

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



July 2014

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



Bill the Motorman Says:

- *MSM Members are encouraged to come and enjoy all of our special events. They are not just for our non-member visitors or customers.*
- *The weather has been wet, but when it's not we've had good ridership so far this season. Tell your friends and neighbors to come and take a relaxing streetcar ride.*
- *Duluth Street Railway No. 78 is the regular service car at ESL this year. If you haven't taken a ride on this 1893 gem of a streetcar, now's your chance.*

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Masthead. Duluth Street Rwy. No. 265 and Twin City Lines PCC No. 322 are shown on a sunny Sunday afternoon in August, 2006. The weather is perfect for a streetcar ride between Lakes Harriet and Calhoun. (Jim Vaitkunas photo)

Special Events

Bill Arends—General Supt.

It's been a very busy two months for our operating season. We've had a lot of charters; as of June 15 thirty five charters have been scheduled. Over 750 people have enjoyed a ride on those charters. On Memorial Day at our CHSL alone over 1,000 passengers enjoyed a ride on the streetcar.

But then in June the "Special Events Season" begins. So what is the "Special Events Season?" Well actually it isn't a season. It's when we run the streetcar other than our regular revenue service. You know, Regular Service at the CHSL is Monday through Friday evening from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM, weekends from 12:30 PM to 8:30 PM and Wednesday afternoon from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. And at the ESL on Thursday, from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM, Saturday from 11 AM to 4:00 PM and on Sunday from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. It's when we get to be "out-of-character" as a Motorman or Conductor and share in the fun with the passengers and actors.

So then what are the "Special Events?" They covers a myriad of things. It may be charters, it may be Story Time Trolley, it may be PJ Trolley, it may be a Motorman Certificate, or it may be a whole bunch of other things we do while operating our streetcars.

I want to highlight one of those "Special Events," which was offered in June. This event was a musical, written by **Rod Eaton**, directed by **David Premack**, and performed on the streetcar starring students and recent alumni of Southwest High School in Minneapolis - **Maggie Noun**, **Gigi Rich**, **Stuart Gordon**, **James Ehresman-Tsagong** and **Nathalie Young**. The performance titled *Streetcar Sweethearts* was based on a musical score of songs from the twenties. That's the 1920s. Songs such as Alexander's Ragtime Band, I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate, I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now. Old time sing-along songs. It was great. Nearly 200 people saw the production. Oh! How remiss of me to not include the people behind the scenes: the Musical Director **Nathalie Young**; Choreographer **Hana Sato**; Stage Management **Chloe Brevik-Rich**; costumes **Mara Hopfensperger**; Keyboard **Levi Schwartzberg** and **Eric Heltemes**; Guitar **Elliot Granath** and **Aaron Brown**; and, **George Petermeier** on violin, fiddle and percussion.

Production you may be asking? Streetcar, musical, production? Yes it was a production. To put together a performance in the confines of a streetcar (how loud can an air compressor be) with a group of teens (herding cats?), with a very limited budget, mosquitoes (which required keeping the windows closed), heat (which begged to have the windows open), and rain (which required the windows be closed). I think that qualifies as a "production."



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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
 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467
 952-922-1096

Streetcar CURRENTS
 July 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 July 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


From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Dave French — Board Chair



Hi everyone! Remember last month when I lectured you about our difficulty in filling shifts and I encouraged you to step up and try to volunteer for shifts in advance and perhaps sign up for one or more additional shifts in addition to what you already do each month? I stated that instead of working at least one weekend at CHSL each month as I have during the past two years, I was going to work two weekends per month this summer. As you know, I live in Crookston in Northwestern Minnesota but I don't mind driving down to the cities for a weekend because I can stay for free at my sister's place in Bloomington and working the trolley is so darned fun it is my main hobby that I do for recreation. Well, that was some big talk and I thought I would be setting such a good example for everyone but as it turns out I don't know when I'll be down to the cities. Last week I found out that the doctor won't sign off on my driver's license so I am temporarily off the road. Some of you know that I am Type 1 diabetic and I am required to get my doctor's approval to retain my license. So now I am going through a reevaluation period working with my doctor to ensure that my blood sugar control is good enough that I can drive safely. I don't know how long this will take but it may be several weeks. Jefferson Lines stops here in Crookston which does give me the option of taking the bus down to Minneapolis but I would have to go down on Friday morning and return Monday evening if I want to work Saturday and Sunday and my sister's house is not convenient to transit. So now I am missing all the good times at MSM and I can't do anything to help fill the vacant spots on our shifts. I have to stand down for a while and work hard to become mobile again.

