

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



June 2014

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



Bill the Motorman Says:

- *Our shop and track & overhead wire volunteers can always use help. Please consider volunteering to do some of the "behind the scenes" work. Call or send an e-mail to General Superintendent Bill Arends.*
- *At CHSL we're now running weekday evenings until Labor Day. Encourage your friends & neighbors to come and take a cool ride this summer.*
- *When did you ride our cars at Excelsior? If it's been a while, make plans now to enjoy a day in Excelsior.*

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Masthead. TCRT No. 1239 and Duluth No. 78 are spotted outside the Excelsior car barn awaiting the call to service. No. 78 is being used more this year for regular service because No. 1239's trucks desperately need rebuilding or replacing.
(Jim Vaitkun's photo)

Volunteering at MSM

Bill Arends—General Supt.

Have you ever just paused...and thought about how rewarding it is to be a volunteer? To volunteer for something, for which one receives no remuneration, but something for which you have an interest or maybe a passion? Wow! That's a whole lot of questions for an introductory article to the *Currents*.

Volunteering and maintaining a historic streetcar line takes a lot of twists and turns. It may be signing up on ShiftPlanning as a Foreman, an Operator or a Station Agent. It may be the people who maintain ShiftPlanning. It may be maintenance and restoration of our vintage streetcars so they are always ready to go. It may be a weekend, each month, cleaning the streetcars. It may be planning the special events that have become so important. It may be keeping the gardens looking great. It may be cutting weeds and other undesirable growth along the tracks. It may be greasing the rails so that the incredible squeal does not annoy not only our neighbors but also our passengers. It may be picking up trash along the right-of-way on which we operate. It may be producing the schedule and brochures which we hand out to our passengers. It may be scheduling charters or recruiting foremen and operators to operate the charters. It may be making sure that each week all the funds taken in during operations are deposited into our bank account. It may be that everything that gets deposited into our bank account is properly accounted. It may be making sure the overhead line is clear, that there are no obstructions that may prohibit save operation.

If you have not experienced it personally, have you ever thought about the satisfaction being a volunteer with the Minnesota Street Car Museum may bring? On a rainy April day, while cleaning out the basement of the depot in preparation for the upcoming season, I happened upon a couple of guys looking into the depot. Not sure if I wanted to ignore them and continue to clean the basement or do the right thing and ask them if they had any questions, I chose to do the right thing. Oh! It was so the right thing. Two guys, brothers, one local, one from Baltimore.

One of the gentlemen commented after peeking through the window in the door about the map in our display in the depot, so I invited them in. They purchased some merchandise. They were very impressed that this has all been created and maintained by volunteers. With them showing so much interest in electric streetcars, the only thing to do was to offer them a tour of the car barn, which they accepted.

After a tour of the car barn, many photos, a lot of talking by me to share the history of TCRT and our museum, lots of questions from them, we walked back to the depot. A cool, rainy day in April had suddenly become a whole lot brighter.



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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 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
 June 2014

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 June 20, 2014.

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

13326 Huntington Lane
 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9481

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


From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Dave French — Board Chair



Hi everyone! Well, after a cold winter and a slow spring, I know we are all ready to enjoy nice weather and summer activities. Because of other commitments, I was not able to come down to Minneapolis to work at CHSL in May and I really missed working Memorial Day at the cemetery gate. Today I signed up for shifts during the weekend of June 21-22 when I will be down for our Board meeting. It was distressing to see how many openings there are in June. The season has just started and we are already having difficulty in filling shifts at both railways and a few shifts have been cancelled at ESL because of the lack of a crew. I am not happy to write about this problem *again* but there it is. We have already committed to running full regular schedules and numerous special events (which, by the way, also need crews!) in 2014, but I sense that the Board may have to take a hard look at our business plan for 2015. If we cannot attract, train, and retain a sufficient number of new volunteers, and if the people who are already on the roster are unable or unwilling to step up and fill a few more shifts, we will have to consider cutting back. We may have to run fewer days and/or reduce special events to better match the current supply of volunteers, it's as simple as that. During the past two years I came down and worked one weekend per month. Since I already missed May, I will work two weekends per month for the rest of this summer. Now, what can *you* do to help? And as always, I will welcome any suggestions on how we can solve this problem.

One of our new special events this year is Streetcar Musical at CHSL! As our flyer explains: *Yes, a musical on a streetcar! "Streetcar Sweethearts" is an original musical with classic American songs. Join us for an hour of fun, music, dancing and romance set in the heart of the streetcar era. "It's the best streetcar musical ever – and also the first." Tickets available in the Linden Hills Station or online.*

Sounds like fun! The dates are Friday, Saturday, and Sunday June 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, and 22 at 9pm and tickets are \$15. I will be working as Station Agent on the 20th and 21st and am really looking forward to seeing at least a small part of the show from the platform. Believe it or not, I actually do sing a little bit and performed in musicals when I was in high school. This show will be presented by gifted alumni thespians from Southwest High, the same talented actors who have appeared in our popular Murder Mysteries. Please "talk up" all of our special events and come yourself and bring a friend!

