

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



Jan-Feb 2009

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

Take Notice!

- **Mark your calendars and make plans to attend our annual meeting on March 12th**
- **Take a look at your uniform now and get ready for the coming season**
- **Need more shoulder patches? Go to the Museum store on our website: www.trolleyride.org**
- **When you get your membership renewal notice take a moment to write your check and mail it back in the envelope we provide. Doing so will save your Museum money**



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Masthead Photo: the 2008 Holly Trolley is over, but it's still nice to see No. 1300 all dressed up in her holiday finery. Here is a photo of the 100-year old girl approaching the William Berry Parkway bridge in mid-December 2008 (John Prestholdt Photo)

Uncertain Times

Rod Eaton—General Supt.

Museums, arts organizations and entertainment attractions around the country are feeling the pinch of a sluggish economy. Gifts, grants and admissions are all down. Prestigious organizations are considering selling prized pieces of their collections in order to meet expenses. And I heard just the other day that even the Disney theme parks are laying off executive-level employees. We have to ask ourselves: How might we be affected by the recession?

Over the past several years we've seen our ridership decrease. So have most museums and attractions. Families have become increasingly busy and their leisure time choices have multiplied. Additionally, our streetcar lines are faced with a unique problem in attracting new riders: unlike other museums, we're not much of a "destination." How far are you willing to drive for a fifteen-minute experience?

It's always been difficult for our Museum to attract new riders. We have virtually no advertising budget and so remain at the mercy of the media and the goodness of others. At Como-Harriet, our choice location brings us lake visitors who chance to happen by, see a streetcar, and take a ride. But the majority of our riders at Como-Harriet and Excelsior come from the neighborhood. Many are true regulars—our season pass holders and familiar faces, our "frequent flyers."

The good news is that our revenue has remained stable the past few years while we've carefully managed our expenses. Financially, we're well positioned to face an uncertain future. And I think our relatively modest stature will prove valuable in insulating us from the current economic uncertainty.

Our riders have shown themselves to be very loyal, and I don't expect to see a serious decline in their participation for the 2009 operational season. We may be losing older riders with fond memories of Twin City streetcars, but we've gained a new, very enthusiastic group of children and their parents and grandparents. With our fare remaining an affordable \$2 dollars we represent a true family value.

Our special events have become increasingly important to our bottom line. These events are designed to attract new riders and encourage regular riders to visit more frequently. I think we've done a good job with these events in the past, and believe they will remain a very important part of our operations now. We're at work planning this season's Classic Car Show, Ghost Trolley and Holly Trolley. We are also looking at ways to improve Moonlight Rides and Pumpkin Patch, and considering new events like a Pajama Party and model railroad show. Where possible, we'll try to involve local businesses partners to provide promotional support.

It's impossible to predict the state of our economy by May. Like the weather, there's seems to be little we can do to affect it. But we have one real bankable asset. While other organizations face employee layoffs, we're thankful for our talented and dedicated volunteers. With your collective effort, I have no doubt we'll be fine, regardless of the Dow Jones, housing starts, or Consumer Confidence Index. ☺

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:

P.O. Box 14467, University Station
 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467
 952-922-1096

Streetcar *CURRENTS*
January-February 2009

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 March 20, 2009.

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

155 Chaparral Dr.
 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9774

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

From the Front Platform *Dave French — Board Chair*

It's winter! A time of year when streetcars are safely stored, restoration and maintenance cranks up at the two carbarns, and our track slumbers under a heavy blanket of snow. Our neighbors hurry down Queen Avenue or Highway 7 probably not even noticing us, or maybe they glance over and long for the return of warm weather and the sight of a big yellow streetcar loading happy passengers. Now is a good time to take stock of our museum and consider where we went during the past year and where we will go in 2009. Certainly this winter's contemplations have to consider the state of our economy. With the country in a deep recession and unemployment reaching levels not seen in many years, and with no recovery in sight, many of our members and passengers are worried about their jobs, the safety of their retirement income, and the future of their families. Some have already been laid off or suffered a financial setback. In this situation, we have to think about our museum. Will we be able to maintain the pursuit of our mission, to preserve the history of rail mass transit in Minnesota and continue to educate and entertain our customers? Is the museum strong enough to weather this economic storm?

