

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



September—2012

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



## Bill The Motorman Says:

- **Our Halloween and Santa trolleys will be operating in the fall, so spread the word about them to your friends & neighbors.**
- **Give a big THANK YOU to all our volunteers when you see them. They make our Museum go!**
- **Attend our family picnic on September 30th**



## Inside This Issue

From the Front Platform	2
Historian's Update	3
Upcoming Events	4
MSM News & Views	4
Shop Update	4

**Masthead.** Twin City Lines PCC No. 325 is shown in service on University Avenue just east of Fairview Avenue in St. Paul, circa 1950. According to its destination sign, No. 325 will be turning in at TCRT's Snelling Station just a few blocks east to complete its run. No. 325 is preserved at the Railways to Yesterday museum in Pennsylvania (see page 3 for a photo of this car at RTY). In a couple of years LRVs will be running in this very spot on University Ave. (MSM Photo Archive)

## Streetcar Camp

Bill Arends—General Supt.

When you were a kid did you ever go to camp during the summer? Do you remember the anticipation the night before? Maybe tossed and turned, didn't sleep well? Spent the night thinking about the adventure that awaited you? Maybe a little apprehensive or worried about the unknown, about the kid who you may be partnered with?

Because you are reading this, you undoubtedly are interested in large machines that run on rails. Now imagine being a kid and knowing that tomorrow you are going to Streetcar Camp and you will have the opportunity to operate a 46,000 pound streetcar. That's what five young campers got to experience last week.

On a beautiful August morning, under the direction of head camp counselor **Rod Eaton**, assistant counselors **Ben Franske**, **Sam VanTassel**, **Jim Berry** and yours truly, gathered at the car barn to ready TCRT standard streetcar No. 1300, go over the curriculum and be ready for the campers by 9 AM.

At 9:00 AM the streetcar pulled into the Linden Hills Station. Excited campers, with their parents, waited on the platform. Youthful exuberance, excitement, shy apprehension and maybe "Oh my gosh! That thing is soooo big. What have I gotten into?" awaited us as we arrived.

Sam first went over some history of the streetcars, from the early horse drawn cars to the steam powered era and on to the first electric streetcars, ending with the PCC. Jim took the campers on a ride, giving a guided tour of our line. The campers then got a very thorough walk-around the streetcar and learned the length, width and height of the streetcar using a tape measure, as well as learning about the trucks, fender, trolley wheel and other operating parts.

After a mid-morning break, Camp Counselor Jim explained tracks, frogs, points, ballast and attempts by each camper to throw the switch. Ben took the campers through an exercise on electricity, explaining circuits, conductivity, resistance and how electricity powers the streetcar. Each camper, using a 9-volt battery, was able to work with various materials to determine if it was a conductor or non-conductor.

As the anticipation of operating the streetcar kept building for the campers, they were given instruction on the sequence of operations, the overhead targets and the signals, including using all the bells and whistles.

Finally, after lunch, the campers got their turn in the motorman's seat. With a counselor's hand on the brake, each camper had a couple of opportunities to operate the streetcar from both the front and the back. While sometimes their attention waned when not in the motorman's seat, the campers were enthralled with the fascination of a fare box and a single token.



(Continued on bottom of page 4)

## 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**  
 September — 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 September 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](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)



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

Dave French — Chair, MSM Board of Directors

Hi everyone! First, I want to thank all of you for your contribution to making this a very successful season for our Museum. Whether you run the cars, clean the cars, maintain the cars, restore the cars, staff the station, plan the events, train the crews, write the articles, edit the articles, purchase and stock the merchandise, keep the books, generously donate money above and beyond your membership dues, whatever it is you do, MSM would not exist without you.

