

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



Nov-Dec — 2011

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## Many Thanks for a Successful Year

- *Despite the uneven weather patterns, the 2011 season was most successful*
- *Many thanks to all our volunteers for your dedication*
- *Thanks to all our members for your loyal support by renewing your Museum membership each year*

**Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule**  
 With this issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** we are now in our winter publication schedule. Next issue will be sent to you on or about February 1st.



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**Masthead Photo:** Here's TCRT No. 1300 in late November, 2008 loading passengers for another Holly Trolley run, featuring Santa Claus. In 2011 the ground was bare right after Thanksgiving but in 2008 there was snow on the ground for the Holly Trolley, thus giving our riders the proper atmosphere. (Jim Vaitkunas photo)

## A Successful Year

Bill Arends—General Supt.

With the holiday season upon us and visions of turkeys, Santa, Black Friday, shopping, etc., running through my mind, I paused to think about it also being the end of another operating season for MSM. After the first weekend in December the streetcars will be put away in the car barn awaiting their annual maintenance to ready them for next spring. Spring seems far off now, but it will require the full effort of the loyal volunteers who show up at the car barns on Tuesday and Saturday. Anyone interested in getting involved with maintenance and restoration need only show up at the car barn at either Excelsior or Lake Harriet on Tuesday or Saturday mornings. If you're thinking you don't have the necessary experience, don't worry. Our experts will provide on-the-job training.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. We still have our Christmas trolleys to run. **Dave** and **Mary Ann Higgins** have once again done a great job of decorating both the streetcar and the depot at our Como-Harriet Line. And thanks to **Karl Jones** our riders on the *Christkindlsmarkt* Trolley at our Excelsior Line rode a lot warmer this year as Karl has completed installation of heaters in No. 1239.

Recently a letter was received in the museum's email in-box regarding a charter for a birthday party for a young child. When scheduling the charter the family had specifically asked if **Bill Hubbard** would be available to operate the trolley for their charter. Bill was called and he accepted, and more. A great job of customer service and promoting customer relations for MSM. Getting requests for specific operators happens very infrequently. Getting a nice thank you letter, priceless. Thank you Bill. This is too nice not to share.

Bill,

*You made Tristan's day driving the trolley for him on his big day this year, I wanted to send a quick thanks for being there for us as I know it's a volunteer gig and you took time out of your own schedule to accommodate our request.*

*We'll look for you on the Santa trolley before the year ends but if we miss you we'll surely be seeing you next summer on the rails.*

*I've attached a couple pictures of you and Tristan at the controls.*

*Thanks again for the great time!*

Cheers,

Another operating season, our Museum's 40th, draws to a close. Of course there were some bumps in the road. Several shifts were cancelled during May, June and July because of rain and heat. Oh, to be complaining about rain and heat again. But it was a good season. A great group of new operators trained and filled many shifts. A successful 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party. A very successful October with our Ghost Trolleys, Pumpkin Patch Trolleys and Trick 'R Trolley doing very well. So I sign off on my last article for the *Streetcar Currents* for 2011 with a big **Thank You** to all the volunteers who made it possible. And to all our loyal members and friends who keep returning to ride with us. **Thank you.** See you on the car next spring. ☺

## 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](http://www.TrolleyRide.org)

The museum's business address and telephone number is:

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

**Streetcar CURRENTS**  
**November-December—2011**

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 January 20, 2012.

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

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**From the Front Platform — Thoughts on Our Museum**

Dave French — Chair, MSM Board of Directors

Hello everyone! Did you see or take a ride on CHSL's Ghost Trolley 2011? Attendance was excellent (total of around 1,600) all four nights partly because of favorable weather and partly because many of our riders are repeaters who've seen the GT before, liked it, and they keep coming back, just like people do for our regular operations. I participated in my first Ghost Trolley in 1999. Some of you might remember that for the first several years I did all the "acting" myself. Luckily we now have several extremely talented people involved so my part has become quite small. This year **Mike Helde**, **Ben Franske**, **Holly Wetzell**, **Alexandra Howes**, and **Travis Bay** all took major roles under the masterful direction of **Rod Eaton**. My thanks and admiration goes out to all of these stars! Because we now have loads of talented people with plenty of energy and creativity it's time for me to step aside and take a year (or years) off. I will still be involved if "C.B." (my nickname for **Rod** who reminds me of Cecil B. DeMille directing *The Ten Commandments*) will have me, but I won't be doing any acting. I've greatly enjoyed the past thirteen Ghost Trolley productions and I thank everyone for your help and support.



