

# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



# Streetcar CURRENTS



Jan-Feb 2014

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



## Bill the Motorman Says:

- If you haven't done so already, please donate to our Annual Appeal.
- Looking for something interesting to keep yourself busy this winter? Come on down to the Isaacs carbarn and help maintain our historic streetcars.
- Plan to attend your Museum's annual meeting on Saturday, March 22nd.

## Streetcar CURRENTS

### Winter Publication Schedule

We are now into our Streetcar CURRENTS winter publication schedule. See the notice on page 6 for details.

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**Masthead.** TCRT No. 1239 is in Santa Trolley service in November 2008. We don't typically operate when there's snow on the ground but when this shot was taken there was just a dusting on the ground so no ice in the flangeways at the Morse Avenue crossing. Santa trolley is a very popular special event at both of MSM's railways.

## No "Off-Season" for MSM

Bill Arends—General Supt.

A new year is upon us and no streetcar has been sighted operating on our lines for about two months. From the depths of snow on the tracks it looks like we may not see one for another two months. But let me assure you that doesn't mean nothing is happening within MSM. There is really no "off-season." It's just a season where our old historic streetcars get a chance to rest and receive a little TLC. But not a season where all of our dedicated volunteers just kick back and rest up for the next operating season. Fortunately not, for if they all did, there may not be a next operating season.

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes to get us ready for each season. This year a major restoration of the exterior of Duluth No. 265 is underway. While the car may have looked good to the casual eye, years of service at CHSL since being restored in 1982 have taken their toll. Cracks, chips, rotting wood, fatigue and being 99 years old was enough to get **Karl Jones** and a crew of **Matt Leibel, Ben Franske, Dennis Stephens, Bob Smith, Joel Schuweiler, Jim Willmore, John Prestholdt, Phil Settergren, Russ Isbrandt, Walt Strobel, Mark Digre, Pete Connors** and **Jim Otto** motivated to make sure she is in tip-top operating condition come spring.

But not everything that happens during this "off-season" happens in the carbarns or involves the streetcars. Of course there's the budget. No organization can operate successfully by the "seat-of-their-pants" without a good budget. Led by our treasurer **Keith Anderson**, bookkeeper **Don Nielson**, with input from **John Prestholdt, Aaron Isaacs, Dave French, Jim Vaitkunas, Scott Heiderich, Ken Albrecht, Todd Bender** and **Bruce Kobs**, we will have a balanced budget for 2014.

Then, there's the up-coming operating season. The events, training and schedules of operations don't just fall from the sky and appear magically on *ShiftPlanning*. Each year the General Superintendent, along with much assistance from **Rod Eaton, Bruce Gustafson, Chris Heck, Dave French, Jim Vaitkunas, Todd Bender** and **Bruce Kobs** meet to discuss when, what, how and where—never mind the where, we all know where—we will operate during the upcoming season.

In my time as MSM's General Superintendent I have observed a number of volunteers who have contributed a lot to MSM. I have and will continue to recognize the volunteers who do so. But one volunteer who has contributed a very lot to MSM that I do not remember ever including is **Michael J. Miller**, a/k/a "Electric Mike." Mike is probably most known for the time he devotes to maintaining the overhead line. That all-important line that is the source of electricity that powers our streetcars. But Mike has done a whole lot more. He has worked on track work, clearing brush that is encroaching on the overhead wire, provided many tools and parts, at his own



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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 interurban 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**  
 January-February 2014

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 March 20, 2014.

Please send items to the 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](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)


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

Dave French — Board Chair

Hi everyone! Well, we are now in year 2014 and as I write this the first month is already over three weeks old. I notice that as I grow older, time seems to fly by ever faster. Do you notice that too? We only have a brief time to make a difference on our earth, and certainly all of us are making a difference by supporting and volunteering at MSM. I've mentioned before how satisfying it is to see passengers young and old experience happy moments while riding our cars, and they receive that happiness for only a few dollars. And why do they receive that happiness? They receive it because of MSM and MSM is really **YOU**, all of you who are members and donors and active volunteers. I suppose that it can be argued that in the grand scheme of things, MSM is not really all that important. All of us could spend our free time doing something else. But what we do at MSM is not being done by anyone else in Minnesota and we are preserving and sharing the history of electric railways in our state, history that would surely be mostly invisible without our efforts. So please, give yourself a mighty "well done" for doing what you do. We all deserve it!



