

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



October 2013

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.**
- **Annual Appeal is coming up soon. Main effort is the shop addition. Please give generously.**

Streetcar CURRENTS

Winter Publication Schedule

With this issue of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** we'll revert to our winter publication schedule. See the notice on page 4 for details on the schedule.

Inside This Issue

From the Front Platform	2
Historian's Update	3
Upcoming Events	4
Halloween at CHSL	4

Masthead. Its September 25, 2004 and TCRT "gate car" No. 1239 is now officially in service. In this photo No. 1239 has made its safety stop at Morse Avenue in Excelsior with Motorman **Charlie McCarthy** at the controller. Charlie is ready to put the controller handle in the first point to start across the boulevard and travel to the Water Street end of the line. (Jim Vaitkunas photo)

Fall Special Events Need YOU

Bill Arends—General Supt.

While thinking that our operating season is waning with weeknight and Wednesday afternoon service at our CHSL ending in August and CHSL's shift-end time on weekends moved up from 8:30 PM to 7:30 PM, I was shaken from my doldrums by an early Monday morning telephone call from Farmer Ken telling me "The Pumpkins are Ready. Can we get a crew together to pick them on Wednesday?" Quickly shaken from my post-vacation doldrums, I realized that the operating season isn't waning. The summer season may have come to a close, but now it's time to get ready for the very busy fall season.



Getting ready for pumpkin gathering began on Wednesday morning, September 18th when **Jim Willmore** and **Pete Connors** in Jim's large F350 truck and **Dennis Stephens** and I in my F150 truck, arrived at Farmer Ken's farm in rural North Mankato to find an abundance of very good-sized pumpkins awaiting us. Not pumpkins in the field needing to be picked, but pumpkins already loaded into the trailers, harvested by Farmer **Ken Albrecht** and Mrs. Farmer Ken a/k/a **Jan Albrecht**. And a great crop it was. Both vehicles departed full to the top.

So step number one into this busy fall season has been taken. But there is still so much more that needs to be done. By the time you read this, the next step, unloading the pumpkins and getting them on the flat cars to be stored in the Isaacs car-barn until the event on October 12th and 13th, will have been done. But setting up the Pumpkin Patch, moving the pumpkins to the pumpkin patch and unloading them on the Saturday morning of the event will require additional volunteer help.

Then, on the days of the event we will be running two streetcars for two days. We will need additional help at the pumpkin patch. We will have, hopefully, a large number of riders. We will need Station Agents. And, with two streetcars running it's nice to have a second person on the platform to assist with guarding the crossing.

Pumpkin Patch is only Weekend one of the fall events. On Friday and Saturday evenings of October 18 and 19 and October 25 and 26 will be the scary **ZOMBIE Ghost Trolley** at our CHSL, and on October 25 and 26 will be the Ghost Trolley at ESL. On Saturday afternoon, October 26, will be our first Transylvania Trolley with **The Count Karl Jones** hosting a not very scary, but funny adventure at CHSL. And then on Sunday night will be the first Ghost Trolley Late Show also at CHSL. And, of course, on Sunday afternoon at both railways will be the annual Trick 'r Trolley.

All these events require a lot of volunteers. Of course, we'll need Foremen, Operators and Station Agents to run the streetcars. But we'll also need a lot of non-operating help. We need **ZOMBIES** (!), crossing guards, pumpkin wranglers and help setting up the pumpkin patch, to name just a few. I encourage all active operating volunteers to go to *ShiftPlanning*, see where the shift vacancies are and sign up. If you are

(Continued on 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

The museum's business address and telephone number is:

P.O. Box 14467
 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467
 952-922-1096

Streetcar CURRENTS
 October—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 November 20, 2013.

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

13326 Huntington Lane
 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9481

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



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Dave French — Board Chair

Hi everyone! As you probably know I've been living in Crookston, Minnesota since December of 2012. I really like it here except it is 300 miles too far from CHSL and ESL! I am currently working a temp job at New Flyer which is a Canadian-based manufacturer of transit buses (part of the current Metro Transit fleet was built by New Flyer). I was surprised to learn that many of my coworkers are excellent at building them but have never actually ridden a transit bus. Many grew up in the country or in small towns where transit services are non-existent or limited to dial-a-ride on demand services. But even in the Twin Cities there are many thousands of people who have never used transit. Of course, we shouldn't be surprised since our country started becoming "auto-centric" a hundred years ago.



