

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



July 2010

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

Have a Safe and Great Summer!

- Give our new Operators a warm welcome when they work on your shift, and help them as much as you can.
- Are you retired or semi-retired? We can use you on those Wednesday afternoon shifts and for charters.
- Stay cool. We're now into the warmest part of the year. Wear loose clothing while you volunteer and drink plenty of water.



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Masthead Photo: TCRT No. 1239 is shown here just delivered to the Excelsior car barn in late 1998. It had been in storage since 1989 at the Jackson Street roundhouse. The forklift was used to lift the body off the flat-bed trailer and onto a pair of shop trucks. The car was pushed inside and the Museum's volunteers went to work. The result? A fully restored and operating streetcar! Note the lack of overhead trolley wire. That didn't go up until spring of 1999. (Jim Vaitkunas photo)

Streetcar Adventure

Rod Eaton—General Supt.

Bill the Motorman was a creation of Twin City Rapid Transit back in the 1920s. His smiling face adorned car card and print advertising, usually accompanied by a folksy quote promoting streetcar transportation. On a recent Saturday morning, Bill was once again the Motorman—minus his pipe and a few pounds lighter—as he took a handful of riders on a Streetcar Adventure.

As passengers waited at the Linden Hills Station, Master Mechanic Mike rode up on his electric speeder, dismounted and began noisily measuring the track gauge along the platform. He called out his measurements: “Four foot, eight and a half inches,” as he went along. When Station Agent Dave asked him to move so Bill could bring the streetcar to the station, Mike made it clear how important correct gauge was. “Look down there, where the track goes into the trees” Bill said, pointing north. “You can clearly see the track gets closer together down there. It has to be checked. If a streetcar falls off the track because no one checked the gauge, don't blame me.”

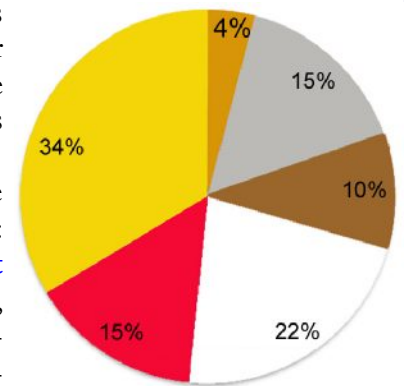
Soon the streetcar arrived and everyone was off on their adventure. Bill explained how track gauge evolved and became standardized in the United States in the 1860s. Kids followed along on an illustrated activity sheet. At the car barn, when Master Mechanic Mike stumbled trying to explain how air can stop a streetcar, Conductor Kathy demonstrated the basic principals of air pressure—using a straw, a potato, and a balloon. And the Trolley Trio boarded to sing streetcar-themed songs, including “We All Ride in a Yellow Trolley Car” (which sounded suspiciously like an old Beatles classic).

Bill the Motorman's Streetcar Adventure was lots of fun, with a little learning thrown in. **Bill Arends, Mike Helde, Dave French,** and **Kathy Kullberg** fell naturally into their characters. And **John Dillery** sang and played harmonica (who knew?), backed by two singing, guitar-playing friends. The talent in our membership really runs deep. Thanks, folks.

The next Adventure is scheduled for Saturday morning, July 10. You can help by mentioning the event in end-of-line talks and at the Linden Hills Station.

Years of Service. While organizing our 120-plus volunteers and years of service in preparation for ordering our new volunteer service recognition name badges, I made the chart shown here which groups volunteers by the color of their new plate.

Starting with gold at the top of the pie, we have the five guys who have volunteered more than 40 years: **Dave Norman; Jim Harrison; Russ Olson; Scott Heiderich;** and, **Keith Lindberg.** Moving clockwise, the silver group, those with more than 30 years of service, makes up 15% of our volunteers. Bronze mem-



(Continued on bottom of page 2)

Volunteer Years of Service

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
 July 2010

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 July 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

MSM News & Views

Jim Vaitkunas

Welcome to our newest members. We've gained several new members over the last few months. We'd like to welcome the following to our MSM family: Leo Meloche, James Allen, Darrell Ravitz, Will Graham, Sarah McAvoy, James Berry, B.M. Orschel, John Bode, Bill Hubbard, John Olson and Jason Kirsch. The last four people are also volunteer Operators with our Museum, so we're especially glad they've joined us.

Here is the list of people who have donated funds since the last report rendered in the March-April issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS**.