I was reading the newsletter from our friends at the Illinois Railway Museum. IRM celebrated their 60th anniversary in 2013 and they asked some of their surviving "founding members" to reminisce about those early years filled with hard work and mistakes and triumphs. We also celebrated a milestone anniversary, our 40th, in 2011. This reminds me that when we speak of the MSM mission to preserve the history of Minnesota electric railways, we are not just referring to railways of the past. Our own MSM is part of that history as well. Our Senior Historian, **Russ Olson**, knew that when he wrote the definitive history *Electric Railways of Minnesota* back in 1976. Russ wisely included a section covering the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line which had been re-started by the Minnesota Transportation Museum. Yes, our own museum is part of that historical fabric. When people ride the Hiawatha Line (now called the Blue Line) and they start riding the Green Line on University Ave. in June, they will still have MSM to show them "what it was like" to ride an earlier incarnation of Twin City electric transit.

Last year I purchased a large stack of *Cinders and Sparks*, which was the newsletter of the Minnesota Railfans' Association which was formed in the late 1940s. In 1954 the MRA saved one Twin City Lines standard car from going to scrap—yes, I'm referring to our No. 1300. In 1962, as the MRA was disbanding, a group of men, some of whom were MRA members, formed the Minnesota Transportation Museum and took possession of No. 1300. I will periodically relate some of the streetcar-related news from these newsletters. The February, 1962 issue included a report on efforts to cover No. 1300 with a "polyethylene protective film" to replace an old canvas tarp. At that time No. 1300 was stored at the Minneapolis-Moline plant in Hopkins. The article states that seven MRA members visited 1300 on February 10th. "The crew found the car in quite excellent condition, with only 3 minor and easily-repaired glass breaks showing as visible damage." Part of the crew climbed on top to clear snow from the roof, while the rest cleared a path through the snow to access the rear doors. The plastic cover was unrolled and "advantage was taken of the chilly wind whipping by to lift the cover up and over the roof of the car." Left-over rope from the can-

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## Shop Update — News from our George K. Isaacs and Excelsior Carbarns

John Prestholdt — MSM Shop Foreman

The shop crew at the Isaacs carbarn is now working on the many annual maintenance tasks on our CHSL operating streetcars. This year, we are also doing some much needed exterior work on Duluth No. 265. No. 265 started operating at Lake Harriett in 1982 and was the first streetcar restored by our Museum (at the time the Minnesota Transportation Museum). Since then No. 265 has operated faithfully with normal running and annual maintenance. Interestingly, No 265 operated longer (1982 to 2013 or 31 years) than it ran in regular revenue service in the Twin Cities and Duluth (1915 to 1939 or 24 years). Over the last few years the external wood work has been showing its age so the Saturday crew of **Ben Franske**, **Matt Leibel** and **Joel Schuweiler** under the direction of **Karl Jones** have been replacing damaged wood on the exterior pole side of No. 265. The Tuesday crew helps with the exterior work as needed while they focus on interior woodwork refinishing and learning how to re-cane the rattan seats. We will then paint the exterior new wood siding and repaint all of the rattan seats.

Volunteers **Pete Connors** and **Russ Isbrandt** continue their work on the door engines in our inventory so we have replacements available, complete our rebuild instructions, and also make them available to other museums that might want them. **Jim Willmore** and **Pete Connors** are creating a method for winding the trolley pole retriever “main” springs which will give us a couple of ready to use retrievers in case one gets damaged.

The shop crew also hosted our Museum’s annual holiday party in mid-December and this year MSM donated \$60 and 71 pounds of food to the Joyce Food Shelf. This is one of the closest food shelf’s located in up-town, just a couple of miles from our streetcar line. A BIG thanks to all who contributed. ☺



(Above left) Karl Jones works on replacing wood on the front of No. 265. (Above right) A jig was made to bend the new wood that goes around the front of No. 265. You can see where this piece will go in the left photo above the front window post (Dennis Stephens photos)



(Above left) The interior woodwork on Winona No. 10 is being put back in. (Howie Melco photo) (Above right) Lyons Industries of Ebensburg, PA has finished the truck for Winona No. 10. The black item at the top is the General Electric CP-25 air compressor. (Lyons Industries photo)

***What's Happening?***

March 22	MSM Annual Member's Meeting—Mill City Museum, Minneapolis
April	Recertification of operating personnel begins. A separate notice will be sent out in March.
April & May	New Operator training —schedule to be determined. You can start recruiting your friends now.
May 1	Start of Thursday afternoon operations at ESL.
May 3	Start of weekend operations at CHSL and ESL

**MSM News & Views — News of our Museum's Administration and Membership***Jim Vaitkunas — MSM Corporate Secretary and Superintendent of Operations*

**MSM's 2013-2014 Annual Appeal.** Our 2013-2014 Annual Appeal has had excellent responses from the Museum's members and friends. Here are the donors so far for our 2013-2014 annual appeal.

