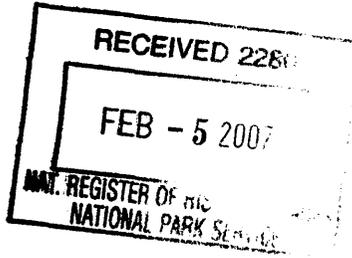


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**United States Department of Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name "Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck
other names/site number N/A

2. Location Lake

street & number	6 miles off Point Beach	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Lake Michigan	X	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI county Manitowoc	code 071	zip code 54241

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 1/31/07
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

"Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck

Manitowoc County

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Edson H Beall

3-21-07

Jan

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- structure
- site
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> contributing | <input type="checkbox"/> noncontributing |
| 1 | buildings |
| | sites |
| | structures |
| | objects |
| 1 | 0 total |

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)

Great Lakes Shipwrecks of Wisconsin

Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

TRANSPORTATION / Water Related

Current Functions

VACANT / Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

OTHER -Three-masted, double centerboard lumber schooner

Materials

Foundation N/A

walls

N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

"Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck
Name of Property

Manitowoc
County and State

Wisconsin

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHAEOLOGY / HISTORIC - NON-ABORIGINAL
MARITIME HISTORY
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1868 - 1912

Significant Dates

1868

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Euro-American

Architect/Builder

Allan, McClelland, & Company

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

"Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck
Name of Property

Manitowoc
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 466932 4902759
 Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
 Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
 Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
 Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Rochelle Pennington, Keith Meverden, and Tamara Thomsen	date	7/3/06
organization	Wisconsin Historical Society, Maritime Preservation	telephone	608.221.5909
street & number	816 State Street	zip code	53706
city or town	Madison	state	WI

"Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck
Name of Property

Manitowoc County
County and State

Wisconsin

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Bureau of Facilities and Lands	date	7/3/06
organization	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	telephone	608.267.2764
street&number	PO Box 7921	zip code	53707
city or town	Madison	state	WI

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

"Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck
Manitowoc County, Wisconsin

Summary

Twelve miles northeast of Two Rivers, Wisconsin, and six miles east of Point Beach, in 170 feet of water lies the wreck of the schooner *Rouse Simmons*. Built in Milwaukee in 1868, the wreck of the double-centerboard lumber schooner offers divers the challenging and unique experience of visiting an intact nineteenth century wooden schooner. Lost with all hands in a violent gale in November 1912, the *Rouse Simmons* is remarkably intact considering her forty-four year career on the Great Lakes as a lumber schooner, as well as her final battle with a Lake Michigan storm. The *Rouse Simmons* represents a rare Great Lakes vessel type – a double centerboard schooner. Built for the Lake Michigan lumber trade, it is unknown why some builders equipped their vessels with double centerboards, while the majority of Great Lakes builders installed only one. Little documentation exists in the historic literature regarding double centerboard schooners, and the *Rouse Simmons* is one of only three double centerboarders known to exist in Wisconsin waters, making her an important archaeological resource for the Great Lakes region.

Description

The *Rouse Simmons* was located by diver Kent Bellrichard on 30 October 1971, twelve miles northeast of Two Rivers, Wisconsin. She lies intact on an even keel, buried in the lakebed up to her light load line on a heading of 330 degrees. Her deck lies at a depth of 155 feet, with scours in the lake bottom around her bow and stern reaching a depth of 170 feet. She is in remarkably good condition after sailing 44 years on the Great Lakes, with an additional 94 years lying submerged on the Lake Michigan bottom. The hull is nearly stripped bare of paint, but several patches of paint remain visible on her outer hull. Originally green, her hull was repainted blue some time prior to her loss. Her standing rigging was painted red. During the survey dives, several survey divers discovered traces of bright yellow paint on their dive gear, most likely from areas around the forecabin. Much of the *Rouse Simmons* is now covered by a layer of zebra or quagga mussels, which cover most of the wreck to a depth of about one inch. The hull's overall dimensions are 131.8 ft. in length and 26.8 ft. in beam.

The hull lists slightly to starboard with a slight twist along her length. The windlass deck lists 4 degrees to starboard, but quarterdeck lists 1 degree to port. The deck cargo is missing, but much of the cargo hold remains filled with evergreen trees and boughs. The cargo has settled several feet below deck level, and is inundated with a dense silt layer. Access to the bilge area is completely barred without major excavation. With the exception of a few missing outer hull planks on either stern quarter, access to inner framing patterns is nonexistent.

The stem post is 10.7 ft. in length, .4 ft. sided, and .4 ft. molded from the plank rabbet forward. A false stem is fastened in front of the stem post, and measures 1.1 ft. molded and .4 ft. sided. The lower 3 ft. of the false stem is broken away from the impact with the bottom. An iron false keel originally wrapped around the foot of the bow and continued up to the underside of the bowsprit, but is peeled away where the false stem is broken away. Roman numeral draft marks are carved into either side of the stem. Outer hull planking on the starboard side,

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Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2

"Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck
Manitowoc County, Wisconsin

beneath the starboard cathead, measures (from the rail down) 1.0, .3, .9, .5, .5, .5, .5, .3, then .5 ft. in width for the remaining planks before disappearing into the lake bed. The bow planking is intact, with only a few butt ends of the planks slightly sprung from the frames, most likely from the impact with the bottom.

Both martingale backstays remain attached to the hull, consisting of chain that is attached to either side of the stem post. The lower bobstay remains fastened to the stem post, but the upper bobstay is missing, with only its anchor point remaining extant above the broken foot of the stem post. The hawse pipes on the inside of the ship have a diameter of 1 ft. overall. The collar around the inside of the pipe is .2 ft. in width, making the inside diameter of the pipe .6 ft. The hawse pipes are located 2 ft. aft of the stem post, and penetrate the bulwarks between the weather and windlass decks.

Both catheads remain extant on the bow. The outboard ends of the catheads are 1 ft. square and extend 3 ft. from the rail cap's outer edge. The catheads extend 49 ft. inboard of the rail cap, and the butt ends are cut at an angle that is perpendicular to the vessel's centerline. Inboard of the rail cap, the cathead tapers towards its end to present a lower profile atop the windlass deck. A small pulley is fastened to the outer edge of the cathead, over which runs a chain that was used to handle the anchors. The chain runs the length of the cathead in a .3 ft. wide channel. The chain runs atop the rail cap and is figure-eighted to an iron pin that is driven through the cathead 1 ft. from the rail cap's inner edge. Two small deadeyes remain fastened to the end of each cathead that measure .5 ft. in diameter and .3 in width. On the port side, one of the deadeyes is anchored to the forward end of the cathead, and the other is mounted on an iron strap that is .4 ft. in length and fastened on the forward side of the cathead, inboard of the former deadeye. A chain is figure-eighted on the starboard cathead's pin, but does not run the length of the cathead. A deadeye is fastened to an iron strap as on the port cathead, but the second starboard deadeye is fastened to the bitter end of the cathead, rather than the forward edge like as the port side.

