

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



October 2010

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

Support Our Fall Special Events

- *Halloween, pumpkin patch and Santa trolleys are real money makers for our Museum. Please support them by SIGNING-UP FOR A shift or two*
- *Encourage your friends, neighbors, co-workers and relatives to come and ride the trolley this fall and visit the pumpkin patch*

Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule
 With this issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** we will revert to our winter publication schedule. See the box on page 4 for details.



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Masthead Photo: Duluth No. 265 is seen here coming down the hill from the Isaacs car barn approaching the West 42nd Street crossing. It's October of 2008, and No. 265 will shortly stop at the Linden Hills station Platform to discharge it's load of happy passengers and their pumpkins. Then No. 265 will load more passengers for the next trip north to Farmer Ken's Pumpkin Patch.
(Jim Vaitkunas photo)

Who is Our Market?

Rod Eaton—General Supt.

I spent some time over two days at Choo Choo Bob's at this year's State Fair. Along with a couple other museums, we had a small display and were able to distribute our 2010 Schedules. It was a nice opportunity to have a presence at the Fair. Thanks to **Dave Norman**, **Dave French**, and **Aaron Isaacs** for the time they spent there handing out our material and talking about streetcars. Anecdotally, that resulted in some Como-Harriet riders.

I'll bet many of you have visited Choo Choo Bob's Train Store in St. Paul and know that the store is a favorite for families with young children. Bob's building at the Fair had the same appeal. There was a large train layout to watch, about an acre of wooden toy trains to play with, and all of the Thomas merchandise to look at. In addition, there were hourly live stage shows for the kids featuring a talented bunch of actors. The place was always busy, and I was surprised at the length of time people spent in the store.

Young children—boys especially, I think—love anything that runs on rails. Running my own garden railway Sunday afternoons for the past several years, I have first-hand experience with this infatuation. And even though we don't operate "trains" at Excelsior and Lake Harriet, we've all seen the excitement in the eyes of children who come for a ride. This is the market Choo Choo Bob has captured.

Who is our market? There was a time when many of our visitors had first-hand experience riding streetcars around the Twin Cities. For them, our museum was a nostalgic trip back in time. Sadly, we see fewer of those folks every year. And although we always have a few trolley- and rail-fans, there will never be enough of them to support our operations.

Today, a large part of our ridership consists of families with children. They're our repeat riders and Season Pass holders. They tell you how "crazy" their kids are about riding the streetcar. When they leave, they say "see you next week." These families and their children are our core market. Marketing to them and providing experiences that appeal to their children's rail zeal need to play a continuing role in our museum's future business plan.

We already do a lot. Almost all of our special events are designed for families, from our perennial favorite Ghost Trolley to this year's new Story Book Trolley. Events like our Streetcar Camp require extra effort and commitment from our volunteers, but they also offer significant personal rewards. And they help build our family-friendly brand. Our partnership with Wild Rumpus Books in Linden Hills provides the model for additional co-promotional events with local child-centric organizations.

What can you do? How about including younger passengers in your end-of-line talks? I know we all find streetcar history endlessly fascinating and believe that even fidgeting kids do, too. Most six-year olds, though, aren't all that interested in things that happened a hundred years ago. But that doesn't mean they aren't ready

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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 inter-urban 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
 952-922-1096

Streetcar CURRENTS
 October—2010

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor
 Bill Graham—Distribution

Streetcar CURRENTS is a 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 November 20, 2010.

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

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 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9774

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



From the Front Platform — Thoughts on Our Museum

Dave French — Chair, MSM Board of Directors

Trainmen shall be courteous to passengers under all conditions, and shall endeavor to avoid, as far as possible, any difficulty or controversy with passengers. Trainmen shall refrain from any display of anger, and shall not use uncivil language even under the greatest provocation. Twin City Lines Operating Rules for the Government of Trainmen - November 1, 1921.

Recently I was on a Metro Transit Route 16 bus. For those of you who don't ride the bus, all of the newer models are low-floor, which means there is just one step to get on the bus, unlike the three steps needed to board our streetcars. The busses also have a kneeling feature which lowers the front end and makes that one step much easier for those with limited mobility, and is quicker than using the lift ramp which is deployed for folks in wheel chairs. (By the way, did you know that these buses are built by **New Flyer** in Crookston, MN?)

