End of line talk scripts

1. Why were there tracks in the street?

This portion of the streetcar system was unusual because the tracks had their own right of way. Most of the system was laid in the middle two lanes of arterial streets such as Hennepin Avenue and University Avenue. Passenger waited on the curb and walked out into the street to board. But why did they put tracks in the street to begin with?

The answer goes back to the early 1800s, when the industrial revolution spurred the growth of cities and public transportation became a necessity. Streets were either cobblestone or unpaved. Horse-drawn omnibuses (where the term "bus" comes from) gave a rough ride over the cobbles or bogged down in the mud when it rained.

The railroad was in its infancy. People quickly learned that an iron wheel rolling on an iron rail gave a much smoother ride with much less rolling resistance. A horse could pull more with less effort. Tracks were laid in the street. About 1890, horses were replaced with electric motors, but running on rails maintained the same advantages as before. Automobiles and rubber tires wouldn't become common for another 20 years.

2. CHSL started as a steam narrow gauge

The Como-Harriet line started in 1879 as the Lyndale Railway, later renamed the Minneapolis, Lyndale & Lake Minnetonka. Electricity was a decade away from being practical as a means of propulsion, so the trains were pulled by steam locomotives. At the time the distance between the rails had not yet been standardized at 4 feet 8.5 inches, as it is today. The Lyndale Railway was only 3 feet between the rails.

The line passed through downtown on Marquette Avenue, followed Nicollet Avenue to 31st Street to Lake Calhoun. The locomotives were disguised inside fake passenger car bodies because this was thought to not alarm horses. The first year the line ended at a recreational pavilion located where St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church is today. The company launched the steamboat Hattie on Lake Calhoun to connect with the trains.

In 1880 the track was extended to Lake Harriet. In 1882 it was further extended to Excelsior, in an attempt to capitalize on the Lake Minnetonka tourist boom. The extension was unsuccessful and the line was cut back to Lake Calhoun in 1886, but re-extended again to Lake Harriet in 1887. The steam locomotives were replaced by electric streetcars in 1891, at which time the track was widened to standard gauge. At the same time the route to downtown was shifted from Nicollet Avenue to Hennepin Avenue where it remained until the end of streetcar service in 1954.

3. High Speed Cars to Lake Minnetonka

Lake Minnetonka boomed as a destination for wealthy tourists during the 1880s, but by 1900 it had been replaced by the western national parks on the recently completed transcontinental railroads. Twin City Rapid Transit decided that the lake was ripe for development as a working class resort. In 1906 it extended its line from Lake Harriet to Excelsior. It also purchased the existing railroad from Hopkins to Deephaven, and a railroad and hotel in Tonka Bay.

It built a fleet of six 70-foot wood steamboats to connect with the streetcars and provide hourly service to all points on the lake. It purchased four older Minnetonka steamboats for tours of the lake. It built a picnic, music and amusement park on Big Island, two miles off Excelsior, and built three large ferry boats to access it.

Most people worked a six-day week back then, so all of this development was primarily used on Sundays. Streetcars ran at least every 10 minutes from downtown Minneapolis to Excelsior. The line was fast, about 45 miles per hour between Lake Harriet and Calhoun, and 60 miles per hour from Edina to Excelsior.

Unfortunately, summer Sundays weren't enough to sustain Big Island Park and the hotel in Tonka Bay. They closed in 1911. Steamboat service was reduced about 1920 and ended in 1926. The streetcar line was cut back from Lake Minnetonka to Hopkins in 1932.

4. CHSL and Lake Harriet

There are concerts at Lake Harriet because of the streetcars. When the steam powered Motor Line tracks originally reached Lake Harriet in 1880, it was well out in the country. A small number of homes had been built nearby, but not nearly enough to sustain a passenger railroad. The attraction of Lake Harriet was for summer recreation. Newspaper stories of the period describe huge crowds riding the trains to 4th of July celebrations. Picnicking, concerts, camping and boating were attractions from the very beginning. The Motor Line ran an excursion boat on the lake.

Thomas Lowry's Minneapolis Street Railway leased the Motor Line in 1887 and in 1888 erected the first of three large pavilions featuring concerts, dancing and all manner of other Victorian recreations. It was located on private land next to the tracks, rather than on Park Board land.

