

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



September 2013

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

Summer is Almost Over

- *After Labor Day, the operating schedules at both CHSL and ESL are reduced. But we still have lots of time left to come out and ride our streetcars on the weekends, especially when the leaves start to turn.*
- *So, get your relatives, neighbors and friends to come and ride with you!*
- *Halloween and Thanksgiving special event operations are important money-makers for MSM. Non-operating members are always welcome to come and help out during these special events.*



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Masthead. TCRT No. 1300 loads passengers at the **George Isaacs** car barn of our Museum's Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. Duluth No 265 is in the rear. We haven't had car barn open houses for several years so this father's day event proved to be very popular for our passengers. (Jim Vaitkunas photo)

Our Season Has Been Busy

Bill Arends—General Supt.

Wow! What a month it's been since I wrote my last article for the *Streetcar Currents* and talked about "firsts." While we had one "first" since I last wrote, that being the first Family Fun Day, we also had a lot of special events, charters and a lot of riders.

In addition to Family Fun Day we hosted: 6 performances of the Murder Mystery; at least 20 charters; the Streetcar Camp; Story Time Trolley at ESL and PJ Trolley at CHSL; a Motorman's Gift Certificate which entitled the recipient an opportunity to operate the streetcar; Crazy Days in Excelsior; a library ground breaking at Excelsior; a very nice article in the *StarTribune* newspaper on July 27th; and, a lot of riders during revenue service.

The murder mystery was titled "A Most Modern Murder" directed by **David Premack** and featured a cast of students from Minneapolis Southwest High School. This 1954 based mystery provided about 250 riders with good music, good humor and a little intrigue.

This year's streetcar camp was our largest. There were 11 campers, and for the first time we had 3 female campers (see photo on page 3). Campers learned about the history of the streetcar, about tracks, switches, parts of the streetcar and how electricity powers the streetcar. Of course the highlight of the day for the campers was getting to operate the streetcar. Along with me, assisting Head Camp Counselor **Rod Eaton**, were **Ben Franske**, **Jim Berry**, **Craig Canada** and **Alexandra Howes**. I'm not sure who had more fun, the campers or the counselors.

The Story Time Trolley at ESL and the PJ Trolley at CHSL continue to be very popular. During the running of these events in June and July over 350 people enjoyed milk and cookies as well as being entertained by a local author of children's books reading one or two of his or her most current books.

On Monday, August 12th **Bruce Kobs** and I participated in the ground-breaking of the new Hennepin County Library in Excelsior. The library will be built right next to ESL's Water Street platform. This gave us the opportunity to meet the library staff, discuss partnering with them in the future and to show off "gate car" TCRT No. 1239. A number of people took advantage of the opportunity to ride the streetcar and learn more about MSM.

Thanks to excellent summer weather and the very favorable article in the Minneapolis *StarTribune*, we have had an excellent month for ridership. During the period starting with the Family Fun Day on July 20 through the next 30 days over 10,000 riders enjoyed a ride at ESL and CHSL.

Since the first of July we have had over 20 charters with over 500 riders. This has kept our charter agent, **Muriel Olsen**, and her husband Jerry, the crew caller for charters, very busy. Some of the names that appear regularly on the charter crews are

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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
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Streetcar **CURRENTS**
September—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 September 20, 2013.

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

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

**George Isaacs Car barn Expansion Update**

Aaron Isaacs — *Project Manager*

As the Project Manager for the CHSL car barn expansion project, my goal this year has been to successfully guide the project through the approval process. It is quite complicated, because we need approvals from three regulatory agencies. Here they are:

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

The Park Board and its staff have been very helpful and supportive. It's too early for them to formally approve the project, but I have no doubt that they will. We gave the Park Board a presentation earlier this year and in turn they gave us the green light to work with their staff. That resulted in the addition being downsized so it will be invisible when viewed from Queen Avenue and will not increase the building's bulk when viewed from Lake Harriet Parkway. On July 25 the Park Board held a public meeting so that nearby residents could view the plan and give feedback. That meeting went well—two residents showed up, thanked us for showing them the plan and told us they loved the trolley. No problem there.

