event like this would be a wonderful way to partner with one of the children's book stores in our neighborhood. They could help promote, provide a seasoned story reader, and perhaps even sell tickets. Could a local baker supply cookies?

Promotional partnerships hold potential for other special events as well. Last year in Excelsior, our streetcars played a role in *Christkindesmarkt*, a holiday ba-

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

The museum's business address and telephone number is:

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 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467  
 952-922-1096

**Streetcar CURRENTS**  
 October 2008

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor  
 Bill Graham—Distribution

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

Deadline for submitting items for the next issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** is November 20, 2008.

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

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**NOTE:** This will be the last monthly issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS**. We will now revert to our every-other-month publishing schedule. We'll return to our monthly schedule with the May 2009 issue which will be sent to you at the end of April 2009.

**From the Front Platform Dave French — Board Chair**

Hello everyone! I'll cover a few random items this month. Those of you who write newsletters know this *really* means that I can't really think of a subject to write about.

Many of you have served MSM for many years and have put in many, many shifts operating our cars. I'm sure all of you have a few special memories of shifts that were not routine and quite unique. I was thinking of some of my favorite memories of operating the car at CHSL. One day we had a family group that brought their patriarch to ride the trolley on his birthday. Believe it or not, it was his

106<sup>th</sup> birthday. He rested in the station while the family went down the hill to get ice cream. He was a bit frail but amazingly lucid and told me how he was a World War I army veteran who served in France, and he remembered riding the trolley to Excelsior and taking the streetcar boat to one of the islands where he had a girlfriend in the 1920's. That was the first time I'd ever talked to someone who had ridden the streetcar boats as an *adult!* During WW2 he joined the Coast Guard Auxiliary. I asked him how that happened and he explained that he had a boat on the Mississippi at the time and they were looking for "Coasties" to patrol the river looking for potential saboteurs targeting the locks and bridges. At that time I had been doing some research into U.S. Navy gasoline tankers built by Cargill on the Minnesota River at Savage during WW II and had found a photo of one of these ships being eased through the Robert St. lift bridge in St Paul on its way down to New Orleans for fit out and service in the Pacific theater. I asked him if he remembered that and he said he recalled taking measurements at every bridge all the way to Wabasha and then escorting the ships down river. He said everyone was pretty nervous as there were just inches of clearance at some bridges. I was thrilled to have one last chance to talk to a living veteran of the "Great War" and thank him for his service to our country, and reflect on the accomplishments of that generation and their children who won WW II. I wonder if we could do what they did if we were faced with a similar crisis today. If you are interested in the T-1 tankers built at Savage, use Google to search for information and you'll find several sites.

It's time once again to prepare for the CHSL Ghost Trolley. This year we are going with a Frankenstein theme and I will be portraying the good doctor whose dream of creating life went horribly wrong. It's hard to believe that this is my 11<sup>th</sup> year and its fun to remember the characters I've played. I'm very lucky to have help with the acting and this year **Mike Helde** and **Tim Nolan** will fill out the cast, and as always our car crews will be participating whether they want to or not. I've been watching all the old Frankenstein movies for inspiration. You may recall how neat it was to see the lightning and massive electrical equipment Dr. F. used to "energize" his creation. One thing I'd like to do is some kind of electrical effect that would flash, spark, and/or make an ominous electrical noise. If I could have something that would help me sell the idea that I'm going to use our 600 volts DC overhead to bring my "creature" to life, something that is safe either inside or outside the car, that would really help us. If you have an idea of how to do this, contact Rod or me. ☺



## Excelsior News & Notes

Bob Johnson—ESL Superintendent

**The Halloween Trolley.** Have you tried the Excelsior Halloween Trolley? Over the last four years our rider ship has continued to grow from 719 riders in 2004 to a total of 1404 last year, roughly doubling our revenue.

We are fortunate to have the Excelsior and Lake Minnetonka Historical society (ELMHS) as partners in this venture. They have developed an outstanding experience for families along our right of way. Last year, the Halloween celebration included an outdoor theater performance about ghostly tales and myths of the area. This professionally prepared play was located next to our Water Street stop. ELMHS supplies personnel and resources to set up scenes along the right of way. The society supplies up to 70 volunteers each year to run the even.

Our streetcar operation was very busy during the days, continuing to run after official closing of the Halloween in order to accommodate our riders.

Because of the anticipated increase in riders this year, we plan to run a two-car operation. A few weeks ago several of us ran a dry run with two cars and found the process to be workable. We plan to have two-way

radio communication during the run and will conduct special orientation of the operators. We will also have gatekeepers to regulate the flow of riders

**Grants and a new fence.** If you come out to Excelsior you will find we will be erecting a white picket fence along the Water street stop. This fence, intended to increase safety and establish better crowd control is the gift of two organizations. Our ELMHS friends made a generous contribution to the fence fund (see photos below) and we also received funds from the Golden Living Center, Excelsior. The residents of the Golden Living Center were our guests during the centennial celebration for gate car No. 1239 last year. We are grateful to these organizations for their generous contributions.