The windlass deck remains intact forward of the windlass, and is 3 ft. above the weather deck. There are two hearts attached to the windlass deck at the forepeak that originally anchored the foremast forestays. The hearts are .6 ft. in diameter with a .3 ft. hole. The hearts are wedge shaped with the lower edge thinner than the upper edge, at .2 and .3 ft. respectively. The hole is not centered on the heart, but is slightly offset to the lower, outside edge of the hearts. The hearts are fastened to an athwartships timber that rises .2 ft. above the windlass deck level. Aft of the hearts is a second athwartships timber that is fastened beneath the head rails and is raised above the windlass deck. This timber measures 6.2 ft. in length, .7 ft. sided, and .7 ft. molded. One foot aft of this timber, there are two iron fairleads fastened atop either rail cap. The fairleads are .2 ft. in width, .2 ft. in height, .5 ft. in length. Between the stem post and the sampson post, an iron patent windlass handle lies atop the windlass deck. The handle is 4.3 ft. in length, has a round shank .2 ft diameter, with an iron handle that is 2.6 ft. in width and .2 ft. in diameter. The V-shaped brace for the handle makes an equilateral triangle that measures .5 ft. on each leg. A set of wooden bitts is located on either side of the hull, 4.6 ft. aft of the windlass deck. Each bitt is .8 ft. sided by .6 ft. molded, and there is 1.4 ft. berth between the upright timbers. The bitts extend 3 ft. beneath the rail, and taper towards the foot. The bitts rise 1.1 ft. above the rail. Two supporting knees remain extant on either aft corner of the windlass deck. The knees measure 3.2 ft. from toe to toe, 2.4 ft. along the foredeck, 3.0 ft. along the side hull, and 1.0 ft. at the throat.

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Section 7 Page 3

"Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck
Manitowoc County, Wisconsin

The sampson post is 1.4 ft. square, and is located at the windlass deck's aft edge. The crosshead for the patent windlass remains fastened to the sampson post's forward edge. The purchase rods extend from the ends of the cross head through the foredeck to where they attach to the windlass purchase arms. The windlass is immediately aft of the sampson post, just beneath the aft edge of the windlass deck, and is 11.2 ft. in length. Gypsy heads on either end of the windlass are 1.3 ft. in length and 1.3 ft. in diameter, with a .2 ft. in width iron reinforcing rings on the end of each gypsy head. The carrick bits on either side of the windlass are located 2.7 ft. from the outer hull, and measure .5 ft. sided by 1.1 ft. molded. The windlass whelps 2.9 ft. in length, and the windlass' diameter at the whelps is 1.6 ft. The pawl rim around the center of the windlass is 1.3 ft. in width. The pawl remains extant and operable, and measures 1.4 ft. in length, .7 ft. in width, and .2 ft. thick. The pawl is constructed of wood and has no visible iron chafing gear. There is a U-shaped iron rod fastened to the pawl's upper surface, measuring .2 ft. in diameter and .1 ft. from the edge of the pawl. It is likely this was a simple deadweight used to keep the pawl in place while operating the windlass. The purchase rims .4 ft. in width and are not exposed, but rather covered with the purchase arms' ratchet mechanism.

A small kedge anchor is located between the windlass and weather decks forward of the windlass. The anchor's eye lies beneath the bowsprit with the shank running towards the port side. The kedge anchor's flukes are 1.1 ft. in length, and .6 ft. in width at their widest point. The shank is 4 ft. in length and .8 ft. in circumference. The anchor stock was not visible and is either missing or folded alongside the shank; it could not be determined which, due to the extremely cramped area between the two decks. The weather deck planking beneath the windlass deck is .4 ft. in width and .2 ft. in thickness. Weather deck beams forward of the windlass are .4 ft. square. A 1.1 ft. wide breast hook is flush with the weather deck and extends around the bow beneath the windlass deck. Four bulwark stanchions are located on either side beneath the windlass deck and measure .4 ft. square with a 1.8 ft. berth. A large hook lies beneath the windlass deck near the port bulwark. This hook was used to handle the anchors between the catheads and the waterline.

Nearly all of both the port and starboard anchor chains have been heaved from the chain locker and lie in two discreet piles on the weather deck aft of the windlass. The port side anchor chain is piled along the port bulwark, and runs into the port side deck pipe. The iron deck pipe is 1 ft. in diameter, and is stoppered with an iron plate that is slotted to ride over the anchor chain. The starboard anchor chain lies in a pile over top the starboard deck pipe. The anchor chain links are .5 ft. in length and .3 ft. in circumference.

The forecandle hatch lies centered on the weather deck immediately aft of the windlass. The hatch opening is 3.4 ft. wide and 3.0 ft. in length. The hatch combing is 1.3 ft. in height and .3 ft. thick. A ladder extends from deck level to the forecandle deck, with four rungs extant. The ladder's uprights are 2 ft. on center and are .3 ft. square. The rungs are .6 ft. in width. Two deck stanchions located on either side of the ladder measure 1.4 ft. square, providing additional deck support to the forecandle hatch area. The remains of a wooden bulkhead extend from port to starboard immediately aft of the forecandle ladder. This bulkhead is constructed of vertical planking that measures .2 ft. thick and .7 ft. wide. There are 9 extant to starboard of the ladder, 4 planks extant to the port of the ladder. A wooden plank door is located on the port side bulkhead that is constructed from three vertical

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"Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck
Manitowoc County, Wisconsin

planks. The door measures 1.8 ft. wide, 3 ft. tall, and .2 ft. in thickness. A small gap is present between the top of the door and the underside of the weather deck, and it is uncertain how the door was fastened to the bulkhead. One additional bulkhead remains extant to the port side of the door.

The forecastle is a cramped compartment that is largely filled with silt and debris. There is 6.3 ft. of space from the forepeak to the sampson post. A fragment of wire rigging lies in the forepeak, consisting of a served eye that is wrapped around a cylindrical timber. This wire rigging lies on a small wooden shelf constructed of three athwartships planks that measure .7 ft. in width and .2ft. in thickness. On either side of the forecastle are several dislodged planks that vary from .7 to 1 ft. in width, and of various lengths. It is likely these planks are what remain of the crews' bunks or shelves for the bosun's gear. A crewman's shoe lies in the silt amongst the long planks on the forecastle's port side, with a pile of crews' clothing is tucked behind the planks on the starboard side. A wood cook stove is located on the forecastle's port side. The stove measures 2 ft. in length by 1.2 ft. in width, and is 1 ft. in height (including the legs). The legs are V-shaped and located on each corner, measuring .3 ft. by .2 ft. in width. The holes for two missing burner plates measure .6 ft. in diameter. The outboard burner plate has a ring to hold the pots on the stove during heavy seas, but the inboard burner plate does not.