The first pavilion burned in 1891, shortly after the railroad was converted from steam power to electric streetcars. The second pavilion was located on leased Park Board land on the lake shore, and including a floating bandstand on the water. Seating was increased to 5000 in 1893.

The pavilion and its concerts continued to be run by the streetcar company until 1903, when the second pavilion suffered a fire. The pavilion had always been a money loser, although the streetcar fares made the whole enterprise profitable. Twin City Rapid Transit donated the $15,000 insurance settlement to the Park

Board, which used the money to help build a new pavilion owned by the Park Board. The new pavilion seated 2000 for concerts.

It lasted until 1925, when it was partially destroyed by a windstorm. It was replaced by a small temporary bandstand was built which lasted until replaced by the present bandstand in 1986.

5. The PCC car

Streetcar ridership began declining in the early 1920s as automobiles became widely available. The ridership loss accelerated during the Great Depression. Even though many streetcar systems had purchased newer cars during the 1920s, most of them couldn't begin to match the automobile for speed and creature comforts. Also, many systems were still running much older wooden cars which. While reliable, could only be called uncomfortable.

The largest companies formed the Presidents Conference Committee to pool their resources and develop of modern streetcar that could compete with the automobile. The design process began in 1930 and in 1936 the first production PCC cars, named for the committee, were delivered.

The car featured much faster acceleration, fully upholstered seats, and plenty of technology to deaden sound and eliminate vibration. The whole package was wrapped in a modernistic streamlined carbody that left all previous streetcar design far behind. When people see the PCC car for the first time, they say it looked like a bus of that era. Wrong. The PCC design came first and the buses copied it.

Between 1936 and 1951, almost 5000 of the PCC streetcars were built. They ran in over 20 North American cities. TCRT purchased 141 of them after World War II. Delivered in 1948-48, they served only a few years before streetcars were abandoned. They were the only rolling stock with resale value. They were sold to Newark, NJ, Cleveland and Mexico City. The Newark cars lasted the longest, remaining in service until 2000. Eleven were sold to San Francisco, where they have been rebuilt for service on the Embarcadero line. Others are in museums in Maine, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Illinois and here at Lake Harriet.

6. Teddy Roosevelt was President

When streetcar 1300 was built in 1908, Theodore Roosevelt was the President. There were only 46 stars in the American flag. New Mexico, Arizona, Alaska and Hawaii were not yet states. The Wright brothers had made the first powered flight only 5 years earlier. Women couldn't vote. Almost no one owned an automobile.

1908 saw some important firsts. The Boy Scouts were formed. The first Mothers Day. The first passenger flight in an airplane, as well as the first death in an airplane crash. Take Me Out to the Ball Game was written. Wireless radio broadcasting was patented. Oil was discovered for the first time in the Middle East.

Ominously for the future of streetcars, General Motors was founded and the first Ford Model T was built in Detroit.

The metro area population was 500,000. Development in south Minneapolis ended at about 38th Street and in north Minneapolis at about Lowry Avenue.

7. Stops along the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line

We run on one mile of the former Como-Harriet line. The right of way survived because it's in the city park. There were three stations.

We're standing at the site of the Lakewood Cemetery Station. Until 1926, when bus service was extended to the cemetery's Hennepin Avenue entrance, this was where you arrived by public transportation. The gate marks the site of the stone station, which you see pictured on that sign. It lasted until 1954. Every Memorial Day, they open that gate and we carry hundreds of people to tour the cemetery.

Just after we pass under the bridge on the way back, look for the steps on each side of the tracks. That's the Cottage City stop. It served the neighborhood between Lake Calhoun and 40th Street, which was platted with 25-foot lots for lake cottages in the 1890s. The development wasn't successful, but about a dozen cottages are still there today.

As we approach 42nd Street, we cross over a pedestrian underpass. There was a fence between the two tracks, so passengers bounded for Lake Harriet got off there and walked under the track.

The depot where you boarded is a replica of the one built in 1900 to serve local residents. It was replaced in 1912 by a larger, chalet-style building that also housed a refreshment stand and a jail cell for the park police. It lasted until the end of streetcar service. The 1900 depot was sold to the Park Board, which used it as the canoe rental office until the 1950s.

