

MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM



Streetcar CURRENTS



September 2008

Minneapolis & Excelsior, Minnesota



Fall Special Events are coming up!

- Volunteer to help fill the crew requirements for the various events
- When you get the promotional flyers for the special events put them up in as many locations as you can
- Encourage your friends and neighbors to attend the special events or just to ride on the weekend



Inside This Issue

From the Front Platform	2
Museum Adventure pass program	3
MSM Annual Picnic will be held on 9-28-08	3
Lake Harriet 9-11 Tribute Concert	3
Upcoming Events	4
Winona No. 10 Update	4

Masthead Photo: There aren't many photos of No. 1300 in regular service and most were taken in the early 1950s. This murky photo shows No. 1300 at Eustis and Como Avenue on an Inter-Campus run in September of 1953. (MSM photo archive)

General Superintendent's Notes

Rod Eaton

For a few weeks this summer we stopped at the 42nd Street crossing going in either direction, even when a Flagman was present in the intersection. This was a serious response to the fact that some of us were crossing the street too fast.

There was lots of discussion about the safety stop policy. Some thought it was a good idea while others hated it. No one, of course, thought they had been operating too fast. In my opinion the discussion was a good thing. It focused our attention on the problem and created high awareness of the safety issues the policy addressed.

The stop order was lifted a week or so ago and I'm hoping the safety awareness will carry through for years to come. We can never operate too safely. Appropriate speeds are important. Constant alertness is essential. Most auto accidents happen near your home in surroundings which with you're most familiar. We operate our streetcars over a short line the majority of us could draw from memory. It's easy to become complacent and inattentive.

I operated at Como-Harriet on a Friday evening in the middle of August. It's surprising how quickly it gets dark at this time of the year. Even with our battery ditch lights on, forward and rearward visibility isn't great. Speeds should be reduced a little more for those late evening runs. I like to use the front and rear foot gongs frequently at all times, and I use them even more as it grows darker.

We've had an enviable safety record over the years and we need to maintain that performance. During the safety stop debate, one person pointed out that we have never had a serious accident at 42nd Street (if you don't count an automobile hitting our streetcar a serious accident). But that argument avoids this reality: our first serious accident might possibly mark the end of our operations. **Safety is everyone's business.**

On a much lighter note, September 28th is the date for this year's museum picnic. It'll be held at the Excelsior Car barn and you'll find more information about the event elsewhere in this *Streetcar Currents*.

I refer to this annual event as our "Company Picnic." I never went to a streetcar company picnic, but for many years I attended the Soo Line Company Picnic. It was a tremendous event. Hundreds of Twin Cities Soo employees and their families boarded a special excursion train which took us to exotic places like Luck, Wisconsin for the day. In addition to the great ride there would be food, games, and prizes.

Our company picnic also features great streetcar rides (you might even drive), food, fun and a chance to talk with other volunteers you might not see much throughout the year. The picnic is a way for our museum to say thanks for a terrific summer. I hope you'll make plans to attend. ☺



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 is:

P.O. Box 14467, University Station
 Minneapolis, MN 55414-0467
 952-922-1096

Streetcar *CURRENTS*
September 2008

Jim Vaitkunas—Editor
 Bill Graham—Distribution

Streetcar *CURRENTS* is a periodic newsletter for the members and friends of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum.

Deadline for submitting items for the next issue of the **Streetcar *CURRENTS*** is September 20, 2008.

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

155 Chaparral Dr.
 Apple Valley, MN 55124-9774

You can send input or enquiries by e-mail to: jvaitkunas@msn.com

From the Front Platform *Dave*

Hello again, everyone! This month I want to share with you a few random thoughts about our favorite museum.

