

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



September 2009

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## Time for Fall's Special Events

- **Mark Your calendars to attend our annual Family picnic on Sunday, September 27th at CHSL**
- **Helps us through the fall operations schedule by signing up for shifts in October and November**
- **Halloween, pumpkin patch and Santa trolleys are real money makers for our Museum. Please support them by volunteering when you get the notice in the mail or by e-mail**



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**Masthead Photo:** Twin City Lines No. 322 was a true "boomer," built by the St. Louis Car Company and delivered to TCRT in 1947. After only six short years it was sold to a line in Newark, New Jersey and in the early 1980s sold again to the Cleveland Transit System. Acquired by the Museum in 1990, No. 322 spent 8 years in the Museum's shop emerging as an almost brand-new car in 2000. (Mike Helde photo)

## What's Ahead?

Rod Eaton—General Superintendent

The State Fair is almost over, kids are back in school, and our busy summer season has come to a close. Thanks to all our volunteers for another great summer of streetcar operations. Let's look at what's coming this fall.

**Ghost Trolley at ESL and CHSL.** Como-Harriet's annual *Ghost Trolley* will have a five night run—Friday and Saturday October 16 & 17, 23 & 24, plus Friday the 30th. In past years, ridership on Thursday nights and Halloween has been low, so we thought we'd take a different approach. Anticipating a smaller turnout the first weekend, we're scheduling just one car; we'll use two on the remaining three nights. As he has in the past, **John Kennedy** will be decorating our streetcars.

This year, **Dave French** and **Mike Helde** will be telling the tale of the "*Streetcar Zombies*." Naturally (or would it be *un-naturally*?), we'll be needing an assortment of zombies each evening. This is a good opportunity for non-operating members of our Museum to participate. Spouses, significant others, older children, friends, neighbors—anyone who wants to release their inner zombie—are also welcome. If you can provide a body or two, give me or Mike a scream.

In Excelsior, we'll be partnering once again with the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society to present the Haunted Trolley and BOOseum. Dates this year are Friday and Saturday, October 23 & 24. This event has become a community favorite, attracting hundreds of people each night.

**Farmer Ken's Pumpkin Patch.** On Saturday and Sunday, October 25 & 25, *Farmer Ken's Pumpkin Patch* will be open at the north end of the Como-Harriet Line. Last year, this event threatened to become too successful, with almost all of our pumpkins selling out the first day. Farmer **Ken Albrecht** is growing more pumpkins for us this year, and this month's abundant rain should contribute to a bumper crop.

As with *Ghost Trolley*, we need non-operating volunteers to make the Pumpkin Patch successful. We'll be looking for people to wrangle pumpkins, assist Farmer Ken at the patch, paint children's faces and apply transfer tattoos. Also, if you know of anyone who can entertain children and would be interested in our event, for example a story teller, musician, juggler, clown, or magician, please let me know.

On Halloween Saturday, we'll introduce a new event -- *Trick 'r Trolley*. Following the popularity of our summer PJ Parties, *Trick 'r Trolley* invites younger children and their parents to come in costume, take an afternoon streetcar ride, listen to a Halloween story, and receive a bag of Halloween treats. Wild Rumpus Books is our partner.

That's a busy and ambitious October schedule! It's always gratifying to see the support these important events receive from our volunteers. And when you see Ken's smile as children scramble through straw looking for the perfect pumpkin, listen to **Karl Jones'** imitation of "The Count," watch **Angela Frerichs** apply a tattoo to a kid's arm, or discover **Dave Irely** and his grandson in matching vampire makeup, you know we're having as much fun as our riders. ☺

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 is:  
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Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467  
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**Streetcar **CURRENTS**  
September 2009**

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor  
Bill Graham—Distribution

**Streetcar **CURRENTS**** is a periodic 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 September 20, 2009.

Please send items to editor Jim Vaitkunas at the following address:  
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**MSM News & Notes**

*Jim Vaitkunas—Editor*

**H**ow are we doing for ridership this year? That's an excellent question and I hope I can give at least a partial answer especially since our regular operating season still has three months left at CHSL and two months at ESL. Here's a quick summary of how we're doing.

At CHSL the vast majority of our riders are either repeat riders who live in the immediate vicinity of CHSL, or they are visitors to Lakes Calhoun and Harriet, see the bright, yellow streetcar, and decide to ride. In other words, spur-of-the-moment riders. What all this means is that the number of people who ride our streetcars on any given day depends on whether the weather is nice enough to be out and about. Ridership at both lines is heavily weather dependent, but more so at CHSL. For May and July CHSL's ridership was good. June, on the other hand, was not very good because of the cool and rainy weather we seemed to experience for almost every weekend and during the week. Here's a run-down of the statistics for May through July at both demonstration railways.

**CHSL**

MONTH	OPERATING DAYS	PASSENGERS CARRIED
May	19	5,768
June	27	5,084
July	31	6,028
TOTAL		18,687

**ESL**

MONTH	OPERATING DAYS	PASSENGERS CARRIED
May	21	686
June	10	542
July	22	1,299
TOTAL		2,527

What this means is that at CHSL our ridership is about where it was for the last several years, except for June, which is down by around 1,000 riders from typical past years. Excelsior saw a big drop in June because of the wet and cool weather and the one weekend that we didn't operate at all because of the broken trolley wire. Otherwise ESL was on a par with prior years.

