

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

JUNE - 2018



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Bill the Motorman talks about the Early Days of our Museum and Car 1300



You know, folks, it's gratifying to sit here in the upstairs crew room of Nicollet Station and see the progress being made by you volunteers of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum. You've done tremendous work saving these priceless historic artifacts from the torch. Over 1,100 of TCRT-built standard cars were burned for scrap back in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, but luckily a group of local guys saved old 1300. You folks have done well.

I recall back in the early 1960s when it was unclear whether car 1300 was going to survive. The local rail enthusiast group known as the Minnesota Railfans' Association (MRA) had title to the car, which was given to them by TCRT in 1954. While this group did a good job of protecting 1300 through the 1950s and early 60s, by 1962 the group was very small and wasn't up to the task of doing something about 1300. That's when a group of local MRA members and others organized and formed the Minnesota Transportation Museum Committee. Led by Bill Olsen, Ray Bensen, Frank Sandberg, Judy Sandberg, George Isaacs, Jim Bertrand, Byron Olson and others, the committee's stated goal was to find a place to work on and restore car 1300 to operation and then to find a place to set up a formal Museum where car 1300 could operate. Luckily, the committee struck gold. The Minnesota Transfer Railway was willing to allow the group to work on 1300 in their St. Paul roundhouse. The car was moved from the Minneapolis-Moline plant in Hopkins, where it had been stored on a side track since late 1954, and work began. Here's what the committee's mimeographed newsletter dated September 1962 said about this breakthrough development.

AT LAST - Car 1300 is now berth in a roomy, spotless, warm, dry airy stall in the roundhouse of the Minnesota Transfer Railway After endless arrangements wherein we almost lost title to the car, where we had to cancel Historical Society Checks and reissue, where new contracts had to be arranged and where we lost press relations because the time of movement was changed a hundred times, the car arrived via Henry Lambert's Truck and Trailer at 35 Miles Per hour (Sirens and all), The slight damage can be repaired within a few weeks. Jim Bertrand, Shop Committee, has selected Saturdays as their work period. Visitors are welcome and we hope you will want to work on the car as there are tasks even for the ladies. Best of all the access from the street parking lot is short and clean, and suitable for guests of any rank. A systematic check of electrical equipment has begun and lights are now restored for interior work. Painting will begin this Saturday. Jim will be looking for Souvenirs and has trading material if you don't wish to loan yours. We also need small tools, and a large box or chest to lock up the loose items taken from the car.

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No. 1300 is on the trailer ready for its move from the Minneapolis-Moline plant in Hopkins, where it spent 8 years outdoors, to the Minnesota Transfer Railway's roundhouse in St. Paul.



A Minn. Transfer Alco RS-3 locomotive was surprised to meet No. 1300 on the Transfer's University Avenue bridge. This was a test run in early May, 1963. Power supply was the "goat" gasoline-powered generator seen here.



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

Time travel when you least expect it. When you're in the history business as we are, little insights into the past can happen unexpectedly, triggering "Time travel when you least expect it." A really good example happened a few weeks ago. **Dennis Stephens** passed a farm rummage sale and decided to take a look. In the dirt he found three Knutson trolley retrievers. No one at the farm knew what they were. One man speculated they were used to make horses walk in circles. Dennis bought them for \$10 each.

After cleaning the mud and some of the rust off them, they were clearly Knutson #2 retrievers. **Russ Olson** was consulted and yes, TCRT owned #2 retrievers. However, they're a model from the early 1900s. Cars numbers 1300, 265 and 1239 have the later Knutson #5 model. I dove into the museum's photo collection. The two models are easy to identify, and sure enough, I found #2s on early cars. Some even lasted to the end of service on the gate cars that survived on the Inter-campus line. The clincher was this photo of No. 1300 sporting a #2, sometime in the 1930s (photo below). **John Prestholdt** has been working on the retrievers. Two of them appear to be usable.

Digitizing the *Minnegazette*. The long-delayed project to scan all the *Minnegazettes* is finally nearing completion. New members may not realize the *Minnegazette* was the newsletter of the Minnesota Transportation Museum. It morphed into a slick paper magazine in 1981. It featured a mix of museum news, Minnesota railroad, streetcar and steamboat history and lots of photos. Gathered together, it thoroughly documents the history of our museum.

The *Minnegazette* went history-only in 2005, with museum news communicated by separated museums' three newsletters, the *Streetcar Currents*, the *Semaphore* and *Steamboatin' News*. When MSM split off from MTM in 2005, the two museums jointly published the *Minnegazette* into 2007. I was the editor, wanted to do a streetcar-only magazine, so I resigned from the *Minnegazette* and started *Twin City Lines*. MTM managed to produce a few more *Minnegazettes* by themselves, but it expired after a couple of years. MSM retained a large number of back issues, which are stored today in the Russell Olson Library.