Well, let's take a look. First of all, I am pleased to tell you that the museum is in good financial health. We ended the year with over \$190,000 in cash in the various accounts and we have no debt. Our ridership increased slightly last year. Our carbarn sprinkler and expansion project is progressing slowly but surely. I expect that donations and grants to non-profits like ours may be harder to come by in 2009, and may be smaller when we do get them. I remind you and our customers to not feel badly because you cannot donate to MSM right now as you might have when times are good. Obviously, your first priority has to be your family. When we tighten our belts we have to prioritize, and we know that a donation to MSM might not "make the cut." However, I will also remind you that donations of any size are always welcome and will be put to good use. Sure, we'd all like to kick in a four digit donation, but we have very few members who can afford to do that even when times are good. We truly are a blue collar museum, just like TCRT was a blue collar company whose passengers were mostly



lower and middle class folks going to and from work. Even \$5 helps MSM to fulfill its mission. So when you consider your charitable donations for 2009, we hope you can still spare something for your favorite museum. And if you need to take a year off from donating, we understand that too. And remember, the museum could have all the money in the world but we would not exist without over a hundred volunteers donating thousands of hours every year. Maybe this is the year when you need to downsize your monetary donations, but perhaps you can give a few hours of your time instead.

So with a sour economy, what can we look forward to this summer? When I was talking to passengers last summer I was surprised to hear how many were first-time riders or riding for the first time in years. When I asked them why they chose the streetcar they often told me they were looking for something to do that was close so they did not have to use as much \$4/gallon gas to get there. The price of gas has come back down, but I pre-

(Continued on bottom of next page)

MSM News & Views

Jim Vaitkunas

Welcome to our *Newest Members*. Since last fall we've gained several new members. So, we give a hearty welcome to the following people who have joined our Museum.

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Erik Brom | Tom Clarke | John Levin |
| Dan Torrance | Margarita Sanroman | |
| Hal Schlachtenhaufen | | |

Annual Appeal off to a good start. Given the uncertain economic times, we're still heartened by the response from our members and friends to our 2008-2009 Annual Appeal fund raising campaign. This year we focused the Annual Appeal on two important projects: The Isaacs carbarn improvements project, which includes installing water service and finishing the sprinkler and alarm systems; and, restoration of Winona No. 10. Here is the list of people who have donated to these projects.

Carbarn Improvements & Sprinkler System

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Judy & Frank Sandberg | Pat & Roy Harvey |
| Doug Anderson | Dave Diskerud |
| Gary Neunsinger | Russ Olson |
| Paul Willer | John Prestholdt |
| Doug Beedon | Hal Johnson |
| Judge James Rogers | Dave VenHuizen |
| Charlie McCarthy | Tony Bauman |
| Steve Eberly | Gerald Robertson |
| Joe Plante & Eric Neumann | Glen Bottoms |

Winona No. 10 Restoration Project

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Pat & Roy Harvey | Doug Anderson |
| Larry Coulter | George Ittner |
| John Prestholdt | Charlie McCarthy |
| Bob Woodburn | |

General Operating Fund

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Weck Charitable Trust | Diane Utrecht |
| Jan & Ken Albrecht | Steve Harrod |
| George Kotsonas | Ed McGlynn |
| Russ Isbrandt | Bill Arends |
| Aaron Isaacs | Dick Niemec |
| Kathy & Scott Heiderich | Eric Tratner |

As of the end of January a total of \$11,545 has been donated to the various funds by the people listed above plus one anonymous donor. Many, many thanks to each of you for your generosity.

Annual Meeting Set for March 12th. In a letter to all members sent with the last issue of the *Twin City Lines* magazine, we announced the annual meeting of the Museum will be held on Thursday, March 12, 2009 starting at 7:00 PM. This year's meeting will be held in the fellowship hall of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1917 Logan Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota. This is located at the north end of Lake of the Isles. (Google maps will actually show you a photo of the church when you type-in the address.) The annual meeting will include the "State of the Museum" report by Chair **Dave French**, the election of Board of Directors members and reports on the financial status of the Museum. After the short business meeting **Aaron Isaacs** will present a slide show on the streetcar history of the Twin Cities. There may also be some other presentations made after Aaron's presentation but we don't yet have the details on those. We encourage each of you to attend this important annual event. It's your chance to meet with your fellow members and learn first hand how your Museum is doing.