One more thing about Ghost Trolley: This production works much better if we have full or nearly full cars. If there are fewer than 20 people on the car they typically just do not react to the play. Any performer will tell you that it is much easier if you get immediate feedback from the audience. If we do a line and all we hear is dead silence it really drains the energy from the performance. This is why we don't have two cars running every night, and when we do have two cars we take the second car out of service when business slows down. One thing that happens every year is we have a really busy night and a line forms on the platform and down the sidewalk. Inevitably the actors then hear from station personnel on the radio telling us to "speed it up" because people are waiting in line. Now please understand, the actors do have empathy for the volunteers on the platform who feel uncomfortable because passengers are waiting. But we also want you to understand that it is very difficult to edit out parts of the performance on the fly. Ghost Trolley does not start out from a fully formed script. We start with a story outline and then we develop a way to tell the story, then the first night we adapt our

lines and actions from the reaction of the audience, in other words we try to find what works and what doesn't. It is unreasonable to expect your actors to shorten the performance which is the same as reducing the amount of product customers are paying for. People who frequent haunted houses, hay rides, and other Halloween attractions tell me that they expect to wait in line *at least* twenty minutes before entering the attraction. So if there are people waiting in line for an MSM event, please think of it as *a good thing* and do your best to interact with and entertain those who are waiting.

I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving. I'm sure you're like me and try to be thankful every day of the year for all of our blessings. One thing that working at MSM has done for me is **every time** I go to the streetcar I think "God bless and keep the volunteers." We all realize that there would be no Minnesota Streetcar Museum without a host of volunteers working very hard performing myriad tasks on the car and behind the scenes.

*(Continued on bottom of next page)*



## MSM News & Views — News of our Museum's Administration and Membership

*Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary and Superintendent of Operations*

**W**elcome New Members. We offer a big **WELCOME** to the MSM family to the following new MSM members: **Mike LaQuey, Michaela Richardson, Jane Nides, and Chris Patridge.**

**D**onations Received. Many thanks to the following Museum members who have sent in donations over the last few months: Gary Neunsinger, Teresa Nessensen, Ron and Elizabeth Wassem, Dick and Barb Stoner, Kent & Shari Deblieck, and Tom & Sharon Sharratt. We also received donations from over 78 Museum members and friends in the memory of two recently departed active volunteers: Roy Harvey and Tom Fairbairn. The total of these memorial donations was an astounding \$4,300! Space doesn't permit listing everyone so we extend our sincere thanks to all who wanted to remember Roy and Tom by making a donation to our Museum.

**O**ur Annual Appeal was announced in the flyer you have received. This is the one and only time that we solicit donations from our members and friends. Please consider giving generously to your Museum. ☺



## Excelsior Streetcar Line News and Update

*Bruce Kobs — Superintendent*

**I**n October, 2011 we celebrated the seventh year of ESL's operation of The Halloween Ghost Trolley with the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Historical Society's Haunted History Boo-seum. Passengers were first treated to a melodrama produced by professional players. The audience sat on bales of straw watching the variety show in front of Gary's Classic Car Repair. After the production they toured the museum building which had been transformed into a Boo-seum. Scary!! Operating both No. 78 and No. 1239, 1715 riders climbed aboard our cars to ride along the line viewing displays animated with 60 volunteers from the Historical Society. Displays along the right-of-way included: a grave yard where bodies arose from coffins; men hanging from the bridge at window height; air hammer man at the end of track; and, apple orchard spooks.

