

## The Christmas Tree Ship

In the years following the Civil War, Chicago was one of the great grain and lumber shipping centers of the world. From the prairies of the great Middle West came the golden grain for shipment east to the industrial Atlantic seaboard and even to the European continent beyond. From the forests of Michigan's dual peninsula, where the greatest lumbering operations in history were taking place, came schooner loads of finished lumber for trans-shipment westward to the treeless plains then rapidly opening up to settlement thru the magic of the Homestead Act. As the hub of these great pipelines of supply and demand, her harbor was cluttered with marine activity almost wholly restricted to sail craft.

One of these ships was the *Rouse Simmons*, a fine three-masted schooner Milwaukee built in 1868. Slightly more than 200 tons burden, the vessel's hull measured 125 feet in length and 27 feet across her beam, about the average for a "fore and after" laker. Her hold measured slightly more than 8 feet, governed by the depth of navigable rivers, harbors and channels of that day. The vessel was built by Kenosha shipping interests and named for a local merchant. In her first five years of service the *Rouse Simmons* plied between Manistee and Chicago, her hold filled with scantling and her deck piled high with joist, basic products of the lumber industry.

In 1873 the *Rouse Simmons* came into the hands of Charles H. Hackley of Muskegon and remained part of his fleet for a quarter of a century. During her career in and out of Chicago harbor, the vessel was credited with more than a thousand cargoes and her experiences were those of the average lake sailing schooner. Several times she left her cat-head and jibboom on one or another of Chicago's bridges. In a fog-bound collision with another schooner, she narrowly escaped her own destruction. Waterspouts, storms and squalls tore her sail-cloth, rigging and ratlines, broke her spars and tackle. Once she sank in Traverse Bay area but was raised, refitted and sailed again. Another time the vessel was dismantled in a violent storm and left helpless in mid-lake.

When the forests of Michigan ran out, Hackley sold his fleet and while other lumber barons ran off to greener fields he stayed behind in Muskegon to rebuild the fortunes of the once great sawdust city. Hackley left behind schools, a library, an art gallery and a public park well stocked with meaningful statuary and one would like to think some of these benefits were paid for out of the *Rouse Simmons'* earnings.

In the declining years of her maritime career the *Rouse Simmons* was owned by mariners, that is, captains who owned their ship. In a sense she was a tramp, picking up a cargo of lumber, logs or cedar posts as opportunity afforded.

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## **Christmas Tree Ship Commemoration**

The 75th anniversary of the loss of the Rouse Simmons will be observed in November of 1987. The Press of the Rampant Lion will commemorate the event with a philatelic tribute that will certainly meet with the wishes of stamp and cover collectors as well as post card enthusiasts. The tribute will take the form of twenty (20) 8½ x 11" — 140 lb. basis white index bristol album pages, on which will be mounted (in protective clear plastic polybags) six (6) cacheted post cards mailed on the anniversary dates (November 22-23, 1987) from Thompson and St. James, Michigan; Kewau-nee, Two Rivers and Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Chicago, Illinois. Added to this will be twelve (12), post cards especially published for this collectors item only, printed with scenes and illustrations relevant to the schooner, Rouse Simmons. The text will take the form of a running story of the vessel's 44 year career, her demise and subsequent discovery of her resting place (1971) by a scuba diver with significant recovery of some relics and artifacts. Throughout the text another dozen illustrations will tell the story of the Golden Age of Sailing Ships on the Great Lakes and the important contributions made by the schooners to the commerce of a Young America, as well as its perilous dangers. This entire collection will be assembled in a specially printed and finished portfolio for safe keeping on a bookshelf or wherever one keeps their valued collections.

This appropriate and timely collectors item should be of interest to philatelists, post card collectors as well as libraries and institutions of learning involved in visual education material. Already several institutional orders have been recorded. The item will be available in two styles; (1) Punched for three ring binder, printed slightly off center to the right; (2) Unpunched and printed in the center.

