

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

January-February 2021



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

The "Off Season"

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

I am continually impressed with our volunteers' skills and dedication to provide services and statements of their technical and artistic work without anything expected in return other than the satisfaction of a job well done and the gratitude of the Museum's visitors. This issue I am again calling-out some of the special work the mechanical crews are putting in during the offseason.

With COVID most of the Museum's volunteer activity has been focused on equipment maintenance by the shop crews at Como-Harriet and Excelsior. To pick up on last issue's recognition of these talented individuals, in this issue I would like to recognize the volunteers at our Excelsior Streetcar Line. During 2020, the ESL crew worked on DSR No. 78 to overhaul and upgrade the electrical components including the controller and on DSR No. 265, where the electric heaters were repaired, rewired, and reinstalled in the car. We give our thanks to the following individuals who volunteered 10 or more hours in 2020 — **Ken Blake**, **Mark Brothen**, **Carl Floren**, **Dave McCollum**, and **Scott Wardrope**. Several volunteers contributed more than 50 hours — **Scott Heiderich** (102 hours), **Dick Zawacki** (58 hours), and **Howie Melco** (56 hours).



Given the state of the COVID pandemic, right now it's unclear when we will begin public operations for the 2021 season. Normally we would hold the initial planning session of the Operations Committee in late January or early February, but we are pushing that back a month or so. At this time we do not plan to open the season in May because of Covid uncertainty. When the committee meets, we'll establish a public operating schedule based primarily on the number of volunteers willing to operate and following existing pandemic restrictions. I hope that in the next issue of the *Streetcar Currents* [Due to you around April 1st—Ed.] we can provide more specifics on the 2021 operating season, but that will be based on the timing of the Operations Committee meeting and discussions with the Board to ensure we continue to operate in accordance with state regulations and CDC/healthcare guidelines.

Thank you all for your work and continued support of the Museum. **STAY SAFE.**



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(Left) The Covid-19 pandemic sure put a crimp on work in our shops. However, that didn't stop work being done. **Howie Melco** took Duluth No. 78's damaged K-10 controller home to his workshop where he refurbished and re-wired it.
(Right) **Dave McCollum** (L) and **Howie** investigate the 600-volt wires coming out of the bottom of the controller to the area under the platform of No. 78.



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

As the 2020-2021 winter has progressed our Museum has kept plugging along making good progress on several fronts. While participation by our “off-season” roster of volunteers is somewhat reduced because of the pandemic, our volunteers have been working in our shops following current state and national pandemic protection protocols. Bruce reported on the ESL work on page one. Here’s a list of what’s been going on in CHSL’s George Isaacs carbarn.



- The 2020-2021 Annual Appeal has been very successful. As this is written, we’ve raised over \$29,000 in individual donations.
- Eleven history signs have been installed along the 44th Street former streetcar right-of-way in Minneapolis’ Linden Hills neighborhood adjacent to CHSL. Funded by the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council, they are mounted along the old ROW from Chowen Avenue to halfway between Xerxes and Upton Avenues. Thanks to **Dennis Stephens** for his help with the project.
- The jib crane has been installed in the Isaacs Carbarn machine shop. A new buffer/grinder has been purchased and installed on a rolling cart.
- **Karl Jones** has continued the work to backdate TCRT gate car No. 1239. With the Baker heater installed on the front platform, he’s working on the perforated stove pipe that would usually go through the ceiling; this is just for appearances. There won’t be any actual fire in or smoke from the heater and no hole in the ceiling. He and **Bill Graham** removed the exterior chimney from No. 265 to serve as a pattern for No. 1239’s chimney. Bill arranged for apprentices at the Sheet Metal Workers Union to make a copy, now painted and awaiting installation.
- Meanwhile **Karl Jones** and **Ben Franske** have designed, purchased and are installing security cameras at Lake Harriet. We’re tired of the endless graffiti under the Linden Hills Boulevard bridge. Two attempts to break into the carbarn pushed us to buy the cameras.
- You may not know that I’ve been giving periodic history presentations. It happened several times in 2020. So far in 2021 I’m scheduled to appear at Southwest High School, the City of Columbia Heights and the Linden Hills History Study Group. We charge a speaker’s fee to the museum of at least \$50. If you know of any groups that want a speaker, let me know.
- **Rod Eaton** has been publishing monthly newsletters for the Carbarn Club and Clerestory Club, whose 12 members range in age from 6 to 16.
- New Facebook posts appear at least three times each week courtesy of **Rod Eaton** and **Brian Long**. Because of all the new content, we have 63 percent more Facebook followers than a year ago. A recent post on the historic signs installed along 44th Street reached over 9000 people. In another sign of our online popularity, the 1950s Como-Harriet video on the museum’s YouTube channel has been viewed over 5600 times.