8. Why I'm out of uniform—and you don't look so good either

When this streetcar was built, people were much more formal in public. For starters, even though I appear to be dressed as a streetcar motorman, I'm not living up to the company's standards for appearance. My beard would not have been permitted, although moustaches were acceptable. I'm wearing a short-sleeved shirt, also not allowed. A tie was required, although it could be either a regular or bow tie. In 1908, when this streetcar was built, I would have been required to wear my uniform wool coat at all times, regardless of how hot it was.

Now let's talk about you. In 1908 you would probably be jailed for dressing like this. The sight of anyone's bare legs, arms or midriffs in public would have been scandalous and probably led to arrest. Everybody, men and women, would have worn a hat. Like me, most of the men would be wearing some kind of coat, even in the summer. For women, being tan was not considered a good thing. That was reserved for common laborers. A pale complexion was the fad, so you might have been carrying a parasol for protection from the sun. It's also quite possible you would be wearing gloves, even in warm weather.

Fashion had an impact on these streetcars. The seats were originally clear varnished. When skirt hemlines rose in the 1920s, the seats snagged stockings and

the company had to pay damages. They applied a thick cream colored paint to the seats to eliminate the snagging problem.

9. LRT and CHSL and ESL are close cousins

Have you ridden the Hiawatha light rail? This streetcar is the light rail's direct ancestor. You could place this streetcar on the light rail tracks and it would operate. The track gauge is identical. Both vehicles are powered by direct current electricity. We use 600 volts while the light rail uses 750 volts, so the higher voltage might burn out some things on this streetcar unless it was run through some kind of transformer first.

The words "street car" and "light rail" tend to confuse the public, which often thinks they are two completely different things. Not so. Essentially they're the same type of vehicle, just deployed differently. A streetcar runs mostly in the street, in mixed traffic and it stops every block. Light rail runs mostly on its own right of way, so it is freed from traffic congestion. Light rail stops only less often, so it can achieve higher speeds. Our preserved piece of the Como-Harriet line is really light rail—it ran on its own right of way, ran at high speed and stopped only periodically. When it reached the corner of 31st and Irving, it entered the street and became a street car.

Here at the museum we like to say that everything old is new again. The year 2014 will see the opening of the Central Corridor between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul via University Avenue. Yet this line almost exactly duplicates the original streetcar line between the cities, which opened in 1890 and ran until 1953.

10. Streetcars elsewhere in Minnesota

Besides Minneapolis and St. Paul, Twin City Rapid Transit extended suburban streetcars to Robbinsdale, Columbia Heights, St. Louis Park and South St. Paul. Long suburban lines reached Hopkins and Lake Minnetonka on the west and North St. Paul, White Bear Lake, Stillwater and Bayport on the east. These included Winona, Mankato, St. Cloud-Sauk Rapids, Brainerd, and International Falls-Ranier. There were interstate operations in Duluth-Superior, Grand Forks-East Grand Forks, Fargo-Moorhead-Dilworth and Wahpeton-Breckenridge.

Streetcar technology was used to build electric railroads that ran between cities. These were called interurbans. They extended from Minneapolis to Anoka, and from St. Paul to Hastings. An interurban ran the length of the Missabe iron range from Gilbert, Eveleth and Virginia to Chisholm and Hibbing.

Automobiles became common starting about 1920 and streetcar ridership quickly declined. By the 1930 some of the cities had already lost their streetcars. The Great Depression of the 1930s finished off the rest of them except in the Twin Cities, where they lasted into the 1950s.

11. Electrification

The first streetcars were pulled by horses. They were slow, and the horses teams had to be replaced about once and hour due to fatigue. It took about 7 horses

to keep a streetcar running all day. Horse got sick, produced large quantities of manure and couldn't handle steep hills. Victorian inventors worked hard to find some acceptable form of mechanical propulsion.

Steam locomotives were available and reliable, but poorly suited for street railways. They were noisy, smoky and deposited soot everywhere. The one line in Minneapolis that used them was strongly criticized from the day it opened and ultimately was required to substitute horses to pull the cars through downtown.

In 1879 the cable car was invented in San Francisco. A continuous cable powered by a stationery steam engine was located in an underground conduit between the rails. The unpowered streetcar gripped the cable through a slot in the pavement and was propelled at 8-10 miles per hour. Cable cars were twice as fast as horse cars and could climb any hill. Two lines were built in St. Paul. However, they were terribly expensive to build and maintain.

