

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



August 2010

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## We Need YOU this month!

- **Are you retired or semi-retired? We can use you on those CHSL Wednesday and ESL Thursday afternoon shifts and for charters at both railways.**
- **Sign-up for a shift or two at the State Fair. It'll be good publicity and exposure with local families.**
- **Stay cool. We're now into the warmest part of the year. Wear loose clothing while you volunteer and drink plenty of water.**



## Inside This Issue

MSM News & Views	2
MSM Historian's Update	3
ESL News	3
Upcoming Events	4
Shop Update	4

**Masthead Photo:** Twin City Lines (TCRT) PCC No. 322 is shown here on a sunny day in 2009 in the "glen" section of our Museum's Como-Harriet line. Delivered to the Twin City Lines in 1947, No. 322 spent only a few short years in TCRT service before being sold to a transit line in Newark, New Jersey. Still later No. 322 ran in Cleveland. No. 322 came home in 1990 and restoration was completed in 2000. *A beauty to behold is a joy forever.* (Mike Helde photo)

## Volunteers at Work

Rod Eaton—General Supt.

**I**t's a Great State Fair. At this time of year it's fun to talk to passengers about riding the streetcar to the State Fair. I remember the terrific photo—it probably appeared in *Twin City Lines*—of the almost continuous line of TCRT streetcars taking people to and from the fairgrounds. Streetcars and the Fair historically go together. So it seems fitting for the Minnesota Streetcar Museum to have a presence at the Minnesota State Fair.

**C**ho Choo Bob's Train Store in St. Paul will have a significant exhibit at the Fair this year, a first for them. Housed in a building on Underwood, across from the Butterfly House and just south of the Kidway, The Choo Choo Bob Show will feature regular performances of their popular children's show and a large O gauge model railroad. Bob hopes to attract more than 20,000 people throughout the run of the Fair, primarily young families.

**Bob Medcraft**, the real Choo Choo Bob, would like to have other local rail-related organizations participate in his exhibit. MTM, Amtrak, and the Twin Cities Model Railroad Museum are planning to have brochures available for visitors, and may have volunteers staffing the exhibit part of the time. MSM has also been invited to join in. We plan to place our new brochures and schedules in the exhibit. And it would be great if some of us could find time to be there, in uniform, to answer questions and "talk transit." **Jim Vaitkun** has offered to coordinate a schedule for volunteer shifts. Please let Jim know if you're interested. It's a nice excuse to sneak a corn-dog, cheese curds, or some other stuff your doctor frowns on. The Fair runs from August 26 through Labor Day.

**C**omo-Harriet Clean Up, Patch Up. On a really hot and humid Tuesday morning just a week or so ago, **Russ Isbrandt** and **Walt Strobel** were hacking their way down the track, pruning back branches infringing on our right-of-way. On the

(Continued on bottom of page 4)



1910 State Fair streetcar and employee line-up. Como Avenue is in the foreground



## 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:

P.O. Box 14467, University Station  
 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467  
 952-922-1096

**Streetcar CURRENTS**  
 August 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 August 20, 2010.

Please send items to editor Jim Vaitkunas at the following address:  
 155 Chaparral Dr.

Apple Valley, MN 55124-9774

You can send input or enquiries by e-mail to: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)

receive yours electronically—[jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com) It costs about 65-cents per copy to send the **Streetcar Currents** to a member using the US Postal Service. Besides saving your museum money you'll receive the newsletter in vibrant color. Over 200 Museum members get theirs by e-mail—join your fellow members. ☺

## MSM News &amp; Views

Jim Vaitkunas

**W**elcome 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: **Christian Frederickson, Kari Kamrin, Judith Moore, Bill Preiss, Bob Smith, Jane Hanson, Dennis Borrell, Jim Ley** and **Kristin Dooley**. **Christian Frederickson** and **Bill Preiss** are recent graduates of our Operator training program and I believe several others are working towards being a qualified streetcar Operator. **Jim Ley** and **Bob Smith** are now active volunteers with the Museum. All this is great news as we can use all of you. Welcome to the MSM family.

**Sad News.** It is with profound sadness that we report that **Mike Lamatsch** passed away recently. Mike was a member of the Museum and the father of MSM Member **Dan Lamatsch**. We also received notice that **E. Truman Garrett** had also passed away. We extend our condolences to the Lamatsch and to the Garrett families.

