

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



February 2005

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota

A Museum is Born!

- *MSM incorporates on 12/21/04*
- *Your Board held its first meeting on 1/15/05*
- *MSM has applied for it's IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit organization recognition*
- *Our 2005 season will begin on April 30 at both ESL and CHSL*
- *We are holding a special membership meeting on Saturday, February 26th, (see page 4 for details)*
- *We are looking forward to a highly successful 2005 operating season*

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Masthead Photo: A pair of beauties. DSR No. 78 and TCRT No. 1239 on 9/11/04.
Tom Fairbairn photo

THE MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM IS FORMED!

Today, we are the Minnesota Streetcar Museum (call us 'MSM'). The old Traction Division of the Minnesota Transportation Museum is no more. Incorporated in the last days of 2004, the new MSM controls all the streetcars, track, buildings and bank accounts of the old Traction Division, both at Lake Harriet and at Excelsior, under a lease-purchase agreement with MTM. The MSM has applied to the Internal Revenue Service for non-profit, tax-exempt status identical to that of the old Traction Division. Our mission remains the same: to conserve and operate historic street railway exhibits for the enjoyment and education of the community. The streetcar lines will look and feel as they always have, but they no longer will be part of MTM.

As MTM's operating divisions grew bigger, more complex and more isolated from each other, the Museum grew harder to manage as a single unit. The volunteer managers of MTM's several exhibit sites increasingly made decisions for their operations in isolation from MTM's other divisions. As a single corporation, however, all of MTM's component groups shared responsibility for all their respective decisions and commitments. Thus, the danger grew that a miscalculation or accident in one of MTM's division could bring down the entire organization, and for this reason, the board of MTM decided in November to form separate corporations for each of the four major operating divisions.

Museum members supported this decision by an over 2 to 1 majority at the January 4, 2005 meeting called to consider the matter. Many members also expressed their hope that some kind of affiliation can be kept among the former MTM divisions. At the January 18 board meeting, the members representing the Railroad and Classic Bus divisions declined to participate in the reorganization plan. As a result, the Streetcar and Lake Minnetonka divisions opted to separate with the hope that they can cooperate with MTM in the future.

The new MSM organization is expected to save at least \$17,000 each year in administration and insurance costs previously paid to MTM. The new Museum must rely on volunteer members for help with bookkeeping and accounting service previously provided by MTM's paid staff. This large saving will help us pay for rising utility charges as well as restoration and maintenance of our streetcar fleet. — *Bill Graham*

ROD EATON IS OUR NEW GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

My father, John, was a railroad man. He worked for the Soo Line. Naturally, as a child, I was given a Lionel train set for Christmas. It was as much my dad's as mine. But when I became serious about model railroading twenty years ago, I had my dad to thank. And it was my interest in model railroading that led me to join the Minnesota Transportation Museum, then volunteer at Como-Harriet three years ago. So I have my dad to thank for that, too.

Now I find myself the new General Superintendent. I really don't know yet if I want to thank my dad again.

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BACK TO THE FUTURE!

A Report to the Volunteers and Friends of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum

Where have we been & how did we get here?

I would be less than honest if I didn't say that I (we?) all feel some amount of sadness as we move on to form the new Minnesota Streetcar Museum. After all, the Minnesota Transportation Museum was founded in 1963 with one streetcar, old No. 1300, and about 20 volunteers who had a dream that someday that streetcar would operate someplace. That someplace turned out to be our Lake Harriet operating site. In 1963 No. 1300 was transferred to the brand-new MTM to preserve it and the Museum's pioneers like **George Isaacs**, **Bill Graham**, **Russ Olson**, **Bill Olsen**, **Fred Rhodes** and others immediately began the process of finding a suitable site to operate "old No. 1300." Luckily they found the near-perfect site—the former Twin City Rapid Transit Company's abandoned Como-Harriet line right-of-way located between Lake Harriet and Lake Calhoun in southwest Minneapolis.

In 1971 the first quarter-mile of track was down and on August 26th of that year the first run was made by No. 1300. MTM had a live operating demonstration railway! Regular operations continued into September and operations have continued every year, rain or shine, up to the present. By 1976, just short of a mile of track with overhead trolley wire carrying a pressure of 600 volts DC now powered No. 1300's four 40-horsepower motors, rather than the 300 volts coming from the gasoline powered generator, the now famous "goat," that No. 1300 had formerly towed and pushed.

Over the years, the Como-Harriet (MTM) volunteers improved the line and the streetcar collection grew. First we obtained and restored Duluth Street Railway No. 265. Then Duluth Street Railway No. 78 was restored. Next came the absolutely fantastic restoration of Twin City Lines PCC car No. 322. And, finally our most recent achievement, TCRT gate car No. 1239. In 1991 the replica of the small 1905 Linden Hills/Lake Harriet station was constructed. In 2004 we assumed operations at the Excelsior Streetcar Line. **What terrific accomplishments we enjoyed over the last 33 years!** And all this was done with donations of time, talent and funds from the volunteers and friends the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line.

