

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



July 2013

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

## The 2013 Season

- *So far, the weather has not helped our ridership. So, encourage your relatives, co-workers, friends and neighbors to come and take a streetcar ride on our Excelsior Streetcar Line or Como-Harriet Streetcar line.*
- *Renew your membership as soon as you get the reminder notice. And please use the return envelope to do so.*
- *This might be the operational time of the year, but we still need volunteers in the shop. If you're interested drop by the Isaacs carbarn Saturday mornings.*



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**Masthead.** On Father's Day 2013 CHSL ran two car operations: TCRT No. 1300 (foreground) and TCRT PCC No. 322. Duluth No. 265 was on display (behind No. 1300). The Isaacs carbarn was open for tours for passengers. A model railroad was operating in the "ready barn" and TCRT artifacts were on display in the maintenance barn. Ridership was good throughout the day as dads could ride for free.  
(Jim Vaitkunas photo)

## The Weather Hit Us!

Bill Arends—General Supt.

I want to apologize to any of our members who planned on riding the streetcar on Saturday, June 22, for a regular ride or for the Moonlight ride only to find that we were not running. It certainly was not due to lack of effort on the part of our volunteers. In fact, because of an outstanding effort by our volunteers, we were able to be back in service on Sunday, June 23rd.

At about 9 AM on Saturday morning we became aware that a violent storm the previous night had blown down a large tree onto our overhead trolley wire near the north end of the track breaking bracket arms from three of the line poles. The trolley wire was now on the ground! In addition there were two other places

along the line where large branches had fallen on the overhead. With the trolley wires down we were unable to power up the streetcars and move them from the carbarn to gain access to our tower car and maintenance equipment.

But that didn't deter the Saturday morning maintenance crew of **John Prestholdt**, **Karl Jones**, **Jim Otto**, **Pete Connors**, **Dennis Stephens**, **Ben Franske** and me from walking down the line with hand saws, pruning clippers and step ladders to tackle this daunting task. By 10:30 AM progress had already been made. One large branch had been cleared. On to the big tree at the north end.

Shortly thereafter **Scott Heiderich** arrived and corralled a member of the Park Board's forestry department with a bucket truck and a chainsaw. With his assistance the large tree was quickly dispatched and the track was clear. With the overhead line off the ground we could move the streetcars and get at the tower car.

About noon **Chris Heck** and Scott took the tower car down the line to work on the branches that were still on the overhead line. With the use of tower car, and Chris's height, they were able to clear all remaining branches. Progress was definitely being made but the trolley wire was still too close to the ground to safely turn on the power.

So it was on to the task of putting the bracket arms back on the three line poles. With Scott working on the ladder on the pole, Chris and me on the tower car and **John Prestholdt** working the ground and passing tools up to us, by mid-afternoon, with one pole completed, we started to sense that we may be able to be back in service on Sunday (*see photos on page 3—Ed.*).

Overhead line poles two and three went much more smoothly. Maybe old dogs can learn new tricks. By 6:30 PM the overhead line was restored to operating condition, the streetcars moved out of the carbarn to get the tower car back in and the streetcars returned to the carbarn. Ten hours after I left the house in the morning I got home very impressed and pleased by what a group of dedicated volunteers can accomplish. Thanks to all the guys who made this happen. 🌱



**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  
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**Streetcar **CURRENTS****  
**July—2013**

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 July 20, 2013.

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

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

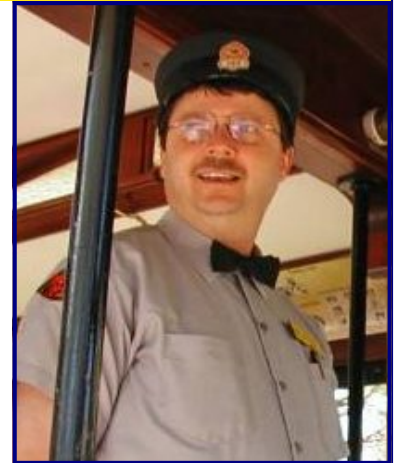
Dave French — Chair, MSM Board of Directors

**H**i everyone! In last month's column I wrote about the ongoing problem of volunteers waiting till the last minute to sign up for shifts and the superintendents having to send out urgent e-mail appeals every week asking people to fill empty slots on upcoming shifts. From what I can see in June, the problem persists. Today, June 25th, I got an e-mail from Jim Vaitkunas listing openings at CHSL for the next ten days. There are 16 shifts listed for the period June 26th through July 5th. Eleven out of the sixteen are in the Red Zone, meaning they will be cancelled if we do not get people to step up. Last month I asked all of you to sign up way in advance for shifts, and to work one or two more shifts each month. Your response, so far, has been disappointing. I am also frustrated as I am unemployed right now and cannot sign up for more shifts as I need to keep myself available for interviews and job fairs, and the 300-mile commute to Minneapolis makes it difficult to job hunt and work the streetcar. Currently, CHSL has 26 Foremen, 59 Operators, and 11 Station Agents. There are 96 of us, so surely if we work together we can solve this problem! I ask you again, sign on to shift planning and get yourself signed up now! And thanks to those who have worked far more than their fair share of shifts to keep the streetcar running.