**Address Changes.** Now that we have the "Return Service Requested" notice printed below our return address on our mailing envelopes, each mailing brings back to us several notices from the postal service of an address change. While these notices cost us only 50-cents, that's still fifty-cents times X that can go towards some worthy project we are working on, like funds for a new platform for the Linden Hills station. So, please remember that if your address changes let us know by sending us an e-mail. Oh, and if your telephone number and/or e-mail address changes, let us know that, too.

**Two Year Memberships Now Available.** Does it bug you to renew your membership each year? Are you a procrastinator or someone who tends to lose the membership renewal notice that we send to you because you have a messy desk? If this describes you, then remember that we now are accepting new memberships and renewals for a two year period. Just check the appropriate box on the renewal slip at the bottom of the notice you get, and mail it in to our business address. If you are an active volunteer we ask that you **not** put your renewal slip with the dues payment in the blue cashier's cash pouch at either the Isaacs car barn at CHSL or at the ESL car barn. We've had problems lately with renewals getting lost in the black hole because someone tried to save a 44-cent stamp.

**E-mail Addresses.** We send our Museum's newsletter, the **Streetcar Currents** (what you are reading right now) electronically as an e-mail attachment to all members who have given us their e-mail address. If you are receiving your copy of the newsletter by US mail and you have a valid e-mail address, please send me (**Jim Vaitkunas**) an e-mail; requesting that you

**Mill City Museum Schedules Special Walking Tours of Minneapolis Railroad Landmarks**

Dates: Aug. 14, 2010 & Sept. 12, 2010 — Time: 1:00 PM

Fee: \$14 adults, \$12 seniors and college students, \$10 children ages 6-17 and MHS members. Includes museum admission.

Reservations: required, call 612-341-7555

Discover the impact of railroads on the city of Minneapolis with a guided tour of the city's railroad landmarks including the Stone Arch Bridge, Milwaukee Road Depot and the Minneapolis Eastern Railway engine house and trestle. Find clues to the vanishing railroad landscape and learn about the new rail era that is beginning with the Hiawatha Light Rail and the North Star commuter lines.

The tour begins and ends at Mill City Museum; admission is included in the price of the tour.



## Historian's Update

*Aaron Isaacs, MSM Historian*

**School Curriculum.** An idea that's been out there for many years is to create an historic streetcar curriculum and a partnership with local schools. Other streetcar museums have done it, but no one at MSM has taken it on, until now. Member **Bob Kroening** lives in Arkansas. His brother **Greg** teaches third grade at Burroughs School, south of Lake Harriet. They have stepped up to develop a curriculum.

When Bob approached me with the idea, I referred him to the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum, the national leader in this area. PTM has a full-time paid educator on staff, and she generously provided Bob and Greg with materials and good advice. PTM handles students of all ages, but MTM will start with third graders. The plan is to revise the PTM materials so they are appropriate for third graders and the historical facts and photos are specific to the Twin Cities. One of the school's mandates is to teach local history. The streetcar program will describe how the streetcars influenced local development and residents' daily lives.

Once the curriculum is complete, Bob will apply for funding to implement the program. According to his research, the General Mills Foundation offers education grants that would be a good fit. The grant would cover the cost of materials, transportation to the streetcar, and MSM operating costs. There's a lot of work left to do, but we'll keep you posted.

**Streetcar Employee Reunion.** Back in 1993 we held a reunion of the World War II Motorettes. It was very successful, but no other streetcar employee reunions have been held. With that generation dying off, it seemed important to hold a reunion before it's too late. We're looking at the latter part of September. Between now and then our biggest challenge is to find the employees and tell them about the event. Amalgamated Transit Union #1005 represented the streetcar employees and stills represents Metro Transit bus drivers and other employees. They have provided a list of retirees, so that's a start. The next step is a PR campaign to publicize the event. **John Reinan** and **Matt Leibel** will work on that.

