

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



October—2012

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

Bill Arends—General Supt.



Bill The Motorman Says:

- **Our Halloween and Santa trolleys will be operating in the fall, so spread the word about them to your friends & neighbors.**
- **Annual Appeal is coming up soon. Thrust will be to build the shop addition. Please give generously.**

Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule
 With this issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** we'll revert to our winter publication schedule. See the box on the bottom of page 3 for details.

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Masthead. What's going on here? No. 322 sits outside in the drizzle rain and a big truck is backed-up to the shop door—and something is going on inside the maintenance shop of the Isaacs carbarn. Turn to page 4 of this issue for details on the "big doings" at CHSL's carbarn. (Jim Vaitkunas Photo)

The Station Garden

I'm sure that anyone who rides the streetcar is aware of the garden area between the streetcar tracks and Queen Avenue. That narrow strip of land (about 12 feet wide and 120 feet long) had a few hosta, a few spirea, a smattering of other blooming plants and a whole lot of undesirable plants, most commonly called weeds. If it hadn't been for the efforts of **Mike Buck** the past several years the hosta, spirea and other desirable plants would have been greatly overshadowed by the undesirables.

But that has changed thanks to Eagle Scout, **Eric Gustafson**, son of Foreman **Bruce Gustafson** (Bruce is also our Car Cleaning Foreman.) This past spring, during several meetings with Eric and Bruce, a plan was presented by Eric to upgrade the garden. While, to me, it looked like a lot of work digging and planting, I was excited about the plan. Eric's vision was more than just digging and planting. He saw a garden that would improve the area across from our Linden Hills station.

Early on Saturday, August 4th Eric and his crew of about 15 people arrived with wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes and other implements, some even motorized. It was obvious this was a big project and they were serious. Eric's plan was to create a garden of low maintenance native perennial plants that will provide color through the season. First step was to remove the plants, shrubs and weeds that were in the garden that had become overgrown while saving many existing plants to be reused.

At the end of the day on Sunday, August 5th with the exception of mulch, the transformation of the garden had been completed. A beautiful garden of various grasses, rudbeckia, hosta, Russian sage, sedum, to name some, was completed.

Thank you Eric. Also many thanks to his hard-working helpers, **Bruce** and **Davis Gustafson**, **Cyndi Olson** (Eric's mom), **Micheal Pederson**, **Jerry Johnson**, **Micheal Sidell**, **Quinton Olgrady**, **Jill Sandstrom**, **Nancy Paget**, **Tom Paget**, **Jane Meller**, **Ben Moss**, **Joe Moss**, **Noah Moss**, **Matt Nunn**, **Red Pederson** and **Phil Sidell**. Your hard work is much appreciated. Thanks also to the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board for providing the mulch, most of which was moved across 42nd Street to the garden by Eric, Davis and Bruce Gustafson. And thanks to **Karl Jones** for resurrecting the in-ground sprinkler system by cleaning out all the heads and getting it back in working condition.

The next time you take a ride on the streetcar I'd recommend sitting on the pole side of the car so you enjoy the garden as you go by. If you're not sure which side is the pole side, just ask the motorman. He'll gladly tell you. 🌱



Bill Arends photo

Some of the Eagle Scout volunteers working on the garden.

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

The museum's business address and telephone number is:

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

Streetcar CURRENTS
 October — 2012

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 November 20, 2012.

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

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 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9774

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



From the Front Platform — Thoughts on Our Museum

Dave French — Chair, MSM Board of Directors

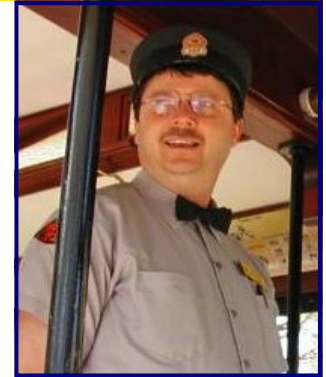
Hello everyone! Last month I quoted an article from *Railway Museum Quarterly* which emphasized the point that the trains and trolleys in museums mean little without human context, and I wish to expound a bit more on that point.

