

The "Rouse Simmons" Inquiry

THEODORE S. CHARRNEY
3737 ARMITAGE AVENUE
PHONE CApitol 7-5150
CHICAGO 47, ILLINOIS

Jan. 4, 1967

Florence Meron
103 North Third St.
Manistiquette Mi. 49854

Dear Mrs. Meron- Copy of letter sent to Mrs. Imogene Herbert from my files. This may help in the collections for the museum records. She is so proud of.

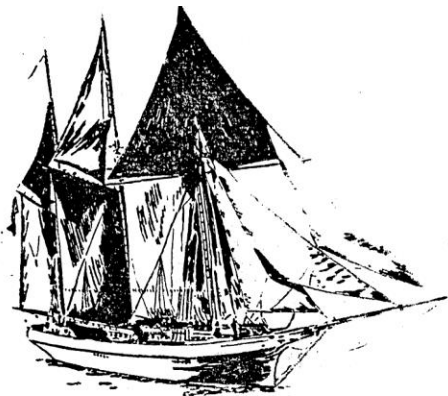
COPY OF LETTER -DATED 1/2/67 Mrs. Frank Weber of your city kindly sent me the clipping from the Pioneer Tribune of December 15th last about the "New Chapter Possible in Yule Ship Legend."

As you probably have gathered from this letterhead, I am making a study of the entire ship's history from its construction in Milwaukee in 1868 thru its final voyage in November of 1912. I have about seventeen three ring binders full of manuscript material and am in the process of writing a book (full length) on the subject.

If I were you I would not take Mr. Hansen's remarks on the ship too literally. All in all the book on the Chicago River is a fine book, but in the comments on the Rouse Simmons, Mr. Hansen took advantage of the poetic license that author's so often avail themselves of.

The Schuenemann's actually brought trees into Chicago as early as 1884, and I have little doubt even earlier ~~early~~ but I cannot substantiate prior to the date given. In 1884, August was the head of the enterprise and was about 33 years old at the time. Herman was 19 and probably did not accompany August at that early stage. Within a few years Herman doubtless came along with his older brother but it was not until 1892 before Herman began bringing in his own cargoes. August butchered his trees along what was know as the Christmas Tree Coast, but actually the Michigan shore of Door County, Wisconsin. When he foundered in the THAL off Glencoe, Illinois on November 11, 1898 his cargo came from Jacksonport, Door County, Wisconsin.

From the earliest times that Herman operated ships he always came to Schoolcraft County and usually tied up at Thompson, although the ship list in the newspaper always mentioned Manistiquette as the port of departure.



The "Rouse Simmons" Inquiry

THEODORE S. CHARRNEY
3737 ARMITAGE AVENUE
PHONE CApitol 7-5150
CHICAGO 47, ILLINOIS

January 2, 1967

Mrs. J. J. Herbert
Schoolcraft County Historical Society
728 Range Street
Manistique Michigan 49854

Dear Mrs. Herbert:

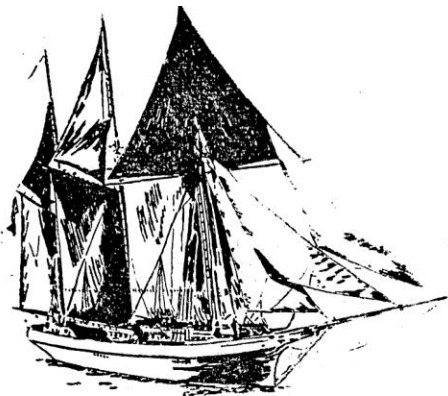
Mrs. Frank Weber of your city kindly sent me the clipping from the Pioneer Tribune of December 15th last about the "New Chapter Possible in Yule Ship Legend."

As you probably have gathered from this letterhead, I am making a study of the entire ship's history from its construction in Milwaukee in 1868 thru its final voyage in November of 1912. I have about seventeen three ring binders full of manuscript material and am in the process of writing a book (full length) on the subject.

If I were you I would not take Mr. Hansen's remarks on the ship too literally. All in all the book on the Chicago River is a fine book, but in the comments on the Rouse Simmons, Mr. Hansen took advantage of the poetic license that author's so often avail themselves of.

The Schuenemann's actually brought trees into Chicago as early as 1884, and I have little doubt even earlier ~~early~~ but I cannot substantiate prior to the date given. In 1884, August was the head of the enterprise and was about 33 years old at the time. Herman was 19 and probably did not accompany August at that early stage. Within a few years Herman doubtless came along with his older brother but it was not until 1892 before Herman began bringing in his own cargoes. August butchered his trees along what was know as the Christmas Tree Coast, but actually the Michigan shore of Door County, Wisconsin. When he foundered in the THAL off Glencoe, Illinois on November 11, 1898 his cargo came from Jacksonport, Door County, Wisconsin.

From the earliest times that Herman operated ships he always came to Schoolcraft County and usually tied up at Thompson, although the ship list in the newspaper always mentioned Manistique as the port of departure.



The "Rouse Simmons" Inquiry

THEODORE S. CHARRNEY
3737 ARMITAGE AVENUE
PHONE CApitol 7-5150
CHICAGO 47, ILLINOIS

January 2, 1967

Mrs. J. J. Herbert
Schoolcraft County Historical Society
728 Range Street
Manistique Michigan 49854

Dear Mrs. Herbert:

Mrs. Frank Weber of your city kindly sent me the clipping from the Pioneer Tribune of December 15th last about the "New Chapter Possible in Yule Ship Legend."

As you probably have gathered from this letterhead, I am making a study of the entire ship's history from its construction in Milwaukee in 1868 thru its final voyage in November of 1912. I have about seventeen three ring binders full of manuscript material and am in the process of writing a book (full length) on the subject.

