

STREETCAR

CURRENTS

August 2022



MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

Mid-Season Recap

Bruce Gustafson—General Supt.

We are still adjusting to the post-COVID shutdown environment as we continue to modify our schedule to meet changing passenger demands. In planning for the 2022 season, we added or adjusted the schedules to accommodate Excelsior's Farmer's Market. At Como-Harriet, we expanded week night service and did a pilot for dedicated weekend charter business. Some things did not work out as planned. We cancelled the Farmer's Market Tuesday afternoon shift and replaced it with a second Saturday shift at ESL. At CHSL we removed the standard car on Saturday's first shift as the charter business did not materialize. The other additions are performing well and will likely continue in 2023.

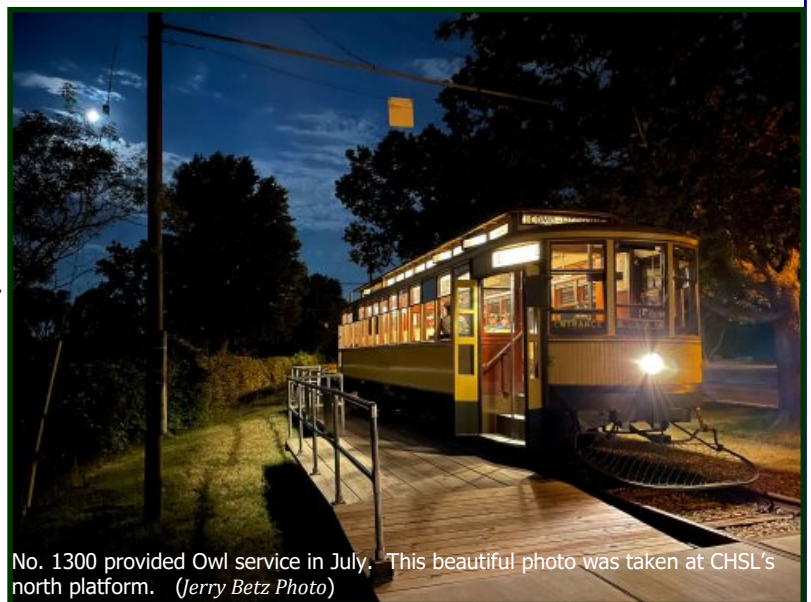


I would like to thank our growing group of operators who have or plan to operate this year. Currently, we have 115 active volunteers, which is comparable to prior years. This is up slightly from last month as the newly trained operators move into active service. There are 90 volunteers at Como-Harriet, 34 at Excelsior – with nine operating at both locations. It's hard to believe, but for those of you who are sitting on the sidelines, there are only 180 shifts remaining to be filled.

In particular, I would like to call out the following operators who have contributed nearly 50% of the total operating hours at Como-Harriet: **Bill Way, Rod Eaton, Mike Buck, Bruce Allyn, Bill Arends, Pat Cosgrove, Patrick Desbonnet, Jerry Betz, Scott Heiderich, Linda Ridlehuber, Louis Hoffman, Andy Jacob, and Aaron Isaacs.** Likewise, I would like to thank the following operators who have contributed 50% of the operating hours at Excelsior. These volunteers include **Jim Kertzman, Mike Buck, Gregg Thomas, Tim Gephart, Denny Morrow, Charles Karver, and Karen Kertzman.** These volunteers have contributed almost 1,000 hours of volunteer service year-to-date.

Another part of our organization that doesn't get much attention is merchandise sales. **Bill Arends** leads the buying activity and manages the Como-Harriet sales. **Karen Kertzman** manages sales at Excelsior. Together they have generated over \$10,000 in sales thru the third week in July. Extrapolating that for the full year, merchandise sales could represent 10%-15% of the Museum's annual operating income from ongoing operations. The items with the highest sales are toys, books, clothing, and jewelry.

