

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



August 2013

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

The 2013 Season

- Please make a special effort to come and ride if you are not a volunteer. And get your relatives, neighbors and friends to come along!*
- Make this operating season your own "season of firsts." Your first season to volunteer with MSM. This is a good time to "do something now" for your Museum.*
- If you can't volunteer, donate to your favorite project. All of them need your support.*
- Get out and visit other Museums in the area. Now is the time while the weather is nice.*



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Masthead. On a warm July afternoon in 2004, the Excelsior crew has Winona No. 10 in tow behind Duluth No. 78 (LaClede Car Company, 1893). The crew has just removed No. 10 from storage on track #2 in the Excelsior carbarn and is now in the process of putting No. 10 into the Excelsior restoration shop to begin serious work on restoring this historic streetcar.
(Jim Vaitkunas photo)

The Season of "Firsts"

Since my column last month there have been a number of new, possible "firsts," that is some interesting happenings which I have had the pleasure to be a part of or to witness. Each year as I meet the new Operators who are being trained, I wonder if this is a passing fancy for them, something that sounds like fun for a year or two; or, is it a passion. On a Sunday afternoon in late May, I went for a ride on our Como-Harriet Streetcar Line and I was greeted by a crew that obviously has found this a passion.

The foreman of the crew, **Dave French**, with only about 15 years of MSM service was almost the junior member of the crew in seniority. This crew consisted of Dave, **Aaron Issacs** (38 years), **John Prestholdt** (30-plus years), **Bill Graham** and **Dave Norman** (each 40-plus years) tallied over 163 years of service to our Museum! And they were joined by newly certified Operator **Craig Canada**. I guess that gets us up to 164 years of service on this one crew! And the Foreman on the second shift on that Sunday was **Karl Jones**, adding another 30-plus years of service. It's dedication and commitments like this that built our streetcar line and keeps it going.

Another first for me were two charters on a Saturday afternoon in early June. The first charter was a wedding party. After being married at the Lake Harriet band shell, the newlyweds chartered our streetcar to take them to the waiting limo at the north (Lake Calhoun) end of our track. Except for a very brief rain shower, this went so smoothly that the charter ended ten minutes before it was scheduled to start.

The second charter was for a young man who chose to re-create a little of his family's history. His grandpa had proposed marriage to his grandmother on the streetcar. This young man, along with his grandparents, boarded the streetcar at the north end of our line. We then proceeded to the carbarn where we waited for the young lady and her friends to arrive at the station. Upon arriving at the station the young man presented the young lady with a red rose and a marriage proposal, re-creating what his grandpa had done many years ago. Oh: she did say YES!

And yet another possible first for "youngest rider." On a beautiful early summer evening a young couple arrived to ride the streetcar with a very young child. I commented about the very young rider and was told that she was only two days old. How awesome that we have such loyal riders that they want to take their infant child of two days for a ride on our streetcar.

On July 18th our ever popular PJ Trolley with an author provided by the Linden Hills children's bookstore **Wild Rumpus**, experienced a very pleasant first. Due to a technical glitch with the computer ticket-booking system, about 40 more tickets were sold than we had room for on our two trips scheduled for the evening. Thanks to **Wild Rumpus**, author **Stephen Shaskan**, operators **Jim Berry** and **Joel** (Continued on page 4)

Bill Arends—General Supt.



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
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Streetcar CURRENTS

August—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 August 20, 2013.

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

13326 Huntington Lane
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You can send input or enquiries by e-mail to: jvaitkunas@msn.com

Vaitkunas for their work in producing our Museum's excellent history magazine, *Twin City Lines* and our *Streetcar Currents* newsletter, respectively. After reading through the pile of newsletters and magazines that Aaron gave me, I can tell you that I was absolutely right when I stated that MSM's publications are second to none in the rail-related museum and historical society industry. I mean it, second to none! So next time you see Jim or Aaron, make sure you mention how much you enjoy reading our publications. I can tell you that it is a lot of time and hard work to create and send out each issue. Not to mention the aggravation Jim faces each month when he tries to get that lazy Chairman to send in his article on time! (*Not to worry, Dave. You're doing just fine! Ed.*)

