



Streetcar CURRENTS



Nov-Dec 2009

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

Many Thanks to You All!

- **Thanks to everyone for a very successful season at both our railways**
- **Come and enjoy an evening of fellowship and goodies at our annual holiday party on December 16th**
- **Mark your calendars and make plans to attend our annual meeting on March 11th**
- **Please donate generously to YOUR Museum's annual appeal**
- **Have a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**



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Masthead Photo: Its Holly Trolley time! Here's No. 1300, ready to make the next Holly Trolley run on 11-29-08. It's loads of fun watching the children and Santa on the Holly Trolley.
(Jim Vaitkunas Photo)

Thanks for a Successful Year

Rod Eaton

Our Como-Harriet operating season ends with a real rush of activity. Farmer Ken's Pumpkin Patch and Ghost Trolley seem to run right into Holly Trolley. And this year we added three successful Trick 'r Trolley trips to the mix. These year end events are fun for us, have become a tradition for our riders, and add thousands of dollars to our annual income.

I think we learn from everything we do – at least, I like to think so. It became apparent this year that it would make sense to hold the Pumpkin Patch the week before Ghost Trolley, instead of having them coincide. With just an hour or so between the two events, there just wasn't enough time to get everything sorted and organized. And it created very long days for several people involved in both the afternoon and night time activities. Putting a week between these major museum events will give everyone more time to breathe and get ready for the next event. All concerned also agree that five nights of Ghost Trolley were probably one night too many; next year we'll return to four nights over two weekends.

So many people contributed to the success of our end-of-season events that I literally don't have room to thank them all. There were all of our crew members who operated streetcars, handled fares, and guarded the crossing. Museum members, augmented by dozens of family members and non-member volunteers, painted children's faces at the Pumpkin Patch and painted their own faces to become Streetcar Zombies. Once again, **Ken Albrecht** grew and donated about 400 pumpkins. **Dave French** and **Mike Helde** turned in award-winning performances night after night. **Kathy Helde** acted as head zombie wrangler. **Karl Jones** and **John Kennedy** did their usual outstanding jobs decorating the station and streetcars. Then **Dave** and **Mary Ann Higgins**, assisted by **Matt Leibel** and **Jim Lipscomb**, did everything up in evergreen and red ribbons for the holidays. And as he did last year, our friend **Bud Lutz** donned his Santa Claus suit to thrill children and delight their parents. We really couldn't do what we do without the energy and effort of all of our volunteers.

To keep us on our toes, our late-season streetcar activity was conducted around the George Isaacs Carbarn water installation—literally around missing rail and big holes in the ground. But thanks to the planning and coordination of our carbarn crew, operations continued to run smoothly throughout the process.

I've discussed our special events frequently in this column, so as you might expect, I think what we're doing in this area is worthy of note. I think we all understand that, for whatever reason, attendance at rail museums around the country is down. For most of us, adding special events is a way to regain some of that lost ridership. And there's no question that our ridership, and revenue, are positively affected by special events. But I think events do much more than that.

In a statement of our long range goals written in February of 2006, we listed special events as a way to promote goodwill and increase membership and volunteer-

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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 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

The museum's business address and telephone number is:

P.O. Box 14467, University Station
 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467
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Streetcar *CURRENTS*
 November-December 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 January 20, 2010.

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

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

From the Front Platform Dave French — Board Chair

Hello everyone! I often get questions from MSM members about the status of projects that they heard about a while ago but it appears that little or nothing has happened. Perhaps you are wondering why it seems to take us forever to get anything accomplished. Coming from dues-paying members and active volunteers this is a fair question. Your patience is now being rewarded as we have several things moving forward right now. A real big one is that the water supply pipe has been installed into the George Isaacs Car barn and the sprinkler system will be operational soon. We have also obtained many useful streetcar parts and shop tools from the dispersal of the assets of the now defunct Lake Shore Electric Railway Museum in Cleveland. Aaron Isaacs is preparing grant requests from the state Clean Water, Land and Legacy fund. A portion of this fund is dedicated to preserving Minnesota history. We don't yet know exactly how the process of awarding these grants will work, but we'll gain valuable insight into that process by starting now.