The bulwarks rise 3 ft. above weather deck level, and are supported by stanchions that are .4 ft. sided and .45 ft. molded. The rail cap is 1 ft. wide by .3 ft. thick. A single bulwark plank is fastened on the inside edge of the bulwark stanchions. This plank is fastened immediately below the rail cap and measures .9 ft. in width and .2 ft. in thickness. There is no evidence of additional planking on the inner bulwark. The bulwark's outer planking begins with a similar plank immediate below the rail cap, measuring .9 ft. wide and .2 ft. thick. Below this upper plank are four more planks that are .5 ft. in width, but are .5 inches thinner than the uppermost plank at .15 ft. thick. Both the port and starboard bulwarks are missing several planks along the length of the hull. Along either bulwark are three sets of lumber ports. The openings are 2.9 ft. long by 1 ft. high, and are located immediately above the weather deck 41.5, 57.7, and 79.7 ft. from the bow on either side. No lumber port covers remain intact, but were fastened by two hinges, one above the other, on the port's forward edge. This allowed the port covers to swing outboard and forward to open.

The deck beams are single timbered with a slight camber across the deck. Most deck beams remain intact with the exception of the beams between the forecastle hatch and the centerboard trunk (which were carried away with the foremast), and to the port side of the forward centerboard trunk (which are been broken atop the trunk and have collapsed into the hold, but remain attached to the port side deck shelf). Beam dimensions are .6 ft. sided by .9 ft. molded, with a berth of 2.3 ft. between each beam. The center of each deck beam has a semicircular groove that runs the entire length of the beams' centerline. The groove is .2 ft. in width and is .1 ft. in depth. The deck beams are saddled onto a beam shelf that runs the length of either side hull and measures .8 ft. molded by .4 ft. sided. There are no hanging knees used in the construction of the vessel; rather, the beam shelf is used in lieu of hanging knees to support the deck. The lack of hanging knees allows an increased cargo capacity for stacked lumber, as hanging knees would have created much wasted space in the corners of the cargo hold by not allowing dimensioned lumber to be in the space taken by hanging knees. There are lodging and bosom knees located fore and aft of each beam, atop the beam shelf. Both the lodging and bosom knees

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Continuation Sheet**

“Rouse Simmons” Shipwreck
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measure 2.3 ft. on the body, 1.4 ft. on the arm, 2.6 ft. from toe to toe, .9 ft. at the throat, and .4 ft. sided. The lodging and bosom knees are lapped, and both knees have docked toes that abut the adjacent deck beam. This method of filling the entire berth between the beams with lapped knees creates an interlocked structural belt around the vessel's length to increase hull strength. Deck beams run atop each centerboard trunk, helping to stabilize the trunks against tensional forces exerted on the hull. Double deck beams located forward of the mainmast partners. As the deck beams are missing around the foremast, it could not be determined if there were double deck beams forward of the foremast partners. Much of the deck planking has become dislodged and lies scattered over the deck beams and in the hold. Deck planking averaged .45 ft. in width and .2 ft. in thickness.

The forward cargo hatch is largely broken up, with little of the combing and headledges intact. The forward cargo hatch's forward headledge is located 34 ft. from the bow, and the hatch opening is 7.6 ft. in length. The starboard coaming of the forward cargo hatch is listing 1 degree towards the stern, while the port side of the coaming is listing 3 degrees towards the stern. The center cargo is much more intact, with the forward headledge located 69 ft. from the bow, and lists 4 degrees to starboard. The hatch opening is 7 ft. in length, with the starboard coaming listing 1 degree towards the stern and the port side coaming lists 3 degrees toward the stern. The aft cargo is also largely intact, and is located 89 ft. from the bow, with an opening of 5.8 ft. All cargo hatches measure 6.6 ft. in width. The center and aft cargo hatch combing's measure .2 ft. in width and 2.6 ft. in height, and are topped with an approximately ½ inch wooden batten that runs the entire circumference of the cargo hatch. This batten was likely chaffing gear that could be easily replaced when worn from sliding lumber into the cargo holds. The center and aft cargo hatches exhibit signs of repairs, as the two hatches are framed in two different manners with differing lap joints.

A broken sail boom lies in two pieces on the deck. The forward section of the boom is 16 ft. in length from the boom jaws to the break, and lies to the port side of the center cargo hatch. The boom's aft section is 21.6 ft. in length and lies athwartship between the aft centerboard trunk and the centerboard winch. The boom retains the iron collar and a double sheave block for the sail sheet. The collar is located 6.9 ft. from the boom's end.

The *Simmons'* two centerboard trunks measure 1.4 ft. in width, and each are capped with two longitudinal planks. The forward trunk rises 3.4 ft. above the cargo of trees and silt at its forward end, and 4.2 ft. above the silt at its aft end. There are 7 longitudinal planks visible above the cargo and silt that measure 1.3 ft. in width and .4 ft. in thickness. The forward centerboard trunk begins 29.3 ft. from the bow, and is 19 ft. in length. The forward centerboard trunk lists 2 degrees aft, and 5 degrees to starboard. The forward centerboard is visible in both the forward and aft ends of the centerboard trunk, suggesting it was at not deployed at the time of wrecking. A forward centerboard winch could not be located, and there was no chain running out of the trunk from the centerboard.

The aft centerboard trunk rises 3.2 ft. above the dense layer of silt that fills the hold, and lists 2.5 degrees to starboard. The aft trunk's planking remains tightly joined, making it difficult to distinguish individual planks. The aft trunk is 78 ft. from the bow, and is 19.2 ft. in length. The aft centerboard is visible in the forward end of the trunk, but not in the aft end, suggesting the centerboard was at least partially deployed at the time of

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“Rouse Simmons” Shipwreck
Manitowoc County, Wisconsin

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wrecking. The aft centerboard chain and winch is extant, but the winch is not located directly over the centerboard trunk. Rather, the winch is located 5.3 ft. aft of the centerboard trunk. The centerboard chain runs over a pulley at deck level directly over the trunk, and then along the deck to the centerboard winch. The aft centerboard appears not to be fully deployed, as there are several turns of the centerboard chain about the winch drum. A single-acting bilge pump remains intact 1.3 ft. aft of the centerboard winch. The pump is located on the vessel's centerline 103.8 ft from the bow. An iron, curved pump handle is attached to the pump and extends to the port side.