On July 20th I represented MSM at the Minnesota Transportation Museum's 50th anniversary celebration at the Jackson Street Roundhouse in St. Paul. MTM participated in our 40th anniversary party in 2011 so I

From the Front Platform — Thoughts on Our Museum

Dave French — Chair, MSM Board of Directors

Hi everyone! **Aaron Isaacs**, who creates our Museum's quarterly history magazine *Twin City Lines*, is also the editor of *Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums*, the quarterly journal of the Association of Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums (ATRRM). In this role he receives many newsletters and magazines from railway museums all over the US and Canada. Aaron was nice enough to give me a pile of these publications and I have really enjoyed reading through them. Besides MSM, I am a member of eight different rail-related historical groups and museums so I already had some exposure to other publications. After looking through the pile that Aaron gave me, I see a few common characteristics shared by virtually every group:

- Everyone is looking for money to fund regular operations and/or to restore historically important equipment and/or buildings.
- Everyone is looking for increased attendance and/or ridership.
- Everyone is looking for more members and more active volunteers.
- Everyone is looking for increased support from the community, local businesses, and government agencies.
- Everyone is looking for younger volunteers.

Sound familiar? Sure it does, these are the same five issues we've confronted at MSM since our creation in 2005, and long before that when we were part of the Minnesota Transportation Museum. Okay Dave, you ask, so what does this have to do with me, an MSM member? Just this, fellow members: It is up to **us**, all of us, to make these five things happen. "But Dave"—you exclaim—"I can't do all of these things!" No, of course not, but all of us can do something to help. As I wrote about monetary donations, our income is just as dependent on small donations as it is on donations of \$1,000 or more. So all of us can promote MSM in some way or other, whether it is encouraging our family to ride or signing up for more shifts or showing up at the carbarn to help maintain the trolleys or signing up to work on the overhead and track or... Well, you get the idea. So come on, let's all do something right now to help MSM!

Those of you who attended our Annual Meeting back in March might remember that I gave special recognition to **Aaron Isaacs** and **Jim**



(Continued on bottom of page 4)

PJ PARTY and FAMILY FUN DAY! at CHSL Very Successful

Our second scheduled PJ Party trolley for this season, operated in partnership with **Wild Rumpus Books** in Linden Hills, continues to be very popular. Ticketing this year has been done online. But for July, when the PJ Party tickets went on sale at 7 PM, the system was overwhelmed when tickets sold out in six minutes! About forty extra tickets were issued, so we added a 5:30 trolley. That Thursday was reportedly the hottest day of the summer to date, but a nice breeze off Lake Harriet and a drop in humidity made the evening fairly pleasant. Milk and cookies were enjoyed by all.

Our first *Family Fun Day* on Saturday, July 20 featured appearances by **Choo Choo Bob** and **Engineer Paul** from the popular local children's TV show, a pair of ferrets from **Wild Rumpus Books**, and costumed historic reenactors from the Dakota City Heritage Village. But the real star turned out to be the thirty-foot long loops of standard gauge toy trains from **Mike Helde's** extensive collection. Completing our model train show in the George Isaacs Carbarn were a G-scale PCC in Twin Cities livery operated by **Minnesota Garden Railway Society** member **Leo Collins**, and a small trolley layout built by the late **Bill Olsen**. **Bob Bayers** was a carbarn host showing kids how a conductor's bell and fare box works and **Bill Arends** answered streetcar questions.

From 12:30 to 5 PM, Museum historic streetcars Duluth No. 265 and Twin City Lines No. 322, carried almost 500 passengers. The evening shift added about 200 additional passengers to a very busy, fun and successful day at Como-Harriet. (*Article and photos by MSM Special Events Coordinator, Rod Eaton.*)



The hit of the afternoon was the fantastic standard gauge train layout set up by MSM Foreman **Mike Helde** in the carbarn's maintenance shop. The kids really loved the smoking steam locomotive.



Engineer Paul serenaded both the youngsters and the young at heart on our Linden Hills Station's platform. Everyone enjoyed his music.



The reenactors from the *Dakota City Heritage Village*, located at the Dakota County fairgrounds in Farmington, Minnesota really added to the fun atmosphere of the day. Many thanks, folks!



