



Streetcar CURRENTS

SPECIAL PHOTO SUPPLEMENT
January – 2023

Mesaba Railway No. 10

Built by the Niles Car and Manufacturing Company in Niles, Ohio No. 10 was delivered to the Mesaba Railway Company in October, 1912. It was the first passenger car of a sixteen car order that included five passenger motor cars (No. 10 to No. 14), five passenger-baggage motor cars, four passenger trailers, and two freight-express motor cars. These cars were exhibited at the American Electric Railway Association convention in Chicago and then moved as a special train to St. Paul where the Great Northern Railway completed their delivery to Virginia, Minnesota. During its operating life between December 24, 1912, and April 16, 1927, Mesaba No. 10 not only transported people from town to town in their daily activities on the Iron Range, but also was a common way for iron miners to get to and from work.

A valuable addition to MSM's collection, No. 10 is our only interurban car. The car was built almost entirely of wood, with steel reinforcement rods throughout and a wooden center sill sandwiched between two steel plates. This is much like the construction of Twin City Rapid Transit Company's early wooden cars. Exterior steel plates below the windows gave passengers the illusion of riding in a steel bodied car, while the mostly wood construction allowed the cars to be powered by lower horsepower motors.

Like all of MSM's rolling stock, Mesaba No. 10 has a varied history. After being retired in 1927, the car was dismantled and the trucks and motors were sold for scrap. The carbody was sold to a Mr. Gregorich who moved it to Cotton, Minnesota. According to our information, he lived in the car for about 45 years, and was found deceased in the car by a relative. MSM acquired the carbody in 1978 and moved it to the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant in New Brighton, Minnesota where it was stored in an unused lumber shed. In 2001 the carbody was moved to the ESL car barn. The Baldwin MCB-type curved equalizer trucks for Mesaba No. 10 were built in Japan under license for the Keihan Railway that still provides electric railway service from Osaka to Kyoto in Japan. The museum obtained the trucks in the mid-1990s. In 2021, the trucks were removed from the carbody and the ESL shop crew refurbished the trucks and cleaned-out the carbody. In August, 2022 the trucks were re-attached to the carbody and, for the first time in 95 years, Mesaba #10 became mobile albeit unpowered.



No. 10's motorman is proudly standing in the street in Virginia, Minn. The company's shop and car barn were located on the north side of Virginia. (MSM photo archives)



Here's No. 10 in January 1976 soon after it was discovered by the museum in the small Iron Range community of Cotton, Minn. (L to R) **Loren Martin, Scott Heiderich, Ray Bensen, and John Larkin. Bill Graham** was the photographer. (MSM photo archives)



Here's No. 10 on its way from the closed Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant to Excelsior. (MSM photo archive)



(Right) Both Baldwin trucks were built under license in Kobe Japan. During shipping to the U.S., the frames were bent. To get both trucks back to operational condition, the frames needed to be straightened. Here we see **Howie Melco** heating part of the truck's frame while **Scott Wardrope** uses a mallet to straighten it. **Scott Heiderich** and **Dick Zawacki** use a bar to apply pressure to the frame to help the process.



(Above) One of the two trucks stored under the Mesaba No. 10 carbody is pulled out from under it in preparation for cleaning and straightening in the warm barn. Notice the wooden "cribbing" that supports the car and holds it off the ground. Mississippi Valley Public Service Company No. 10, a single-truck streetcar, is in the background on track #2. It ran in Winona, Minnesota from 1914 to 1938 and awaits a rebuilt motor so it can enter service, hopefully in 2023.



(Right) **Scott Wardrope** and **Jerry Draeger** are cleaning the dirt and grease from the truck components. Scott examines the wheel on one axle for wear and damage. The gear behind the wheel meshes with a gear on the motor to send the power to the wheels.



(Left) **Scott Wardrope** and **Howie Melco** are working on one of Mesaba No. 10's anti-climbers (a.k.a. "bumper") that was stored inside the car. Many other parts from the car and other cars, plus miscellaneous building materials, were haphazardly stored in the car.

(Right) After scrap parts and unneeded building materials were removed from the car, and once the remaining materials were better organized, the original beauty and detail of the car's interior became apparent.



(Above) One truck needed to be rotated 180-degrees to get the brake rigging oriented so the two trucks will work correctly when the time comes to connect the car's brake rigging. With the help of a crane, **Jim Kertzman** (red shirt), **Scott Wardrope** (dark shirt), and **Howie Melco** (hat) supervised this operation. In the top picture one end of the truck faces east on the ESL tracks. In the bottom picture the same end of the truck now faces west

(Right). **Carl Floren** helps **Howie Melco** align the carbody bolster to a hole in the front truck's bolster in preparation for installing the front kingpin. Other ESL shop crew volunteers are under the car moving the truck into the correct position to allow the kingpin to drop into place.





(Above) It was a tight squeeze to get Mesaba No. 10 out of the car barn, due to the misalignment of the track with the doors on track #3 and the curvature of the track outside the car barn. The car made it with less than an inch of clearance at one point. The misaligned track was one of the reasons for moving Mesaba No. 10.

(Left) New kingpins were needed to align and hold the truck and carbody to each other. A hole needed to be drilled and threads tapped to one end of the pin. Here one of the pins is held vertically on a drill press table to complete the drilling and tapping operations.



Jim Kertzman, Scott Wardrop, and Howie Melco prepare to put a tie under the car body to help stabilize and brace it during the move.



A strap was used between Duluth Street Railway No. 265 and Mesaba No. 10 to pull it out of the car barn on track #3.

Did any of this stuff look like fun?

Sure, some of the stuff the ESL car barn crew does certainly is hard work. And after some of the work sessions, the crew got a "little" dirty. But the volunteers on the car barn crew are great to work with and the camaraderie is priceless. If you're interested in joining the crew, they meet each Tuesday morning at the Excelsior car barn starting at around 9 AM. Contact Dick Zawacki if you're interested in joining the crew or to learn more: 952-215-4572 e-mail dickzawacki@gmail.com



With everything cleared out from track #3, local railroad construction company Railroad Specialties Inc., began the process of aligning the track with the center of door #3. With the track now properly aligned, all the cars at ESL can safely access track #3. The next step is to finish the concrete floor around track #3, which was done in December 2022.



A tow bar was used to push Mesaba No. 10 into car barn track #2.



Several crew members examine Mesaba No. 10 as it resides in its new location on track #2 in the ESL car barn. The car is well centered between the doors and will now serve as a focal point for car barn tours. Future restoration work on the car is now being planned.



The entire ESL shop crew contributed over several weeks to prepare and move Mesaba No. 10. Pictured here is **Howie Melco** (leaning out from the car window), **Steve Mages**, **Carl Floren**, **Jim Kertzman**, **Mike Kimitch**, **Scott Heiderich**, **Jerry Draeger**, **Dick Zawacki**, **Scott Wardrope**, and **Chris Hawver**.

Credits For This Photo Supplement

The photos in this supplement, except as noted, were taken by Karen Kertzman, Jim Kertzman, Howie Melco and Jerry Draeger.

Photo captions were written by Dick Zawacki, Karen Kertzman and Jim Kertzman.

Many thanks to Karen Kertzman for organizing the photos and text and getting things together to send to the editor.