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

The Watershed District requires that the rain and snowmelt runoff from the addition roof be slowed to prevent erosion and silt washing into Lake Harriet. To design the runoff system we hired the engineering firm EOR. They have determined that an underground tank is the best way to meet the Watershed District's requirements. However, I would like to go farther and treat the runoff from the entire roof. Besides being the right thing to do environmentally, it's a political plus as we go through the approval process. According to the Watershed District staff, there is a reasonable chance that we can get grant money to pay for the additional runoff treatment. We'll learn more about potential grants after we clear the City's approval process.

City of Minneapolis.

Thanks to our consultant EOR, we submitted our Planned Development materials to the City staff for review. They take it around to all their departments for comments. When it reached the Zoning Department, they stopped it, saying it could go no farther because the streetcar barn is a non-conforming land use, the addition will cross a property line, and expansion of a non-conforming use across a property line is not allowed under the zoning code.

So as of July 23rd we were stymied by the bureaucracy. I should add that the 50-foot wide streetcar right of way is owned by the city. The first six feet of the expansion will be on city property and the rest will be on Park Board property. You might be thinking "No problem—doesn't it all belong to the City of Minneapolis?" Unfortunately the City doesn't see it that way.

Since the City staff gave us no legal way to do the expansion, I went the political route and complained to City Council Member Betsy Hodges, who has been helpful to us in the past. Specifically, I told her we would like the City convey the streetcar right of way to the Park Board. Once under common ownership, the lot lines could be eliminated and we'd no longer be in violation of the zoning ordinance. Hodge's aide asked us to first get the support of the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council, and we did that on August 13th.

Pressure from her office appears to have pushed the City staff to find a legal way to accommodate us. The route they have chosen is through the Historic Preservation Commission. Apparently we can apply for a variance to several zoning policies because we are an historic resource, so that's the route we're embarking on as this is

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MURDER MYSTERY and **STREETCAR CAMP** at CHSL Very Successful

The Four Swells were a quartet. But before the night was over, they had become a trio. Who killed Fred – and why – was the stuff of this year’s Streetcar Murder Mystery. Once again actors from South West High School created and performed the original one-act play. That four of our six performances sold out attests to the popularity of this summer event. Thanks to our volunteer PCC Operators **Bill Arends, Ben Franske, Brian Krynski, Bill Hubbard, Ed Rapoport** and Station Agent **Craig Canada**. Although they had no dialog, all had cues to follow and “marks” to hit during the show. And kudos to **Charles Barthold** and **John DeWitt** for working out the bugs in our online ticketing. About 80% of all ticket sales came through our web site.

Bill Arends, Ben Franske, Jim Berry, Craig Canada and **Alexandra Howes** spent the morning of Friday, August 9th with eleven boys and girls enrolled in this year’s Streetcar Camp. The “campers”, aged 7 to 11, explored TCRT No. 1300 from top to bottom, experimented with simple electrical circuits, and took turns in the Motorman’s seat for a trip down the Como-Harriet right-of-way. A mother emailed “thank you for the great experience my son had at streetcar camp! I assume all you folks are volunteers, so I just wanted to say thanks for a job well done – your efforts are appreciated.” *Report and photos by Rod Eaton* 🌐



ABOVE LEFT. Here’s a future Motorman taking his job seriously. All of the campers had a chance to operate streetcar TCRT No. 1300.
ABOVE RIGHT. The class photo of our 2013 Streetcar Camp graduates. There were three girls in this year’s class; a good group of kids.

