

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



June 2012

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



**Bill The Motorman Says:**

- Encourage your neighbors, friends and co-workers to come and ride the cars
- Visit ESL and take a ride. See the progress on Winona No. 10 up close
- Don't forget to take a ride on the Streetcar Steamboat Minnehaha while you're in Excelsior
- Consider becoming more involved in your Museum's operations and administration—we need your expertise and help

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**Masthead.** Sunny days have been relatively rare this spring. Here's a photo of TCRT gate car No. 1239 (TCRT 31st Street shops, 1907) and Duluth No. 78 (LaCledé Car Co., 1893). Both are basking in the summer sun in mid-2004.  
(Photo by Jim Vaitkunas)

## Off and Running!

Bill Arends—General Supt.

And they're off! That's what went through my mind on Saturday, May 5th. Yes, I may have been thinking about the Kentucky Derby. But instead I was thinking about something that ran on a completely different track. I was thinking about the first running of the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line as the 41st season begins.

Out of the Ready Barn TCRT No. 1300 came at about 12:15 PM. Ready for another season of operation. With passengers waiting to ride, the squeal of steel wheels on rusty, ungreased steel rails could be heard as Karl Jones pulled No. 1300 into the Linden Hills station. Our 41st season of operation had begun. Unfortunately, as typical of early season weather, Mother Nature wouldn't cooperate with us. After running about 96 furlongs the rains came and operations for the day ended. However, 45 of our loyal passengers enjoyed a ride on one of the six trips we ran on our first day of the 2012 season.

On both Saturday and Sunday the sale of season passes was brisk. It was good to see so many of our regular riders showing up, in less than ideal weather, to get their season passes. It was also nice to see the familiar faces that we have not seen since the calendar turned to 2012.

The weather improved greatly on our second weekend of operation. Sunny skies, warm temperatures, freshly greased rails and we were ready to run again. Our loyal following also showed they were ready to ride. During our second weekend of operation over 1,000 passengers enjoyed a streetcar ride. We really were off and running!

Then, on Wednesday, May 15 we received more good news. In the Minneapolis *StarTribune*, in a special section about the "Best of Minnesota," **Gail Rosenblum**, a writer for the *StarTribune*, and also a long time rider of our streetcars, wrote an article titled "A Sweet Escape to Nowhere and Back." She eloquently described the pleasure of riding the streetcar with no specific destination or purpose other than providing enjoyment and a bit of history. Thank you, Gail. We, like you, make no apologies for our love of the streetcar.

Although we had not yet started operating on week days, that doesn't mean the streetcars aren't operating. On a Wednesday morning, while riding my bicycle around Lake Harriet, I saw No. 1300 at the Linden Hills Station. Stopping to see why the streetcar was out I found **Jerry Olsen** and **Charlie Fritzen** were just about to start their 4th charter run of the day. This charter was for a 2nd grade class from Nicollet, Minnesota. It is also the 12th year that this teacher has scheduled a field trip from Nicollet for his 2nd grade class. Wow! That's a loyal following.

So yes, we are off and running. For my trifecta I'd pick numbers 1300, 265 and 322. The problem is picking the order. They're all winners. And by the way, if you're wondering how many trips we made on the first day, a furlong is 1/8 of a mile and our track is about a mile long. See you on the line. 🚋



**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**  
 June—2012

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 June 20, 2012.

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

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 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9774

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

Dave French — Chair, MSM Board of Directors

**H**i everyone! I had all three days off work over the Memorial Day weekend so I was able to work at CHSL on Saturday, Sunday, and Memorial Day. Saturday was cool and rainy, but not quite enough rain to put the streetcar away. It was not real busy but the 150 or so passengers we carried were all glad to see the car running, particularly the families with little kids who are anxious to get out of the house and do something fun no matter the weather. Sunday was sunny and very hot but the humidity was fairly low so it was not too uncomfortable. The weather brought loads of people to Lake Harriet and the classic car show was a big success. I just wish I could have walked the street to see the cars close-up. I did walk over to talk to the guy with the 1938 Mack fire truck, a real beauty in original condition. Yes, in addition to trolleys and trains I am fond of fire trucks also. I also enjoyed the trailer-mounted band organ parked on the hill below our depot. Gotta love that merry go round music!