One advantage of being on the Museum's Board of Directors is that it allows me to know more about what's going on behind the scenes of our museum. Jim and Aaron do a great job of updating us in the *Currents* and *Twin City Lines*, but of course they can only summarize the many activities. You can take it from me that there is an amazing amount of work that constantly occurs. **Every day** someone somewhere is working hard on a project to make our museum better. Most organizations know it is easy to come up with a hundred ideas for what "should" be done, but finding the people to do the grunt work to make that idea a reality is much more difficult. Thousands of hours of volunteer time have already been graciously donated by many people this year. Just a few of these projects include: the Isaacs carbarn sprinkler project; enrolling MSM in the public library/museum partnership; the promotion, scheduling, and operation of charters; making media contacts to get "free" advertising; meeting with public officials to get the Wirth Park shelter project moving; soliciting grants from foundations and companies; the ongoing effort to sell our surplus Baldwin trucks; selling memorabilia on eBay; getting ready for the Pumpkin, Ghost, and Holly trolleys; the list could go on and on. And of course, this doesn't include the "normal" behind the scenes efforts of our restoration and maintenance crews, keeping our financial house in order, scheduling crews, training, etc. All of this dynamic activity makes it possible for our visitors to be greeted by a smiling volunteer and board a pristine trolley for a journey to the past. To all of you, I say thank you for all this hard work that does not always get noticed and recognized as much as it should be.

We recently had an accident at Excelsior that resulted in significant damage to the carbarn door. I would bet that every one of us has had an accident in our "real" life outside of MSM where we said afterwards, "How could I possibly have done that?" For me, I usually add "How could I be so *dumb!*?" Yes, almost all accidents occur because someone made a mistake. The good thing is we can significantly reduce the chance of accident by constantly remaining alert and thinking about what we are doing. Many accidents occur not when we are doing something new, but when we do something we've done a hundred times before. Operations at MSM are

susceptible to this because every trip on the streetcar is much like the one before. It can become so routine that pretty soon we don't do much thinking while we are at the controls. It takes discipline to make ourselves focus and think about how we are going to run safely every time we release the brake and pull out the controller. One way to do this is to review the Sequence of Operations for the line you are running on. Have you picked up some bad habits that go against the SOO? Let's all resolve to make sure we are running correctly and safely on our next shift!

We recently made a temporary rule at CHSL requiring the car to stop at 42nd St. even if there is a Flagman in the street. Our intention was to remind everyone to run slowly between the North switch, the station and the south side of 42nd. Of course, this generated some controversy and there was a flurry (well, more like a



(Continued on page 4)

Museum Adventure Pass Program

Aaron Isaacs

Effective Sept. 4th, MSM is part of the Museum Adventure Pass network. **John Diers** did the legwork to sign us up. We have issued a special Passenger Services bulletin with all the details on the Adventure pass. But here's a quick synopsis.

The passes, which allow free admissions to over 20 metro area museums, are issued by 106 public libraries around the metro area on a first-come, first served basis. Library customers "check out" the pass for one week, then it expires. Each pass is good for 2 free rides on our streetcars. The pass holders will present us with one of those little paper computer-printer library check-out receipts, the same ones you get when you check out a book. It will say "Pass for 2: Fire, Rail & Streetcar," followed by the due date (expiration date). Our volunteer collects the pass and the people get a free ride.

The passes won't be honored for special events like

the Halloween Trolley and the Holly Trolley. Most of the passes are designated for a specific museum. In MSM's case, we are grouped with the Minnesota Transportation Museum and the Firefighters Hall and Museum. It says so on the pass. Each pass can be used at only one of the three museums.

So why are we giving away free rides? In exchange for some heavy duty advertising, plus some good market feedback. Macy's funds the program, which includes considerable free advertising in the Star-Tribune and on KARE11, with our museum name prominently mentioned. We can also place our brochures in most of the area libraries, along with 11X17 posters. The feedback includes computer reports on which libraries issued the passes.

Our enrollment in the Adventure Pass Program lasts one year, until September 2009. At that time we'll decide whether to renew for another year.

MSM Annual Family Picnic Set for Sunday, September 28th

Our third annual MSM family Picnic will be held on Sunday, September 28th at our Museum's Excelsior car barn. Please circle that date on your calendar. Start time is 12 Noon. We'll provide the usual—brats, burgers, pop and condiments. We ask that attendees bring a side item such as potato salad, chips, etc. Besides the usual streetcar rides we'll offer guest operations for those who might want to operate a streetcar but are not yet trained.