**T**he success of an event of this magnitude could not have been possible without the help of car decorators, crew schedulers, foreman and operators. A big thank you to **Bob Johnson** and **Todd Bender** for organizing the Halloween Ghost Trolley. Thank you also goes out to **Jeff Anderson, Bill Graham, Marv Krafve, Bill Preiss, Trudy Schnorr** and **Bob Wetherall** who crewed the trolleys.

**C**hristkindlsmarkt, a German Christmas outside market with many vendors was staged in the parking lot adjacent to our Water Street car stop. The festive weekend in Excelsior is highlighted with a tree lighting ceremony, parade and of course Santa riding on TCRT streetcar No. 1239. New this year was heat in No. 1239. **Karl Jones** dedicated his summer of 2011 to instal conduit, wiring, the heaters, and controls so that Santa and his passengers could ride in comfort. Karl, Santa said: "This is the best Christmas present of all." Thank you also from everyone at ESL and MSM for your dedication and expertise in completing this installation.

The *Christkindlsmarkt* event happened Friday, Saturday and Sunday, November 25, 26, & 27. A total of 1,311 passengers rode the streetcar this weekend. ESL's coordinators were **Bob Johnson** and **Todd Bender**. **Marv Krafve, Karl Jones, Marsh Ginther, Bill Preiss, Jess Clabo, Dave Ire, Clyde Stephens, Jim Wilmore, Dave Norman, Jeff Anderson, Don Nielsen, Bill Graham, Denn Evens, and Mark Brothen** comprised the operating crews. Thank you to all from our passengers, Santa, and all the children who sat on Santa's lap.

**A**s ESL completes operations for 2011 we sincerely thank everyone at MSM for the many volunteer hours of service to ESL and to the most important aspect of our Museum, our passengers. Without saying "YES" to **Marv Krafve** when he calls you to operate or YES to the maintenance crews who keep our cars rolling, the Excelsior Streetcar Line can not function at the efficiency that it does.

**S**cheduling Foremen and Operators is **one tough job**. So I want to give special praise to **Marv Krafve** for his dedication to this area of our operations. Marv and ESL need more foreman! So when you operators remember how much fun you've had this summer, we ask you to climb up the ladder one more step and request to become a foreman in 2012. We have many events requiring more foreman so please say YES. ☺

**(From the Front Platform** *Continued from page 2)*

And this is true of *every* volunteer organization. It is truly astonishing to contemplate how much time and money is generously donated by Americans to keep outfits like MSM going despite a lackluster economy. On behalf of the Board of Directors I say **THANKS** to each of you and we wish you a grand holiday season and a happy and healthy year in 2012. ☺

**What's Happening?**

December 14 Annual Holiday Party at the George K. Isaacs Car barn, Minneapolis starts at 7 PM  
 March 17 MSM Annual Member's meeting, Mill City Museum, Minneapolis. 1 PM start-time.  
 April Operator recertification and new Operator training schedule will be announced in early April

**CHSL 2011 Halloween Ghost Trolley**



Here's a group photo of the actors who performed magnificently during CHSL's 2011 Halloween trolley: (L to R) **Holly Wetzels, Alexandra Howes, Ben Franske, Mike Helde** Wearing the mask) and **Dave French**. Not shown: **Travis Bay** and **Bill Arends**. (Mike Helde photo)



Dave French is shown here terrorizing the passengers. You can easily see how scared the passengers are. (Mike Helde photo)

**CHSL 2011 North Pole & Santa Trolley**



As reported on page 3 of this issue, ESL's North Pole trolley was a huge success, carrying over 1,300 passengers on the three days after Thanksgiving. Here we see Santa doing what he does best—making boys and girls (and moms) smile and dream. (Todd Bender photos)



**Please mark Tuesday, December 14th 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 join your fellow members, we ask that you also bring some canned goods for the local food shelves—this has been a yearly tradition here at MSM.**