**O**n Monday I worked the 9 AM to 12:30 PM “early bird” shift and I chose to stay at the north end for the entire shift. This is the first time I’ve been to Lake Harriet for Memorial Day. After 10 AM business started to pick up a bit and I was surprised to see how many passengers buying tokens at the cemetery gate had the exact amount to pay the fare, rather than the usual blizzard of twenty dollar bills I see at the depot. I started asking passengers if they had done this before, and fully 80% reported that they have ridden the car on previous Memorial Days so they knew that the platform attendant appreciated receiving small bills. So this got me to thinking about our ridership. Now don’t get me wrong, I love regular customers but a big challenge for our museum is how do we get new people who’ve never ridden before to come try us out?

**L**ike any other business, our long term survival for our second forty years will depend on keeping our loyal repeat customers and attracting first timers who never even knew there are restored antique streetcars running every day during the summer for a two dollar fare. We can’t afford expensive paid advertising, so we need to promote MSM via every free or low cost venue we can. How about you, members and active volunteers, what are you doing to help? Here are Dave’s three positive steps all of us can take.

1. Are you talking about MSM? Are you telling friends, family members, and coworkers about the trolley? Are you inviting and encouraging them to take a ride this summer? Believe me, this is something all of us need to do to keep those seats on our streetcars filled.

2. Are you giving our passengers a positive experience for their two dollars? Are you doing something a little extra to make it more fun? Are you smiling and cheerful and engaging passengers in friendly conversation? Or are you frowning, morose, crabby, bickering with fellow volunteers, and generally not being pleasant? Come on, we all know that helping people to have fun will encourage them to come back and make them more likely to recommend us to their family and friends. Again, this is powerful promotion and all it costs is a little extra effort by all of us. And be sure to remind people about that other line we run, CHSL if you are at ESL and ESL if you run at CHSL.

*(Continued on bottom of next page)*



## MSM Training Update — We train the future of our Museum

Chris Heck — MSM Superintendent of Safety and Training

Springtime is by far the busiest time of the year for the Training Department, with Operator recertification, Operator cross-training, and new Operator certification all taking place in the course of about two months. That's about 125 volunteers who we need to schedule, quiz, or otherwise train in on a very concentrated timeframe!

We've made some minor changes to the recertification process this year. Second-year operators will still be required to recertify in-person by demonstrating their proficiency in operating our streetcars, while all other volunteers will only be required to do this on a rolling 4-5 year period. All operators, regardless of tenure, will still take the annual rules exam each year.

Classes for our new trainees began in mid-April with training orientation sessions held at both our Como-Harriet and Excelsior streetcar lines. Later, the trainees studied in groups of 2-4 with our volunteer trainers to learn how to safely and efficiently operate our streetcars. With knowledge of the car's equipment and an air brake finesse in hand, our operators have now moved on to understudy with a revenue crew and the guiding supervision of the shift Foreman. Finally, after all this practice, our new operators will demonstrate their skills by undergoing written and performance exams. As I write this, we have two individuals who are about to graduate from training to become full-fledged streetcar operators, while the rest will be getting there shortly.

When you have a chance to work with one of our new operators, please make it a point to welcome them to our Museum and thank them for their interest in volunteering. All of us were new here once (some earlier than others!) and we all relied on the kind advice and guidance of our more experi-

enced veterans and peers to become proficient in operating.

Further, all of our training has been done in a very deliberate manner by a small group of trainers. It can be very disheartening for a new operator to be told by a more senior Foreman or Operator that he or she is doing something "wrong." Unless there is immediate danger to person or property, please don't chide a new operator for the way he or she operates--rather, please take up such matters with me directly and I will address them with the Operator. The Training Department teaches to the most current rules of the Operating Department, and it is discouraging and confusing for a new Operator to be told that he or she is doing something "wrong" just because another operator thinks it "ought" to be done a different way.