Over the years, the numbers of volunteers working at the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line continued to grow until by the late 1990s over 100 men and women worked at our Lake Harriet railway. Some volunteered to operate the streetcars one or twice (or more) a month. Others operated the streetcars and also volunteered to do more "behind the scenes" work such as cashier, trackwork, overhead line repairs, streetcar restoration and maintenance, administration and financial work. All of this is im-

portant work and allowed the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line to gain friends and passengers and to improve the streetcar line.

So what happened to bring us to where we have now formed a "new/old" Museum called the Minnesota Streetcar Museum? What has brought us "back to the future?" I commend to you the article on the top of page one of this newsletter. **Bill Graham**, one of the MTM pioneers, summarizes very well what happened. In short, MTM grew too big, too fast. It took MTM about 10 years and tens of thousands of dollars to find that out. The widely dispersed divisions (operating sites) of MTM became unmanageable and the membership more and more became centered only on their own division. The decision made by the MTM Board, and confirmed on January 4th by the members, resulted in where we are today. We will become separate from MTM and have created the new MSM to preserve our priceless collection of historic streetcars for future generations of Minnesotans.

Lest we forget, while it certainly should be fun to operate our streetcars, we must always keep in mind that as we operate our cars our overriding mission is to safeguard and preserve them—that is our "prime directive" (with thanks to you Star Trek fans).

Look to the Future!

To preserve our collection we incorporated a new museum organization on December 21, 2004 called The Minnesota Streetcar Museum. The first organizational meeting of the MSM Board of Directors was held on Saturday, January 15th. Your interim Board is comprised of the following individuals.

- Jim Vaitkunas—Chair of the Board
- Dave French—Vice Chair of the Board
- Louis Hoffman — Secretary
- Greg Taylor — Treasurer
- Rod Eaton—Member

In addition, **Rod Eaton** was appointed as the first General Superintendent of the new MSM. Rod's "new/old" position has authority and power changed from that formerly enjoyed (or cursed) by previous General Superintendents. This is because under the new MSM structure some of the functions and responsibilities that were assigned to the General Superintendent will now be exercised by the Board of Directors and the several Committees of the Board.

Over the next six months or so your Board will meet on at least a monthly basis to develop the

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(ROD EATON IS NEW GENERAL SUPT. Continued from page 1)

I do know this will be a very exciting year for the Como-Harriet and Excelsior Streetcar Lines. With the incorporation of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum, we now manage our own operations and decide our own future. It's a future that looks very bright. There's a lot to be done and many questions about our new Museum await decisions. But our primary mission will continue to be the restoration, maintenance, and operation of Minnesota's classic streetcars.

We all owe a huge thanks to outgoing General Superintendent Jim Vaitkunas, whose untiring efforts have positioned us to take full advantage of our new organizational status. Additionally, several of our members have worked long and hard on behalf of both the Minnesota Transportation Museum and the new MSM. They deserve our thanks as well. Fortunately, Jim and the others continue to play important roles in the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

As we begin running this spring, the only change most of our passengers will notice is the MSM logo on our

(BACK TO THE FUTURE Continued from page 2)

policies and procedures for the new MSM. We will also have to establish the new management structure, create the new committees and then recruit volunteers to work on the committees. A bookkeeping system needs to be created and new financial and administrative procedures set up. We'll have to do a lot of these functions that were formerly done by MTM. All this will take time and effort. Within the next six to nine months we'll also hold an election to formally constitute the permanent MSM Board of Directors.

How will this affect you, our stalwart and hard working volunteer? In terms of operations you will notice no change. We will train and recertify our crews this spring at both CHSL and ESL and we will call crews and fill the monthly schedules at both operating sites like we have in past years. We plan to conduct special operations and we hope to expand our charter operations through more aggressive marketing at both CHSL and ESL. Your Board hopes you will help with some of the increased responsibilities now that we have become independent of MTM. This has happened already with **John DeWitt** volunteering to be our Membership Services Director and webmaster, and **Bill Arends** agreeing to be our bookkeeper. We will be calling upon some of you to take on increased roles in the new MSM and we hope that when asked you'll say "Yes!"

How will the new MSM affect our passengers? The reorganization and forming the MSM will be virtually transparent to our passengers. When we revise our brochures and wear our new name plates on our shirt

new name badges. And for the majority of our members, it will be business as usual. Operations won't be affected by the reorganization going on behind the scenes. But the changes will create a more flexible, more profitable, more professional Museum.

There will be many opportunities to increase your involvement in the new Minnesota Streetcar Museum. Watch for information in future issues of *Currents*, or ask what you might do. The Museum wouldn't be what it is today without the help you've given, and it can't move forward without the help you'll give.

Growing up in Minneapolis, I rode the streetcars. It's fun to think I may have ridden No. 1300 downtown with my mother. And now on warm summer evenings, motoring along Lake Calhoun as the sun sets, I think how fortunate I am to be able to share our unique streetcar history with our guests. Thanks to all of you who help make that possible.