I'm sure that everyone's workplace and/or family life is absolutely perfect, right? Everyone gets along and everything runs smoothly according to plan, right? Well, we all know that life isn't perfect and our museum is no exception to this rule. At our June Board meeting (ably run by our Vice Chair **Aaron Isaacs** in my absence) **Glen Sandness**, our general contractor for the Isaacs Car barn expansion project, informed the Board that the cost of construction is going to be significantly more than was initially estimated. Part of the reason is the current boom in the construction business, and we all know that when demand increases prices do too. Also, this is not exactly your average project given the location of the building under a bridge and

between two steep embankments. Aaron, **Dennis Stephens**, and the Board are working with Glen to see what we can do. I am very impressed with the ability of our people and contractor and am confident that the project will move forward. Every rail museum is unique and one thing that makes MSM a little different is our space constraints. Many rail museums have enough space to make it relatively easy for them to acquire equipment and artifacts because they have storage space. MSM is at the opposite end of that spectrum. The planning for the car barn expansion has been tedious and sometimes frustrating as we try to get the most out of every available square foot of space. Is everyone going to be entirely satisfied when it is done? No. But just like our family and job, sometimes we just have to do our best to contribute good ideas and then be satisfied with the result knowing that the decision makers ultimately have to do what's best for MSM while being aware that different people will have differing ideas of what exactly is best. Yes, MSM is much like one large extended family with all of the

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MSM Historian's Update — We make Minnesota's Electric Railway History Come Alive!

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Historian and Photo Archivist

The last grant. The National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) has announced that it has approved MSM's application for a \$5000 grant to help build the library/archive room in the Isaacs Car barn addition. I want to thank **John Goodman** of the NRHS Northstar Chapter and MSM's **Russ Isbrandt** (also with NRHS) for making this grant possible.

Metro Transit Green Line opening. Because of the Green Line's obvious historic back story, MSM has made the news as part of the grand opening. For those of you who don't know, the Green Line runs between downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul using most of the original right-of-way on which the University Avenue Interurban ran until 1953. **Bob Stevenson**, former TCRT motorman, rode the line the day before it opened and gave a terrific interview to Minnesota Public Radio. There's a link to it on the MSM website.

I supplied photos and commentary to the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*. I did a guest blog for Metro Transit's online *Rider's Almanac*. Twin Cities Public Television Channel 2 interviewed me for an upcoming show on

metro area transportation.

As part of Metro Transit's sponsorship of the most recent issue of *Twin City Lines*, they purchased 4000 copies which were distributed to the general public.

Members will notice that MSM did not supply volunteers for the Green Line opening. I was originally going to coordinate that effort. However, with the constant shortage of operating volunteers threatening to cancel shifts, I couldn't justify diverting the resources elsewhere.

Car barn addition update. The project suffered a setback when general contractor **Glen Sandness'** initial project estimate came in at \$300,000+. That's more than double what we originally estimated. The construction industry is much healthier than it was during the recession and prices have risen accordingly. The MSM Board decided to phase the project over two years. We're also ordering up soil borings of the addition site. That will clarify whether the soil is stable or not and may reduce some of the cost estimates. We still intend to begin construction this year. ☺



Above. How dirty can a streetcar roof get? Well, after **Karl Jones, Jim Kertzman, Don Nielsen** and **Ron Neitzel** got done with No. 78's roof, you couldn't tell. (Don Nielsen photo)

Left. Yes, we've had the rain the last few weeks! Here on ESL is our soggy track close to the aptly named Water Street platform. (Bruce Kobs photo)

Right. Here are a couple of photos of our successful *Streetcar Sweethearts* musical described in **Bill Arends'** column on page 1. The musical was fun for everyone. (Rod Eaton photos)



What's Happening?