The bus made a stop for a woman who was using a walker. The driver opened the door and the woman loudly and angrily demanded that he lower the bus. He replied with something to the effect: "I will do it if you ask nicely." There ensued an increasingly angry conversation between driver and passenger. She became more agitated with insults and threats. He became more angry and refused to accommodate her, and then used the radio phone to call dispatch and request assistance from Transit Police. It ended with his closing the door and she stomped away, still yelling and cursing. Meanwhile, we passengers were unwilling witnesses to this ugly scene on a bus that was becoming increasingly late.

It occurs to me that all of us at MSM who operate the stations and cars are really in customer service. Those who have been here a while have probably dealt with some passenger who was difficult, who got upset over something seemingly trivial or became angry over an innocuous request. It is always so tempting to reply in kind, firing back with an angry retort. But this never accomplishes anything, and usually just makes the customer angrier and more determined to get their way. This is like those road rage incidents we see from our cars where there is nothing to win for either side. The best thing to do is to listen to the customer, keep your voice low and your words gentle and considerate. The customer is always right, they say, and except where doing so would create an unsafe condition, we should always try to make them happy. TCRT and the railroads had a long standing rule that in the event of a dispute over proper fare, the passenger should pay the fare, take receipt, and apply to higher authority for

relief. At MSM, if you cannot placate an unhappy customer, ask for a name and phone number or e-mail address, and Rod or Jim or Bruce or I can contact them and try to work out a solution.

Remember that people ride the streetcars for fun and are under no requirement to come back. If they witness a confrontation between a crabby volunteer and an irate customer, do you think they will come back and ride again? Nope, they will spend their hard-earned entertainment dollars elsewhere.

Finally, remember to refrain from talking negatively about MSM or arguing with fellow crew members in front of the public. I remember years ago when a volunteer "blew up" at crew members in front of passengers. It saddens me to think that maybe someone decided never to ride the cars again after seeing that incident. I am old enough to remember riding Rock Island's *Plainsman* train to Des Moines with my Mom and seeing some real snarling conductors. They were not going to discourage me from riding since I love trains but they were frightening to a kid! How do the kids see you on the car? Happy, smiling, having fun, or do you look angry and inconvenienced by passengers?

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MSM History & Archives Update — News on Museum Historical & Archives Activities
Aaron Isaacs — MSM Historian and Photo Archivist

The *Reunion that Wasn't*. In the August Currents I announced a reunion of TCRT streetcar company employees for later in the year. Well, it didn't happen. In order to have a reunion, it's necessary to find the people. In advance of the Motorettes Reunion in 1993, we received extensive media coverage, which allowed us to find about 75 of the women. This time, despite the excellent efforts of John Reinan, we couldn't get the media to publicize the event. We had tentatively scheduled the reunion for late September and time simply ran out. We'll regroup and decide whether to try again next year.

More photos. **Dave French** has donated about 80 more vintage Minnesota streetcar photos, color slides and postcards to the MSM collection. Over 60 of these are new to the collection. He also donated a St. Paul City Railway stock certificate from the 1880s, a TCRT Stillwater timetable from 1918, and a 1919 copy of the City of Minneapolis franchise with TCRT's Minneapolis Street Railway subsidiary. Of note are quite a few studio portraits of TCRT motormen and conductors that date from 1900-1920, plus a large collage of head shots of the Duluth Street Railway's Superior carhouse employees. Dave has been monitoring eBay for these photos and artifacts, buying them and donating them to MSM. Many thanks, Dave.

With these additions, there are now 9460 catalogued images in the MSM collection. I've been spending quite a few hours lately copying scanned photos from CDs onto my computer and a newly purchased auxiliary hard drive. This follows a seminar at last year's Association of Railway Museums conference. The presenters told us not to rely on CDs or DVDs for long term photo storage. Apparently the life of a CD may only be a few years before the image is lost or corrupted. We have many photos in the collection that are at least 100 years old and are in good shape. Digital images, however, must be renewed or relocated whenever software and hardware becomes obsolete.

Railway Museum Quarterly merges with *Trainline*. MSM is a member of the Association of Railway Museums (ARM), a well-run trade organization representing most of the larger railway museums in North America. I edit ARM's publication *Railway Museum Quarterly* (RMQ). If you're interested in railway preservation, please check out RMQ on the ARM website at www.railwaymuseums.org.