The item is limited to an edition of 500 numbered copies, signed by the editor, Theodore S. Charrney. Numbers will be issued in sequence as orders are received. Delivery will be by First Class Certified Mail or U.P.S. on *February 25, 1988* or possibly a few days earlier.

Pre-publication price \$25.00. Should any copies remain after *February 25, 1988* the price will be \$35.00. Remittances will be confirmed with reservation number.

**Make check payable to Theodore S. Charrney**

**SATISFACTION GUARANTEED**

**Returnable for full refund if not found satisfactory.**



**Rampant Lion**  
5358 Bloomingdale Avenue  
Chicago Illinois 60639



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"The Christmas Tree Ship" project has met the same fate as the Rouse Simmons itself. I am truly sorry, at this time, that I ever began the commemorative device considering the series of misfortunes that have dogged me for the past seven months. My interest in the project was and is a selfish one. I have a lengthy manuscript on the theme, researched and prepared over several years and now under consideration for publication, so I could hardly be faulted in my desire to commemorate, in some way, the 75th anniversary of the luckless ship's sinking.

Although I had personal funds, almost sufficient, to pursue the enterprise, the plea for pre-publication orders (such as yours) fell far short of the projected number required when compared to the monumental promotional costs. A preferred list of 1400 potential subscribers was contacted with a disappointing yield of only 2%. Subsequent inquiries from promotional press releases yielded only a dozen additional orders.

Nevertheless I was prepared financially to proceed as planned when I suffered a fractured ankle in early fall. The delay occasioned by this accident, plus medical expenses, (I am 79 years old living on a fixed income that is barely adequate) set me back a couple of months until I could re-finance with my annual calendar business (Nov./Dec.). With the necessary funds on hand I again suffered a refracture of the same ankle early in January, stripping me of my finances a second time. Although the project is 60% complete, I am unable to wrap it up until mid-summer based upon the finances (or lack of them) on hand and anticipated.

To have tried your patience for so long and inconvenienced you as well, I am truly sorry and ask your forgiveness. Enclosed is my check for the refund of your remittance and cancellation of your order. I am both grateful and happy for your support, thus far, and only wish I could have delivered as promised but it was not to be.

Apologetically,

Theodore S. Charney



# The PRESS of the RAMPANT LION

THEODORE S. CHARRNEY

5358 BLOOMINGDALE AVENUE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60639

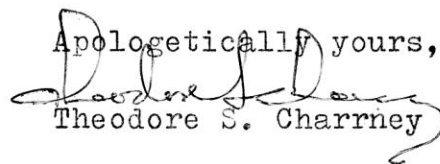
Dear Subscriber:

It is with regret that I must inform you of a further delay in the delivery of "The Christmas Tree Ship" item you have on order with me. For one thing, some medical problems have plagued me during the winter. Furthermore, a necessary change in one of the post offices created a time consuming search for suitable replacement illustrative material as an alternative. Some funding problems too, have had a tendency to delay certain aspects of the project. Frankly, I bit off more than I could comfortably chew. Nevertheless, these problems are all behind me now and I can concentrate on completion.

A definite date is impossible to predict but it will be in April, middle of the month hopefully, but it will be in April. More haste would only sacrifice the high standard I have set for the publication of this unique item, so dear to my heart.

Your patience has already been sorely tried but I must ask for your continued compliance a short time longer.

Apologetically yours,

  
Theodore S. Charrney



RESERVATION ORDER



Rampant Lion

5358 Bloomingdale Avenue  
Chicago Illinois 60639

Enter my [our] order for 1 sets of the tribute to the Christmas Tree Ship at the pre-publication price of \$25.00 per set. [Make check or money order payable to Theodore S. Charrney].

Confirmation and Reservation Number will be sent by return mail.

**SATISFACTION GUARANTEED!**

Returnable for full refund if not found completely satisfactory.

Delivery; February 25, 1988.

Name Mrs. MIRON CGRS  
Address 103 No. 3rd St  
City/State Manistique MI  
49854