The *Rouse Simmons*' cabin is missing, but its former location is obvious near the vessel's stern, and several cabin fragments remain extant. The cabin's forward edge is located 105.3 ft. from the bow, and its dimensions measured 18.5 ft. in width, and 15.7 ft. in length. The cabin was offset to the starboard side, abutting the starboard rail, allowing a 2.8 ft. wide passageway between the cabin's port bulkhead and the port bulwark. The cabin's forward bulkhead separated the main deck and the quarter deck levels, the quarter deck being 1.9 ft. higher than the main deck. The cabin's deck is 1.5 ft. below the weather deck level. Its forward combing board is level with the weather deck, but extends the 1.5 ft. from the weather deck to the cabin deck. This combing lists 1 degree to starboard, and is notched at irregularly spaced intervals to receive strongbacks that are no longer extant. These notches are .3 ft. in width, .2 ft. in height, and .2 ft. in depth. The cabin's deck planking averaged .5 ft. in width, but varied from .4 to .55 ft. in width. Deck beams beneath the cabin deck run athwartships and all measure .7 ft. molded and vary in sided dimensions between .3 ft. and .9 ft. All have a berth of 1.9 ft. The ship's stove was located in the cabins forward port corner, and has fallen through the cabin deck and now lies beneath the cabin and is heavily encrusted with zebra mussels. The cabin's entrance was located on the port quarter and was 2 ft. in width. A coaming measuring .8 ft. in height kept water from entering the cabin entrance. To starboard of the cabin's entrance this coaming increases to 1.2 ft. in height above the quarter deck level. The mizzenmast penetrated the rear cabin, and is located 2.8 ft. from the cabin's forward bulkhead.

The *Simmons*' transom is 7.8 ft. tall, and is slightly dislodged in the lower port quarter. The transom is covered with 13 horizontal planks .35 ft. in width, with the exception of the three lowest three planks, which are .8 ft. wide. There are two porthole openings located in the transom that measure .75 ft. in diameter, and are located 6.4 ft. from the outboard sides, and 3 ft. from the bottom of the transom. The brass portholes were salvaged by sport divers in the 1970s.

The rudder post is located 126.2 ft. from the bow, and lists 4 degrees to port. The rudder post is topped with an iron cap with sockets on either side to accept the ball sockets of the steering mechanism. The remains of the rudder box consist of four timbers. There are two timbers on either side of the rudder post that are attached to the quarter deck. These two timbers run longitudinally on the deck and each measures 3.7 ft. in length, .4 ft. in thickness, and 1.4 ft. in height. Atop these two timbers are two athwartship timbers that are saddled onto the lower timbers fore and aft of the rudder post. These upper timbers measure 3.1 ft. in length, 1.4 ft. in height, and .5 ft. in thickness, and 3 ft. apart. The steering mechanism are mounted atop these thwartship timbers, and two iron mounting braces remain attached to the after thwartship timber. There is a distance of 3.5 ft. from the cabin's aft bulkhead to the front of the helm's stand. The rudder lies dead amid, still attached and in place

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beneath the transom. At the blade of the rudder, the rudder post is .9 ft. both molded and sided, and is rounded on its forward surface where it rotates within the sternpost. The rudder extends 6.3 ft. from the mud to the underside of the hull, with the blades aft edge angled towards the bottom. The ruder blade is constructed of three timbers aft of the rudder post; all are .9 ft. sided, and the first timber aft of the rudderstock is .8 ft. molded, the second is .9 ft. molded, and the third is .8 ft. molded. An iron eye that measures .3 ft. in diameter, with a .1 ft. hole, is located on the aft surface of the rudder blade, 3.4 ft. from the transom. This eye was used to fasten a chain preventer that kept the rudder from turning too far to either port or starboard. The preventer chain remains attached to the eye, but is no longer connected the hull; rather, it drapes down into the silt on the lakebed.

The quarterdeck's planking is .5 ft. in width, and all deck planks remain intact. The lazarette scuttle's opening measures 2.2 ft. in length and 2.7 ft. in width. The coaming is 1 ft. tall and .2 ft. in width, and rises .5 ft. above the quarter deck level. An iron boat davit lies on the starboard quarterdeck; its former location is visible on the starboard quarter, where it fit into a hole in the stern rail cap. An iron open chock remains extant on the starboard stern rail atop the transom. The port side chock is absent, most likely having been removed by divers. A 13 ft. spar lies across the starboard quarterdeck, but retains no distinguishing features. The spar runs from the starboard side, over the lazarette hatch, and behind the rudder post and wheel housing.

The foremast was stepped between the forecastle hatch and the forward centerboard trunk, but the mast step is not visible as it is buried beneath several feet of silt, debris, and cargo. The foremast was dislodged with great force that carried away many of the deck beams between the forecastle hatch and the centerboard trunk. The mainmast is also missing from the hull, but its removal was much less violent than the foremast. The mainmast broke above deck level, with the upper section of the mainmast falling forward and to port, where it now lies alongside the port bow. The bottom of the mainmast has not been located, but the mainmast partners are intact. The mainmast was located 65.8 ft. aft of the bow. A portion of the mizzenmast is extant within the stern cabin, and is located 109.2 ft. from the bow, and 2.8 ft. aft of the cabin's forward bulkhead. The mizzenmast originally projected through the cabin roof, and is broken just above the cabin roof. The extant portion of the mizzenmast is 18 inches in diameter and rises 8.3 ft. above the mast partners.

The chainplates for all three masts are largely intact. The foremast was held by four shrouds on either side. The forward most chainplates on the foremast are located 24 ft. from the bow, measure on the vessel's centerline. The remaining three forechain plates are not quite equally spaced, at 2.12, 2.28, and 1.92 ft. on center, traveling aft from the foremost chainplate. The chainplates themselves are constructed of iron and are .25 ft. in width, 4.8 ft. in length. Many of the deadeyes are extant, and are hinged to the chainplate flush with the top of the rail cap. The deadeyes are .65 ft. in diameter and .35 ft. in thickness. There is a smaller deadeye fastened to the rail cap between the first and second chainplates that held the topmast shrouds, and there is a small iron eye fastened to the rail cap between the third and fourth deadeyes, as well as one fastened aft of the fourth deadeye. There is a timber rubbing strake fastened atop the lower chainplates that measures .38 ft. in height and 8 ft. in length. The port side forechain plates are somewhat less intact than the starboard side. The forward three chainplates on the port side were pulled forward with the collapse of the foremast, and the timber rubbing strake is missing. There is a smaller .5 ft. diameter deadeye that is fastened to the rail cap between the first and second chainplates.

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The mainmast also has four chainplates, with the forward most chainplate beginning at 64.8 ft. from the bow, measured on the vessel's centerline. The forward two chainplates measure .25 ft. in width, while the after two chainplates measure .23 ft. in width. The spacing between the first and second chainplates, on center, is 2.12 ft, 2.2 ft. between the second and third chainplates, and 2.28 ft. between the third and fourth chainplates. The chainplates are 4.55 ft. in length, and there is a rubbing strake that measures .4 ft. in height and .2 ft. in width. The deadeyes measure .5 ft. in diameter, and .32 ft. in thickness. There is a smaller deadeye fastened to the rail between the first and second chainplates, as well as iron eye affixed to the rail cap between each remaining deadeye, as well as an iron eye that is affixed behind the aft most deadeye. The port side chainplates are less intact than the starboard. The forward most deadeye is missing, and all four chainplates are bent and twisted around the bulwarks. The rubbing strake is also missing on the starboard side. There is a smaller .5 ft. in diameter deadeye affixed to the rail between the first and second chainplate.