See **YOU** there! ☺

Address Changes

Please remember to let us know when you have a change to your address, telephone number or e-mail address. A quick note addressed to the Museum's business address, ATTN: Membership Services, will do the trick. Or you can send Membership Services Chief **John DeWitt** an e-mail with the change(s) to: jdewitt@comcast.net

(From the Front Platform Continued from page 2)

dict that with this economy folks will be looking for inexpensive entertainment. Our \$2 fare provides families with a fun activity without breaking the bank. I also predict (hope!) that our ridership will hold steady or even increase slightly despite the dismal economy. Even when times are bad people still need to enjoy themselves. I often tell passengers that the streetcar can be their time machine transporting them away from the cares of the modern world for a few minutes. In this sad and uncertain world, people need some diversion from bad news more then ever. And out streetcars give us the perfect tool to give some happiness to the people. Wow, now I can't wait to get the car out! Where's that weather forecast? ☺

Shop Update

John Prestholdt—Shop Foreman

As mentioned in my column in the November-December 2008 issue of the *Streetcar Currents*, the Museum's shop crew is working on the yearly preventive maintenance on all three of CHSL cars. Almost all of the work has been completed on PCC No. 322 and we are now working on TCRT No. 1300.

There are two major projects also being worked on at the George Isaacs car barn this winter.

- **Dennis Stevens** is doing a lot of the metal fabrication for **Ken Albrecht** for Winona No. 10. These parts are for the door operation for No. 10 which is much different than the TCRT door operation we are used to. Winona No. 10's doors were operated manually by a system of cranks, rods and levers.
- **Neil Howes** and **Keith Lindberg** are replacing the main electric switch/contacter located in the back of the "ready barn" that has caused us problems for most of last year. This required us to disconnect all 600-volt power for our overhead which means some of our preventive maintenance for No. 1300 will have to wait until the 600-volt power is restored. But after 30+ years the replacing of this switchgear was long overdue.

This seems to be a good time to give much deserved thanks to several people who make my Shop Foreman job easier. **Neil Howes**, who has been doing maintenance and restoration to all of our cars, has been a great help in reminding me (or telling me) what we need to remember to do and plan these jobs. We also have some operators like **Walt Strobel**, **Russ Isbrandt** and **Mark Digre** who have no trouble letting me know of problems during our operating season, and this allows us to get any problems corrected. Thanks to all of you.

Putting on my Chief Cashier's cap, I need to recognize our hard-working cashiers who help get all our nightly money into the bark. A **BIG** thank you and tip of the Cashier's hat goes to **Bill Arends**, **Keith Anderson** and **George Kotsonas** who been helping me get this very important job. Again thanks to all of you for the help. ☺



Restoring our streetcars is fun but it's also very time consuming and sometimes tedious. These two photos show just two examples of what goes into a streetcar restoration.



Top. Here is just one part of a couple of hundred parts that will eventually make-up the door operating mechanisms for Winona No. 10. This is a step bracket that was fabricated from scratch by **Dennis Stephens**. (John Prestholdt photo)

Right. Winona No. 10 had wood seat backs and bottoms. Running the length of the top of the seat backs were wood handles attached by brass brackets. Here we see the finished brass brackets on the workbench of **Ken Albrecht**. Ken does a lot of this work at home over the winter to avoid travelling the 65 miles one way from his North Mankato home to either ESL in Excelsior or the Isaacs car barn in Minneapolis.

(Ken Albrecht photo)

Historian News and Notes

Aaron Isaacs—MSM Historian

Selby Tunnel grant application. Member **Jim White** is spearheading an effort to refurbish the historic lower portal of the Selby Avenue streetcar tunnel in St. Paul. When the tunnel was closed in 1953, its upper portal was filled in, but the lower portal remains intact, along with most of the tunnel. Over the years it became a hangout for the homeless, so the portal was blocked off. The rest of the concrete cut leading to the portal remains in place, along with the iron fencing on both sides. However, both are deteriorating.

Jim White is a St. Paul resident and is a regular volunteer station agent at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. He has spent the last year building support for the project among St. Paul elected officials. He has also successfully enlisted the support of the neighborhood district councils that review most new projects. The next step is to fund it, and Jim has recently applied for a \$200,000 development grant from the city. If the application is successful (which won't be known until this summer), it will trigger a federal Transportation Enhancement grant application for about \$400,000. Enhancement grants paid for the construction of the Excelsior Streetcar Line, expansion of the Isaacs car barn, replacement of the Como-Harriet tracks, and restoration of the CHSL pedestrian underpass and the Cottage City steps. The City of St. Paul has used Enhancement funds to restore the Como Park streetcar depot and will soon do the same for the pedestrian bridge next to that depot.

If the grants are approved, the portal's concrete walls and pavement would be restored, the railings scraped and repainted, the light fixtures replaced and overhead wire restrung. Appropriate interpretive displays would be created.