TCRT ridership peaked in 1920 and went down every year except for the WW II years. Many people I know have been driven everywhere as a child and quickly attained unlimited access to a car shortly after obtaining their driver's license. Growing up in St Paul my parents were definitely not interested in driving my siblings and me everywhere, and even after we got our licenses our access to that car was very limited. Like a lot of families in my neighborhood we only had one car, so most of the time us kids had a choice between walking, biking, or catching the #14 **Randolph-Payne** bus if we wanted to go somewhere. Over the years I've talked to many people about using transit, suggesting ways they can use the services available and begin the process of becoming less dependent on their automobile. Many times their initial reaction is one of horror, or at least of fear. I've come to realize that in many cases this fear comes from their complete inexperience in using transit. It comes more naturally to those of us who grew up using buses or trolleys or trains, but for a newcomer it can be kind of intimidating. Okay, you say, what's your point, Dave? I want you to keep in mind that when you talk to our passengers at ESL and CHSL, remember that not only is this likely their first ride on a restored streetcar, they may be totally unfamiliar with the experience of using transit, period. So when you educate them about the history of electric transit in Minnesota, what it once was in all its glory, you are also perhaps giving them a gentle introduction to transit in general which might make them think about it a little more. Who knows

they might someday try parking their car at the park-and-ride and hopping that bus or light rail train!

October is nearly here and with it our ever-popular (and profitable for MSM) Halloween special events. I appeared in 13 consecutive Ghost Trolleys at CHSL but had to bow out in 2012 due to work commitments. Boy, I really missed it. This year, based on the growing popularity of our Murder Mystery performances which are geared toward an adult audience, we are going to try a Ghost Trolley Late Show for at CHSL on Sunday, October 27th at 8pm. There is only one performance so I sure hope it doesn't rain! Rod Eaton has written a terrific story and he scraped the bottom of the barrel and asked me to perform it. I ask all of you to please promote all of our October events. I sure would like to have a full car for my performance, just as the Ghost Trolley performers need full cars to make their performances more effective (when there are more people in the audience they are much more likely to react to the performance instead of sitting silently.) So have a great fall and I'll see you on the car! 🚗

**MSM Historian's Update** — *We make Minnesota's Electric Railway History Come Alive!*Aaron Isaacs — *MSM Historian and Photo Archivist*

We periodically hear from people researching family genealogy. Their ancestor worked for TCRT and they'd like more information, and maybe a photo. I generally refer them to the Minnesota Historical Society's research library, where we donated the TCRT employee appointment cards. The cards provide limited data, but often it's helpful. In one recent case, it helped John Regan, who was adopted as a baby and is now age 66, identify his birth father. Here's the story in his own words.

"Ever wonder if saving old records is worth it? This is a story that proves old records can change lives: When I was adopted by my parents in 1947 they were given a "Genetic History" which was information about my birth father and mother. We did a search in 2006 to find my birth mother and that was fairly straight forward as we had her maiden name. The search resulted in a wonderful visit to San Jose, CA where I met my birth cousins. That reunion prompted me to want to find my birth father as well.

In my "Genetic History" it stated the year and place of my birth father's birth, his nationality (Swedish) and religion, his last year of school, where he was living in 1946, that he had three younger brothers and the fact that he had been working for the "street railway department." My wife Judy decided to look up the street railway company on the internet and keyed in "Minneapolis street car company." Almost immediately she found the site that told us that the Minnesota Historical Society had the corporate records of Twin City Rapid Transit, including employee appointment cards.

We were excited to go the Minnesota Historical Society, our first visit, and look at the employee records. We happily proceeded into the library and soon found out that since the employee records had social security numbers on them we would not be able to just look through them. A library employee did suggest that we contact Aaron Isaacs with the Minnesota Streetcar Museum. A call from him indicated that without a name, finding someone that worked for Twin Cities Rapid Transit looked impossible as there were thousands of employee cards. We were disappointed.

My wife is not one to be stopped by someone telling her something is impossible. She thought about this challenge for a few months and then made an appointment for us to meet Aaron at the carbarn. Since it was January and the building was not heated we had a chilly visit, but did learn things about the cars, employee titles, routes, etc. At the end of our personal tour I told Aaron how important it was to find my birth father and asked if he could help us. Suddenly his face lit up and he said, "I just remembered that I have cards that list all the employees in badge number order in my basement at home. It's a cross reference for the employee appointment cards." He offered to loan them to us and off we went to his house. He went to the basement and came back with several boxes of cards.

Later back at our house we figured out that we had about 4000 cards that told who had a particular badge number and the dates they had the badge number. We were so grateful that Aaron had these cards and was willing to loan them to us. Then the work began. I went through all the cards and listed the names of anyone who worked at Twin City Transit in 1946 and had a Swedish last name. To figure out if a name was Swedish I looked up the name on the internet. I ended up with a list of 103 men who were Swedish and worked at Twin City Rapid Transit in 1946.

My next trip was back to the Minnesota History Center where employees agreed to look up all 103 people in the employee cards to see which ones were born in 1924. This took about two weeks and they charged us about \$15. We now had three names of men who met the criteria of being Swedish and working at Twin City Rapid-Transit in 1946. My wife looked them up in the 1940 census on Ancestry.com to see which of these men had younger brothers. The first one had no siblings. The second one had a sister. And the third had three younger brothers. We had found my birth father.