Treasurer **Chris Heck** held the annual budget meeting on January 22nd. The proposed budget will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors at its February 11 Zoom meeting. For budget purposes, we’ve assumed no streetcar operations before July 1. It’s impossible to know if that will be the actual opening date, but it’s our best guess so far. 🍷



Here’s the finished and freshly painted chimney for No. 1239. Soon it will be mounted on No. 1239 by **Karl Jones**. (Aaron Isaacs photo)

What's Going On?



Tom Schramm & Jim Willmore



Tom Schramm & John Prestholdt's arm



Rob Mangels & Tom Schramm



Project finished!

This winter's BIG project in the George Isaacs carbarn and shop has been the installation of the jib crane in the machine shop annex. The above photos show how the crane was installed. The crew that helped with the project includes **Dennis Stephens, Jim Willmore, John Prestholdt, Tom Schramm** and **Rob Mangels**. (Dennis Stephens photos)



RARE FIND

(Left) A woman from Las Vegas, Nevada recently e-mailed us to ask if she could donate a St. Paul City Rwy. horsecar bell. The bell has arrived. **Dave French**, our eBay guru, had seen these bells twice before on eBay but they were too expensive—now we have one. They dangled from the horse harness and rang with the horse's movement.

(Right) St Paul City Railway horsecar in the 1880s. The sign on the front reads: Rice St to West St Paul via Robert-Ducas & Concord STs. In the hi-rez photo the bells are discernable.



What's Happening?

- April 3-----MSM Annual Meeting using the Zoom application. Meeting starts at 10:00 AM.
- April-June-----CHSL & ESL Operator recertification and orientation training. Schedule to be determined.
- July 1-----Beginning of CHSL's and ESL's public operations (tentative)



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

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

MSM's Annual Meeting. Our annual meeting of the Museum's members will be held on Saturday, April 3, 2021 starting at 10:00 AM. The Zoom application will be used again as we did in 2020. Approximately 3 days prior to the annual meeting, all members in good standing as of December 31, 2020 will be sent the instructions to logon to Zoom to attend the annual meeting. The business portion of the annual meeting will include reports from your Museum's officers and the election to fill two seats on the Museum's Board of Directors. After the formal business of the meeting is concluded, Board Chair **Aaron Isaacs** will make a presentation on some aspect of Minnesota's streetcar or interurban history.

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

The museum's business address and telephone number are:

P.O. Box 16509
Minneapolis, MN 55416-0509
952-922-1096

**Streetcar CURRENTS
January-February—2021**

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 March 20, 2021.

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

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Change of address or e-mail address. We continue to receive membership renewals and the *Twin City Lines* history magazine returned by the USPS because the one-year forwarding period for a member's mail has expired. These cost our Museum money. Please remember to let us know when your address changes. Also, if you change your e-mail address send that to us. We won't have to pay if an e-mail is rejected but you won't be getting the *Streetcar Currents* either. ☺

The 44th Street Historical Marker Project

Aaron Isaacs

In 2019 a member of the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council (LHiNC) approached me about placing interpretive signs along the abandoned streetcar right of way that parallels 44th Street. I suggested we duplicate the design of the history signs funded by LHiNC and installed along the museum's Como-Harriet Streetcar Line in 2006. They're vinyl on 24x 24 inch aluminum. Each has an historic photograph and caption. They're placed so the viewer sees the historic photo and current scene from the same angle.

After some planning and discussion we settled on 11 signs, located from west of Upton Avenue to Chowen Avenue. The initial idea was to mount them on city sign poles and street lights. That was rejected by the city, so instead we purchased eight aluminum channel posts with the signs mounted waist high at a 45 degree angle. The final three signs, clustered around the 44th and Beard intersection, will hang on the fence that surrounds the parking lot across from Turtle Bread.

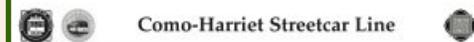
The project experienced several delays, including the Covid pandemic, but the ones mounted on sign posts were installed on December 18. The fence mounts should be done by January 2021. The entire project has been funded by LHiNC, with Minnesota Streetcar Museum designing the signs and overseeing the installation.



Here is the historical sign at the location where the OAK-HARRIET and OAK-XERXES lines diverged at Xerxes Avenue. The COMO-HARRIET, COMO-HOPKINS, LAKE MINNETONKA and DEEPHAVEN lines continued ahead to their destinations.



The Oak-Harriet line split off here, turning south on Xerxes Avenue to 50th Street, then east to its terminus at 50th & Penn Avenue. The Como-Harriet, Como-Hopkins, Lake Minnetonka and Deephaven lines continued west along 44th Street. Some cars ended at a loop just east of France Avenue. Others turned south on France to 54th Street. The rest continued west towards Hopkins.



Streetcar CURRENTS Winter Publication Schedule

The **Streetcar CURRENTS**, is now in its winter publication schedule. You've been receiving the **Streetcar CURRENTS** every other month since September 2020. Publication date for the next issue will be on or about April 1st. If you don't receive your issue on or shortly after that date please contact me at: jvaitkunas@msn.com