

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



August 2012

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



Bill The Motorman Says:

- *Special events are very important to our Museum's "bottom line." Help out with these events when you are asked.*
- *Ridership is down slightly because of our weird weather. Help your Museum out by encouraging your friends and neighbors to take a ride.*
- *Stay cool!*



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Masthead. Duluth Street Railway No. 78 is 119 years old this year! In this photo taken in 2006, Bob Johnson is swinging the single trolley pole around at the Water Street platform of our Museum's Excelsior Streetcar Line. (Photo by Jim Vaitkunas)

Special Events

Bill Arends—General Supt.

There's a lot that's special about our museum. Way too much to be able to cover in a short article. So today I'm going to write about "Special Events." For clarification, my definition of "Special Events" is any time the streetcar is operating in service, with paying passengers, other than during our regular schedule. Bear with me as I remove my motorman's cap, roll up my sleeves and slip on my accountant's cap, or maybe more appropriately, my accountant's visor, and share some statistics.

Our peak ridership was in 1977 when nearly 52,000 passengers rode our streetcar. Ridership continued to be in the 45,000 to 50,000 range throughout the 1980s. In 1991, with the introduction of DSR No. 78 and the opening of the Linden Hills station, ridership again jumped to nearly 52,000 passengers. During the past several years, as our regular ridership decreased and leveled off at about 30,000 riders per year, more special events have been offered. The very successful Ghost Trolley was introduced in the late 1990s at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. In 2005 the Halloween Trolley started running at the Excelsior Streetcar Line. These have been very successful with 3,500 or more frightened passengers riding our streetcars each year as a result of these special events.

In 2006 the Holly Trolley, with Santa, started running at CHSL. The next year we started running the Christkindlmarkt Trolley at ESL. Both events have become very popular and have added additional ridership and revenue at the end of our operating season. Since the introduction of these events over 14,000 passengers have ridden our streetcars in November and December.

Two more very popular special events in June, July and August are the PJ party Trolley at CHSL, and the similar Story Time Trolley at ESL. Kids and adults, if they choose, get dressed in their PJs, enjoy milk and cookies, take a ride on the streetcar and listen as the author of a children's book reads a bedtime story. This popular event is run again in late October disguised as the Trick r' Trolley. These events sell out very quickly and have drawn 600 to 700 passengers per year.

Other Special Events include the Classic Car Show, Early Bird Service on Memorial Day, Streetcar Camp for Kids, Farmer Ken's Pumpkin Patch, A Streetcar Murder Mystery and Charters. In 2011, over 2,200 passengers rode the streetcars on charters. During the past 5 years, 14% to 15% of the ridership at the CHSL was during special events. At the ESL the percentage has been much greater, topping out at about 50% in 2011. In addition to contributing a significant percentage to our ridership, because of increased fares for these special events they have become a very important source of revenue.

But, I have one more "Special Event." It falls outside my definition of "Special Events" as stated in the first paragraph. This "Special Event" occurred on a Saturday afternoon in early July, this year. The shift had only a Foreman and an Op-

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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
 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467
 952-922-1096

Streetcar CURRENTS
 August—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 August 20, 2012.

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



From the Front Platform — Thoughts on Our Museum

Dave French — Chair, MSM Board of Directors

Hi everyone! Last month I reported the accident suffered by **George Ittner** while working on Winona No. 10 at the Excelsior carbarn. I regret to report that George passed away on July 1st. Because I now live 300 miles away I was unable to attend George's funeral and am grateful to the MSM members who represented us wearing their uniform at the service. I wrote a note to George's family expressing our Museum's condolences stating that at the end of his life George was doing something he loved by applying his craftsmanship to the restoration of Winona No. 10 which will undoubtedly be one of MSM's finest restorations. When No. 10 makes that first run down the track, George's spirit will certainly be on board. Let's honor George's memory by continuing to do our best in all that we do at MSM and do it in the safest manner possible.