If I were you I would not take Mr. Hansen's remarks on the ship too literally. All in all the book on the Chicago River is a fine book, but in the comments on the Rouse Simmons, Mr. Hansen took advantage of the poetic license that author's so often avail themselves of.

The Schuenemann's actually brought trees into Chicago as early as 1884, and I have little doubt even earlier ~~early~~ but I cannot substantiate prior to the date given. In 1884, August was the head of the enterprise and was about 33 years old at the time. Herman was 19 and probably did not accompany August at that early stage. Within a few years Herman doubtless came along with his older brother but it was not until 1892 before Herman began bringing in his own cargoes. August butchered his trees along what was know as the Christmas Tree Coast, but actually the Michigan shore of Door County, Wisconsin. When he foundered in the THAL off Glencoe, Illinois on November 11, 1898 his cargo came from Jacksonport, Door County, Wisconsin.

From the earliest times that Herman operated ships he always came to Schoolcraft County and usually tied up at Thompson, although the ship list in the newspaper always mentioned Manistique as the port of departure.

The "Rouse Simmons" Inquiry

- 2 -

In the beginning (1892) Herman's ship was the JOSEPHINE DRESDEN, and a year or two later he shipped in the MAGGIE DALL although he did not own her but merely chartered for the voyage. By 1896 he owned a fine three-sticker, the MARY COLLINS and traded with her until the fall of 1900, when he accidentally ran her aground at Point Aux Barques about 12 miles south of Manistique when he mistook a light in a house on shore for the light at Thompson harbor. It was early in October and he continued to collect a cargo of greens while his friend, Captain Charles Nelson came up in his ship the IDA, to bring them back to Chicago.

In 1901 and 1902, Herman sailed in the JESSE PHILLIPS and then abandoned her and bought the CHARLES L. WRENN which he used thru 1909. In 1910 he bought a piece (25%) of the ROUSE SIMMONS and used her the next three seasons including the fatal voyage. *Am having trouble with the ribbon slide on my type writer*

It is true that the distaff side of the family then took over operations but I have very little faith in the story that the women sailed the ships. Shortly after the tragedy Elsie and the Captain's widow, Barbara, paid a visit to Manistique vicinity to gather what information they could and to have an affidavit signed by the store keeper who provided the ship's groceries. This was necessary to collect on a life insurance policy since there was no corpus delicti. Barbara evidently sounded out prospects of continuing the Christmas tree venture and did come to Thompson in 1913, but by train. As the collecting of the greens progressed a ship came in good time and carried away the cargo and Barbara returned by train, being sure to be in Chicago before the arrival of the ship. When newsmen came aboard to interview her, the impression that she sailed on the voyage was given them. Soon Elsie, the oldest girl who was born on board one of Herman's ship, took as active a part in the venture as Barbara. Every year they commercialized on the tragedy but by 1916, with war approaching their German sounding name did not stand them in good stead and although they continued the business it was on a much smaller footing. The trees were now brought in by train and transferred to a small ship at the traditional Clark Street Bridge site. By 1920, the anchorage was taken by another merchant and the Schuenemann women moved up Clark Street a couple of blocks north. The development of Wacker Drive soon replaced South Water Street and the city was now too large to have a central market. Merchants all over the city were selling Christmas trees. Soon the Schuenemann women moved up near their home in the Lincoln Park area and always at Christmas maintained a tree market, but certainly not in the dimensions it was carried on under the captain. Barbara died in June 1933 and was buried in Acacia cemetery on the northwest side. The girls Elsie and the twins, Pearl and Hazel, had a stone placed on the grave and inscribed with both the father and mother's name and between the two names a Christmas tree is graven in the stone.

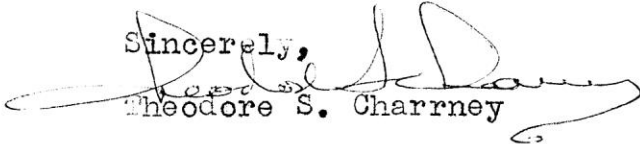
The "Rouse Simmons" Inquiry

I have been their several times. Elsie passed away 14 years ago and is buried by her mother but has no stone. I met Hazel a couple of times a few years ago. She is a retired gymnasium teacher and must be well up in her sixties by now. Pearl was a housewife and had some history of mental illness. I never met her though I did speak to her over the phone. Both Pearl and Hazel are uncommunicative and the information they gave me as to dates etc., are not born out by some vital statistics I have collected on my own.

In your newspaper article you ask that anyone who knows the family should contact you. I dare say some people around your area have done this. If you are a true historian you will have them prepare recollections and then have them neatly typed out and let them sign them. In this way you will have a lasting record and time is a wasting for such oldsters will not be with us long. Should you collect such memoranda I should like very much to have copies of it for my records and will willingly pay to have such copies made and sent to me.

There is little I do not know about the Rouse Simmons. I am still trying to fill in on two important episodes in her career. Once in October 1903, she was scuttled intentionally to keep her from breaking up on the pilings when a fierce Nor'easter struck rapidly. This happened at Torch Lake in the Grand Traverse area. She was raised, wintered at Charlevoix and then crossed the lake to Sturgeon bay to be refitted. But the next October she was dismasted in Lake Michigan while carrying a load of slabs from Beaver Island to Milwaukee. She wallowed helplessly in the storm for 38 hours until the ~~the~~ Grand Trunk R R Car Ferry en route from Milw to Grand Haven took her in tow and brought her to port (Milwaukee). She was refitted and refloated and carried on as valiantly as ~~she~~ had since her building. She was a fine ship and will tell the story of the great age of sail on the Great Lakes if I have my own way and with God's help.

Sincerely,


Theodore S. Charrney