I guarantee you that many if not most of our riders at MSM care little or nothing about the technical aspects of our streetcars. I've seen many times how the passengers' eyes glaze over as a well-meaning Operator goes on and on about the car motors and controllers and trucks and overhead wire and electrical power. What many, if not most, of our customers care about is the human context of this beautiful car they are riding. How many times has a customer told you that they or their parents or grandparents or other family members used to ride the trolley, or that a family member worked for TCRT? Despite that family connection, these folks often do not know much about the street railway system. They like to hear about what was the job like for the trainmen. How many hours did they work? How much were they paid? Did they really have to stand on an open platform to run the car during the Winter in the early 1890's? How much was the fare? Did kids ride free? How often did the cars run? How could you possibly board the car safely when it was stopped in the middle of the street with automobile traffic on both sides? How many employees did the company have? Did they get to ride the cars for free? Did the cars ever get stuck in the snow? What did you do if the car you were on was blocked by a broken down trolley in front, how could you get around?

These questions and many others can all make good end of the line or carbarn talks and answering them puts that human context on the ride, plus adds a historical connection between our riders and the passengers of long ago, and between our volunteers and the platformen of long ago. In the October issue of *Railfan & Railroad* magazine, Professor **George M. Smerk** (*Professor Smerk is a member of our Museum.—Ed.*) writes in his **Transit Currents** column about what he calls a historical vacuum: "Most Americans lack any great understanding of the role that various modes of transportation played in the development of the United States." He goes on to suggest that schools should be better funded and do a better job of teaching transportation history. Well, maybe. I have a lot more confidence in the ability of you,

our volunteers, to accomplish this by giving our riders that human context to demonstrate how important streetcars were in the history of Minneapolis, St Paul, Duluth, and the other Minnesota cities that had streetcars.

OK, so I am preaching about educating our customers, about streetcar history in a way that "grabs" their attention by talking about people who ran and rode the cars. But why the heck should that be so important in this day and age? Well, I will tell you. In the same issue of *Railfan & Railroad*, Alexander Craghead in his **Departures** column summarizes how railroading right now is really a growth industry in the US: "Tonnage hauled by US railroads is nearly double today of what it was in 1990, and a staggering 12 times what it was in 1900. Railroads have never been as busy and as profitable, and this is, remarkably, during the Great Recession." He goes on to note that Amtrak has set an all-time ridership record for 8 out of the last 9 years and is likely to do it again this year. Streetcars, light rail, and commuter rail continue to be built at a pace not seen in 100 years. Short lines and regionals have taken over branch lines and made them profitable and kept them in service all



(Continued on page 3)



MSM Historian's Update — We make Minnesota's Electric Railway History Come Alive!

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Historian and Photo Archivist

University of Minnesota Inter-Campus Line *article.* The MSM photo collection has recently helped with other organizations' history projects. We contributed photos to the University of Minnesota Alumni Association's Fall 2012 magazine for its article on the Inter-Campus streetcar. This turned out to be a win-win situation because the magazine asked alumni to send in their memories of the U's Inter-Campus line. About 100 people responded and 28 of their comments are posted at www.MinnesotaAlumni.org/trolley, along with the article. We'll use some in a future issue of *Twin City Lines*. By the way, the UofM's Alumni Association found us thanks to our photos that are posted on the Minnesota Reflections website.

Museum in the Streets opens. Anyone walking along much of Lake Street will learn more about the street's history, thanks to a signage program called *Museum in the Streets*. Over 50 signs with historic photos and text are scattered from Hennepin Ave-

nue on the west to about 31st Avenue on the east. MSM contributed photos to a pair of the signs, showing a streetcar in Uptown, and the Lake Street Station (carbarn) at 23rd Avenue (see photo of one of them). It's well worth a visit and a walk down Lake Street.

Seward neighborhood history. Historians in the South Minneapolis Seward neighborhood are working on a neighborhood history book. Longtime Seward resident **Dave Norman** lives in the neighborhood and is writing the streetcar chapter. At his request, MSM is contributing photos.

Another photo collection acquired. Thanks to **Dave French** patrolling EBay, we have purchased a collection of TCRT photos. They were posted by the Western Railway Museum, an excellent mostly-streetcar museum located not far from Sacramento, California. I contacted their librarian who was running the sale and he happily agreed to pull them from EBay and sell directly to us for the bargain price of \$100.