Some years ago, **Dennis** and **Andy Stephens** started scanning all the *Minnegazettes*. They got through 2002 and the work stalled. I resumed the scanning and completed it this spring. The final task is an index, which will be completed about the time you read this.

We'll be offering the complete *Minnegazettes* for purchase later this year. They're the complete record of our Museum's history, along with a wealth of material on Minnesota's railroads, streetcars, steamboats and buses. ☺



CHSL Fashion photo shoot.



(Above) Here's a photo of our No. 1300 taken on the Snelling Shops' transfer table. Looks like she got a not-so-minor fender-bender at the rear and is headed for the repair bay. Note the storm windows are on the car.

(Left) Here are those Knutson #2 retrievers rescued by **Dennis Stephens** from that farmer's yard sale. Serendipity, indeed!

Excelsior Streetcar Line Update



(Above and Right) Following last year's car barn improvements, including the concrete floor and the new lighting, the Tuesday Winona No. 10 restoration crew is helping build on the customer experience by revamping the store area and history wall. The store will have a great finished look, the wall will extend to 48 feet allowing easy access to historical pictures, current special events and more. We can't wait to show the finished look.



(Above) The ESL car barn tour season started early this year. **Howie Melco** gave a 4 year old boy the thrill of his young life viewing Winona No. 10 from the pit. According to the boy's Mom, he has been interested in the streetcars for a long time, it's all he talks about. He could hardly wait for the ESL season to begin so they could ride!



(Right) The 2018 Spring Time Trolley, in memory of Cliff Thomas one of our faithful Foremen now deceased, was a success. Kids had a fun time riding the Trolley and learning about chickens and ducks. Kids and parents alike enjoyed interacting with the little feathered friends.

Don't forget the Winona No. 10 dedication ceremony is scheduled for Sunday, June 17th at 11:30 AM. Shuttle service from the Water Street platform in Excelsior to the Excelsior car barn begins at 11:00 AM.

All photos on this page were taken by Karen Kertzman.

- June 6-----Start of Wednesday afternoon service at CHSL (1 PM to 4 PM)
- June 14-----Story Time Trolley at ESL (5 PM & 6 PM)
- June 17-----Dedication ceremony for restoration of Winona No. 10—11:30 AM at ESL car barn
- June 21-----P.J. Party trolley at CHSL
- June 24-----Grandma's Day at ESL—Grandparents ride free with their family
- June 30-----OWL trolley service at CHSL—9:00 PM to 12:00 Midnight



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

Jim Vaitkunas — *MSM Corporate Secretary & Assistant Ops Chief*

New members. We welcome the following new members to the MSM Family: Peter Wezeman and Paul Anderson. We all are please that you have joined out Museum.

Member Renewals. We have quite a number of members who have renewal dates on May 31st and June 30th. Please, when you receive the renewal notice from Member Services Director, John DeWitt, send in your renewal as soon as you can. And, remember that you can also renew on line by going to our website: <https://trolleyride.org/about/become-a-member/>

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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

The museum's business address and telephone number are:

P.O. Box 16509
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 952-922-1096

**Streetcar CURRENTS
 June—2018**

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 edition of the **Streetcar CURRENTS** is June 20, 2018.

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

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(**Bill The Motorman** *Continued from page 1*)

After a year's worth of planning and work on 1300 by the Shop Committee, on May 11th car 1300 made it's first passenger run on Minnesota Transfer tracks in their midway yard. This was mostly for the benefit of the committee's members but a few non-members also rode and car 1300 ran well. So, what's the next step, the group's leadership asked themselves. They decided to schedule several runs in the summer, get some free publicity for the special runs, and invite the general public to ride old 1300.

The MTM Committee operated car 1300 over several days and weekends in 1963. Between May and the end of September 1963, car 1300 successfully ran on 11 days, operated over 350 miles, carried 8,919 passengers and received \$352.99 in donations (no fare was charged then). The operations that were run on July 6th and 7th were by far the best days as you can see from the below photo, when passengers stood in line for close to an hour to take a ride in 1300.

No further runs were made after those of 1963 because the Interstate Commerce Commission prohibited 1300 from operating on the Transfer's tracks. That meant only one thing—the MTM Committee's museum site search group, led by Byron Olson, Jim Harrison and others, went into high gear to identify sites that the group could obtain for both static and operational museum use. The MTM Committee also realized that they needed to be formally incorporated and obtain their tax-exempt status from both the US and Minnesota governments. That work was accomplished and the Museum was incorporated in 1964. Now the search to find a suitable museum site began in earnest.



It took over six "fits and starts" years to find the perfect site at Lake Harriet and gain Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board approval in 1969 . But that's a long story for another time. ☺