As in life, our museum experiences arrivals and departures and transitions, some of them happy and some sad. I am sorry to report that long-time member **Marshall Ginthner** departed on May 8th. Marsh did a lot of work on the Winona No. 10 restoration and was one of our most faithful operators, working many shifts at ESL. His wife, Kris, wrote: "He really enjoyed hanging out with everyone and really enjoyed driving the streetcars. Marshall would come home every Tuesday to talk about the progress on the Winona 10. So sorry he couldn't have been there for the delivery of the undercarriage (truck). He was so looking forward to it. Thank you for everything you do, and preserving a piece of history." I wrote a letter of condolence to the family and told them that I have a strong sense that the volunteers who have worked and had fun on the car are still with us, even after they have crossed to the other shore. They live on in our happy memories and those of countless riders.

(Continued on bottom of page 4)


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

 Aaron Isaacs — *MSM Historian and Photo Archivist*

Grants. My dad George worked for the Onan Corporation and he used to get an annual grant of several thousand dollars from the Onan Family Foundation. Shortly after he passed away in January 2006, the Foundation contacted me to apply for the annual grant. I filled out the paperwork, which was easy, and got the grant.

So I thought, why not see if I can get some more grants for the museum. Some research led me to the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council, which annually gives small grants of up to \$1000. I got \$750 to put up the interpretive signs along the right of way. We've since received another pair of Linden Hills grants totaling \$2000, including one this year for the car barn expansion.

Then I learned about the 20th Century Electric Railway Foundation. It's funded by an individual in southern California, and gives only to trolley museums that are members of the Association of Railway Museums, now the Association of Tourist Railroads & Railway Museums. These are challenge grants, which must be matched dollar for dollar with funds outside the museum's normal revenue stream. To date we've received six challenge grants totaling \$48,000 to fund the CHSL car barn sprinklers, Winona No. 10 restoration, rebuilding the 42nd Street grade crossing and the car barn addition. The latest this year is \$13,000 for Winona No. 10 and the car barn expansion.

The other largest grantor has been the Winona Foundation. Since 2009 they have given us four grants totaling \$30,000 toward the restoration of Winona No. 10, including \$3000 this year.

We received \$1000 in 2013 from the newly formed Thomas E. Daily Foundation, which funds railway preservation.

The CHSL car barn expansion project will include a new cistern to treat the runoff from the existing car barn roof. That water currently runs untreated into Lake Harriet. I applied to the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District for project assistance, and they have granted the museum \$14,022 for the cistern, which should be installed this year.

One major potential resource is the Minnesota Legacy Fund. To date we've received a \$3800 grant to purchase archival sleeves for the photo collection. In 2015 I'm planning to apply for money to overhaul No. 1300's trucks. Over the winter I tried for a

\$100,000 federal Transportation Alternatives Program grant for the trucks, but it was unsuccessful.

Grants are not a substitute for fund raising from our membership, which averages about \$15,000 per year. However, grants are available and they add up over time. From 2006 through 2014, grants have provided \$116,000. Oh, yeah—there's a \$5000 grant application pending with the National Railway Historical Society. By July we'll learn if it was successful.

Linden Hills Station electronic display. At last winter's planning session, we decided to move forward with an electronic display in the Linden Hills station. The museum has over 11,000 photos and 2 hours of digitized vintage video, and we want to share those with the public. **Ben Franske** purchased a large flat screen TV. He and **Joel Schuweiler** installed it in the middle display case. I put together the first program and Ben installed and debugged it. Over time we'll add more, including video.

Fact and fiction. Bill Arends opens the e-mails that come into the MSM mailbox and refers the obscure history questions to me. These often take me on journeys I never expected. A case in point is an inquiry from author **Erik Rivenes**. He's writing a crime thriller set in St. Paul in 1901. In one scene the hero is pursued by bad guys onto a streetcar. This starts a gunfight and one streetcar winds up chasing the other through downtown St. Paul.

Rivenes wanted as much historic accuracy as possible and submitted his draft for comments. Not surprisingly, it was full of incorrect terminology and inaccuracies. For example, the villain enters through the front passenger door, which didn't exist in 1901. Everyone entered and exited through the rear gates. The cop boarded the car and tried to pay his fare with a \$10 bill. Not so—police showed their badge and rode for free. At one point, sparks fly from the sides of the car, another impossibility. And the cars race uphill toward the state capitol at 50 mph, also not possible.