The mizzenmast only has three chainplates, and the forward most chainplate is located 107.2 ft. from the bow, measured on the vessel's centerline. Just forward of the mizzen chainplates, a monkey rail begins to protect the raised quarterdeck, and the mizzen chainplates terminate at the top of the main rail (as in the fore and main chainplates) but below the monkey rail. The mizzen deadeyes measure .55 ft. in diameter and .3 ft. in thickness. The forward most chainplate is .25 ft. in width, the center chainplate is .22 ft. in width, and the aft chainplate is .27 ft. in width. Spacing between the chainplates, on center, is 3.05 ft. between the first and second chainplates, and 2.65 ft. between the second and third chainplates. The rubbing strake is .48 ft. in height, .27 ft. in thickness, and 8.3 ft. in length. Both the fore and aft ends of the rubbing strakes are taped toward the hull, beginning .8 ft. from either end and ending nearly flush with the outer hull planking. Atop the monkey rail there is a smaller deadeye attached between the first and second chainplates, as well as an iron eye with an iron ring and a smaller deadeye immediately aft of it, located atop the monkey rail just aft of the aftermost mizzen chainplate. The port side mizzen chainplates are missing all but the aftermost deadeye.

Much of the vessel's standing and running rigging lies on the lakebed forward of the bow. The foremast is the most dominant feature, and is completely intact from heel to mastcap at 71 ft. in length. The mast's heel has a tenon that measures 1 ft. in length by .9 ft. in width, which fitted into the foremast step atop the keelson. The foremast is 18 inches in diameter. The remains of a mast table are extant 10.8 ft. from the heel. The mast table consists of vertical wooden chocks that are topped with an iron band that has fallen loose and now lies just above the wooden chocks. The futtock shroud band is located 56.8 ft. above the heel, and is tightly fitted around the mast, which is 17 inches in diameter at the futtock band. The futtock band is an iron band around the mast that served several purposes – an anchor point for the yard truss and futtock shrouds, as well as provided support for the cheeks. The yard truss is a gimballed truss that held the single yard carried by the *Rouse Simmons*, perhaps used to set a fore course, but most commonly to set the raphe sail, a triangular topsail common on the Great Lakes. The yard remains attached to the foremast by the truss, but the starboard arm of the yard is broken off and lies beneath the foremast closer to the hull, extending to starboard from beneath the foremast. The disarticulated starboard yard fragment is 32 ft. in length, 8 inches in diameter at the break, and 6 inches in diameter at the yard arm. A mortised sheave was not located at the end of the yard, but a brace block

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remains attached to the yard via a brace pendant anchored 4 ft. from the end of the yard. The port side fragment of the yard that remains attached to the foremast via the truss is 35.3 ft. in length. The yard is 12 inches in diameter where the yard truss is attached at the center of the yard, and is wrapped in 3 foot long wooden battens that are attached longitudinally around the yard. On either side of the battens, the yard's diameter is reduced to 8 inches, and then tapers toward the yard arm, whose diameter is 6 inches. There is a single sheave mortised into the port yardarm for the outhauls, with an iron hoop that is fastened to the very end of the yard arm.

Immediately above the futtock band the cheeks remain extant on either side of the foremast. The cheeks are timbers on either side of the mast to support the weight of the topmast. The cheeks are 6 ft. in length, and taper towards the heel, where they abutt the futtock band. Immediately above the cheeks are the trestle trees. The trestle tree served several purposes: to hold the heel of the topmast, provide a platform for the tops, and provide an anchor point for the yard truss sling. The yard truss sling consists of a length of chain anchored to an iron eye on the forward surface of the trestle tree, with the other end attached to the top of the yard truss just aft of the yard. This sling holds the gimballed yard truss in a level position in front of the foremast, while allowing the yard truss to swing from port to starboard. The trestle tree runs in a fore and aft direction, and is an equal thickness as the cheeks.

Fastened atop the trestle tree is the top and two hardwood bolsters. The bolsters are fastened atop the trestle tree on either side of the mast and provide a seat for the shroud eyes and prevent the foremast shroud eyes from chafing the mast. The rim of the top is fastened to the fore and aft surfaces of the trestle tree with iron bolts. The rim's primary purpose was to provide an anchor point for the topmast shrouds, as well as a platform for working the raphee and topsails. The forward edge of the top is swept aft to cut down on weight aloft and reduce the spread of the forward topmast shrouds. This allowed an increased the angle to which the fore yard could be braced and reduced sail chafe on the top. The top has no cross trees and is not fully decked, but consists solely of the rim and two widely spaced deck planks on either side of the mast. The top's outboard ends were supported against the upward pull of the topmast shrouds by solid iron futtock shrouds, which were fastened to the futtock band and the top's outer rim. The distance from the futtock band to the top is 6 ft., and the top is 12.9 ft. at the widest point. The foremast rises an additional 9 ft. from the top of the cheeks to the masthead. The masthead has an upper tenon accept the wooden mast cap. The tenon measures 1 ft. in length and .9 ft. in width.

The fore topmast was stepped forward of the foremast, but has become dislodged and now lies near its former location at an angle perpendicular to the masthead. The fore topmast is 30 ft. long from the heel to where it disappears into the sand on the lakebed. The topmast is round with the exception of the heel, which is squared to fit into the trestle trees. Just above the topmast's heel is a thwartship mortise that still holds the fid that was used to keep the topmast from falling through the trestle trees. The heel of the topmast measures .9 ft by 1.1 ft. The wooden foremast cap remains attached to the fore topmast 8.5 ft. above the topmast's heel. The topmast is round where it is fitted to the mastcap. The mastcap is 3 inches thick, mortised 1 ft. by .9 ft. to fit the tenon atop the foremast. Just above the mastcap, at 9.9 ft. above the topmast's heel, there are four wooden chocks fastened around the topmast to hold an iron band that is 11.2 ft. above the heel. The iron band is tightly fitted over the

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chocks, allowing a gap between the topmast and the iron band. This band is visible in historic images of the *Simmons*, and may have served a purpose similar to that of mast tables, such as supporting the topsail hoops while the topsail was taken in. At 22 ft. above the mast's heel, the topmast's diameter is .9 ft.