I thought of this when I read an excellent article by **Ted Kornweibel** in the Summer 2012 issue of *Railway Museum Quarterly/Trainline* magazine, edited by our own **Aaron Isaacs**. In his article describing the restoration of a 19th century “Jim Crow” combine by the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum, Mr. Kornweibel writes:

“Railroad history is not primarily about hardware (‘counting rivets’) but about the intersection between man and machine. There is little to railroad history without the human story or background or context. We would have no railroads without railroaders. As obvious as it would seem, this point often gets lost. And when we consider that the vast majority of museum visitors are not died-in-the-wool rail fans, and may have never ridden a train [or a trolley—Ed.], what are they going to take home with them, if not the human stories. And if we are to remain viable institutions, we must attract a new young generation [see Bill’s column on page one-Ed.]. The popularity of Thomas the Tank Engine proves the point: Thomas is not primarily a story about machines, but about the personalities who inhabit railroading. Even the locomotives are given names and character traits.”

When I work a shift on our streetcars, I always notice that it’s not just the car that fascinates the kids, it is the crew who is running that car. Yes, it is you who provides the immediate “human story or background or context” for our Museum. So please, tell them your story! Tell them how you became a streetcar operator and why you like it. Tell them how you are continuing the heritage and tradition of thousands of operators and conductors who ran the big, yellow electric streetcars in the Twin Cities from 1893 to 1954. Tell them to imagine going for a ride a hundred years ago for a five cent fare just to cool off on a hot summer evening. Give them examples of how much our cities have changed in the last hundred years but also how in

many ways we are the same as the people back then, with the same need for transportation to get to work or to a ball game or a picnic or the State Fair. I guarantee you, our trolleys are priceless operating artifacts, but it is the “human context” provided by you that makes those passengers want to come back.

Please operate safely for the rest of this season and—I’ll see you on the car. 🚗



**MSM’s MUSEUM STORE NEWS**

If you are holding off on purchasing a powered version of the HO version of our PCC No. 322, don't wait too long! As this is written, there are only 4 models left. We are already sold out of the version with sound. Also, there are only 2 of the No. 386 PCC models left in stock.

If you thought you missed your opportunity to buy a conductor's hat, you are in luck. All sizes we normally stock are now available in the summer version. This is a mail order purchase as the hats are not stocked at our Linden Hills station.



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

Aaron Isaacs — *MSM Historian and Photo Archivist*

**D**igitizing *ERM*. From time to time someone asks about reprinting *Electric Railways of Minnesota*, **Russ Olson's** definitive book on Minnesota's electric railways. Published in 1976, *ERM* predates digitization, and there are some significant issues that would have to be answered first. Most important, Russ didn't stop his research. Since then he has uncovered all sorts of new material. In 1990 he compiled a 154-page typed and Xeroxed supplement that was indexed to the original text. In the years since, he has compiled much more info, although he hasn't turned out an enlarged supplement. So the first big issue is how to incorporate all the new material, some of which contradicts parts of the old material.

All this would probably be academic given the high cost of traditional publishing, but advances in technology and a new volunteer may change that. **Ben Franske** has taken on the challenge of digitizing *ERM*. To date he has scanned the TCRT portion of the book, which is the first 310 of its 560 pages.

Once the job is done, the question remains—reprint the original book, or revise it to incorporate all the new material? That will remain unanswered for some time, but when something is published, copies will be printed on demand, rather than a traditional

run of thousands of the book. This will make the project affordable. It took 25 years to sell the original 3000-book run of *ERM*.

**TCRT PCC Update.** Lately the TCRT PCCs that went to Newark, New Jersey have been in the news. Eleven were sold to San Francisco Municipal Railway to operate on the **F-Embarcadero** line. They received cosmetic rehabs, but soon proved unreliable because of electrical system failures. All were sent back for electrical and mechanical work, and several have been returned to service. The rest should be completed this year. One of them is now running in TCRT colors.

Following their retirement in 2001, the ones not sold to San Francisco were retained by New Jersey Transit for a proposed trolley line in Jersey City. Those plans haven't materialized, and last year more of the cars were declared surplus. NJ Transit No. 5 (TCRT No. 324) went to Seashore Trolley Museum in Maine. No. 6 (TCRT No. 325) went to Rockhill Trolley Museum in Pennsylvania. It was recently announced that No. 10 (TCRT No. 329) has been sold to UTCRAS, a railroad wheel and axle shop, which will rehab the car and make it available for sale. UTCRAS has hired Rockhill Trolley Museum to perform some of the work. 🌀