I am most grateful to the many MSM leaders and volunteers who are working so hard to "get 'er done" on projects large and small and to all the Museum members and friends whose generous donations helped fund the car barn sprinkler system so we could "go for it" when we finally got the approvals to install the water. Be sure to read the rest of this issue as I'm sure you'll find more exciting news about things *happening* at MSM.

At our last Board meeting we had a lively discussion about what items to go for in the Lake Shore Electric collection and how much to bid. The Dupont single-truck was on our want-list for a long time so that was a no-brainer. There was a mountain of miscellaneous parts to select from and **John Prestholdt** and **Ken Albrecht** went to Cleveland to identify and get the items we wanted. One intriguing possibility was the availability of two single-truck open cars that originally served Vera Cruz, Mexico. As many of you know, open cars were used in the Twin Cities from the 1880's until around 1910. Open cars are typically star performers at other trolley museums in terms of attracting ridership and I would love to run such a car at CHSL on a lovely summer day. Unfortunately, there were obstacles to going



for an open car in the auction. Our restoration crew is aging and we have other cars to get running first; we have almost no space for more cars at either car barn; and a Vera Cruz car is not a Minnesota streetcar which is what our museum is dedicated to preserving. The Board decided to submit a "low-ball" bid in case some of the other museums unexpectedly decided to not go for an open car. I actually voted against this proposal as I believe that whenever we pursue a new streetcar we must have the plans, means, and determination to eventually restore and run it, and we did not appear to have that at the time. Plus the condition of the open cars was an open question. After the auction, I heard from other members who were very disappointed that we did not more aggressively pursue one of the Vera Cruz open cars because, as it turned out, we might have gotten one and it would have been a comparatively easy restoration. Although they did not say this, my sense is they were disappointed that we did not "dream big" to grow the museum or to look to the future.

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MSM News & Views

Aaron Isaacs—MSM Historian

Special *Twin City Lines* issue. It's not streetcars or light rail, but the opening of Minnesota's first modern commuter rail line was still an opportunity for our museum to celebrate. After all, new rail transport in any form is a move in the right direction.

For about a year, knowing this day was coming, I had been planning a special commuter rail history issue of *Twin City Lines*. I had known there were commuter trains many years ago, but how many were there really? As I pored over old plat maps and excavated obscure files at the Minnesota Historical Society, it became clear that there was a huge infrastructure that had been completely forgotten.

At its peak in the 1880s, about 240 daily trains on 14 routes served over 120 stations throughout the metro area. The arrival of electric streetcars in 1890 put quite a few of the trains out of business, but many remained in operation through the 1920s. I discovered they weren't confined to the Twin Cities. Duluth had two lines and the Dan Patch briefly provided rush hour service from Faribault timed for people working in Northfield.

Rather late in the process, it occurred to me to ask Metro Transit to sponsor the issue. Thanks to Marketing Director Bruce Howard and Marketing Specialist Kelci Stones, the issue features Northstar color ads. Metro Transit purchased 1000 additional copies, which

they distributed to employees, VIPs and other grand opening participants. Anticipating this outside exposure, **Louis Hoffman** suggested that the special issue include a page promoting our museum. It appears on page 22. Bottom line—we received some welcome revenue and realized good publicity.

Northstar Grand Opening. I was hired by the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board to add rail history activities to the Northstar Grand Opening. Working with Dave Stevens of the Mill City Museum, we produced 30 boards featuring historic photos of the railroads of downtown Minneapolis, including streetcar views from the MSM collection. MSM member **Dick Stoner** displayed his modular "O" gauge traction layout, on which ran various TCRT streetcars, as well as a Minneapolis, Anoka & Cuyuna Range-Northern Pump car and a two-car Mesaba Electric train. **Gary Foss** operated his small streetcar diorama, featuring a TCRT PCC car.