There is another trade association called the Tourist Railway Association (TRAIN). As the name implies, it tends to represent tourist railways, but about one-third of ARM's and TRAIN's memberships overlap. For some time the two organizations have been interested in more cooperation, perhaps leading to a merger. At a joint board meeting last April, it was decided to merge their annual conventions and their publications. The conventions are combined starting in 2011. If you care about railway preservation, consider attending one. You'll learn a great deal and meet your peers from other museums. This year we're headed to the National Capital Trolley Museum near Washington, DC on October 13-17. Check the ARM website for details.

TRAIN's publication is called *Trainline*. The first issue of the combined *RMQ/Trainline* appeared last month and I'm the editor. The featured story is on the Minnesota Transportation Museum, of which MSM was formerly a part. I think it's a great publication, but of course I'm completely biased, so read the magazine and judge for yourself. You can download it at traininc.org. ☺

(Who is Our Market? Continued from page 1)

to learn from you. I'll sometimes ask kids how their school bus is like a streetcar, and how it's different. That can lead to a simple discussion of how electricity gets to the streetcar's motors. You're not "dumbing down" your talk, you're opening it up to include all your passengers. (The electrical concepts may be new to some of the adults, too.)

I've watched many of our volunteers interact with children and their parents, and I think we're in great shape in that respect. Making everyone feel welcome, treating everyone with respect, and taking that extra few minutes to answer a question or point out a feature of a streetcar goes a long way in creating a positive experience. Those families will visit us again. ☺

(From the Front Platform Continued from page 2)

The streetcars are wonderful and the ride is lots of fun, but repeat business depends on friendly and competent volunteers who make the ride as pleasant and fun as possible. Will you be one of those volunteers? I guarantee you will get more out of operating by being customer friendly! ☺

What's Happening?

- October 16 & 17 Farmer's Ken's Pumpkin patch at CHSL operates from 12:30 PM to 5 PM
 October 22, 23, 29 & 30 Halloween ghost trolley at CHSL, operates from 6 PM to 9 PM
 October 29 & 30 Halloween ghost trolley & Boo-seum at ESL operates from 6 PM to 9 PM
 November 26-28 Excelsior *Christkindlmarkt* special operations at ESL
 November 26-28 & December 4 & 5 Holly Trolley featuring Santa Claus operates at CHSL

**Shop Update** — News from our George K. Isaacs and Excelsior Car barns

John Prestholdt — MSM Shop Foreman

As we do throughout our operating season, we continue to work to keep all our cars in good operating condition. We just completed tightening the brakes on No. 1300 and continue to check the batteries in all three cars. The air brake valves on the wood cars have been checked and we'll be replacing the compressor on Duluth No. 265 before it goes back into service later this month for the Halloween special events.

While routine "running maintenance" is being done we are now planning our work for this winter. All three cars need their yearly scheduled maintenance and there are several special projects we need to work on.

For No. 1300 we need to re-paint the floor. Not that difficult, but we do need to keep track of the seat parts since they are somewhat different for each location.

On No. 265 we plan to re-do the window and other inside woodwork that is showing signs of wear, as well as some long overdue painting (e.g., black hand rails, controller top, and silver on the steps).

Besides this car work we will be repairing several trolley catchers and trolley retrievers both for Winona 10 and as replacements for our operating cars, and are looking at re-conditioning a couple of air brake valves, again for spare assemblies, or for Winona 10. We also need to try to learn more about re-upholstering some more rattan seats. I know member **Clyde Stevens** has done some of this, but we need a few more members with the knowledge to keep this process going. If you're interested in keeping busy this winter, please call me at 952-922-7413 or send me an e-mail: jprestholdt@comcast.net

5th Annual MSM Family Picnic Photos

Chef, **Scott Heiderich** is shown here serving up the burgers and brats to **John and Jill Prestholdt**. **Jan Albrecht** is in the background. All the salads, fixin's and deserts were inside the Excelsior carbarn. (Both photos by Jim Vaitkunas)



Some sat outside in the warm sun. Some sat over on the right in the shade. Some chose to sit inside the Excelsior carbarn. All in all, close to 35 members and family attended this year's family picnic held on a beautifully sunny and warm September 26th. In any event, a good time was had by all.

Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule

With this issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** we will revert to our winter publication schedule. After this October 2010 issue, you'll be receiving the **Streetcar CURRENTS** every other month until May, 2011. Publication dates for these issues will be on or about: December 1st; February 1st; and, April 1st. If you don't receive your issue on, or shortly after, those dates please contact me at: jvaitkunas@msn.com