**WHERE THEY ARE NOW**

**(Right)** New Jersey Transit No. 5 (TCRT No. 324) at the Seashore Trolley Museum in Maine. I'm sure the visor kept the sun out of the Operator's eyes but it sure doesn't do anything for the car's looks. *(Jim Schantz photo)*

**(Below Right)** Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) (Shaker Heights Line) No. 27, (ex-NJ Transit No. 27, Exx-TCRT No. 416) at the Shore Line Trolley Museum in East Haven, Connecticut. The car is undergoing restoration. The PCC on the left in this photo is a unique and rare car—Brooklyn Queens (NY) Transit No. 1001. It is the very first production PCC car to be delivered to a streetcar operator (in 1936). *(Bob Perlman photo)*

**(Below)** NJ Transit No. 6 (TCRT No. 325) is shown in its original Public Service Coordinated Transport (PSCT) Newark colors at the Railways to Yesterday Trolley Museum, Rockhill Furnace, Pennsylvania. Note the second trolley pole installed for better rearward operation. *(Richard Panse photo)*



**What's Happening?**

September 3	Labor Day—Holiday schedule at ESL, extended operations at CHSL
September 8	Excelsior's Apple Days festival—ESL operations start at 9 AM
September 30	MSM's annual family picnic hosted by the volunteers at our Excelsior Streetcar Line
October	Special Halloween and pumpkin patch trolleys operate at both ESL and CHSL

**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 August issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS**.

**General Fund:** Gannett Foundation matching donations made by Charles Barthold.; Rose and Bill Arends who donated the proceeds from a recent garage sale they held.

**New Members.** We've had several new members join the MSM family in the last month: Beth-Anne Rowe, Elizabeth Nelson and David Thell. Elizabeth and David are new volunteers with MSM. Welcome, folks! 🌱

**Shop Update — News from our George K. Isaacs and Excelsior Carbarns**  
*John Prestholdt — MSM Shop Foreman*

As you read this issue of the Streetcar Currents, Labor Day will soon be here and we'll revert to our weekend-only operations schedule. We all owe a big thank you to our faithful shop volunteers who maintained our streetcars last winter and throughout the season. Thanks to **Mark Digre, Russ Isbrandt, Jim Willmore, Jim Otto, Neil Howes, Dennis Stephens**, and all the others, all three cars have operated with no major problems. Yes, we have had some small problems like a broken rear brake spring on No. 1300 and a problem with the interior commo buzzers on No. 322. But everything else has been working like we want. And who remembers that we had a problem with the interior lights on "mother car" No. 1300 at the end of last season? Who can locate what **Karl Jones, Matt Leibel** and **Ben Franske**, along with a couple of other volunteers, did to correct that problem? At ESL **Karl Jones** and **Dick Zawacki** have worked through the maintenance procedures on No. 1239, but we still need a couple of people in Excelsior who can help keep those cars up to MSM standards.

Our work crews have done great work, and are now working on various small projects around the carbarn. There are a lot of things like getting rid of brush along the wall by the car barn, greasing the depot curve, and general carbarn cleaning.

Our bathroom project has taken another large step as we have contracted with a sewer company to install the sewer connection for the Isaacs carbarn. This is required before we can select a plumbing contractor to install and complete our long-awaited bathroom. If we make good progress, we can hopefully celebrate the holiday season with a new bathroom, sink and cleaning tub. This will be a real blessing for all of our hard working and faithful shop volunteers. It only took us forty-one years and we're almost there! 🌱

*(Streetcar Camp Continued from page 1)*

At 1:00 PM, No. 1300 returned to the station where the campers received their official certificate, a Minnesota Streetcar Museum patch and had their picture taken in the motorman's seat wearing a motorman's hat. Thanks to Blake, Eric, Ben, Johan and Anand. You were great campers! And all the counselors had a great time, too.

And, if that's not enough about our next generation of trolley operators, in the next issue of the *Currents* you'll hear about an Eagle Scout project and why our garden across the tracks from the Linden Hills Station looks so great. 🌱



Standing in front of TCRT No. 1300 for their official group portrait are the proud graduates of our 2012 streetcar camp. Is there a future Operating volunteer in this group of junior motormen? We sure hope so! (Bill Arends photo)