Mike Helde set up and staffed the MSM table. He was assisted by **Bill Arends**, **Brian Krynski**, **Denn Evans**, **Dave French**, **Bill Graham**, **Jerry Olsen**, **Andy Jacob**, **Terry Wagoner** and **Jim White**. They sold some merchandise, but the exposure was the real story. As each of the five trains arrived, a flood of 700 passengers surged through the tent. It was a fun day! ☺

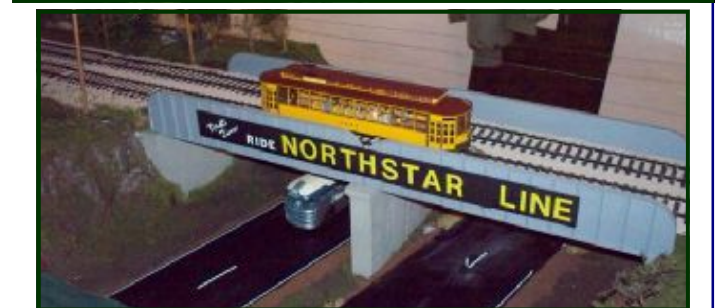


(Above left) We had some good interaction with the people who visited our table at the grand opening festivities at the Target Field station of the Northstar line. This photo shows **Bill Graham** (left) and **Mike Helde** chatting with two visitors who stopped at our table. (Denn Evans photo)



(Above right) Here's Dick Stoner getting his modular trolley layout ready to go. (Denn Evans photo)

(Right) This is a shot showing a large banner touting the new Northstar commuter line. Very timely, Dick. (Mike Helde photo)



Shop Update

John Prestholdt—Shop Foreman

Work at the Isaacs car barn has been limited to maintenance on our cars to keep them ready for all our fall special events. We have also been trying to remember again all the things that Roy Harvey (Mr. Carbar) has been doing. Roy was again hospitalized for leg problems back in September and just recently was released to home. I think everyone in the Tuesday crew has chipped in to cover all of Roy's work. Get well fast, Roy!

In the maintenance area we have been working on PCC No. 322 checking the roof and inspecting the internal (underbody) controls. Since we needed to move No. 1300 to the warm maintenance barn for the late season Holly Trolley and the sprinkler system water work, we also did some of the less complex inspections on our "mother car." One problem we identified first off was that the brake shoes were badly worn. As can be seen in the below photo, we were very late in changing these brake shoes (a new one is on the left front of the table).

As noted earlier we are also finally getting the water put into the car barn for our sprinkler system. This has been a lengthy process because of the problem the contractor had digging into the very fine sand that the entire Linden Hills area is built upon. We had to remove about 20 feet of track from the ready barn lead to allow the contractor to dig a trench to run the six inch pipe from the street to the barn, so this has disrupted some of our work and operations. This project will be covered elsewhere in the Currents on in a supplement.

As a final note, the shop crew cordially invites you to attend our holiday party this year on Wednesday December 16th. Continuing our annual tradition, we will be collecting canned goods and other non-perishables to donate to the local food shelves and will be having treats from those attending. I am also looking for some more able bodies volunteers to help with our Lake Harriet work. As noted earlier with only a couple of exceptions the entire maintenance force is well over retirement age. Your Museum needs more younger members to learn and do some of this much needed streetcar work. Most of the work is not complicated and we have written maintenance and repair procedures for our streetcars, so working on our cars by a novice will be much easier. If we want to keep running our fleet we need to keep them up to our operating standards. ☺



(Left) Here are some really worn brake shoes! A new one is on the far left. Note the difference in thickness of the area bearing on the tread of the wheel. (*John Prestholdt photo*)

(Below left) What a mess! This photo looks straight out from the maintenance barn entry door. Because of the water work we had to suspend our regular schedule on November 21st and 22nd because of the huge mound of dirt blocking the track into the maintenance barn. (*Jim Vaitkunas photo*)

(Below) In case you don't already know, **John Prestholdt** is now married and the happy couple is shown in this photo seated on the "peanut seat" on the right with Jill in front and John behind her. The wedding party went on a pre-wedding trip on October 10th on TCRT No. 1300. (*Becky Rodeman photo*)



Water Now in the Isaacs Car barn

Keith Anderson—Chief Engineer

MSM has nearly completed the sprinkler system that will provide fire protection to the George Isaacs Car barn at the Como Harriet Streetcar Line. This project began as part of an overall program to enlarge the building, to provide more workspace and storage space as well as a restroom. That program got bogged down in a complicated development review process with the City of Minneapolis. In addition, the estimated cost of the building project was pretty high. At this point, Bob Johnson suggested that we slim down the project to simply provide fire protection. The permitting process for this was simpler. The permit could be obtained by the Contractor, bypassing the development review process. The Board decided to follow this approach. At that point, things began to happen quickly.