Throughout the 1880s, several inventors tried and failed to harness electricity. Frank Sprague succeeded in 1887 and his patents swept the nation. In only 5 years, over 90 percent of the street railways had adopted his technology. The Twin Cities converted from 1889 to 1891.

12. Snoose

TCRT hired an enormous number of Scandinavian immigrants and their children to drive streetcars. It was an all-male workforce and the use of chewing tobacco or snoose was widespread. When you chew snoose, you have to spit out the juice. Streetcars weren't equipped with spittoons and that was a problem. In those days the front windshield wasn't fixed. Like all the other windows, it dropped down and out of the way into a wall pocket. Motormen would spit their juice out the front window.

Unfortunately, the old adage "don't spit into the wind" applied. Frequently at least part of the juice wouldn't make it out the window and would end up on the window sill, the controls and the floor. It also was deposited on the outside front dash of the streetcar. Disgusting is not too strong a word to describe it. We have copies of company bulletins that urged motormen not to spit out the front. Instead, they suggested the alternative of spitting down one of the two switch rod holes, located in the floor on either side of the motorman's stool. These holes are only about three inches in diameter, not a very big target. Some motormen lifted up the right front passenger seat and spit into the sand bin that was located under the seat.

Spitting by passengers was also a problem. Note the sign in car #265's rear vestibule warning that spitting violates the law and is subject to steep fines.

13. Working conditions

By the labor standards of the early 20th century, running a streetcar was not a bad job at all, but was still a challenge. The six-day or even seven-day work week was the norm and a typical work day was 10-11 hours. Motormen and conductors were forbidden to sit down while the streetcar was moving. In fact, there was no motorman stool at all.

Most one-way trips took about an hour, with several minutes of layover or recovery time before the next trip began. However, during those minutes the car had to be turned around, usually on a wye that involved backing around a corner. The three hand-cranked destination signs often had to be changed. The conductor had the worst of it during layover, having to count received fares and transfers, and record them on separate trip envelopes. He also had to pick up any litter left in the car and, in winter, stoke the coal stove from a trackside bin.

Trainmen wore a heavy wool coat regardless of the weather. Over the years these rules were eased somewhat. Wood stools were installed for the motorman, with along with rules forbidding sitting down in congested traffic and at junctions with other streetcar lines. Eventually the stools received cushioned seats, adjustable backs and motormen sat all the time. In hot weather, trainmen were eventually allowed to remove their coats.

14. 1948 (By Russ Isbrandt)

Everything is optional, pick and chose to keep the talk time limited. Don't bother if there are few or no people over 60. The crowd won't understand most of the talk.

Welcome to the Minnesota Streetcar Museum's 1300 time machine. It's 1948 so things like cell phones, MP3 players haven't been invented yet and won't work. Neither have shopping malls been invented.

My Dad just got a new Oldsmobile with Hydramatic transmission (no shifting) and turn signals so you don't have to stick you arm out the window in the rain and cold to signal your turn.

Hubert Humphrey is mayor, there's Gov. Luther Youngdahl and of course President Harry Truman.

Radio columnist Walter Winchell reported that President Truman was mighty upset with a music critic who wasn't impressed with the President's daughter Margaret's singing. The President threatened to punch him in the nose if he saw him.

(On Saturdays) If you're going shopping, get off this car at 5th and Hennepin, walk one block east to Nicollet Avenue where you'll find Daytons, Powers, Donaldsons and Penny's department stores. Woolworth's has a good lunch counter where you can pick up an inexpensive lunch. Check out the soda fountain at Walgreens for a great sundae.

(Before 2:30pm) For a real treat, you can ride the Burlington Route's Afternoon Zephyr to St. Paul for about $.30. They've just started running those brand new dome cars. Maybe you'll get a chance to sample one. Stay on the car and get off at the Great Northern Station.

If you're going to the Como Park Zoo, stay on, we'll take you there, but you'll have to pay another token when you get off. Travel between the Twin Cities takes two tokens.

(Early afternoon) Hey, the Millers are playing the Milwaukee Brewers at Nicollet Park. Get off at Hennepin and Lake, take a Selby – Lake car to Nicollet Ave. and walk one block south.