Carbarn Improvements & Expansion: Doug Beedon

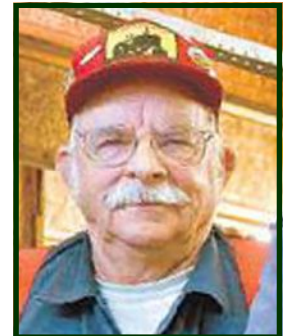
Unrestricted General Operating Fund: Kathy & Scott Heiderich, in memory of Blair Dollery; Gary Neunsinger; Bill and Rose Arends; Tom Beaumont; Sharon Deblieck; Gary Gustafson; Clark Hoffman; Mike Buck; Dr. John Stewart; and Greg Taylor.

Blair Dollery — R.I.P.

Blair Dollery was an old-time Minnesota Railfan. I met Blair as a teenager in 1956, while riding a Soo Line passenger excursion to Rice Lake, Wisconsin. Blair, I learned, was a collaborator with Ray and Margaret Benson, Dick Prosser, Bill Cordes and others in organizing the Minnesota Railfans' Association, the predecessor to the Minnesota Transportation Museum and much later, to our own Minnesota Streetcar Museum. That summer day, I stood with Blair in the open baggage car door and listened to his stories of the Soo Line and its passenger trains. The Soo Line was Blair's favorite railroad since its line to Sault Ste. Marie passed near his family's Wisconsin farm. Blair was one of those special people whom I met as a child and who helped kindle my interest in railroads and transportation.

For over four decades, Blair showed up most weekends at Lake Harriet. He helped put down streetcar track through the picnic glen (S-curve) area and he was part of the last great push that resulted in 1,500 feet of track built to Como-Harriet's north end—in a single day! Year after year, Blair made the long drive from his Wisconsin farm to run our streetcars and to tell us of the people and events that helped shape our hobby. The day he passed away, he was wearing his motorman's uniform preparing for another operating shift at Lake Harriet. He was pleasant and tolerant even when others occasionally were not, and he always showed up. Rest well, good and faithful servant.

Submitted by Bill Graham



(Years of Service Continued from page 1)

bers, with over 20 years of volunteering, make up 10%. Those with over 10 years, in the white group, constitute 22% of the total. Red nameplates, recognizing over five years of service, will go to 15%. And a big 34% will wear the yellow nameplate indicating newer member volunteers.

While it's not surprising that very few of us have been around for 40 years, it is surprising that so many—more than a third—have been volunteering less than five. I think it's terrific that we continue to attract new volunteers. Historically, however, a lot of these folks don't remain active for long. Busy lives, jobs, and family demand varying time commitments. And maybe for some, the museum experience doesn't remain fun and interesting. That presents a challenge to the rest of us. Let's make sure our new volunteers always feel welcome and useful. These folks are our museum's future. ☺

Excelsior Streetcar Line News

Bruce Kobs & Bob Wetherall

Bill Fox and **Leo Meloche** recently toured the Excelsior Streetcar line with ESL’s Superintendent, **Bruce Kobs**. We visited the car barn and took a ride on the streetcar. We talked about the development and construction of the line in 1998. One of Bill’s Lakeland Engineering Companies, Control Assemblies Company, designed and built the electrical power supply for ESL, a donation in excess of \$50,000. In-coming power of 480 volts AC is converted to 600 volts DC for streetcar operation. The building of the Excelsior Streetcar Line, which included the track, car barn and overhead, was accomplished by submitting a federal ISTEA grant written by **Leo Meloche**. Project sponsors were the adjacent towns of Excelsior & Shorewood. **Paul Webster** made a donation of 3 semi-trailer truck loads of new railroad ties for the project. A heart-felt thank you goes out to Leo, Bill & Paul and all of the volunteers for their foresight and hard work in establishing the Excelsior Streetcar Line.

Over the years our riders have asked for more history of Excelsior and Lake Minnetonka in the late 1880s. Recently a new picture wall displaying the history of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad trains, the Lake Minnetonka ferries, express and steam boats, and the lake’s grand hotels. This display tries to answer the question “What was Excelsior like in the 1880s?” A history of TCRT will be added to this wall when Winona No. 10’s platform roofs are moved to another location in the car barn which will free up another display wall.

Ken Albrecht reports that the steel frame is now back under Winona No. 10. When the frame is welded to the steel side body sheets and the window posts attached to the frame the floor can be installed. Volunteers interested in the Winona No. 10 project is increasing which will speed the restoration.

Tots and Tales—ESL’s Story Time Trolley a Success!