So, without further ado, please welcome our new volunteers: **Chic Anding, KJ Archer, Dick Bethke, Craig Boone, Steve Frederickson, Matt Grosser, Cheri Hannah, Colin Harris, Jim Kertzman, Dave & Deb Koefod, Cameron Slick, Bob Smith, David Thell, and Cliff Thomas.**

I would be remiss if I forgot to express gratitude to all of the volunteers who have helped run the training program with me this year. Thank you to the following volunteer trainers who have worked one-on-one with our new trainees: **Bill Arends, Todd Bender, Rod Eaton, Bill Graham, Mike Helde, Dave Higgins, Bob Johnson, Karl Jones, Marv Krafve, and Jim Vaitkunas.**

Finally, I'd like to add that our number two source of recruiting new operators is via word-of-mouth through our current volunteers (number one is placing notices in newspapers). If you know anyone who would be interested in becoming a streetcar Operator, please have him or her contact me. 📞

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

3. Are you doing something to improve your skills? Are you trying to improve your braking and operating practices to give our riders a smooth ride and impress them with your professionalism? How about that end of line talk? Are you using the same old tired routine, droning on for minutes on end in a soft voice and from the front platform so they can't hear you? Or are you finding new and interesting facts on our website and in the various books to tell people about, something all of those repeat riders haven't already heard twenty times before? If you're looking for ideas, we have suggested short end of line talk scripts and we can refer you to all kinds of excellent resources you will find very interesting. All you have to do is ask.

So let's go, everyone! Let's all promote the museum and improve the experience we give to our customers and make this a great year. I'll see you on the car! 📞

**What's Happening?**

- June 2 Streetcar cleaning session at CHSL. Come out and help keep our streetcars clean.
- June 12 Story Time trolley at ESL.
- June 21 Pajama Party trolley at CHSL starts at 6:30 PM
- July 4 Special extended operating hours at both CHSL and ESL

**MSM News & Views — News of our Museum's Administration and Membership**  
 Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary and Superintendent of Operations

**Donations Received.** Here are the members and friends who have responded generously to our 2011-2012 MSM Annual Appeal since the last report in the May issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS**.

**General Fund:** Steve Collin.

**Winona No. 10 Restoration Fund:** The Winona Foundation.

Many thanks to all donors for your generosity.

**New Members.** We've had several new members join the MSM family in the last month: Dick Bethke, Cheri Hannah, Jim Kertzman, Pete Connors, James Boone, Matt Grosser, Joel Bergstrom, and Barb Durfee & John Hotvet. We are especially pleased to welcome these new members because all of them, save one, have become active volunteers with our Museum, either as streetcar Operators or as volunteers in our two shops.

**Address Changes and Updates.** At the risk of sounding like a broken record, please let us know as soon as possible when your address changes. When MSM gets updates from the US Postal Service that your address has changed, it costs us anywhere from 50-cents to over \$2.00 if it involves forwarding the *Twin City Lines* history magazine to you. Thanks!

**We had a GREAT Memorial Day Weekend!** John Prestholdt, our Museum Statistician, reports that the Memorial Day weekend was a great one for ridership. Here are the stats: From Friday through Memorial Day, we carried over 1,500 passengers including close to 1,000 on Memorial Day. Total cash receipts for the four days amounted to over \$3,800 which included several hundred dollars for several charters. Many, many thanks to all of you who volunteered for these four days and for your dedication to our Museum. 🌿



**New benches at Linden Hills.** The fellows took off a Tuesday from normal shop and restoration work and replaced the old benches at the Linden Hills station. They look real good. (Photo by Jim Vaitkunas)



**Right of Spring.** Several years ago MSM received a grant from the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council allowing our Museum to produce and mount over a dozen interpretive signs along our historic TCRT right of way. In the winter we remove the signs and every spring we re-install them in their proper location.

This photo shows MSM's Historian, **Aaron Isaacs** putting up one of the signs on the railing adjacent to the pedestrian underpass (subway) built by TCRT in 1911 and still used by Linden Hills residents and visitors to gain access to Lake Harriet without crossing the streetcar tracks. In the foreground is one of the signs that shows a photo of a TCRT streetcar approaching the pedestrian underpass sometime in the early 1950s. The TCRT standard car is located approximately where our north switch, seen on the center right of the above photo, is located. (Photo by Jim Vaitkunas)

**Make a Note.** We'll be sending to those who have e-mail capability a special photo supplement featuring progress on the Winona No. 10 restoration project and some major work done in the Isaacs carbarn. Be on the lookout for it in the next week or so.