If you're going to the Wold Chamberlain Airport to watch the planes take off, get off at Lake Street, take a Selby - Lake car to Chicago Ave., take a 34th Ave. car to the end of the line and transfer to the airport shuttle bus. You just may luck out and see one of those new Northwest Orient Boeing Stratocrusers. They are a blast to watch take off.

(On cloudy cold days) The big downtown movie theaters are the Orpheum, State and Gopher. John Wayne in Ft. Apache is playing at the Orpheum. For more modest ticket prices there are the theaters along Lake St. You have the American at Nicollet, Uptown at Hennepin, Granada at Hennepin and Rialto at Chicago. Bambi is showing at the Granada.

(Saturdays) You kids may get stuck with a baby sitter tonight if Mom and Dad go out dancing. Wayne King is at the Orpheum and the Clyde McCoy Band is at the Club Carnival. Tommy Dorsey is at the Prom on University Ave. Don't know who's at the Marigold.

Whoa! There comes my follower, an Oak – Harriet car. Now I'll have to pick up his passengers too and really be late. The starter at 5th and Hennepin will really be on me now. Then again, maybe we'll just go back to 2012 and avoid the hassle.

A lot of this stuff is what I remember when I was a kid. You can mention your dad going down to shovel coal in the furnace unless you were fairly well off and had a stoker. Most people heated their homes with coal. Dial telephones were coming in, no need to tell the operator what number you wanted.

Most of the Tuesday morning maintenance crew can relate most of this. If I recall correctly, Bud Goldberg's dad booked acts for the Carlton Celebrity Room, I believe. Bud got a kick out of the talk.

This is by no means factually accurate. Northwest may not have started Stratocruiser service until 1949 for example. They were however, the first carrier to fly them.

15. Why did the streetcars go away? By John Diers (not a script, but it answers the oft-asked question)

Perhaps you've heard the tale about a conspiracy of oil, rubber, and auto interests that took over America's streetcar companies, banished trolleys and replaced them with "smelly" buses so inferior that people deserted them and bought more automobiles, dooming mass transit systems forever. The story even made its way to a PBS special, *Taken for a Ride.*

Nothing could be further from the truth. There *was* a conspiracy, but it was wrapped inside an economic revolution, and everyone who bought an automobile between 1920 and 1950 was an unindicted co-conspirator—along with U.S. automakers, banks and financial institutions that profited from auto loans, and state, local and federal

governments that paved highways. By 1920, a $300 Model T Ford purchased on time payments was affordable for working families, who found the automobile a more convenient and efficient form of transportation, especially if they lived on the urban fringe and their bungalow came with a garage.

In 1949 General Motors, Firestone, and Standard Oil were found guilty of violating the Sherman Antitrust Act, but their conviction had nothing to do with eliminating streetcars. Rather, the defendants were found guilty of illegally monopolizing the sale of buses, tires, and fuel to National City Lines, a transit operator that had acquired some 62 US transit systems, converting all but four to bus operation. General Motors, National City Lines, and seven other corporations were each fined $5,000 plus court costs by a U.S. District Court; the seven executives named in the suit were each fined $1. After the verdict came down, National City Lines continued running transit systems and GM kept selling buses. The public, meanwhile, continued purchasing automobiles in ever-increasing numbers.

Twin City Rapid Transit Company (TCRT) was regarded as one of the finest street railway properties in the United States. Its best year came in 1920, when it transported 238 million passengers. Twelve years later its profits were gone—along with half its riders. Until the mid-1920's streetcar ridership and automobile ownership closely paralleled national trends. Then, auto registrations sprinted ahead of the national averages. In 1920 there were 8.2 persons per automobile in Minneapolis and St. Paul, compared to 5.3 nationally. By 1928 there were 4.5 and by 1940, 3.5. A 1940 survey found that only 8 out of 30 cities with a population of over 300,000 had more automobiles per capita. Twin Citians loved their cars. Meanwhile, under the terms of its city franchises, TCRT was required to plow snow and maintain the streets used by its streetcars. Costs kept going up, but city officials, and, later, the Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse Commission were slow to grant fare increases. As riders drifted away, transit systems, nationwide, began turning to buses. By 1929, 20 percent of all U.S. transit systems had converted entirely to bus, and by 1937, over half were all bus. Even staunchly pro-streetcar TCRT was using buses on low volume crosstown lines, as suburban feeders, and had converted a handful of marginal lines to bus operations.