I worked with Erik to correct all the little mistakes and suggested he reverse the direction of the chase. Even the underpowered cars of 1901 could have hit some pretty high speeds if they rolled downhill from the capitol into downtown. That in turn opened up the opportunity for both cars to take the corner at 5th and Wabasha at excessive speed and overturn onto the courthouse lawn. Both accuracy and dramatic license were satisfied. ☺

What's Happening?

- June 4 Start of Wednesday afternoon service at CHSL (1 PM to 4 PM)
- June 10 Story Time Trolley at ESL
- June 13, 14 & 15 **Streetcar Swęęthęarts** Musical on the Trolley at CHSL starts at 9:00 PM
- June 20, 21 & 22 **Streetcar Swęęthęarts** Musical on the Trolley at CHSL starts at 9:00 PM
- June 19 PJ Party trolley at CHSL
- July 4 Independence Day operations at both ESL and CHSL



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

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary and Superintendent of Operations

MSM's 2013-2014 Annual Appeal. We received several donations in the last few weeks for which we are very grateful. Many thanks to Tony Bauman and Rose and Bill Arends for their generous donations to the MSM General Fund. Also, many thanks to Greg Taylor for his generous donation to the car barn expansion fund ☺

Marsh Ginthner—R.I.P.

MSM lost a dedicated volunteer in **Marshall Ginthner** who passed away May 8, 2014. Marsh joined MSM in 2006 qualifying quickly as an Operator at Excelsior. He really enjoyed operating our streetcars and willingly volunteered for many extra shifts, soon earning a promotion to Foreman. His long sheepskin Australian coat with a wide brim hat was his costume while operating the Halloween Trolley for many seasons.

Marsh was also an active member of the Tuesday Excelsior crew restoring Winona No. 10. Soon on Tuesdays he was mowing the right of way using our weed whip and mowers.

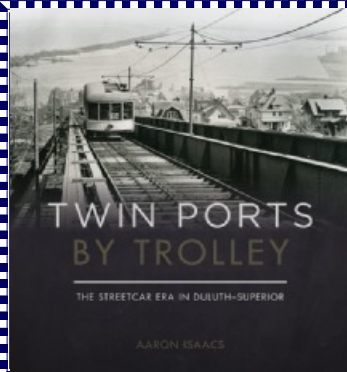
Marsh lived west of Excelsior in Maple Plain. In this rural setting he and his wife, Kris raised chickens. On Tuesdays he brought to the crew many dozens of eggs for them to take home. Some of those eggs were just hours from being hatched when popped into the frying pan. Thank you Marsh for being our egg supplier, Tuesday crew member, streetcar Operator, but mostly being a close friend to us all. **Bruce Kobs**

(From the Front Platform *Continued from page 2)*

We also had a transition in May when **Earl** and **Bettye Anderson** informed us that due to health issues they would no longer be able to stay on our active volunteer roster. Earl was an Operator and Bettye a Station Agent for many years. Earl was in a special club as he was our last MSM Operator who worked on the streetcars in “real life.” Earl got a Motorman’s job at TCRT while attending the U of M on the GI Bill after World War II. I enjoyed many shifts with the Andersons listening to their stories and Earl always patiently answered questions from us “rookies.” Thanks, Earl and Bettye, and we look forward to seeing you when you come to Minneapolis for a visit. I’ll see you on the car! ☺

(Volunteering at MSM *Continued from page 1)*

If you’re a Foreman, Operator or Station Agent (at CHSL) and haven’t worked a busy Saturday or Sunday shift at ESL or CHSL recently, I recommend giving it try. It’s an opportunity to meet a lot of interesting people and share a little about MSM and the fascinating history of the Twin Cities streetcar system. If volunteering with MSM to operate a 46,000-pound streetcar or a streetcar that’s 111 years old is not something you want to try, we can always use help in a lot of other areas. It’s an opportunity to meet new people, make new friends and help keep MSM strong. Ask me about it the next time you see me out on the line. ☺



New book: Twin Ports by Trolley pre-sale offer

Aaron Isaacs' new book, *Twin Ports by Trolley—The Streetcar Era in Duluth-Superior* is scheduled for release in September. Just like we did with *Twin Cities by Trolley*, we'd like to offer MSM members and non-members the chance to buy autographed copies in advance and support the museum in the process.

The price is \$40. You have the option of having it mailed to you for an additional \$6. Otherwise, you can pick up your copy in September at a central location to be designated later. Here's how you can buy the book

1. Send a check by mail made out to MSM to: MSM Duluth Book, PO Box 14467, Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467. Make sure to give us your mailing address and phone number.
2. Order using a credit card from the MSM Online Store TrolleyRide.org.