A streetcar bursting with toddlers and their parents marked ESL’s inaugural Story Time Trolley for 2010. Sixty-three passengers enjoyed the 6:30 PM run on Tuesday, June 15th. Noted children’s books author **Marion Dane Bauer** captivated the toddlers with two of her celebrated stories. Juice and cookies were enjoyed by tots, parents and grandparents. Threatening rains in late-afternoon departed the area just in time for the event, which was the first in the summer series for ESL. Author **Nancy Carlson** will host Story Time on Tuesday, July 13th and author **Phyllis Root** will read to the children on Thursday, August 17th. The event is partnered with the Excelsior Bay Bookstore. Store owner **Ann Nye** called the evening a success—for her store, the author, and the community. ☺



ESL Story Time Trolley a big hit. Over 60 parents and their children went for a trolley ride and then listened as the guest author for the first Story Time Trolley, **Marion Bauer** holds up her book she is reading, so the children and their parents can see the book’s illustrations. Two more Story Time Trolleys are scheduled for the remainder of ESL’s 2010 operating season. That’s Motorman/Conductor **Bob Wetherall** partially hidden by No. 1239’s rear farebox pole. *(Bruce Kobs photo)*

A good time was had by all. Judging by the face of the young lady seen in the center of the above photo, the passengers on ESL’s Story Time Trolley enjoyed themselves. TCRT “gate car” No. 1239 is shown on the right—the car that was used for the first Story Time Trolley. This car was definitely needed to accommodate the large number of people who participated in this first Story Time Trolley. Who could have imagined back in 1907 when No. 1239 was built by TCRT, that the car would be still operating in 2010! *(Bob Wetherall photo)*

What's Happening?

- July 4 Special CHSL *Early Bird* service start at 9:30 AM. ESL runs from 1 PM until 4 PM.
- July 10 Motorman Bill's Streetcar Adventure at CHSL starts at 10:00 AM
- July 13 Story Time Trolley at ESL starts at 6:30 PM
- July 15-17 Excelsior *Crazy Days*. ESL streetcar runs on extended schedule: Thursday, 2 PM to 8 PM,
Saturday 10 AM to 8 PM.
- July 15 PJ Party Trolley at CHSL, first run at 6:30 PM

News from the Carbarns

John Prestholdt—Shop Foreman

The CHSL shop crew got all three streetcars ready to start the season on May 1st, and **Bruce Gustafson** and his cleaning crew got the cars cleaned, but we forgot to clear the start of the season with one very important person: Mother Nature. The opening day (May 1st) was very windy and after only two runs a tree in the "S" curve or glen section got blown over, hanging on phone wires on the west-side of the track with branches laying on the overhead wire (see my photo below). Needless to say this halted operations, but thanks to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's forestry crew's quick response, the tree was cleaned up Saturday afternoon so we could run the following day, Sunday. Mother nature got us again on Saturday, May 22nd when the wind contributed to not only de-wiring TCRT No. 1300's trolley pole, but snapping the pole in two (!!) after it snagged the overhead. The flailing trolley pole broke several span wires and damaged the roof of No. 1300. This was all caused by the trolley rope breaking immediately after the pole de-wired, thus the retriever didn't do it's job—the perfect storm for a Museum like ours. **Howie Melco** and **Mark Digre** got the car into the barn (Duluth No. 265 was the tow car) and **Scott Heiderich** and **Mark** got the overhead fixed up Saturday afternoon and evening.

To repair the damage to No. 1300, **Russ Isbrandt** and **Andy Stevens** worked on top of the car, **Phil Settergren** and **Dennis Stevens** fixed the trolley rope, and **Neil Howes**, **Mark Digre** and me got the new trolley pole ready. (How many people does it take to replace a trolley pole?) While an unfortunate problem, we don't work with trolley poles very often—we replaced two trolley bases in 2006 or 2007 and nothing before that since No. 322 and No. 1239 had their poles installed after their restorations were finished 8-10 years ago. So the chance to work on No. 1300 was good training and we got all this done the following Tuesday working outside near the overhead and around three charter operations (no power can be on while we are on top of the car).

Along with being Shop Foreman, I also created and maintain our inventory list of streetcar parts and artifacts like roll signs. As many know, we have been selling surplus inventory in the Linden Hills station and through our website. One out-of-state member got a couple of items last year and has mounted one of our surplus destination roll signs in his office (see below left photo). You can contact either **Rod Eaton**, **Charles Barthold** or your Shop Foreman (me) if you might like to acquire one of our excess streetcar artifacts/parts. ☺



Before and after. Damage and subsequent repair made to No. 1300's rear platform roof are shown here. (Dennis Stephens photos)