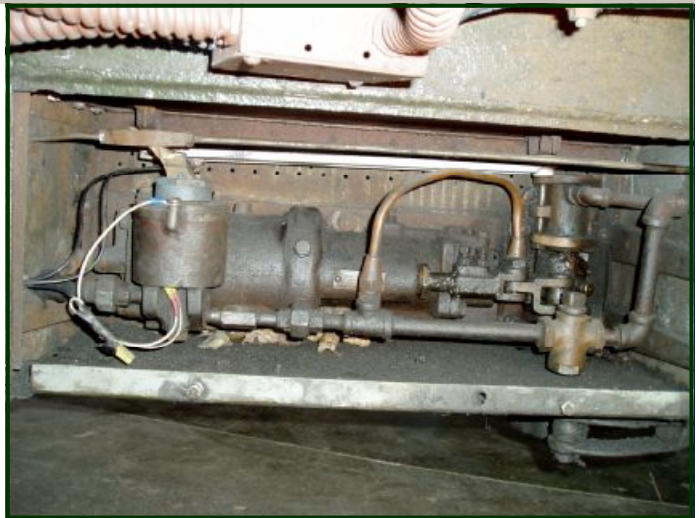


Shop Update — *News from our George K. Isaacs and Excelsior Car barns*

John Prestholdt — MSM Shop Foreman

You have not read reports in the *Currents* from the maintenance shop this summer because during this time we work to keep the streetcars operational; we don’t take on large projects. Here are two examples of what has kept us busy.

The front door on No. 1300 was leaking air and not closing correctly. One of the supplies of old parts we have is some 5 or 6 door engines—the air powered machine that does this work (see photo). Since these parts have not seen work since 1954 or earlier, **Pete Connors, Walt Strobel** and new member **Clay Hansen** have been taking them apart cleaning and rebuilding them while learning all about how door engines work. We now have a rebuilt door engine installed in No. 1300 plus five spares. We’re also working on getting a couple more of our retrievers (the big green thing that pulls the trolley pole down on the back of the streetcar) operational as replacements.



Out at Excelsior, **Karl Jones, Todd Bender** and **Don Nielsen** have been maintaining Nos. 78 and 1239. 🌐

What's Happening?

August 30 Last day of weeknight service at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line. CHSL starts fall schedule.
 September 2 Labor Day holiday 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 (9 AM to 4 PM). ESL starts fall schedule (Thursdays and Saturdays only).



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

Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary

Donations Received. Donations to our Museum's annual appeal have slowed considerably. However, we are grateful to the Head Family Foundation for their most generous donation recently received.
New Members. We've had one new member join the MSM family since you received the last issue of this newsletter: **Clay Hansen** who is our newest volunteer in the shop. Welcome aboard, Clay!
HO Scale PCC No. 322 models are almost gone. If you have been holding off on your purchase of the HO version of our Twin City Lines PCC No. 322, now is the time to act. There is only one powered version of the car left and 6 of the souvenir version. When they are gone, they are gone. ☹

Excelsior Streetcar Line Photo Ops



Left. On August 1st ESL hosted a production crew from the Duluth Public TV station, WDSE. They are producing a story on the Iron Range and wanted information on Mesaba Railway No. 10 which is preserved by our Museum. Top photo shows ESL Asst. Superintendent **Todd Bender** being interviewed on camera by **Pamela Fish** of WDSE. The body of Mesaba No. 10 is shown in the background. Lower photo shows MSM Historian, **Russ Olson** with Ms. Fish off-camera. The show will air in March, 2014. (Both photos by Don Nielsen)

Below. Here's a group shot of a wedding party that just came out of the Bayview Event Center across Old Excelsior Boulevard from our ESL, saw the big, yellow TCRT No. 1239 (right place at the right time) and decided that it would make for a unique and nice group photo. It did and we got an extra \$20 in the process. Not bad, eh? (Cliff Thomas photo)



(Our Season Has Been Busy *Continued from page 1)*

Jerry Olsen, Mike Buck, Marv Krafve, Charles Fritzen, Steve Simon, Andy Jacob and Sam Van Tassel. Thanks to all the Operators and Foremen who make our charters happen. I was fortunate to be part of charter recently which was a wedding charter. On a beautiful Saturday morning, with the streetcar parked in the glen area, the wedding vows were exchanged. I don't remember if they said I Do or I Will or whatever. I do know I WILL continue to sign up for special events. They are a lot of fun. Think outside the rails. There's a lot to experience. ☹

(Isaacs Car barn Expansion Project Update *Continued from page 2)*

written. It involves a lot of paperwork, but I'm hopeful of success in the end. Continue to watch for updates in the *Streetcar Currents* for progress reports.

Before closing I want to thank **Bill Arends, Keith Anderson, Dennis Stephens and John Prestholdt** for their help with the car barn project. ☹