On the plus side, CHSL's Wednesday afternoon rides have proved to be very popular. Through the end of July we carried just short of 1,000 passengers on the Wednesday afternoon runs and that would have been higher if it wasn't for the wet and cool weather in June when we carried only 240 passengers. The new PJ Party trolley at Lake Harriet was also very popular.

**O**ur season is really only half over. Now we have several very lucrative events coming up in October and November: Farmer Ken's Pumpkin patch in late October at CHSL; the ghost trolley at both CHSL and ESL; and, the Santa Trolleys also at both railways. We will send out a special call

for volunteers for these special operations in early October, but please consult the "What's Happening" box on the top of page 4 of this newsletter and block-out or mark several of these dates on your personal planning calendar so you won't schedule anything on those dates. These special events require many people and we need maximum participation on everybody's part. Please help out as much as you can. Thanks! ☺

Our third annual MSM family Picnic will be held on Sunday, September 27th at our Museum's George Isaacs carbarn at CHSL. Please circle that date on your calendar. Start time is 12 Noon. We'll provide the usual—brats, burgers, pop and condiments. We ask that attendees bring a side item such as potato salad, chips, etc. To help event chef, Scott Heiderich procure the brats & burgers, please call him at 651-645-3333 or send him an e-mail to [s-klines@comcast.net](mailto:s-klines@comcast.net) to tell him how many will come with you.

Last year we had a good turn out at the Excelsior carbarn. This year, we hope to see even more of you at Lake Harriet. This is a nice opportunity to get together socially and share our streetcar passion with our families and friends. It's also a chance to meet Museum members you might not know well, especially our newest members, but with whom you share a common interest. So come, bring something to share, have a brat or burger, and enjoy the company. See **YOU** at the picnic.

## Historian & Archives News & Notes

*Aaron Isaacs —Historian*

**M***useum Adventure Pass Review.* In September 2008 MSM joined the Museum Adventure Pass program. Any resident of the seven county metro area can go to the local library and check out a free pair of admissions to any museum that participates in the program. The number of passes per library is limited and the passes expire after one week.

The Adventure Pass program provides free publicity for the participating museums. In addition to kiosks in over 100 libraries, the program is advertized on KARE11 and in the Star-Tribune.

Because we signed up rather late last year, they grouped us with the Minnesota Transportation Museum and the Fire Museum, meaning that the pass was good for any of the three. Starting in September, MSM will have its own individual pass, which will reduce confusion.

So has the Adventure Pass program been a good thing for MSM? Past surveys of Como-Harriet passengers showed that most lived within a few miles of Lake Harriet and few came from farther away. The Adventure Pass has provided free advertizing that we could never have afforded. Of course the real goal is to increase ridership, and our hope is that free rides will stimulate repeat riding. That seems reasonable since we know that many of our riders return over and over during each season. However, we didn't want to give out too many free rides to people who live nearby and formerly paid.

I reviewed the passes redeemed in May, June and July. We gave out 382 free rides at Como-Harriet and 40 at Excelsior. At Lake Harriet, three-quarters of the passes came from outside south Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Edina and Richfield. That area represents roughly a 5-mile radius from Lake Harriet. Half of the passes redeemed came from outside Hennepin County. We saw passes from as far away as Waconia, New Prague, Inver Grove Heights, White Bear Lake and Stillwater. The breakdown by county was:

50.3% Hennepin; 20.5% Ramsey; 11.4% Dakota; 5.4% Anoka; 4.3% Washington; 4.3% Scott; and, 3.8% Carver

Of the passes redeemed at Excelsior, half came from more than five miles away, and the furthest was from St. Paul.

These results tell me that the Adventure Pass is doing what we wanted it to do. Yes, there is some lost revenue, but I'm pretty sure most of the pass riders aren't former paid riders. Hopefully some of them will

become regular riders.

**D***uluth Visit.* **John Diers** and I were invited to give a presentation on the history of Duluth-Superior streetcars at the National Railway Historical Society's annual convention in Duluth on August 13. We spoke to about 60 people and it was well received. The day before, we visited the Douglas County Historical Society in Superior to see if they had streetcar photos. The staff person brought us a stack of folders containing many images we had never seen before. All bore the stamp of the late Wayne C. Olsen, foremost historian of streetcars in the Twin Ports. We had known that Olsen bequeathed much of his collection to the North East Minnesota Historical Society, located at University of Minnesota-Duluth. Apparently he gave his Superior photos to the Douglas County Historical Society. We purchased copies of the 30 best ones to add to the MSM archive.

**T***TCRT Appointment Cards.* Several years ago MSM donated to the Minnesota Historical Society a large number of TCRT employee appointment cards. These list, in alphabetical order, the motormen and conductors who ran streetcars from 1891 to 1954. The appointment cards give birth date, hire date, end of employment date and work location, plus sometimes other limited information. The donation was made because MSM received frequent calls from people researching their family genealogy. Donating them to MHS has made them much more available.