The mainmast lies closer to the hull, beneath the foremast, and runs along the port bow, ending just aft of the port cathead in a dense pile of silt and tangled commercial fishing net. The mainmast's heel is broken away and has not been located, but the extant section of mainmast measures 56.9 ft. in length and 2 ft. in diameter at the break. The mainmast's masthead lies beneath the foremast. The main topmast, like the fore topmast, was stepped forward of the mainmast and lies at a perpendicular angle to the mainmast near its former location, atop both the foremast and the mainmast. The main topmast's length is 48 ft. from heel to head. The main topmast is constructed similarly to the fore, with the heel of the topmast squared to fit the main trestle tree, measuring .9 ft. by 1.1 ft. at the heel. A square mortise is located immediately above the heel, with an intact fid to keep the topmast from falling through the trestle tree. Three feet above the heel is a round hole that penetrates the mast. Just above this hole, there is a wire mainstay which is draped over the topmast 3.4 ft. above the heel, and forms an eye that is wrapped around the mainmast lying below. Above the heel the topmast is round with a diameter of 1.1 ft. The main mastcap is located 8 ft. above the heel, and is 3 inches thick. The topmast is round where it fits the mastcap, and the mastcap is mortised to fit the mainmast's masthead tenon (which was not visible because the foremast lies atop the mainmast head). The mortise for the main masthead tenon measures 1.1 foot square. The main topmast has a table similar to the foremast, with four wooden chocks attached vertically to the mast, and equally spaced around the circumference of the topmast. The chocks begin 9.7 ft. above the topmast's heel, and extend to 11.6 ft. above the heel. The chocks are tapered at the foot, and at the head extend .9 ft. from the mast. The iron hoop has become dislodged from the chocks, but remains around the topmast several feet above the chocks. What appears to be the main topmast shrouds remain attached to the topmast 35.6 ft. above the heel. Here the topmast is .7 ft. in diameter, and the shrouds are anchored to the topmast via an iron collar with an eye on either side that remains attached to wire rigging that disappears into the lakebed. Above this band is another iron band, perhaps used to anchor the topmast stays, 43 ft. above the heel. Here the topmast is .6 ft. in diameter, and an iron collar is affixed that has an eye on either side that retains attached wire rigging that disappears into the lake bed.

A wooden spar lies beneath the main topmast and extends back towards the hull with its opposite end lying atop the mainmast. This spar's identity has not been confirmed, but may be the fore staysail boom. This spar is broken at the forward end, but its extant length measures 31.8 ft., with a 6 inch diameter at the break and a 4 inch diameter at the end. The spars end is tapered, with a hole bored through the end at the base of the taper.

The bowsprit was broken from the vessel when the hull struck the lakebed, snapping at the stem post. The bowsprit's housing remains intact between the sampson post and the stem post, and is square for the 7 ft. length of the housing. The bowsprit's hounding, from the stem post forward, now lies on the lakebed, angled to starboard immediately forward of the hull. The bowsprit's hounding measures 18.2 ft. in length, and is round for its length. The jib boom remains attached atop the bowsprit, fully intact and 48 ft. in length from heel to head. The jib boom's heel retains the tenon that fit into the heel chock atop the bowsprit. The bowsprit's iron

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cap remains intact, but the martingale is absent. The bowsprit beneath the foredeck measures 1.2 ft. by 1.2 ft. square.

The *Rouse Simmons* carried double chain bobstays, and both bobstay plates are extant on the stem. The outer bobstay chain remains affixed to the bobstay plate, but the inner bobstay chain has pulled free of the plate. The martingale backstays were also chain, and according to historic images, attached to the outer hull just below and forward of either cathead, and were attached with double sheave wooden blocks. Neither martingale backstay is present, but the iron eye anchor points remain attached to the hull on either side. The starboard side still has the block stropped to the eye, while the port side has the eye only. The port and starboard bowsprit guys were also chain and attached to iron eyes on either side of the bow immediately below and just slightly aft of the martingale backstays. Unlike the martingale backstays, the bowsprit guys were fastened directly to the iron eye without a block. The *Simmons* carried wire rope inner and outer jib-stays. The stays attached to iron eyes on either side of the stem post, just below the rail cap. According to the historic image, the inner jib-stay was attached to the port side of the hull, which is no longer extant. The outer jib-stay remains attached to the starboard side bow, and hangs down to the lakebed. Examination of the historic image reveals at least one jibboom guy that attached to the forward surface of the cathead. These guys are no longer extant on the hull, but the port side cathead retains two small deadeyes on its forward surface, while the starboard cathead has one deadeye off the very end and only one deadeye of the forward surface.

Many of the *Rouse Simmons*' artifacts were salvaged by recreation divers prior the passage of state and federal laws protecting historic shipwrecks from looting. Today these artifacts are scattered throughout Wisconsin. The Rogers Street Fishing Village Museum curates one of the vessel's nameplates, the restored ship's wheel, a wooden stool, an earthenware crock, two topmast spreaders, and a tree. In 1992, the ship's wheel and steering mechanism were pulled to the surface in commercial fishing nets approximately a mile and a half north of the *Rouse Simmons*' wreck site. Jim Brotz, a Sheboygan diver, maritime historian, and model ship builder, spent several years restoring the wheel its original condition. A second nameplate is on display at the Pier Wisconsin Museum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as is one of the stern portholes. One of the ship's anchors was raised in 1973 and placed on display at the Milwaukee Yacht Club. Milwaukee's South Shore Yacht Club also displays several artifacts, including dishes, a hand-cranked fog horn, and a light bulb from a string of lights used by Captain Schuenemann to decorate his ship after he docked in Chicago. The Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum in St. Ignace, Michigan displayed several *Rouse Simmons*' artifacts, including axe heads, a calking mallet, dinnerware, crockery, silver spoons, eye glasses, sun glasses, kerosene lanterns, several canning jars, chisels, corked wine bottles, shot glasses, medicine bottles, several clay pipes, a ceramic spittoon, a barometer, a taffrail log, and the jawbone from a pet dog aboard the ship when it sunk. These items are currently in a private collection in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The community of Port Washington, located north of Milwaukee, houses a museum in their restored 1860 lighthouse. In their collection is a Christmas tree from the *Rouse Simmons* cargo, as well as a belaying pin from the ship. The Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, is in possession of a decorative timber from the *Rouse Simmons* with carved letters on it, a key chain made from one of the Christmas trees from the ship, and a wooden compass box lid.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

The *Rouse Simmons* represents a once numerous and important class of Great Lakes vessel: the lumber schooner. Lumber schooners supplied the essential building blocks for Lake Michigan cities, and were a vital component to the rapid growth of Chicago and Milwaukee during the nineteenth century. As a double centerboard schooner, she is also a rare vessel type within the lumber schooner class. One of three known double centerboarders in Wisconsin waters, the *Rouse Simmons* is an essential component to understanding why few shipbuilders added two centerboards to their vessels, while most Great Lakes shipbuilders scorned double centerboards. In addition to her archaeological significance, the *Rouse Simmons* has become one of Lake Michigan's most celebrated shipwrecks. Lost with all hands while carrying a load of Christmas trees to Chicago, the entire Lake Michigan region mourned her loss. Today, the *Rouse Simmons*' story is more popular than ever, and has continued to grow each year to become the subject of several Christmas Tree Ship reenactments around Lake Michigan, as well as a theatrical play performed throughout the United States, a school curriculum taught to Michigan fourth graders, and a national television program that airs on a national cable television channel each holiday season.