And thanks, dad.

Rod Eaton – General Superintendent

pockets some of our more knowledgeable passengers (our frequent flyers and season pass holders) might ask you: "What happened to MTM? What is this new MSM? Why did you guys separate?" These are certainly legitimate questions and we plan to prepare you for them. At recertification training in April we will give you a short fact sheet so you can answer these questions. Right now we have no plans to raise our basic \$2.00 fare. However we may adjust the rates for our special multi-ride and all day passes and tickets to reflect the fact that MSM members will get a certain number of free rides on the streetcars as a membership benefit.

How about membership dues? That's one question that your Board cannot yet answer. We have already discussed the issue but have yet to come to consensus. Regarding MTM'S dues, we really don't know yet what they plan to do regarding their membership dues. They may leave it at \$60 or perhaps reduce it by some amount. Your Board will have to establish membership dues for MSM. The question is how much should those dues be? Our dues certainly won't be \$60 we can assure you—they'll probably be half that or perhaps even less this first year. We hope to have an answer for you by the end of February when we plan to send out to you an MSM membership notice.

These will be busy and exciting times! Your Board will try our best to keep you informed over the coming months and to make the transition to the new MSM as smooth as possible. With your help and encouragement we can do it. Won't you help us?

Jim Vaitkunas—Chair of the MSM Board of Directors

Streetcar *CURRENTS* February 2005

Streetcar *CURRENTS* IS A PERIODIC NEWSLETTER FOR THE VOLUNTEERS AND FRIENDS OF THE MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ITEMS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE *Streetcar CURRENTS* IS MARCH 20, 2005.

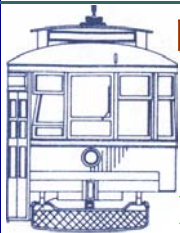
PLEASE SEND ITEMS TO JIM VAITKUNAS AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

155 CHAPARRAL DR.,

APPLE VALLEY, MN 55124-9774

YOU CAN SEND INPUT OR INQUIRIES BY

E-MAIL TO: jvaitkunas@msn.com



MINNESOTA STREETCAR
MUSEUM

COMO-HARRIET
STREETCAR LINE

EXCELSIOR STREETCAR LINE

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- February 26 MSM Membership Meeting, Linden Hills Park House 9:30 AM
- April & May Training and recertification at CHSL and ESL
- April 30 Opening Day for 2005 season for CHSL and ESL—beginning of weekend service at CHSL & ESL
- May 20 Beginning of daily service at CHSL
- May 21 & 22 Linden Hills festival weekend
- May 27 & 28 Special Operations for the *Central Electric Railfans' Association* at CHSL (27th) and ESL (28th)
- May 30 Special Memorial Day "Early Bird" service to Lake-wood Cemetery begins at 9:00 AM at CHSL

MSM Membership Meeting Saturday — February 26, 2005

Linden Hills Park House, 3100 West 43rd Street (43rd & Xerxes Ave S.) — 9:30 AM

Mark your calendars now and please attend

TEA-21 TRACK REBUILDING PROJECT UPDATE

The public bid opening for our TEA-21 track rebuilding project was held on Tuesday, February 1st at the Hennepin County building in downtown Minneapolis. The result of this bid opening was disappointing, with all the bids coming in well over the maximum amount of funds we are allocated by our TEA-21 grant. Our consulting engineers, SRF Consulting Group, will analyze the bids and will make recommendations on the next step that we need to take.

We don't know yet why the bids came in high, as the bid analysis has not yet been done. We suspect one contributing factor was that prices for relay grade steel rails has doubled within the last year. The fact that we had an initial requirement to have all the work done by Memorial day may also have had something to do with it. Meeting federal guidelines for wages paid and other governmental requirements certainly played a part in inflating the final bids.

What's next? We'll have to take a look at the bids and make some adjustments to the scope of the work. Some parts of the project will have to be severely cut back or eliminated. Then the project will have to be let out for bids again and hopefully one will be at or below the amount of allocated funds. One thing seems clear, however. This re-bidding process will delay the start of work until sometime after Memorial Day. We'll have to negotiate with the contractor on this and try to reduce the impact of the work on our regular and charter operations.

MSM BOARD CALLS GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Board of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum has called a special membership meeting for Saturday, February 26th, at 9:30 AM. Location is the Linden Hills Park house located at the intersection of Xerxes Avenue and West 43rd Street.

The purpose of the meeting is to give you, the volunteers of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum, more information on the new MSM and to give you the chance to ask questions of your interim Board regarding the new MSM. As it was so well stated by someone last December when the special meeting on January 4th was announced: "I felt like I came in the movie and it was already half-over." Well, your Board doesn't want you to have this same feeling this time.

Besides briefing you on the on-going efforts to organize the new MSM we will also discuss other issues and topics. These will include, but not be limited to: MSM dues structure; forming of new MSM Committees; the new organizational structure of the MSM; up-coming recertification training; and, other topics of interest.

This will be an important initial informational membership meeting and we hope you can attend. Please try to do so.