Finally, I would like to thank all the volunteers for your time and effort. You are the ones that help make the Museum a treasured destination for tens of thousands of guests each year. **Be safe!**



No. 1300 provided Owl service in July. This beautiful photo was taken at CHSL's north platform. (Jerry Betz Photo)

Inside This Issue

<i>From the Front Platform</i>	2
<i>MSM Photo Update</i>	3
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	4
<i>MSM News and Views</i>	4



From the Front Platform—Thoughts on Our Museum

Aaron Isaacs — MSM Board Chair

How we got No. 1300. Longtime member **Clark Johnson** recently wrote about how No. 1300 was obtained. “After a lot of effort, **Bob Schumacher** and I arranged to meet with Fred Ossanna, president of Twin Cities Lines on June 17, 1954 just before trolley service ended (one day before streetcar service was discontinued). His office was on the second floor of their office building at 11th Street and Hennepin Avenue. Ossanna was a small man, but had bodyguards stationed in his office. These guys were enormous and looked like they had survived a number of fights. After entering, Ossanna had one of his guards lock the door, which certainly seemed odd. Bob and I were quite young at the time, I was 23 and Bob was a few years older. Ossanna came across as gruff and annoyed by our presence. Yet in the end he was not hesitant to give us the 1300. Shortly thereafter we took the 1300 out to the Minneapolis-Moline plant in Hopkins where it sat for several years. The trip out to Hopkins would be inconceivable today. The Milwaukee Road sent a switch engine into TCRT’s Snelling shops and coupled onto the 1300 using a drawbar that we had fabricated and went between the 1300’s coupler socket and the switcher’s coupler pin. Then we crept out to Hopkins, and stuffed the 1300 on the MM siding. The rest of her history is well-known.” (See next page for two photos of the move—Ed.)



Senior bike ride. On July 17 members **David Gepner** and **Bruce Allyn** organized a senior citizen bike ride from Hopkins to Lake Harriet. They stowed their bikes in the empty ready barn and I gave them a carbarn tour. When regular service car No. 1300 arrived, all 28 boarded for a round trip. Upon returning to the carbarn, they reclaimed their bikes and dispersed. Interrupted by Covid the last couple of years, Bruce would like this to be an annual event.

No more Bryant-Johnson line. The City of Minneapolis is rebuilding Bryant Avenue S. from Lake Street to 50th Street as a bicycle street with one-way auto traffic. In the process the old, paved-over streetcar tracks have been removed. The buses are now permanently shifted to Lyndale Avenue. That means for the first time since 1920 there will no longer be a Bryant-Johnson transit line. That pairing persisted after the conversion to buses.

Simultaneously, the streetcar tracks have been removed from Grand Avenue S. as part of another street project. With the Bryant line now on Lyndale, there’s no longer any reason to run the 18G Grand Avenue bus (only three blocks from Lyndale), thus another former streetcar line is gone.

Phil Epstein Passes. Longtime member and volunteer **Phil Epstein** has passed away at age 83. A volunteer since 1974, Phil was an original. Talented and cantankerous, you always knew his opinion, but he was right more than wrong. He was also very generous with his time. He shows up in the *Minne Gazette* (the museum’s newsletter at the time—Ed) for the first time in 1980, helping salvage parts from a streetcar body in the woods somewhere. He was a mottoman, and worked on restorations when we were located in the Como Shops building. He had a thorough, firsthand knowledge of the streetcar system. Although not part of MSM when it split from MTM, Phil is best known for his work maintaining and driving MTM’s antique buses. A year ago he decided the public needed to know what we did at the Lake Harriet carbarn so he shot and posted a YouTube video the carbarn with John Prestholdt. Titled *A Visit to the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line*, it runs 49 minutes and has had 2100 views. 🌐



Here’s Phil in his Metro Transit uniform but wearing a Twin City Lines hat badge. He’s standing in front of Twin City Lines’ GM bus No. 1303. MTM also had No. 1399, another TCL bus that Phil liked to drive. (MSM photo archive)