**Are you ready for Christmas?** We are preparing for our Santa Claus trolley the weekend after Thanksgiving. There are plenty of volunteer positions open, both for operation and also to decorate the cars. There will be about 20 vendors selling everything from Christmas decorations to Apple Strudel. There are lots of opportunities to shop, and the family is welcome. This event is our biggest of the season. ☺



*(General Superintendent's notes... Continued from page 1)*

zaar featuring food and merchandise. Could a similar event be staged at Como-Harriet, bringing Linden Hills merchants and food sellers together around our station?

**M**any of these events are really just extensions to our regular service. They don't require extra volunteers like the Ghost Trolley. But they still create additional slots on our monthly volunteer schedule. And they also require a few dedicated people behind the scenes to plan, provide, execute, and clean up. Do we have the volunteers necessary?

There are other things we might do. How can we improve car barn tours and make them more entertaining and educational? Can we raise our visibility during the Linden Hills Festival? It's been suggested that, like our neighbors, we have a "garage sale" that weekend.

As **Bill Arends** commented, we need to "think outside the trolley." Do **YOU** have any ideas? ☺

**What's Happening?**

October 11

October 24 &amp; 25

October 24 &amp; 25

October 24, 25, 26 &amp; 31

Nov. 28-30 &amp; Dec 6 &amp; 7

November 28-30

Streetcar Cleaning at CHSL starts at 9 AM. Juice &amp; rolls will be provided

Halloween trolley at ESL, 6 PM to 9 PM both nights

Farmer Ken's pumpkin patch, 1 PM to 5 PM both afternoons

Halloween ghost trolley at CHSL, 6 PM to 9 PM all four nights.

Holly trolley at CHSL, 1 to 4 PM. Santa on the trolley.

Santa trolley at ESL, times vary for each day.

**Shop Update**

Work at the George Isaacs Car barn has been primarily routine maintenance and small jobs this past summer. Our big project has been correcting a brake problem with PCC No. 322. Since No. 322 is all-electric, and many changes to the electric system were made by TCRT, as well as in Newark and Cleveland (Shaker Heights), Ohio, our wiring diagrams were not entirely accurate. But thanks to **Neil Howes**, **Mark Digre**, **Jim Willmore** and others, they found the burnt out wires and got No. 322 back into operation on Sunday, Sept 14. If you haven't had a chance to ride it since it went out of service, then come down on Sundays to see how fine it now runs. We also tightened the brakes on No. 1300 to compensate for brake shoe wear, with thanks to **Walt Strobel** and **Andy Stephens**. We also did some repainting of our station's platform, touching up all those areas where the paint was wearing off. This was one of **Jim Otto's** good jobs. We also were able to do a lot of cleanup in the rear of the "ready barn,"

**John Prestholdt—MSM Shop Foreman**

consolidating parts inventory which then allowed us to easily walk around that area again. With our sprinkler system installation starting, **Russ Isbrandt**, **Neil Howes** and others removed our old composting toilet, and **Phil Settegren** worked on patching the block wall on the East side of the maintenance barn. Also all three car roofs were washed during August thanks to **Chris Heck** and **Bruce Gustafson** and the caretaker of the apartments across the street from the station.

We are still working up our plans for winter work, which will include all the required inspections of all three cars at Lake Harriet and rebuilding the trolley bases for No. 1300 and No. 265. With the addition of the sprinkler system and running water with an actual bathroom (Huzzah!) in the near future, a lot of help will be needed to run electrical conduit, reroute our compressed air line, and relocate some tools and benches along the east wall. So anyone, nay **everyone**, is welcome down to the car barn on Tuesday or Saturday to join our current work force. ☺



**There's always something to do at the Isaacs car barn.** Here we see the bulk of the "Tuesday crew" stacking bricks on the west retaining wall in front of the Isaacs car barn. These bricks were formerly used for our platform at the Linden Hills station. From left to right are **Walt Strobel**, **Roy Harvey**, **Neil Howes**, **Russ Isbrandt**, someone behind Russ, **Mark Digre**, **Phil Settegren** (back towards us) and **Jim Otto**. Others that helped with the work include **Scott Heiderich**, **Bill Arends** and **John Prestholdt**. (John Prestholdt photo)



**Have you noticed the clean streetcar roofs?** For the first time in we think 5-6 years, the roofs on the standard cars have been cleaned of the built-up unsightly grime. Our take-charge car cleaning foreman **Bruce Gustafson** asked **Chris Heck** to help him, and the caretaker of the apartment building across the street from the Linden Hills station allowed us to use his hose and water. It took Bruce and Chris just a couple of hours to do the roofs on No. 1300 and No. 265. The roof of PCC No. 322 was done later on in August. (Chris Heck photo)