**John Stern photos added.** Sixty TCRT photos by east coast photographer **John Stern** have been added to the collection. Stern visited the Twin Cities in the late 1940s and his photos were featured in **Russ Olson's** first history of TCRT, *Interurbans Special Number 14*, published in 1953. Stern had an excellent photographer's eye, and his shots were very well composed—but no one knew what had happened to them. It turns out they were in the collection of the Electric Railroaders Association, the venerable traction fan group based in New York City. A few of the photos appeared in their magazine *Headlights* in 2006. I contacted Frank Pfuhrer and Frank Miklos of ERA, who graciously loaned us the negatives for copying. Museum member **Dick Stoner** did the darkroom work, which ended this summer. ☺

## Excelsior Streetcar Line News

*Bob Wetherall*

**Sell-out for Excelsior July Story Time Trolley.** Two streetcar runs on TCRT No. 1239 carried 124 toddlers, parents and grandparents on the Excelsior line Tuesday, July 15th. The second in our series of summer Story Time events featured children's author **Nancy Carlson** and showed once again that west metro parents appreciate good books for their children, as their local book store and the efforts of our Excelsior Streetcar Line's volunteers. Sponsored by Excelsior Bay Bookstore and MSM, Story Time wraps up August 17th with author **Marsha Chall** telling tales to the tykes. **Bob Wetherall's** photos of the July Story Time Trolley are below. ☺



**What's Happening?**

August 12	PJ Party Trolley at CHSL starts its run at 6:00 PM
August 14	Streetcar Adventure for Kids at CHSL
August 17	Story Time Trolley at ESL starts at 6:30 PM
September 6	Labor Day early bird operations at CHSL starts at 9:30 AM
September 11	Excelsior Apple Day festival. ESL starts early operations at 9:00 AM
September 26	MSM Member's picnic at the Excelsior Streetcar Line starts at 1:00 PM

**News from the Carbarns***John Prestholdt—Shop Foreman*

Summer has always been a time to make needed “running repairs” to keep our cars operating well and this year is no different. Unfortunately we had another trolley pole break in two and this one also broke one of the wooden line poles too. We were able to get a new trolley pole installed on No. 1300 within a couple of days, but it took our friends at CenterPoint Energy almost a week to put in a new wood line pole for us, at our expense. Did you know that a 35-foot treated pole costs over \$350! While we are getting good at this job, we are depleting our stock of spare trolley poles! So please remember to keep the speed slow when back polling from the north end (Lake Calhoun Platform) up to the William Berry Parkway Bridge.

On a more positive note, we have installed new window shades in all the windows of our Museum’s “mother car,” TCRT No. 1300. Thanks to **Dennis Stephens** (who made patterns) and his wife **Ruth** and friend **Vicki Johnson**, both of Minneapolis Community and Technical College, we have 30 new window shades. A big thanks to the entire Tuesday crew who assembled the shades and then installed them in No. 1300. While not the original fabric or design, these shades are a good replacement. Many of the old shades are around 100 years old, based on notes written on them and not removed or cleaned in about 60 years, so replacement was needed. ⊕



**Platform Repairs.** **Jim Otto** (left) and new Volunteer **Bob Smith** (right) are seen here replacing yet another rotten board on the Linden Hills station's platform. (John Prestholdt photo)



**Trolley Pole Troubles.** Here's most of the Tuesday crew working to replace the trolley pole on No. 1300—again. The pole broke twice in six weeks, an unusual occurrence to say the least. (Dennis Stephens photo)

*(Volunteers Continued from page 1)*

platform, **Jim Otto** and **Bob Smith** were working hard replacing rotting boards. When we built the platform in 2006 it was considered a temporary solution. **Ken Albrecht**, who engineered the project, got a real bargain on the untreated lumber. But we knew it wouldn't last. Next spring we plan to rebuild the platform using treated lumber, which should last for many years. Until then, the almost weekly board replacement will continue.

**Mike Buck** has been quietly doing a lot of clean up along the Como-Harriet right-of-way this summer. Armed with a new weed whip, Mike has been keeping the growth along the line under control. He also cleaned up the garden areas by the Linden Hills station.

And speaking of clean up, **Bruce Gustafson** and his car cleaning crew assemble on the first Saturday of each month to keep our streetcars looking their best. He and his crew can always use more help. So if you're interested in pitching in, give Bruce a call at 952-920-0920.

Many others have been working behind the scenes this summer, in the carbarn and along the line, to keep us running and looking our best. Thanks to all of you. ⊕