Their high unit capacity allowed streetcars to move large numbers of people at a much lower labor cost. However, their high fixed costs had to be spread over a large number of riders. Thus, as more people bought automobiles and ridership declined, the streetcar, paradoxically, became a victim of its own efficiency—exacerbated, especially, when track and power infrastructure came due for replacement. After World War II, GM and other bus manufacturers introduced high-capacity buses with automatic transmissions, air suspension, and diesel power (following the work of GM's Charles Kettering, who perfected the two-cycle diesel engine), wiping out any efficiency the streetcar may have had.

TCRT's ridership dropped steadily throughout the 1920s, from its high of 238 million in 1920 to approximately 168 million in 1929, all because of automobile competition. The Great Depression took away another 68 million, bringing total ridership to 100 million in 1933, its lowest point since 1906. Ridership surged during World War II, but dropped back to the 100 million mark in 1953. TCRT brought $1.1 million to its bottom line in 1929; that fell to a slim $40,000 in 1932, and the company lost money in

1933. TCRT took measures to trim its losses, eliminating conductors, cutting peak hour service, and reducing wages. Profitability returned in 1935. However, none of these gains were sustainable because they all came from operating economies, not more riders. Passenger revenues kept right on tumbling, from $10.6 million in 1931 to $8.6 million in 1935. There was a surge in riders during World War II, but the decline resumed after the War, and, by 1949, the company was near bankruptcy.

During World War II, TCRT hired a consulting firm, Gilman and Company, to make recommendations for its postwar operations. The consultant's report counseled modest improvements at the company's main power plant, together with a gradual but total conversion to buses over a span of 10 years. There was no mention of rail investments. TCRT's prewar bus operations brought in about 10 percent of its operating revenues and carried 8 percent of its passengers. Undoubtedly, management was aware of the large diesel buses that GM and Mack would bring out at the end of the war. These new buses could seat 50, came with automatic transmissions, and could do the work of streetcars even on the heaviest lines. New York would buy hundreds of them to complete the conversion of its Manhattan surface operations in 1947-1948. TCRT's own bus data suggested conversion might be financially prudent: At 20 cents per mile buses were much cheaper to operate than the streetcar's 28 cents per mile, the higher cost attributable to the hundreds of additional employees in the shops, track, and power departments and the large investment in physical plant.

It was surprising, therefore, when President D.J. Strouse, ignored the consultants' recommendations, and announced that the company would begin postwar modernization with an order for new PCC streetcars. Speaking to the press he said, *"We are convinced that the streetcar is as necessary to most people as it ever was. The thousands who have to ride streetcars and the other thousands who prefer them are entitled to good cars and good service, and they are going to have them."* Strouse was correct. People were entitled to good cars and good service. And passengers loved the 141 new PCC cars that graced the Twin Cities in the late 1940s—but only when they weren't driving their own automobiles to the suburbs

As riders deserted the system and operating expenses soared, the company continued doing business as usual. In its peak postwar year, 1946, TCRT carried over 201 million, passengers, earning $1.2 million. Just three years later, it carried only 165 million riders and *lost* $797,215. In that time, management made no efforts to reduce operating expenses or mileage. In fact, TCRT actually operated more miles of service in 1949 with fewer riders than in 1946.

For at least one stockholder, it seemed as if management wasn't minding the store. That stockholder was Charles Green, a Wall Street player who had no special interest in, fondness for, or competence in the street railway industry. He summed up his talents best when he described himself as one who was "always ready to make a fast buck." Green staged a stockholder revolt and took over as president in 1949, promising to turn the company around, pay dividends, and convert the system to buses. He kept his promise. He furloughed hundreds of employees, reduced maintenance, and cut service. He even threatened to sell, or scrap, the entire St. Paul operation, because it wasn't making money. TCRT returned to profitability, but the board found Green so obnoxious they ousted him and elected Fred Ossanna, a prominent Twin Cities attorney with favorable

political connections.