July 4	Independence Day operations at both ESL and CHSL
July 8	Story Time Trolley at ESL
July 12	Moonlight trolley ride at CHSL begins at 9 PM
July 17	PJ Party Trolley at CHSL
July 17, 18 & 19	Excelsior Downtown CRAZY DAYS festival
July 18, 19 & 20 and 25, 26 & 27	Murder mystery on the trolley at CHSL

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

New Members. We would like to welcome the following new members: Ismail Akharas; Eric Werner; Donna Johnson; Steve Legler; Carmelle Abron; and, Stan Schultz. Folks, welcome to the MSM family. We hope you enjoy your membership and please consider volunteering with your Museum.

MSM's 2013-2014 Annual Appeal. We received several donations in the last few weeks for which we are very grateful. Many thanks to Michael Corbett and Dick Levering. Remember, it's never too late to donate to our Annual Appeal. ☺

**Excelsior Streetcar Line Update***Bruce Kobs — Superintendent — Assistant Superintendent*

In the morning of Thursday, June 19, six inches of rain fell in the western suburbs of Minneapolis. The photo on page 3 shows the water on our track between the Lyman Lumber Company's building to our Water Street platform. The water remained on our track until noon the next day. For that Thursday's operations, we operated slowly through the area using DSR No. 78. Record high water in Lake Minnetonka required "no wake" closed throttle speed for power boats over the entire lake for many days.

The Metropolitan Sewer District will begin construction of a major sewer line in Morse Avenue starting from Second Street. This will mean our track will be cut for 10 days from mid- to late-July. If you are planning to operate an ESL streetcar sign up with ShiftPlaning now so you don't miss the opportunity to operate. ☺

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

attendant good and bad. I am so grateful to be part of this family!

I've talked before about how we can advertise MSM "on the cheap" by encouraging friends, family, and coworkers to ride the trolley. As most of you probably know, "social media" via the Internet is a huge factor in the way we communicate in the 21st century. Businesses large and small are aware of this and they work very hard to maintain a positive presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others. This week I looked on YouTube to see if anyone has posted video of the recent Streetcar Musical at CHSL. I could not find any yet, but I did come across this video posted by a gentleman named Paul Holte in 2012 of his daughter riding at CHSL. This is not your conventional trolley video as most of it is just a closeup of the little girl during the ride.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-SrFHI4cBE>

In the comments Mr. Holte gives a brief description of MSM and our website address. I hope those of you with Internet access will watch this and tell me what you think. I know watching this little toddler react to her ride on the car really makes me want too! We can't buy four minutes of advertising as good as this. When you see our passengers taking photos and video on the car, maybe you can suggest to them that they post them on the 'net. I'll look forward to seeing them! ☺

(Special Events *Continued from page 1)*

But it was also a lot of fun. A lot of hours were spent by a lot of people to make this happen. Thanks to **Rod Eaton** (Conductor on all 6 performances), **Bruce Gustafson**, **Patrick Desbonnet**, **Bill Graham**, **Ben Franske** who helped as Station Agent and Crossing Guard, **David Premack**, SW High School students and alum, etc., who made this a fun, successful event.

And I heard a certain Motorman got a speaking part. I won't name him lest he be embarrassed by the number of lines he missed. As we all know, riding the streetcar is always fun. Riding the streetcar during "Special Events" is even more of a treat. I recommend checking out the special events. There's a Murder Mystery coming up in July. I'm sure not going to miss it. See you on the line. ☺