The *Rouse Simmons* is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and D at the state level. Under criterion A – Maritime History and Commerce, the vessel is a significant representative of the Lake Michigan lumber schooner, and illustrates how these aging schooners clung to life during the first quarter of the twentieth century. For 44 years, the *Rouse Simmons* sailed between Michigan's Upper Peninsula and the southern lake cities of Milwaukee and Chicago, carrying vital lumber products that fueled these cities' explosive growth. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Great Lakes sail was long obsolete, overshadowed by the large steel steamers that dominated Great Lakes shipping. Lake Michigan lumber schooners, like the *Rouse Simmons*, were among the last sailing vessels to work the Great Lakes. Old, ill-maintained, and often leaking badly, these aged vessels carried lumber, not only because it was impervious to water damage aboard the leaky vessels, but also because many lake captains believed the buoyant nature of a wood cargo would prevent a waterlogged ship from sinking. As the twentieth century wore on, the lumber schooners faced increasingly fierce competition from the expanding network of railroads and highways, causing schooner captains to search for whatever cargoes could be found, and pushing their aging vessels late into the winter season in an effort to wring as much profit as possible from their vessels. Christmas trees were one of the unique cargoes that lumber schooners carried, and allowed many vessels a last trip of the season. The *Rouse Simmons* played a large role in shaping the Chicago Christmas tree market, supplying thousands of trees to families and city landmarks each year.

With her loss in 1912, the entire Lake Michigan region became involved in her story, which has grown to become the most well-known shipwreck story on Lake Michigan. Each year the *Rouse Simmons*' story grows, educating thousands yearly about Lake Michigan's historic maritime culture and its important role in shaping the Great Lakes region. Today, the wreck of the *Rouse Simmons* remains a remarkably intact representative of the Lake Michigan lumber trade, and the lake schooners' final years in which aging vessels fought to stay

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afloat, both literally and financially, in the onslaught of new technologies that pushed traditional occupations into extinction.

Under criterion D –Maritime History, the vessel is considered significant for the information it has yielded, and is likely to yield, on double centerboard schooners. Double centerboard schooners were rare on the Great Lakes, and little historic documentation exists regarding the advantages of two centerboards. Only through the study and documentation of archaeological examples will we understand the role these unique vessels filled. One of three known double centerboard schooners in Wisconsin, the *Rouse Simmons* is the most intact of the three, and possesses the greatest potential to yield new information regarding double centerboard schooners in particular, and three masted lumber schooners in general. The *Rouse Simmons* is also one of Wisconsin’s best archaeological examples of Great Lakes schooner rigging. Despite having collapsed onto the lakebed, nearly all of the rigging is extant and has yielded significant evidence of nineteenth century standing and running rigging.

The *Rouse Simmons* is considered significant at the state level. Built in 1868, the height of the Great Lakes’ age of sail, the *Rouse Simmons* was unique among lake schooners in that she carried two centerboards. Her 44-year career was a long one by lake standards, and during her career she played a vital role in the Lake Michigan lumber trade and helped shape the Lake Michigan Christmas tree trade. Under the command of Captain Herman Schuenemann, the *Rouse Simmons* was Chicago’s most well-known Christmas tree schooner, and was one of only a handful of schooners still sailing at the time of her loss in 1912. Today, the *Rouse Simmons* embodies the schooner’s adaptability in the face of fierce competition from steam and rail, and of the resilience of traditional occupations facing extinction under emerging technologies. Even in 1912, the *Rouse Simmons* represented a nostalgia for Great Lakes sail, and this nostalgia has grown with time. Since her loss, the yearly retelling of the *Rouse Simmons*’ story has elevated her to become Lake Michigan most well-known shipwreck. Today, several Christmas Tree Ship reenactments take place each year around Lake Michigan. The largest of these reenactments has drawn the United State Coast Guard, with the USCG Cutter *Mackinaw*, the most advanced ice-breaker in the United States fleet, playing the role of the *Rouse Simmons*. Theaters throughout the nation host plays celebrating the vessel and her final voyage, and nationally broadcast television programs have carried the *Rouse Simmons*’ story to homes worldwide. Once common in Wisconsin history, intact schooners from her period are today an archaeological rarity. The intact nature of *Rouse Simmons* wreck site provides not only a rare opportunity to document unique construction features, but the opportunity to observe one of Lake Michigan’s most iconic vessels that embodies the Great Lakes age of sail and the schooners reluctance to give way to steam technology.

Summary Paragraph

Resting in 170 feet of water 12 miles northeast of Two Rivers, Wisconsin, the *Rouse Simmons* represents an intact example of a rare vessel type, the double centerboard schooner. More than a significant archaeological site, however, the *Rouse Simmons* has become Lake Michigan’s poster child for the age of sail. Built as a lumber schooner in 1868, she was one of the last sailing schooners on the Great Lakes, and became employed in

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her later years in one of Lake Michigan’s more unusual maritime trades – hauling evergreen trees to Chicago to celebrate the holiday season. Each November, the *Rouse Simmons* became a floating tree lot on Chicago’s riverfront and a social center for many of Chicago’s residents. While enroute to Chicago with a load of Christmas trees in November 1912, the *Rouse Simmons* was lost with all hands off Two Rivers. Unlike many Great Lakes schooners, the *Rouse Simmons* was not soon forgotten. Each holiday season, the *Rouse Simmons* continues to entertain and educate an increasing audience, drawing attention to the important role maritime culture has played in shaping the Great Lakes region.

Vessel History

On August 15, 1868, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* announced the launching of a new vessel built in one of the city’s local shipyards, the three-masted schooner *Rouse Simmons*. The Milwaukee press reported:

The *Rouse Simmons*, one of two new vessels recently contracted for by Kenosha, Wisconsin, parties, will be launched this afternoon from the shipyard of Allan, McClelland & Company. Her dimensions are as follows: Length overall, 127 feet; breath of beam, 27 feet 6 inches; depth of hold, 8 feet 1 inch; measurement about 220 tons. The model of the *Simmons* combines speed with large carrying capacity, and in this respect must be considered faultless. Her entrance, though seemingly full, is nevertheless quite sharp, and her run is really beautiful. The timber used in her construction is the finest we have ever seen put into a vessel, and the manner in which it has been put together reflects the highest credit upon the builders. The cost of the new vessel, when fully completed and ready for sea, will be in the neighborhood of \$17,000. She will carry three masts, fore-and-aft rigged, with square sail on foremast. Her owners are Royal B. Tousley and Captain Akerman, of Kenosha, the latter of whom will have command. The *Simmons* is designed for the lumber trade and will ply between Manistee and Chicago.

The *Rouse Simmons* took approximately six months to build at a cost of \$14,000 to \$17,000 (reports vary) – a sizable sum of money in 1868. At the time of her launch, she was one of the largest schooners on the Great Lakes and the pride of her builder. Originally designed to participate in the lumber trade, the *Rouse Simmons* could also carry 16,000 bushels of grain, and carried varied cargoes throughout her forty-four year career on the Great Lakes, including iron and copper ores, lumber, piling, and rough stock of all descriptions. It was estimated by Theodore Charney, a devoted student of the ship’s storied career, that the *Rouse Simmons* piled up a veritable mountain of lumber dockside during her lifetime spent serving the Chicago market – over 200 million board feet – carrying up to 350,000 board feet of lumber per trip (Karamanski 2000).