The work involved connecting to a water main in Queen Avenue above the north end of the barn. The water service line was routed down a shaft in Queen Avenue, then east under the tracks north of the barn, then south into the northeast corner of the barn where the pipe comes up through the floor.

This required removal of about ten feet of track outside the ready barn. Number 1300 was placed in the maintenance barn, so that it could operate in regular service and the Holly Trolley operation. The other two cars were placed in the ready barn. MSM borrowed a rail saw from MTM and made the necessary rail cut on November 14. Spikes were pulled and track bolts removed on November 16, effectively marooning the other two cars in the ready barn. The contractor started work shortly thereafter. Work proceeded full time through completion on the day before Thanksgiving. MSM personnel restored the track outside the ready barn on November 28.

At this point, the water service line terminates just above the floor in the northeast corner of the maintenance barn. The next step will be for the fire protection contractor to install the “Christmas Tree”, which is the assemblage of valves, meters, and piping that control the drypipe sprinkler system. The rest of

the interior piping and sprinkler heads are already in place. When the Christmas Tree is installed, hopefully within a couple of weeks, the system will be complete and operational. As part of the activation of the sprinkler system, **Karl Jones** is working to upgrade the alarm system.

Special thanks to **Bob Johnson**, for arranging the contracts with the sprinkler installer and the water main contractor and for providing overall leadership on this project; **John Prestholdt**, for providing onsite coordination and direction while the work progressed; the CHSL Tuesday crew, for removing the brick pavers in the construction area; and to **Phil Epstein** and **MTM** for loaning MTM’s rail saw. The Saturday morning CHSL crew (**Jim Willmore**, **Tom Fairbairn**, **Jim Otto**, and **Dennis Stephens**), plus **Leslie Knapp** and **Jim Toulouse**, who assisted me (**Keith Anderson**) with track restoration ☺



Both rails of the Isaacs car barn’s “ready barn” track had to be removed and the ties taken up so the contractor could dig a trench to install the water pipe. Here you see (left to right) **John Prestholdt**, **Dennis Stephens** and **Keith Anderson** mounting the power rail saw so the rail could be cut. (*John Prestholdt photo*)

See page 6 for more photos of the water line work



Please mark Wednesday, December 16th on your calendar and plan to attend our Museum’s annual holiday party at the Isaacs car barn, Linden Hills (Minneapolis). This fun evening starts at 7 PM—nothing formal planned, just some nice treats (provided by the attendees) and good fellowship. If you attend we ask that you also bring some canned goods for the local food shelf—this has been a yearly tradition here at MSM.

What's Happening?

- December 5 & 6 Holly Trolley at CHSL featuring Santa Claus— 1 PM to 4 PM
- December 16 Annual holiday party at Isaacs Carbarn, Lake Harriet, Minneapolis—7 PM to 9 PM
- March 11 MSM Annual Meeting, Firefighter's Hall & Museum, Minneapolis, Minn. 7 PM
- April Training and recertification sessions—schedules to be announced
- May 1 Start of ESL operating season
- May 1 Start of weekend operations at CHSL

Photo Op Page



Before and after. On the left is what you saw on November 17th. The photo on the right was taken on November 29th. (Jim Vaitkunas photos)



The volunteers at the Excelsior Streetcar Line did a terrific job again in decorating TCRT No. 1239 for ESL's annual North Pole trolley. Here are a couple of good shots of the interior of No. 1239. We'll have some more photos in a subsequent photo supplement. (Teresa Babler photos)

(From the Front Platform Continued from page 2)

In retrospect, maybe we should have dreamed bigger and made a stronger attempt to get an open car, and I respect the opinions of those who disagree with the Board's decision. As much as I love the vision of an open car sailing through the s-curve in the glen, I think the time was not right for the acquisition of a new streetcar.

I wish all of you a wonderful holiday season and all the best for the New Year! ☺

(Thanks to all... Continued from page 1)

ism in our communities. I don't know if we've added any new members as a result of Ghost Trolley or Holly Trolley, but this Halloween we certainly increased our number of community volunteers. And I believe we've generated a tremendous amount of goodwill in our community. Want proof? Stand on the platform, watch the excitement as families wait to board, listen to the thanks as they leave, look at the smiles on children's faces. In my opinion, special events provide rewards far beyond monetary. The added revenue is just a bonus. ☺