Here is MSM volunteer **Bob Bayers** showing a smiling young lady how to ring the overhead Conductor's bell while the little fellow cranks the handle on the Johnson farebox. Lots of fun things to see and do.

What's Happening?

| | |
|------------------|--|
| July 26, 27 & 28 | Murder Mystery trolley at CHSL |
| August 2, 3 & 4 | Murder Mystery trolley at CHSL |
| August 9 | Streetcar camp for kids at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line starts at 9:00 AM |
| August 13 | Story Time Trolley at the Excelsior Streetcar Line starts at 5 PM |
| August 16 | PJ Trolley at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line |
| August 28 | Last day for Wednesday afternoon service at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line |
| August 30 | Last day of daily service at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line |
| September 2 | Labor Day service at both ESL (1 PM to 4 PM) and CHSL (12:30 PM to 8:30 PM) |
| September 7 | Excelsior's Apple Days festival. ESL Operates starting at 9 AM |



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

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary

Donations 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 members and friends.

General Fund: Loren Martin; Mark Digre & Maryellen Mueller; Phil & Betty Settergren in memory of Bill Olsen; and, Bruce DeVilliers, CPA in memory of Bill Olsen. We extend our grateful thanks to all who have donated to our Museum.

New Members. We've had one new member join the MSM family since you received the last issue of this newsletter: Franz Cordes-Eklund who graduated from our Operator Training Program. Welcome aboard!

How are we Doing? No doubt some of you have wondered what how ridership is doing given the cold and wet spring and hot and steamy summer we've "enjoyed" this operating season. Well, our faithful statistician **John Prestholdt** has maintained our CHSL statistics since the early 1970s and he has just sent us the 2013 stats for CHSL. At CHSL, May was down because of the cool and wet weather, but June was on a par with past years. Over at ESL, **Don Nielsen** does an excellent job with collecting the stats and it's clear from the table that 2013's numbers are up, especially in June. This is primarily because the Thursday farmer's market is now less than a block away from our Water Street platform, rather than three blocks away as it was for the last few years. Being closer sure helps. ☺

| Year | CHSL | | ESL | |
|------|-------|-------|-----|------|
| | May | June | May | June |
| 2013 | 2,849 | 5,234 | 370 | 698 |
| 2012 | 3,542 | 5,282 | 376 | 558 |
| 2011 | 3,122 | 5,103 | 274 | 613 |

(A Season of "Firsts" *Continued from page 1*)

Schuweiler, our patient riders and **Rod Eaton**, our Museum's Special Events Coordinator, another trip was scheduled to run at 5:30 PM. Over 140 riders were treated to the reading of Stephen's new book *The Three Triceratops Tuff* and a number of songs.

So to all our members and Operators who haven't been on the streetcar recently, I invite you join us soon. There's always a good chance to experience something new. ☺

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

was happy to help them celebrate 50 years of preserving Minnesota's transportation history. As MSM members, I hope you will support other rail-related historical groups and museums whenever you can. When was the last time you visited MTM, or the Museum of Lake Minnetonka (steamboat Minnehaha), or the Lake Superior Railroad Museum? Next time you take a trip, take a look for rail attractions enroute and see if you can fit a visit into your schedule. I've taken a lot of trips in the past 15 years but I find that it is these visits that I fondly remember.

I'm sure **Bruce Gustafson**, our Superintendent of Transportation will be sending information to our operating personnel about some recent unfortunate incidents at CHSL telling you what happened and what we can do to prevent them from happening again. The only thing I will add is that if you are an Operator or Station Agent at CHSL or ESL, don't hesitate to help your Foreman! I've seen crew members who just assume that the Foreman already knows what to do and will do it correctly so all the crew member has to do is wait for the Foreman to give instructions. Wrong! When I have served as Foreman I depend on my crew to double check that I am following the correct procedures. If they see me forgetting something, I hope they will remind me! Like a lot of people, I don't always like it when someone points out my mistake, but I am always grateful that they care enough about me and MSM to make sure we are doing things right. So even if this is your first year as an Operator, don't be shy about asking questions and helping your Foreman. **I'll see you on the car!** ☺