

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



September 2016

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



## Bill the Motorman Says:

- Our annual MSM family picnic is set for Sunday, 9/25. Plan to attend and see the progress on Winona No. 10
- Volunteers are our Museum's bedrock. We wouldn't exist without YOU.
- We're changing the format for our Halloween ghost trolley at both ESL and CHSL. Can you help us with the work on the new formats? See Bruce Gustafson's column on this page for more info.

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**Masthead.** Duluth Street Railway No. 78 is shown here at the Water Street platform of our Museum's Excelsior Streetcar Line. No. 78 was built in 1893 by the LaClede Car Company of St. Louis, Missouri. It ran until 1911 when it was retired and sold for use as a garden shed. Rescued and restored by the Museum it entered service at CHSL in 1991 and was sent to ESL in 1999 to establish streetcar service on our railway there. No. 78 is one of our Museum's five operating streetcars.  
(Jim Vaitkunas photo)

## Many Thanks

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

In the last issue of the *Streetcar Currents*, **Jim Vaitkunas** did me a big favor and substituted an excellent article on how the Twin City Lines served the 1907 Minnesota State Fair for my column while I took a short vacation. I seem to say it every month, but it is hard to believe that another month has passed and that the State Fair is here signaling a wind down of our season. There are so many people who have helped make the 2016 season successful. I would especially like to call out our first year operators who collectively have contributed approximately 10% of the 2,700 hours the Museum's volunteers have spent operating our historic streetcars so far this year. The first year operators include:

CHSL - **Pat Cosgrove, Kathleen Dion, Dave Grandpre, Pat Kriske, Steve McCulloch, Jim Talley, and Lantz Wagner.**

ESL - **Larry Kappel, Ted Spear, and Jeff Storlie.**

It is also encouraging that many of these new members have also been very active in other non-operating activities such as car cleaning, tree trimming and building maintenance. As I have mentioned in previous columns, these behind the scenes functions are critical to making our customer experience positive.

Speaking of behind the scenes work, the Museum's resident creative genius, **Rod Eaton**, is reworking our Halloween ghost trolley format at CHSL. As you likely know, ridership on the ghost trolley at CHSL has been declining the last few years. To hopefully reverse that trend, Rod has developed a new concept which will replace the "traditional" skit on the car. The new ride will offer a series of scary (but not gory) trackside displays combining the lighting experience gained from the Vinternatt with state-of-the-art Halloween set designs. More information will available later in September, but if you are interested in helping to build some of the props please let me ([bruce.gustafson@optum.com](mailto:bruce.gustafson@optum.com)) or **Rod** ([rpeaton@comcast.net](mailto:rpeaton@comcast.net)) know.

I would like to recognize several others. **Bill Way** has volunteered as Car Cleaning Foreman. For the last few years Bill has pulled a heavy load of shifts and I am pleased for him in the new role. I would also like to thank **Pat Kriske** for taking on the responsibility for maintaining our buildings. Pat's first big effort will start around September 12 when he begins soffit and fascia replacement on the Linden Hills station, which looks worn now that we have a new roof thanks to **Bill Arends** who coordinated that major project. And, **Norm Larson** and **Russ Isbrandt** deserve a special call out for their work in applying weed killer along the right-of-way and along the retaining wall by the carbarn. This exhausting work has made a huge difference.

While the season is winding down it is not over. We continue to run full weekend service for another month at which time we begin to focus on the special events of Halloween and the Holly Trolley. If you have not participated as a volunteer or as a guest in the special events I would encourage you to try those activities.

Thank you for all you do. 🍷



## 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 are:

P.O. Box 16509  
Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509  
952-922-1096

### Streetcar **CURRENTS** September—2016

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 edition of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** is September 20, 2016.

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](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)



### From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

**T**CRT No. 1300 trucks update. The No. 1300 trucks working group met on Saturday morning, August 13 and agreed on a repair specification as well as some of the strategy and logistics for the repair of No. 1300's trucks. Thanks to **Dennis Stephens, John Prestholdt, Jim Willmore, Jim Vaitkunas, Dick Zawacki, Russ Isbrandt, Tom Schramm** and **Karl Jones** for contributing to this discussion.