**A**s you know, the weather has been problematic for MSM so far this summer. Cold, cloudy, rainy weather and severe storms have kept our passenger numbers down. The Board of Directors thanks all of you for keeping the cars running even when passengers are scarce. As I said last month, the people who do come to ride are very grateful for your faithful service.

**E**ver wonder how much Motormen and Conductors were paid back in the TCRT days? I have a 1941 issue of Motorman Conductor and Motor Coach Operator magazine which lists wages for all of the Divisions represented by the Amalgamated Association of Street, Electric Railway, and Motor Coach Employees of America. Division 1005 represented employees of Twin City Rapid Transit. (Our friends at Metro Transit are now represented by Local 1005 of the United Transportation Union.) In 1941 32% of

the work at TCRT was two-man cars and 68% was one-man cars and buses. For two-man cars, the first year wage for Motormen and Conductors was 59 cents per hour, second year was 62 cents, and 65 cents thereafter. For one-man cars and buses the first year wage was 68 cents per hour, second year 71 cents, and 75 cents thereafter. 75 cents in 1941 is the equivalent of about \$11.70 today. They worked an eight hour day and 48 hours per week and earned time-and-a-half after their scheduled run, and could earn two weeks maximum vacation per year. They could pay 60 cents per month for \$1,000 worth of insurance up to a maximum of \$2,500. The policy covered death and total disability if you were 60 years old or younger, it did not cover sickness. For pensions, the company paid a maximum of \$30 per month to retired employees. Retirement was voluntary at age 65 and mandatory at age 70. I'll see you on the car! 🚗





**GOINGS ON AT MSM**



Father's Day at CHSL featured model railroad displays. Here's **Rick Krenske** with an O-scale model of TCRT PCC No. 322.



Down at the Linden Hills station, **Dave Norman** (left) had some of his O-gauge models on display. The youngsters loved the small operating trolley line. **Mike Helde** (right) is talking to some passengers.



**Excelsior Visitor's Center.** MSM has a very nice display in the new Excelsior visitor's center, located at Water and Second Streets. Here's what it looks like.



On June 21st we had a special ESL charter of 90 kids from the Blake School's summer program. Here some of the older kids are "operating" TCRT No. 1239 under **Bill Arend's** watchful eyes. (Rod Eaton photo)



**Stormy Weather causes a mess!** Early on June 22nd, a violent wind storm hit the Twin Cities and caused significant damage throughout the metro area. At CHSL, several trees and tree limbs fell onto the overhead trolley wire including a very large tree that fell onto our line at Lake Calhoun. The photo on the left shows this large tree which brought the trolley wire down to the ground. Operations were cancelled all day on Saturday, June 22nd as the crew cleared the trees and repaired the overhead. In the right photo we see **John Prestholdt** providing ground support while **Bill Arends**, **Scott Heiderich** and **Chris Heck** are up on the tower car. Service was restored on June 23rd. (Rose Arends photos)



**What's Happening?**

- July 4 Independence Day operations at ESL (1 to 5 PM) and CHSL (12:30 to 8:30 PM)
- July 16 Excelsior Streetcar Line Story Time Trolley (5-7 PM)
- July 18 Como-Harriet Streetcar Line PJ Trolley
- July 18, 19 & 20 Excelsior *Crazy Day* festival. ESL runs on all three days with extended hours.
- July 20 Family fun day at CHSL. Isaacs carbarn open to visitors.
- July 26, 27 & 28 Murder Mystery trolley at CHSL



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

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary

**D**onations Received. We are still receiving much needed donations to our Museum's annual appeal. Over the last two months, we've received donations from the following people.

**General Fund:** Harry Lee in memory of Henry Lee; Robert & Rosie Schulte in memory of Bill Olsen; Byran (Barney) & Alis Olsen; and, Gary Sparr. We extend our grateful thanks to all who have donated to our Museum.

**N**ew Members. We've had several new members join the MSM family since you received the last issue of this newsletter: Joshua Freeze; Charlie Rossley; Devin Hogan; and, Jeff Larson. All of our new members have graduated or are in training to become streetcar Operators. Welcome aboard!

**M**embership Notes. **Renewing memberships.** Please, when you receive your membership renewal form and return envelope in the mail, use the return envelope to send in your renewal. Recently we've had several "lost" membership renewals for members who gave the Linden Hills Station Agent their dues with and without the renewal slip. The dues check and the renewal slip goes to two different places/people, so to ensure your membership gets processed correctly, please mail in your dues renewal to the Museum's business address. And send in your renewal promptly so your Museum doesn't spend extra time and money for follow-up notices.

**Membership cards.** Some members who join or renew at the individual member level are asking for two membership cards. Only Household memberships are authorized two membership cards and only if they specifically request two cards by checking the appropriate block on the renewal slip. ☺

**WINONA No. 10**



**Above.** Here's the underside of one of Winona No. 10's platforms. You can see (I hope) the almost dizzying array of rods, bell cranks and shafts that control the operating doors on No. 10. No. 10 was a very simple streetcar. No air-operated door engines on this car like the big TCRT "standard" cars. (Howie Melco photo)

**Left.** Body work is progressing nicely. The metal dasher is now in place and the body is being sanded down to remove most of the dings and dents. More wood "filler pieces" are being put in to make the body waterproof. As soon as the truck is finished (it's still in Pennsylvania right now awaiting installation of the air compressor), the truck will get shipped here and the body will be placed on the truck. (Howie Melco photo)