Two years ago I received a call from **Larry Rolf** at Metro Transit. I was surprised to learn that Metro Transit had retained a large number of the appointment cards, including those of bus drivers post-1954. Our previous donation to MHS was incomplete and here were the rest of the cards. Metro Transit employment records are now computerized, so the cards were obsolete and in danger of being discarded. Wanting to preserve them, Larry arranged for donation to MSM. MSM has now donated them to the Minnesota Historical Society, so the set of appointment cards is again complete.

As a volunteer for MHS, I have begun merging the two sets of cards alphabetically. This has proven a bigger job than I expected, because the cards are split into five sets, one for each of the streetcar stations (Nicollet, North Side, East Side, Snelling and Duluth Street). There's also a second phase to this project. Each TCRT employee was assigned a badge number.

*(Continued on bottom of page 4)*

**What's Happening?**

- Sept 5 Streetcar cleaning at CHSL, 8:30 AM to 11 AM.  
 Sept 12 Excelsior *Apple Days* festival. ESL runs from 9 AM to 4 PM.  
 Sept 27 MSM annual family picnic at CHSL's Isaacs carbarn, Lake Harriet (see page 2)  
 Oct 16, 17, 23, 24 & 30 CHSL's Ghost trolley operates 6 PM to 9 PM  
 Oct 23 & 24 ESL's Halloween ghost trolley operates 6 PM to 9 PM  
 Oct 24 & 25 CHSL presents *Farmer Ken's Pumpkin Patch* Operations runs from 1 PM to 5 PM

**Mystery of Grit Blasting Revealed***Dennis Stephens—Shop Metallugist*

Most of us have at some time struggled to remove rust or scale from steel and cast iron with an assortment of tools: needle scalers, wire wheels, scratch brushes, dental tools, sanders, grinders, Scotch-Brite wheels, etc. The resultant airborne dust settles on carbarn walls or fresh paint and poses a health hazard. Care in surface preparation is reflected in final appearance and paint adhesion. In some cases, corroded parts must be replicated but their geometry and dimensions are obscured. But traditional tools fare poorly with complex geometry, corners, holes or pits and may actually injure important features.

One part of the solution is to grit blast small and moderate sized parts in an enclosed cabinet, known as a glove box. MSM chose a Cyclone Model 3824 with minor cosmetic damage, offered at a deep discount of \$680, but with full features and warranty. It has been installed at Excelsior, where there's more space and a strong air compressor. It will see a lot of use on the Winona 10 restoration project.

So, how does it work? The hardware, limited in size by the gasketed 16" x 19" door, is loaded into the lighted cabinet. Our unit can accommodate articles up to the size of a trolley base or truck coil spring. A compressed air source is controlled by a foot-actuated valve. The worker reaches through arm holes fitted with rubber gloves to manipulate both the work and the pneumatic gun. Two hoses connect to the gun—one delivers high pressure air, while the other aspirates abrasive media through a siphon tube extending down into the hopper. A dedicated vacuum system extracts dust (scale, paint and spent media).

Quartz sand is cheap, but never used indoors, as a lung disease known as silicosis can result. Steel shot is unsuited, but common non-metallic media ranges from walnut shells to glass beads to crushed slag (Black Beauty). For our purposes, 80 mesh aluminum oxide provides the best combination of sharpness, durability and economy. Alumina is the second hardest natural substance and chemically the same as ruby or sapphire. Aggressiveness is controlled largely by air delivery—typically 14 cfm at 80-100 psi. Finer finishes on brass or bronze may call for glass beads and reduced pressures. Exchange of media is simple and straightforward.

Grit blasting is both an art and a science. It is not a substitute for degreasing; fouled media becomes ineffective and contaminates later work. The peening action of the abrasive can warp thin articles or erode important features. Rubber stoppers and rubberized tape can be used to mask holes and delicate areas. Experience has shown that access should be limited to those checked out on operation, maintenance and technique. It's a good idea to practice on a piece of hot rolled angle iron before moving to more important work, as edges, blind cavities and inside corners pose challenges in blast cleaning. The Lexan cabinet window is protected by replaceable Mylar film, but can be damaged if careless. Remember that clean, grit blasted steel will rust quickly, so take appropriate measures to protect the surface. ☺

*(Continued from page 3)*

That number is visible in many vintage photos, making it possible to identify the employee. I have actively collected photos of TCRT employees and identified them whenever possible. To date I have identified over 700 employees in photos. In addition, MSM has several of the "yearbook" photo collages that show all the employees working at a particular streetcar station in a given year (i.e. Lake Street Station 1921). That amounts to hundreds of additional employee photos.

It occurred to me that most of these photos are probably unknown to the families. Wouldn't it be great if a family member found his/her relative's appointment card and it was cross-referenced to a photo? That's what I'll be doing as part of this MHS project. The whole process will probably take at least the next year to complete. If any reader would like to join the effort, I'd welcome the help. Contact me at 612-929-7066 or [aaron-mona@aol.com](mailto:aaron-mona@aol.com). ☺