The bid spec has been mailed to five firms, including: Lyons Industries, who rebuilt Winona 10's single truck; Brookville Equipment Co.; Gomaco in Ida Grove, Iowa; Irwin Car; and, the Strasburg Rail Road. The first four have experience rebuilding vintage power trucks. October 1st is the deadline for bids to be received.

We agreed that the truck overhaul should be completed by May 1, 2017. We also agreed that No. 1300 should be placed on shop trucks so it can be moved and won't tie up our heated shop in the George Isaacs carbarn all winter. That means we have to acquire a pair of shop trucks. **Jim Vaitkunas** suggested we try to buy a pair of 1920s-vintage Chicago Transit Authority 4000-series unpowered elevated "L" car trucks. For those who don't know, that's what is currently under TCRT No. 1239, only we installed a single motor in each one.

Quite a few of those L cars went to museums back in the 1970s when CTA was disposing the 1920s era cars. If we're able to buy a pair, we might later motorize them and install them under No. 1239. That would give us an extra pair of power trucks (always good to have) and would prevent No. 1239 being out of service for a long time while its trucks are rebuilt, which needs to happen within the next two years. If we can't get the L car trucks, Plan B is to acquire a pair of conventional freight car trucks.

In the last issue of the *Streetcar Currents* I reported that we submitted a \$115,800 Minnesota Legacy Grant application in late July. On September 24th we'll learn if that application is successful.

**R**etail grows at **ESL**. Thanks to **Karen** and **Jim Kertzman, Todd Bender** and **Bill Arends**, merchandise sales at Excelsior have increased dramatically over last year, almost \$1000 to date compared to about \$250 in 2015. Prior to this year, merchandise was sold at the Excelsior Welcome Center on Water Street as well as at the carbarn. Because the rent was \$600 per year and sales were minimal, the decision was made to pull out of the Welcome Center and upgrade the carbarn store.

**Karen Kertzman** consulted with **Bill Arends**, who supplied stock from the Linden Hills depot and made recommendations on what would sell best. The number of items for sale has almost doubled. Children's books, toys, hats and books such as *Twin Cities by Trolley* and *Twin Ports by Trolley* were added.

This is still a work in progress. There are no full time store clerks. The streetcar crew opens the store when they do the carbarn tour during each trip. Sales are cash only. Karen expects the store to expand for next year, and credit card sales will be explored. 🌀



### MSM Annual Family Picnic—Sunday, September 25th

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR** — MSM will hold its annual family picnic on Sunday, September 25th starting at 1 PM. The volunteers of our Excelsior Streetcar Line will host us this year. We will send out details on how to sign-up and what to bring to the picnic in about a week by an e-mail. We hope to see you there.

**MSM's 2016 Streetcar Camp for Kids**

This year, and for the last several years, we conducted a special Streetcar Camp for Kids on our Museum's Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. The camp is geared towards kids in the age range of 6 to 11 years old. This year we had a larger than usual group with 13 kids attending, almost half of whom were girls. We spent the morning learning all about track, motors, and the streetcar's controls, with the kids using their workbooks to record their answers to questions. We showed them how the crew does their jobs. Then each child had the opportunity to climb into the Motorman's seat and run the car down the line. At the end of the 4-hour camp, all received a nice certificate.

Why do we do this, you may be wondering? Of course, one answer is for the revenue which helps pay the Museum's bills. Another perhaps more important reason is community involvement. Fortunately for us, our Museum's Como-Harriet Streetcar Line has become an integral part of the Linden Hills neighborhood community, so involving the members of our community is one of our Museum's stated objectives. We also conduct the camps with an eye on our Museum's future. If we can get the kids interested in our Museum at an early age, hopefully when they get older they'll come back as full-fledged volunteers. Let's hope that some of the kids who attended this year's camp, as well as past year's camps, will be back in a few years to help us preserve a part of Minnesota's transportation heritage.

Special thanks goes to Camp Leader **Rod Eaton**, for organizing this year's streetcar camp. The Camp staff included **Kathleen Dion, Andy Jacob, Dave Higgins** and **Jim Vaitkunas**. *(All photos by Jim Vaitkunas)*



Here we see **Kathleen Dion** talking to some of the campers about things to watch for when they operate the streetcar, in this case the overhead targets we have along the line.