Streetcar map grant application. Google is offering grants to non-profit organizations to create special custom maps. I've applied for a grant to create a computerized map that charts the year-by-year development of Twin City Rapid Transit's track and facilities. The finished product would permit the viewer to

see the TCRT streetcar system as it was in any given year. It could also be viewed as an animation over time. The grant recipients will be announced in February or March.


20th Century Foundation grant. MSM has received its second challenge grant from the 20th Century Electric Railway Foundation. The \$5000 grant will purchase steel and other materials for the Winona No. 10 restoration. It must be matched by \$5000 from someone other than an MSM member. Last year we received a \$5000 grant from the same foundation for the Isaacs car barn sprinkler system.

Surplus artifacts for sale. MSM is offering surplus historic streetcar artifacts for sale. These are items that exist in such numbers that they will never be needed to restore a streetcar, fill an archive or appear in a display. They include historic photos, tokens, streetcar transfers, TCRT rulebooks, wood dashboard signs, motorman number hat buttons, streetcar signal bells, destination sign rolls and interior wood panels with car numbers.

At present, most of these items don't appear in the depot or on the website. **Bruce Gustafson** has offered some on eBay, and brings them to the White Bear railroad flea markets. We also usually sell at the January Woodbury railroad flea market.

I'll be working with Bruce and with merchandise manager **Charles Barthold** to make these items more widely available.

TCRT 1909 System map poster available.

From 1907 to 1917, TCRT published a large, annual, fold-out brochure promoting sightseeing on its streetcars and steamboats. Each one features a 9 x 32 inch map of the streetcar system. The 1909 map was different from the rest and is by far the most attractive issue. Now you can own one. It was scanned from an original copy in the MSM archive (see low-res image below). The cost is \$5.00 plus shipping if you order from our website (www.trolleyride.org). Look for it in the depot this Spring. 



What's Happening?

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
May 22	Start of weekday operations at CHSL

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

The Excelsior Streetcar Line made its last runs of 2008 in support of Excelsior's annual Christmas market event.

We ran for three days just after Thanksgiving carrying a total of seven hundred eighty-five paid riders. For this event, children younger than 4 years old were free. Our estimates are that approximately one hundred sixty children accompanied an adult, for a grand total of about nine hundred forty riders.

Larger sales areas helped the Christmas Market organization increase the number of vendors. Items such as German foods, apparel, and various household items were on sale. Entertainment included choirs, and musicians performing periodically. Each day a parade was held on Water Street, with Santa as

the grand marshal.

We meet with the Market staff on a monthly basis. Next year the event should be expanded, with some current vendors moved to better locations. We will be planning some changes that will help to increase ridership.

If you haven't done so, plan to attend next year's Christmas Market. Bring the children or grandchildren and make it a family outing.

Some new features are planned for ESL. Bruce Kobs, Mike Buck, Chip Kempainen and Bob Johnson are working on a Museum display at ESL. We plan to include some artifacts and related items in display cabinets for our riders to see. We have purchased two very nice oak cases for the display. ☺

Membership Renewals

Over the next four months close to 70 percent of our members renew their annual memberships to our Museum. Consequently, this is a busy time for our Membership Services Chief, **John DeWitt**. To help him with the workload, and to save your Museum some money, please send in your dues and member renewal slip as soon as you get it. We always include an addressed envelope with the first notice so all you have to do is write your check and put a stamp on the envelope. Prompt renewal avoids extra postage for second and third notices. *Thanks much!*

**SteppingStone Theater in St. Paul Presents****Streetcar! Twin Cities Bound**

by Graham Gremore
Music by Sasha Smith
March 13-29, 2009

Take A Trip To The Age of The Streetcar!

From the writer of SteppingStone Theatre's popular *Mill City Gang* comes a new musical play set in St. Paul in the 1890s.

Can a boy and a girl from opposite sides of the streetcar tracks be happy together? Even with the help of a singing, dancing moon and "Miss Sponge Mushroom?" An important period in Minnesota history comes to life in this off-kilter romance. Students of all ages will enjoy this "through the looking glass" version of the past.

SteppingStone Theatre will be presenting a world premier production of *Streetcar! Twin Cities Bound* March 13-29, 2009. This is a production that provides a fun and fascinating slice of life from the Twin Cities in the 1890's, exploring class differences, gender roles, and the growth and development of the Twin Cities themselves. Tickets: \$9 children & seniors-\$11 adults. Groups of 20 or more, just \$7.00. For more information and schedule you can check out our web page by going to: www.steppingstonetheatre.org/streetcar.html