Last year we had a good turn out at the Isaacs car barn at Lake Harriet. This year, we hope to see even more of us at Excelsior. This is a nice opportunity to get together socially and share our streetcar passion with our families and friends. It's also a chance to meet Museum members you might not know well but with whom you share a common interest. So come, bring something to share, have a brat or burger, and enjoy the company (see photo above). See **YOU** at the picnic.



We're Invited!

The 7th Annual 9-11 Tribute will again be produced by our good volunteer **Bob Bayers** on 9-11-2008. It will take place at the Lake Harriet Band Shell like it has each year since 9-11-2002. This great event attracts over 2,000 people to see the concert put on by over 130 volunteer orchestra and chorus members. This event is not just for people living in our Linden Hills neighborhood—anyone can come and enjoy the music and pay tribute to those who fell on that terrible day. Our streetcars will not operate on this night because it gets dark too early. But still come and enjoy the music. Go to the 9-11 Tribute website for more info: <http://our911tribute.com/>



What's Happening?

September 5	Last day of weekday CHSL service. Weekends only until the end of November.
September 6	Excelsior's annual "Apple days" festival. ESL streetcar ops begin at 9:00 AM.
September 7	Last day of weekend ESL service. Thursdays only thru the end of October.
September 13	Moonlight Trolley ride at CHSL. Special run starts at 10 PM.
September 28	MSM annual family picnic at the Excelsior Streetcar Line starts at 12 Noon
October 4	Streetcar Cleaning at CHSL starts at 9 AM. Juice & rolls will be provided

Winona No. 10 Update

Bob Johnson—ESL Superintendent

Have you ever wondered what kinds of activities are necessary to reconstruct a streetcar? In the words of Ken Albrecht, a lot of it involves "Forensic Engineering." Much like in a detective story, our reconstruction crews not only have to disassemble a streetcar in order to fix it, they have to figure out how the streetcar was originally built. Winona No. 10 is a good case in point. **George Ittner, Ken Albrecht, Jim Willmore, Tom Fairbairn, and Marsh Ginthner** have been engaged in removal of the vestibules on both ends of Winona 10 in order to have them refurbished. The plan is to break down the vestibules into roof, sides and floor sections.

Special fixtures have been designed and constructed by **Ken Albrecht** to hold the vestibule roofs in alignment once they were removed from the car. This is to protect them from losing their shape. The vestibule roofs are very fragile and would be very difficult to construct from scratch because they have compound curves requiring special techniques to construct. The plan right now is to leave the vestibule roofs at Excelsior so regular **George Ittner** and others can complete the rehabilitation of the roofs.

The sides, including the door frames and window frames hold special challenges. The posts are not square. They were cut with angles to match the round end of the vestibule, and have unique methods of joinery at the base of the posts. The posts support the roof and include slots for the windows. The bottoms are set into an oak sill with unique shapes in the connecting joints. These posts have rotted and need to be repaired. Here again, it is difficult to cut a new post from scratch so the old rotted material will be removed and replaced with new wood sections cut to

match the old profiles. The floor has holes cut in it that tell us how the various streetcar controls were installed. These were measured and documented so a new floor can be installed.

All this activity is governed by the original dimensions of the streetcar. As the project progresses, special techniques are needed to measure the car so everything fits together when the car is re-assembled. One hazard is what I call "measurement creep." As the car is restored, random errors can cause significant problems. A minor error during the restoration can lead to such problems and doors or windows don't fit.

Our museum is fortunate to have an outstanding restoration capability. We have restored several streetcars and have developed good working relationships with other museums where we share knowledge on best practices and how to avoid the pitfalls while sharing good restoration lessons learned.

Next issue we will discuss some challenges our restoration crews have met in working on the rest of Winona No. 10. ☺



Here's **George Ittner** refinishing a vestibule end post.

(From the Front Platform... Continued from page 2)

blizzard) of e-mail traffic regarding this change. Several members were strongly opposed, but believe me when I tell you that this is a *good* thing. It shows that people really care about MSM! One thing that can make people in any organization unhappy is when they feel like the leadership is not listening to them. I can assure you that we are listening. You will not always get what you want but all opinions are carefully considered.

Well, that's all for now, and I hope you will look at the schedules in September and for the ghost trolley and Santa trolley at ESL and CHSL and help us out by signing-up. I guarantee you will have fun! ☺