**Dave Higgins** and **Andy Jacob** gave the campers an overview on how railroad track is built. This photo shows one of the campers learning how a switch works. She is trying mightily to "bend the iron."



Of course, the highlight of the camp for the kids was operating the streetcar from both ends. In this photo **Andy Jacob** is instructing one of the campers on proper controller operation.



At the end of the camp, campers received their certificates. **Dave Higgins** and **Rod Eaton** are presenting the campers their certificates in this photo, with parents and friends looking on. In the right foreground is **Andy Jacob**.

**What's Happening?**


September 5.....Labor Day special operations at CHSL—Ops starts at 12:30 PM and ends at 7:30 PM  
 Labor Day service at ESL starts at 1 PM and ends at 4 PM.  
 September 17.....Excelsior Apple Days festival— service runs from 9 AM to 4 PM  
 October ..... Special Halloween trolleys at CHSL and ESL



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

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary & Assistant Ops Chief

**W**elcome to MSM's newest members. We're pleased to welcome a couple of the new members who have joined our MSM family since the last issue of the *Streetcar Currents*: Bruce Allyn & Joel Miller. Welcome!

**M**SM's Website. MSM's website has a wealth of information on our Museum including all back issues of the *Streetcar Currents*, annual meeting minutes and "state of the Museum" reports, and minutes of all MSM Board meetings from 2006 until the present. There's other good information there too, so visit our website if you have a minute. 

**What's in MSM's Russell L. Olson Library?**

By Aaron Isaacs

**T**he new **Russell L. Olson Library** in the Isaacs Car barn addition is available to members and the general public, so what does it have to offer? In a nutshell, it contains the entire history of Minnesota streetcars, and quite a bit of info on North American streetcars, interurbans and electric railways.

The heart of the collection is **Russ Olson's** research papers, contained in 34 three-ring binders. In typical meticulous fashion, Russ organized his working papers and copies of many photos by subject and they are neatly presented. With them is a copy of Russ' 1976 book *Electric Railways of Minnesota*, along with the 1990 ERM Supplement. It's a trove of good data, which I'll be mining for future articles in *Twin City Lines*. Russ also contributed TCRT valuation reports from 1916 and 1922. These are multiple volumes that inventory everything TCRT owned.

From Metro Transit we have the TCRT Schedule Department log books that list every route change since 1900.

**T**here is a complete collection of Twin Cities streetcar transfers dating back to the 1890s, compiled in five scrapbooks by **Joseph Zalusky**, who was instrumental in founding the Hennepin County Historical Society. There are also thousands of loose Twin Cities and Duluth transfers in one of the file drawers.

The flat file contains numerous maps and TCRT technical drawings. Some are also stored in vertical tubes. Most have been digitized and are available on the Minnesota Reflections website, but if you want to unroll the real thing, we have it.

**W**e have an extensive library of books on North American streetcars, interurbans and electric railways, originally owned by late members **Bill Olsen**, **Norm Podas** and **George Isaacs** and supplemented by other recent donations. We want our members to learn the history and books can be checked out by any member. The books are organized with general histories first, followed by states from east to west, then Canada. Quite a bit of space is devoted to back issues of the *Minnegazette* and *Twin City Lines* history magazines organized in chronological order. They are available for sale. Members pay \$1 for *Minnegazettes* and \$2 for *Twin City Lines* back issues.

**T**he library is also the shop office and home to MSM's financial, administrative, training and shop records.

**John Prestholdt** has been organizing the shop records and **Jim Vaitkunas** will be setting up the Museum's administrative files in the next few months. There are also quite a few uncatalogued items on the history of our museum.

**T**he library has a new computer set up by Ben Franske into which we are loading everything that has been digitized. That includes *Electric Railways of Minnesota*, many trade periodicals such as the *Street Railway Journal* and shop records. Soon to come—about 5000 digitized Minnesota streetcar photos and two hours of vintage video. The actual photos will remain at my house because I need them handy to produce the *Twin City Lines* magazine.

**T**he library is open whenever work crews are at the Isaacs car barn, usually Tuesday and Saturday mornings. If you need special access, or want my assistance to locate specific items, please contact me at: aaromona@aol.com.

The Russel L. Olson library was dedicated on June 19th. →