At this point we thought the difficult part of the search was done. Little did we know that since my birth father's last name was Anderson the work had just began. Many hours on Ancestry.com later, and after calls, letters, emails and prayer we were able to locate the family. We made a trip to the Minneapolis Public Library and saw my birth father and his siblings in the Roosevelt High School yearbooks.

(Continued on page 4)

What's Happening?

October 12	Last day of Saturday service at ESL. (Sunday service ended on September 1st.)
October 12 & 13	Farmer Ken's Pumpkin Patch at CHSL—12:30 PM to 4:30 PM
October 18, 19, 25 & 26	CHSL Halloween Trolley REVENGE OF THE STREETCAR ZOMBIES —6 PM to 9 PM
October 24	Last Day of Thursday service at ESL
October 25 & 26	ESL Halloween Trolley—6 PM to 9 PM
October 26	CHSL's TRANSYLVANIA TROLLEY —12:30 PM to 4:30 PM
October 27	Last Day of Sunday service at CHSL—Saturdays only in November 12:30 to 4:30 PM
October 27	ESL & CHSL's Trick 'R Trolley—CHSL 1:30 PM, 2:30 PM and 3:30 PM—ESL 1:30 PM & 2:30 PM
October 27	CHSL's Ghost Trolley LATE SHOW at 8:00 PM—for adults only!
Nov 29, 30 & Dec 1	ESL's Santa Trolley in conjunction with Excelsior's Christkindelsmarkt —daily times vary
Nov 30 & Dec 1, 7 & 8	CHSL's Holly Trolley featuring Santa Claus—12:30 PM to 3:30 PM

Halloween Events at Como-Harriet

As General Superintendent Bill Arends explains in his column, October is a very busy month at CHSL. This year we're adding two new events – the Transylvania Trolley and the Ghost Trolley Late Show. Here's the run down. From 12:30 to 4:30 Saturday and Sunday, October 12 and 13, families ride the trolley to Farmer Ken's Pumpkin Patch at the north end and pick out that special pumpkin to take home. The Fare is the usual \$2, with children 3 and under free. Pumpkins are \$3 each.

The zombies are back for Ghost Trolley, Revenge of the Streetcar Zombies. Mike Helde will play a fearless zombie hunter, supported by a cast of volunteer zombies (there's always room for more – you can never have too many zombies). The event operates from 6 to 9 PM Fridays and Saturdays, October 18 & 19, and 25 & 26. Although played for laughs rather than screams, this event may be too intense for the younger kids. If people ask, explain that much of the ride is in the dark and “zombies” will get on the car. The Fare this year is \$4 for all riders.

For younger children – or anyone who likes to dress up for Halloween – there's the Transylvania Trolley. New this year, the silly-not-scary-ride is hosted by Vampire Motorman Count Karl. Some may know him as Karl Jones. The Count will be handing out treats to everyone in costume. The event runs 12:30 to 4:30 Saturday, October 26. The Fare is \$2; children 3 and under free.

Finally, there's the Ghost Trolley Late Show at 8 PM, Sunday, October 27. Dave French will be telling The Motorman's Tale, an old fashioned ghost story. This half hour trip into madness, mayhem and murder is not recommended for children. Fare is \$5.

Happy Halloween! **Rod Eaton** — *Special Events Coordinator*

Streetcar **CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule**

With this issue of the **Streetcar **CURRENTS**** we will revert to our winter publication schedule. After this [October 2013] issue, you'll be receiving the **Streetcar **CURRENTS**** every other month until May, 2014. Publication dates for these issues will be on or about: December 1st; February 1st; and, April 1st. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after those dates please contact me at: jvaitkunas@msn.com

(Fall Special Events Need YOU *Continued from page 1)*

not an operating volunteer but would like to help out, we certainly can use you and family members. You know what they say: “You never can have too many Zombies!” If you'd like to help out, give me a call at 612-922-2208. I know we can find a place where you can help. I look forward to seeing you at these events. It's a busy time but it's also a lot of fun! ☺

Here's the group that went down to North Mankato to get the pumpkins. From left to right: **Peter Connors, Jim Willmore, Bill Arends, Dennis Stephens** and Farmer **Ken Albrecht**. That sure is a full load of pumpkins in the bed of Bill's pick-up truck, eh? (*Jan Albrecht photo*)

**(MSM Historian's Update** *Continued from page 3)*

It had been a long journey to new places, meeting new people and developing our research skills but soon we were talking to my birth father's family members.

We wish to thank the people at Metro Transit who were forward thinking enough to know that the records they preserved would be important later (*Aaron's Note*: the cards were donated to MSM by Metro Transit). Thank you to all the volunteers who have put in the time, energy and given up basement space to preserve Twin City Rapid Transit records. **John Regan**; September 9, 2013. ☺