Ossanna wanted to move forward with TCRT's bus conversion plans but was frustrated by its financial woes. The company was in such poor shape that it could not arrange financing with local banks. Then, General Motors came along with an offer of favorable terms from GM and its credit arm, General Motors Acceptance Corporation, enabling TCRT to buy 525 new GM buses. The purchase would permit the company to abandon all rail operations. It was an offer Ossanna couldn't refuse. Three years later, in June 1954, Twin City Rapid Transit ran its last streetcar. The PCCs found homes in Newark, N. J., Cleveland, and Mexico City. The rest of the streetcar fleet was torched or sold for lake cabins and chicken coops.

Subsequent investigations found that Ossanna and some of his associates had schemed with local mobsters, crooked scrap metal dealers, and real estate brokers to sell scrap metal and valuable real estate at below market prices, pocketing the difference. Ossanna was convicted of fraud and sentenced to prison. Barney Larrick, TCRT's general manager and a former official with National City Lines, joined him in the pen.

General Motors often gets blamed, along with the Ossanna management, for the disappearance of TCRT's streetcars. But the fact is that GM's loan, and Ossanna's bus conversion, *saved* the company from bankruptcy. Ossanna's crimes provoked public indignation, but there was absolutely no support for public ownership, or operation, of the failing Twin City Rapid Transit Company. There was no constituency for transit and wouldn't be for another 20 years. If not Fred Ossanna, the unhappy task would have fallen to someone else. By 1954, streetcars had simply run out of time.

Excerpted from "Did A Conspiracy Really Kill The Streetcar," John Diers, *Trains*, January 2006

16. Women and the streetcar company

This streetcar (1300 or 265) was called a 2-man car when it was built. That term sounds sexist, but at the time there were no women running streetcars in the Twin Cities and none would until World War II. We have a 1916 list of streetcar company employees. It shows that one-third of the office employees were women, as were all 10 of the telephone operators. There were also a dozen women employed in the Park Department, meaning they worked at Wildwood Park on White Bear Lake. In all, there were 68 women out of a total work force of 4400.

During the first World War, a shortage of men caused the hiring of a few women as conductors. We have one photo of a woman in a twin City uniform, but no other information. In Duluth, we know that 21 women were hired as conductors and two of them worked until 1929.

World War II brought unprecedented numbers of women into the work force, and in jobs that were previously all male. TCRT began hiring female streetcar operators in 1943 and eventually hired almost 500. They couldn't call them motormen, so they used the term "motorette". Even though conductor was a gender-neutral term, they

called the women "conductorettes". Several dozen more were also hired to clean streetcars and to work in the shop as mechanics.

Most of the motorettes and conductorettes served for only a year or two. By the end of 1947, only 37 were still working. 25 survived into the 1950s and 14 to the end of streetcar service in 1954. The last one retired as a Metro Transit bus driver in 1980. No other women were hired to drive streetcar or bus until the early 1970s.

17. Streetcar remnants

Even though the streetcars have been gone since 1954, you can find plenty of remnants if you know where to look.

Just north of here, along the east side of Lake Calhoun, the old streetcar right of way is a path between 34th Street and 36th Street. The steps and platform of the 35th Street streetcar stop are still in place. Beyond our carbarn, the right of way has become an alley and is the parking area for Linden Hills businesses, passing between the Great Harvest Bakery and Bayers Hardware. Continue west along 44th Street and it is now a walking path between Xerxes and Zenith Avenues.

Portions of streetcar right of way have been converted to bike trails by Blake School in Hopkins and through St. Paul's Hazel Park neighborhood.

Five of the former streetcar barns still stand. They are:

- East Side Station on 1st Avenue NE at University Avenue
- North Side Station at Washington Avenue N. and 26th Avenue
- The original general offices, carhouse and powerhouse at 3rd Avenue N. and 2nd Street
- Midway Carhouse at University and Raymond Avenues
- The small South St. Paul carhouse on Concord Avenue just south of I-494

The Main Steam Station that supplied electricity for the streetcar system still stands at the east end of the Stone Arch Bridge. In addition, three of the original electrical substations still stand.

The east portal of the Selby Tunnel is deteriorated, but completely intact, including the tracks.

And there are many miles of streetcar track buried beneath the pavement in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Each spring, some of them become visible through the potholes and pavement cracks.