Museum Photo Ops



The ESL Shop Crew replaced the old crosswalk at the ESL carbarn. Pictured are **Howie Melco, Carl Floren, Dick Zawacki** and **Steve Mages**. (Karen Kertzman photo)



Dick Zawacki and **Howie Melco** with **Aaron Isaacs** on Mesaba Railway No. 10 discussing plans for the identification and disposition of the remaining items in storage in Mesaba No. 10. (Karen Kertzman photo)



To fix a broken window in the ticket booth, **Howie Melco** and **Dick Zawacki** cut old streetcar window glass while **Jerry Draeger** and **Scott Heiderich** offer encouragement.

RIGHT. Miss Debra entertained the riders on the 2 sold-out ESL *Story Time Trolley* runs with stories and songs. The theme of "Fun in the Sun" was appropriate as the temperature was in the 90's.



Four photos and captions by Karen Kertzman



ABOVE The unusual train arrives at the Milwaukee Road's Hopkins depot after its 15-mile trip from TCRT's Snelling Shops in St. Paul. **LEFT** The hose seen going through the window passed through No. 1300 and connected the train air from the locomotive to the hopper car behind No. 1300. No. 1300 couldn't be connected to the train air because it had non-compatible "straight-air" brakes.

August 13-----Owl Service at CHSL—9:00 PM to 12-midnight
 August 14-----Grandma's Day at ESL (grandmas ride for free)
 August 18-----Streetcar Camp for Kids at CHSL—9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
 August 18-----Story Time Trolley at ESL—6:00 PM and 7:00 PM
 August 25-----Streetcar Camp II at CHSL—9:00 AM to 1:00 PM
 September 5-----Labor Day operations at CHSL and ESL—see our website for times at ESL and CHSL



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

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

Change of address and other contact information. Recently we had two members who contacted us to let us know that they had not been receiving our *Twin City Lines* quarterly history magazine or they didn't receive the *Streetcar Currents* newsletter. In one case, their address changed and in another, their e-mail address had changed but they failed to let us know. Please remember that when you change any of your basic contact information, let MSM's Member Services Manager **Barb Gacek** know as soon as possible. The best way to send Barb your updated information is by e-mail to her: rhodabump@gmail.com

Thanks, and stay safe! ☺

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
 August—2022**

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 August 20, 2022

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

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 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9481

E-mail: jvaitkunas@msn.com



This photo shows Mesaba Railway No. 16 in front of the Oliver Hotel in Hibbing, MN in the late-1910s to early-1920s. The photograph originated from a local photography company in Hibbing. Mesaba 16, the second car to hold this number, was delivered in 1914 and had been constructed by the Niles Car Company to replace the original 16 after it was destroyed in a car barn fire in November 1913. Like the original, Mesaba 16 was a combination baggage and passenger interurban car, and the baggage section of the car is out of the frame of the photo on the left side. The car continued in operation until the Mesaba Railway was abandoned in 1927, upon which it was sold to a private owner and fell into disrepair. Years ago, a couple of museum members were able to visit Mesaba 16 and were allowed to harvest some parts for the purpose of helping preserve Mesaba 10, which is in the museum's collection at the Excelsior Streetcar Line.

(Photo MSM Archive—Caption by Brian Long)

Financial Planner Needed

Recently our museum received a significant bequest from Gordon Geddes, a long-time member of MSM. The Board decided that these funds, along with an additional amount, should be invested so they can be secure while also earning interest. None of MSM's Directors or Officers has financial planning experience, so the Board directed the Finance Committee to consult with at least three financial planners about this subject. Now, we need your help with this important effort.

- Are you a financial planner or CFP, and if so, are you willing to help your museum invest these funds?
- If you are not a financial planner or CFP, do you know someone that you would recommend to the Finance Committee?

If you are willing to help your museum with this important effort, please contact one of the following.

- Chris Heck — msmtreasurer@gmail.com 651-249-5358
- Aaron Isaacs — aaronmona@aol.com 612-231-8989

Thanks!