**General Fund.** Chic Anding, Tom Balcom, Anthony Bauman, Paul T. Beyer, Dr. & Mrs. Peter Bingham, Thomas Boies, John & Amy Bullock, Steve Collin, John DeWitt, John Dillery, Phil Epstein, Dennis A. Fischer, H. Dutton Foster, Dave French, Bill Graham, Bruce Gustafson, Russ Isbrandt, Karl Jones, George Kotsonas, Marv Krafve, Charlie McCarthy, Ed McGlynn, Dick & Joan Niemiec, Bill Preiss, Gerald W. Robertson, Frank & Judy Sandberg, Andrew Selden, Vonnie Thomasberg, and Eric Tratner.

**Isaacs Car barn Expansion Fund.** Keith Anderson, Doug Anderson, Chic Anding, Tom & Mary Beaumont in honor of Jim Otto, Douglas Beedon, Ray Bensen, Jr., Glen Bottoms, Bernie Braun, Mary Ann Corbey, Richard B. Darling, Patrick Desbonnet, Rod Eaton, Ben Franske, Gordon Geddes, Gary Gustafson, Jay Halvorson, Jim Harrison, Louis Hoffman & Rebecca Hamblin, Miles A. Jarrow, Bob Johnson, Marv Krafve, Rick Krenske, Gary Neunsinger, Byron (Barney) Olsen, Jim Otto, Joe Plante & Eric Neumann, Robert Powell, John & Jill Prestholdt, Fred Raiche, John Reinan, Judge James D. and Leanna Rogers, Mark Sims, Jim & Jincy Vaitkunas, Dave Ven-Huizen, Charles Webber, and Dick Zawacki.

**Winona No. 10 Restoration Fund.** Eleanor Dollery in memory of Blair Dollery,

**Many Thanks to all who donated to this year's Annual Appeal.** ☺

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

vas tarp was run around the car, just below the windows, to hold the cover in place." Vertical lines were added to hold it down, and wooden pallets were placed on the roof to provide additional hold-downs. The seven volunteers were **Blair Dollery**, **Steve Hedeman**, **Bill Graham** and his brother **Jim Graham**, **Dick Prosser**, **John Goodman** and **Bill Cordes**. The late **Blair Dollery** and **Bill Cordes** were very active streetcar guys and mentors to many of us, and **Bill Graham** is still active at MSM today!

Speaking of mentors, when I talk to new active volunteers about their experience at MSM, one thing I hear repeatedly is their appreciation for the experienced people who serve as mentors for them. I asked one "newbie" for more detail about how a senior crew member had helped him. He thought for a moment and told me that he had not actually spoken very much to this person, but he had learned so much from just watching how he ran the car and talked to passengers. He told me that this volunteer is "always a gentlemen and always sets a good example." Now that's what I like to hear! All of you, whatever you do at MSM, will have opportunities to work with people who are new to the job, or need some "polishing" of their existing skills. And all of you who were "rookies" in 2013 will probably be working with new trainees in 2014. Your mentoring of other volunteers makes our operation safe and efficient and fun for our customers. Yes, all of you make history every time you step on the property. I hope to see all of you at our MSM Annual Meeting on March 22nd and I cannot wait to see you on the car in just a few short months! ☺

**(No "Off Season" for MSM** *Continued from page 1)*

expense, to keep us operating efficiently. Mike is also contributing much to the electrical restoration of Winona No. 10. Next time you see Mike please thank him for his contributions.

Get ready for another season. We'll be ready to re-certify, train and give you a good ride on our streetcars. See you when the snow is gone. ☺

**Streetcar **CURRENTS** Winter Publication Schedule**

We are now into our **Streetcar CURRENTS** winter publication schedule. Starting with the November-December 2013 issue you'll receive the **Streetcar CURRENTS** every other month until May, 2014. Publication dates for these issues will be on or about: December 1<sup>st</sup>; February 1<sup>st</sup>; and, April 1<sup>st</sup>. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after those dates please contact me at: [jvaitkunas@msn.com](mailto:jvaitkunas@msn.com)