17. John Dillery's talk

Welcome aboard car ____ operating in restored service by the Minnesota Streetcar Museum, an all volunteer organization. We come from many walks in life to bring alive this bit of Minnesota's public transportation history. If you would be interested in volunteering, we would love to have you join us! We pay to work here; active membership is just $30 per year. You get to wear this stylish uniform which closely resembles those worn by Twin City Lines crews in the 19__'s. You also get to

ride streetcars for free all you want! Only, you should expect to cover a 4 or 5 hour shift about twice per month.

Then, depending what I'm aboard, I say something like:

Car 265 was built in 1915 at the Snelling Shops in St. Paul, one of over 1,200 streetcars and work cars such as snowplows. This is a "standard" car. It originally had an open back platform and you came and went via wire gates in back. All standard cars were this way. This car was sold to Duluth Street Railway in 1917 at for cost, essentially, since DSR was owned by Twin City Rapid Transit Co. aka "Twin City Lines" back then. They remodeled the car extensively in Duluth over the years. The wide front doors and narrow back doors, fun curved back seat, were not seen here, but were popular in Duluth. The car has been rebuilt to appear as it did before it last saw service in Duluth in the late 1930's. Please see the card cards (point) that include a complete "bio" of this car. (I often vary the talk by noting the hot water heater, or route number sign in front).

or

Car 1300 was built in 1908 at the Snelling Shops in St. Paul, one of over 1,200 streetcars and work cars such as snowplows. This is a "standard" car. It originally had an open back platform and you came and went via wire gates in back. All standard cars were this way. It is truly a "home-made" car, designed and built here – this was not a common thing. Even 100 years ago, most transit companies brought their vehicles from a supplier, much like city buses and light rail vehicles are purchased today. The reasons for this are many, but I think the main ones were that Thomas Lowry, the president of Twin City Rapid Transit Co. aka "Twin City Lines" back then, had a philosophy much like another innovator you have probably heard of named "Henry Ford". The idea was basically: "Make it yourself if you can – buy it from someone else only if you have to." Also, he was not convinced that the streetcars available on the market were really up to our weather. The streetcar company rebuilt these cars extensively about every 4 to 5 years and also re-designed them as they went. This car received its air operated doors front and back in 1931. It had its coal-fired furnace under the floor replaced with the electric heaters you see (point them out) in 1938. Car 1300 was one of the last cars operating in June 1954 on the Como Harriet line – the last regular streetcar route. It was saved by a group of streetcar preservationists after they took one more chartered ride in the car on Saturday June 19, 1954. It remained in storage until 1962, when just to see if people wanted a ride, they operated it on some industrial yard track in St. Paul's Midway area. Thousands turned out, convincing all it would be a good idea to return the car to service somewhere. Out of this effort, the museum was started here with the help of the Minneapolis Park Board in the summer of 1971. Please see the card cards (point) that include a complete "bio" of this car. (Sometimes I vary this last part by pointing out the red rear upper window – tail-light, or other features of the car or contrast the lovely interior with more Spartan old designs such as you see on St. Charles in New Orleans.)

or

Car 322 was built in 1946 and delivered new to Twin City Rapid Transit Co. aka "Twin City Lines" in early 1947. There were once 141 of these cars operating here. They were intended to replace all of the standard wooded cars that you can also ride here. These were designed by the presidents' conference committee of many of the major streetcar operators and suppliers in the 1930s to compete with the comfort and performance of the automobiles new then and that is why they are called "PCC" cars. This car was built by St. Louis Car Company, the largest supplier of PCC cars in America. It is an all electric car, which means that the doors, brakes, heat are all operated by electricity. This car is one stage behind the modern light rail vehicles you may ride on the Hiawatha Line not far east of us here. Those LRV's and the PCC are more the same than different – the principal behind the operation is really the same. The car accelerates very quickly and stops faster than the standard wooded cars. A key reason is that it is much lighter. Please see the card cards (point) that include a complete "bio" of this car. (I sometimes mention that people say the PCC looks like a 1950's bus, but in fact those buses look like this PCC car – it came along 10 years earlier.)

Sometimes, I mention that this one-mile recreation of the original Como Harriet line is true to private right of way operation, but that most of the time, the streetcars operated in the center lanes of the major streets in our cities such as Hennepin Avenue. If it is a major inner city bus route today, it was probably once a streetcar route). I am prone to shortening this talk a lot – I just talk about the museum briefly, when we get real busy.