The photos were taken by a prolific photographer named **Norman Rolfe**, who was previously unknown to us. He travelled nationally for his work and took over 100,000 photos during his travels. The museum is selling off the non-California photos. Rolfe's Aug. 31-Sept. 2, 1952 visit to the Twin Cities produced 276 images. About half are common roster shots taken at the various TCRT stations (carbarns). The rest are street scenes. He did a pretty good job of traveling the city, even recording the State Fair. We always look for photos that show locations and equipment not previously seen and there are several in this group. 🌱

THE TWIN CITY LINES



Aaron Isaacs photo

(From the Front Platform Continued from page 2)

over the country. I think back to the 1970's when the Rock Island folded, the Milwaukee Road abandoned their mainline to the Pacific Coast and weed covered branch lines were simply abandoned, not resold, and I certainly did not think of railroading then as a "growth industry." Wow, things have changed! So my point is, dear friend and gentle reader, not only is our museum a showcase of the way things used to be, it is also a living connection between the past and today's resurgence in flanged wheel on steel rail transportation in our country. So not only does that human context apply to the past, it also is very applicable to the future. I look forward to telling folks that our Twin City Lines PCC No. 322 used to run down University Avenue just like the new light rail line will.

I'll see you on the car! 🌱

Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule

With this issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** we will revert to our winter publication schedule. After this [October 2012] issue, you'll be receiving the **Streetcar CURRENTS** every other month until May, 2013. Publication dates for these issues will be on or about (o/a): December 1st; February 1st; and, April 1st. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after those dates please contact me at jvaitkunas@msn.com

What's Happening?

October 13 & 14	Farmer Ken's pumpkin patch at CHSL
October 19, 20, 26 & 27	Halloween ghost trolleys operate at CHSL.
October 26 & 27	Halloween ghost trolley and Booseum operates at ESL
November 23, 24 & 25	Santa Claus Holly trolley at CHSL; Santa on the ESL trolley & Chriskindlsmarkt in Excelsior

**MSM News & Views — News of our Museum's Administration and Membership**

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary and Superintendent of Operations

Donations Received. Here is a list of our members and friends who have donated to our Museum since the last report in the September issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS**.

Winona No. 10 Fund in memory of George Ittner: Marv Krafve, Bob Johnson, Ken Albrecht, Mark Brothen, Tom McGruder, Jim Peschong, Triffle Donult, Bruce Kobs, Karl Jones, Gunter Nitz, Steve Mages, Dave French, and Dick Zawacki. 🌱

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

Dennis Stephens—MSM Assistant Shop Foreman

Exciting times at CHSL. Cichy Water & Sewer Inc., was contracted several weeks ago to install a sewer line connection from the George Isaacs carbarn to the nearest connection to the city's sewer system. They cut a hole in the floor of the Isaacs carbarn on Tuesday, September 18th. The next day (Wednesday) the drilling contractor arrived and moved his diesel powered drill rig inside the shop. Their work was top-notch as the drill operator drilled in one shot to a city sewer manhole on the street below. After the drill reached the manhole, the Operator then withdrew the drill bit but attached to the bit was the end of a 100-foot long four-inch high impact plastic sewer outlet pipe. As he withdrew the drill bit, the sewer pipe was pulled into the void just drilled. After about 25-30 minutes of that, behold! The sewer pipe came out of the hole and was complete from the carbarn to the manhole. The whole drilling job took a little over four hours. See the photos below. In the afternoon, Cichy's workers finished tapping our new sewer pipe into the sewer manhole and backfilled around the manhole.

The next step is to let the contract in the next 3-4 weeks for the plumbing work and to build the bathroom. By Thanksgiving we hope to have a fully functioning bathroom in the Isaacs carbarn. Another major milestone for our Museum. 🌱



(Left) The drilling machine is aiming for the sewer manhole down the bank on which our carbarn is located.

(Right) After about an hour of drilling, the drilling bit comes out exactly where it's supposed to. The fitting on the end of the drill bit was then put on and the plastic sewer pipe was connected to it. The drill bit was pulled back up to the carbarn with the plastic pipe connected to it.



All photos by
Dennis Stephens



(Left) Here's the plastic sewer pipe emerging from the hole. It's still connected to the drill bit. In a few weeks, the plumbers will connect the toilet and sink drains to the plastic pipe and tap into the existing water supply.