Recently I wrote to our operating personnel that the most frequently observed safety violation at CHSL was exceeding 5mph in both directions in front of the station and across 42nd Street. One of our newer Operators expressed frustration when I coached him to reduce speed while entering the station northbound after crossing 42nd because he was trying hard not to have power applied when the trolley wheel went through the wire frog over the switch. I told him that while it is important to have power off when the trolley wheel is in the wire frog, it is more important that the car is traveling dead slow when the front end reaches the platform where people are standing in close proximity to the track and not always paying attention to the approaching car. I gave this some further thought and remembered that this is one of the toughest skills to be learned at CHSL. As you approach 42nd Street headed northbound you're traveling downgrade and need to start braking well in advance to control your speed. You need to be down to 5mph when you reach the first sidewalk while watching pedestrians and traffic. The car continues to slow down as it hits the switch so you want to give it a little power to carry you through but not so much that you are going too fast at the platform, and you want to shut off power before the trolley wheel hits the frog. It's a lot easier to write than it is to actually do it! It took me a long time to really get the hang of it so I can now do it consistently, at least most of the time. I ask you again, whether you are a new Operator or a seasoned veteran, continue to practice and improve your operating skills on



both lines. Like any other skill, it is rewarding when you notice that you have really improved and are "getting it right." Thousands of Motormen and Motorettes who ran Twin City and Duluth streetcars had to learn the same skills to achieve professional, safe operating technique. Thank you for upholding a proud tradition!

I was sad to learn that Bob Bayers has decided to close his hardware store in Linden Hills. The store has been operated by Bob's family since 1923 and has long supplied hardware to our maintenance forces at the George Isaacs carbarn. Bob is an MSM member and an active volunteer who serves on our Board of Directors. I always welcome his input because he provides a valuable business perspective to our discussion. We wish Bob all the best in his retirement. The main reason that Bob decided to close the store is a new, larger competitor opened a hardware store a few yards from Bob's building. This makes me reflect on the sometimes cruel world of free enterprise and competition in the business world and the nature of our business at MSM. Do you think of our

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MSM Historian's Update — We make Minnesota's Electric Railway History Come Alive!

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Historian and Photo Archivist

Photo collection update. I looked back through the earlier Currents to see when I had last updated you on the photo collection. It was April 2011. At the time the collection contained 9,808 catalogued images (although mostly photos, there are catalogued maps, advertisements, booklets and other images). Of these, 3,335 or 34 percent had been digitized.

There has been plenty of activity over the last year. I recently did photo swaps with the Dakota County Historical Society and Anoka County Historical Society, and copied quite a few photos from Minnesota Historical Society. This last year saw the large **Jim Kreuzberger** collection catalogued, along with photos copied from the collections of Illinois Railway Museum, Winona County Historical Society, Minnesota State Fair, University of Minnesota Archives and Stearns County Historical Society. **Dave French** continues to find treasures on EBay and usually is successful bidding on them on behalf of MSM. With all this activity, the collection has grown by 829 images over the last year. It now stands at 10,637 images, and 3,921 (37 percent) of those have been digitized.

More images on Minnesota Reflections. Once again we have taken advantage of the opportunity to add images to Minnesota Reflections, the website where over 125 small museums and historical societies have posted photos and other images. Funded by a Minnesota Legacy grant, we're able to get our photos digitized at no cost to the Museum, and they can be viewed by anyone with internet access. This time we added 191 items (some with multiple pages), bringing our Reflections total to 1738. They may be posted by the time you read this. You can access them via the Historic Photos button on the MSM website. This group of images included most of

our oversized photos, as well as oversized maps and plans for the Selby Tunnel and Snelling Shops. These were scanned at the University of Minnesota, making it possible for the public to access very large, hard to handle images for the first time.

Historic video digitized. About 15 years ago, we compiled all the then-known film of historic Twin Cities streetcars and attempted to make a video for sale to the public. **Russ Olson** and I worked out a script and editing instructions. We shipped those, along with the films, to longtime MSM member **Don Olsen**. Don is a Minneapolis native who has lived in the San Francisco Bay area for many years. He runs Catenary Productions, which has produced numerous high quality railroad videos, often of traction subjects. Using some sophisticated German technology, Don converted the film to video tape. In the process he corrected faded color and otherwise cleaned up the images.

Then the project stalled for lack of money. At the time, we were part of the Minnesota Transportation Museum and were barely breaking even. Then came the split from MTM and the TEA-21 track replacement project. Those activities soaked up all our financial resources and the video languished. Eventually we gave up on the project and last year Don returned the film, along with the video tapes he had created.

During the years that the project was delayed, the technology shifted from video tape to digital. Additional film also surfaced, most from **Jim Kreuzberger**, but also some from Father **Francis Nolan** and a little bit from **Bill Cordes**. Over the last several months we have paid to have all the film and video digitized, and that process is now complete. In all, we have over two hours of vintage material.

We'll keep you posted on our plans for these videos. ☺

(From the Front Platform Continued from page 2)

museum as a business? I hope so, because in spite of our tax-exempt status and the fun nature of our streetcar hobby, we are facing dead-earnest competition just like any business in the "real world." Just think of how our market has changed in the past 40 years. The entertainment options have increased exponentially for Twin Cities families. One of our biggest competitors today is in the home. Families can stay in the comfort of their air conditioned homes with myriad entertainment options on their computer and hundreds of channels on their large screen TV, and many of them do just that instead of getting out and about to do things like ride the trolley. Do you think of MSM as a business? Are you trying your best to give passengers a fun and educational experience that provides good value for their money and makes them want to return and ride again? I sure hope so, as the long-term survival of our museum depends on you doing just that. We've done a great job of developing charters and several special events over the past few years to attract new business, but our core business is still the regular operations at Lake Harriet and Excelsior. Yes, we can succeed against our competition but it will take the hard work of all of us to do it. So, let's go and have fun and attract those customers. I'll see you on the car! ☺

What's Happening?

August 9	Streetcar Camp for Kids. All-morning fun and education for the youngsters.
August 14	Story Time trolley at ESL with first run at 5 PM
August 16	PJ Party trolley at CHSL with first run at 6:30 PM
September 3	Labor Day—Holiday schedule at ESL, extended operations at CHSL
September 9	Excelsior's Apple Days festival

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

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

Donations Received. Here is a list of our members and friends who have donated to our Museum since the last report in the July issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS**.

Winona No. 10 Restoration Fund: The following folks made donations in memory of **George Ittner**: Marv Krafve, Tom McGruder, Jim Peschong, Bruce Kobs, George Nitz, Mark Brothen, Jan & Ken Albrecht, Bob Johnson, Karl Jones, Dave French, Dick Zawacki, Triffle Donult and Steve Mages. Many thanks to all donors for your generosity.

New Members. We've had several new members join the MSM family in the last month: Marie Harrison, Tammy Schexnaider, Craig Bair, Barbara Rohland, Cameron Slick, and Annette Gagliardi. Cameron and Annette are our newest volunteers. Welcome to the MSM family! ☺

Murder Mystery Trolley a Success!

This year's Murder Mystery Trolley was entitled "Encrypted for Murder" and was a very successful event. We operated the event in cooperation with the Minneapolis Southwest High School drama club and split the profits with them. The murder mystery trolley ran for three successive nights and we collected some nice revenue from the runs. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped with this year's Murder mystery trolley.

(Special Events Continued from page 1)

erator scheduled. But that didn't stop Foreman **Karl Jones** and Operator **Steve Simon** from operating on that Saturday afternoon. Fortunately, long-time volunteer, **Jim Otto**, although not trained as an Operator or a Station Agent, was available to serve as a street crossing guard. Karl and Steve were able to keep the streetcar running and between runs, opened the station, sold tokens and provided our loyal passengers with a ride. I think that qualifies as a "Special Event." But not a special event we want to encourage or repeat if we can avoid it.

And thanks to **John Prestholdt** for his many years of maintaining statistical data without which this article would not have been possible. ☺

**George Ittner—R.I.P.**

After the restoration of the streetcar steamboat *Minnehaha* was finished, in 1998 George moved over to the Excelsior streetcar barn to work with Bob Dumas and me on TCRT gate car No. 1239. He helped replace the rotted-out underframe members, the roof and the endless window and woodwork restoration. George was meticulous in his work. When No. 1239 was complete, George turned to the same work on Winona No. 10. George was so thorough and precise in everything he did. He moved easily and smoothly from one task to the next. He never ruffled the feathers of others, but collaborated easily and quietly with a dry humor that was funny, insightful and right on the mark. He showed up at the carbarn every Saturday morning with the precision of a clock where he worked so quietly that you had to see him to know he was there. He was a thoroughly delightful work mate and friend, and the barn will be a different place without him. **Bill Graham**