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The ship's sturdy construction served it well during its forty-four years in the Great Lakes lumber trade. The *Grand Haven Daily Tribune* reported the *Simmons*' loss on December 6, 1912: "Many a middle aged Muskegon, Michigan, man will recall the days when he helped load the ill-fated old schooner *Rouse Simmons* with lumber for the then almost insatiable Chicago market. Others will recall her weekly trips made more noticeable by the peculiar name the craft bore." The "peculiar name" belonged to both the ship and a real man. Mr. Rouse Simmons was a Kenosha citizen in the 1800s and helped finance the ship's construction. The Kenosha County Historical Society's records read: "Three Kenosha citizens with a vision of the future saw the great potential in getting into the profitable shipping business and also in building up the growing Kenosha community. They decided to build a suitable schooner primarily for transporting lumber. In 1868, R. B. Towsley, with the shipping and business know-how, and Captain Ackerman, with an excellent record of seamanship and lake port knowledge, planned a three-masted lake schooner. Rouse Simmons was not a partner, but he helped finance the building of the ship" (Kenosha County Historical Society 1871). The Simmons family was a manufacturing power in Kenosha, and founded the well-known Simmons Mattress Company, a bedding and furniture factory. Although Rouse Simmons did not own the vessel, the ship was christened with his name out of gratitude for his financial support.

Charles H. Hackley purchased the *Rouse Simmons* in 1873, and employed the ship for more than 25 years in the prosperous Lake Michigan lumber trade. The ship was said to be the "work horse" of Hackley's fleet and contributed significantly to Hackley's earnings, which he generously used to better his home town city of Muskegon, Michigan. Much of Hackley's beliefs were founded upon Andrew Carnegie's *Gospel of Wealth* written in 1889 (Pennington 2004). Like other entrepreneurs of the time, Charles felt that his wealth should be used not only to correct hardship and misfortune, but also to benefit those who wished to better themselves. In an interview, Charles Hackley said: "A rich man to a great extent owes his fortune to the public. He makes money largely through the labor of his employees... Moreover, I believe that it should be expended during the lifetime of the donor so that he can see that his benefactions do not miscarry and are according to his intent... To a certain extent, I agree with Mr. Carnegie...it is a crime to die rich." Charles Hackley lived and died with this belief and left the City of Muskegon a hospital, a library, a school, a park, an art gallery, and an athletic field. The Hackley family also established an endowment fund to benefit the poor of the city, and another for the purpose of educational benefits. The *Rouse Simmons* contributed in part to Muskegon's prosperity through the profits it earned for Hackley and his company.

Captain Herman Schuenemann first purchased a part ownership in the *Rouse Simmons* in 1910, two years before he and the vessel were lost on Lake Michigan (Bureau of Navigation 1910). Captain Schuenemann had operated boats in the Lake Michigan lumber trade for more than 25 years, and had gained popularity in Chicago as "Captain Santa," selling Christmas trees each holiday season from decks of his schooners moored along the Chicago waterfront. At the end of the Lake Michigan sailing season, Capt. Schuenemann would make one or more trips from Michigan's Upper Peninsula loaded with trees. Unlike many other schooners that sold their trees to Chicago wholesalers, Capt. Schuenemann would trim his vessels in electric lights at the Chicago riverfront and sell his trees directly to Chicagoans, often donating many trees to the poor and local churches.

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The *Rouse Simmons*' average load was between three hundred and four hundred tons of Christmas trees, and Captain Schuenemann would make one or more trips per season during November. The larger trees were loaded on deck, while the smaller trees and evergreen boughs for wreaths were neatly stacked in the hold.

Herman Schuenemann began sailing in the Christmas tree trade with his brother August, and the two used several vessels in the trade prior to the *Rouse Simmons*, including the *Maggie Dall*, *Ida*, *Jessie Phillips*, *Truman Moss*, *George L. Wrenn*, *Mary Collins*, and *Thal*. The Schuenemann brothers were not strangers to the dangers of the Christmas tree trade. The cargoes of trees were necessarily made late in the shipping season on the Great Lakes during the month of November – a month of wild gales that were notorious for wreaking havoc on any vessels that were unlucky enough to be caught on the lake during the violent storms. Herman Schuenemann was intimately familiar with just how dangerous Lake Michigan could be. While commanding the schooner *Mary Collins*, the vessel was driven ashore during a storm and became a total loss, but luckily no lives were lost. Herman's brother August was not so lucky. He went down with the schooner *S. Thal* in 1898 (*Chicago American* 1912).

Herman Schuenemann bought his vessels late in their careers, purchasing the inexpensive, aged schooners and wringing the last bit of life and profit from them in the lumber trade. Lumber was a popular cargo for aged schooners, as the lumber was not easily damaged by water in the leaky vessels, and the inherent buoyancy of the cargo perhaps helped many an old leaky vessel to make port in a raging Lake Michigan storm. Christmas trees were well suited for these aged lumber schooners, a cargo that could not be damaged by a leaking vessel. Nearly one month after the *Simmons* was lost, there were still those who believed that the ship might possibly be afloat somewhere on Lake Michigan. The *Manistique Pioneer-Tribune* reported on December 20, 1912: “Owing to the nature of the cargo, the boat would not sink, and the government fears that members of the crew may still be aboard the vessel and that the wreck has drifted among islands that have no communication with the main land.”

When Herman Schuenemann first purchased a share of the *Rouse Simmons* in 1910, she was already 42 years old – a very old and worn boat by any standards. By the time of her loss in 1912, following 44 years of hard service on the Great Lakes, she had become a vulnerable old vessel. Although she had once been a grand ship, decades had passed since she had seen her prime. By 1912, the *Rouse Simmons* was rickety and ramshackle, and was one of the last vessels still afloat from the golden age of sail, when majestic schooners, with their sails raised high, filled Great Lakes harbors. At the time of her loss, Great Lakes sailing vessels were nearly extinct, pushed aside by the advances of steam technology. The nostalgia of the Great Lakes age of sail is perhaps an important reason the Christmas Tree Ship story has perpetuated – a remembering of a time long past when beautiful, canvassed sailing ships were the principle means of transportation on the Great Lakes. The *Chicago Tribune* summarized the nostalgia connected to the old *Rouse Simmons* in an article published by the newspaper on December 8, 1977:

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In an age when the Yuletide season begins earlier and more frenetically each year, it is refreshing to remember the *Rouse Simmons* and the legend she inspired...Aside from the romance of the legend, the *Simmons* is a symbol of a more peaceful, innocent time before World War I when the horse and the sailing vessel gave their slow, gentle imprint to the tempo of life...Crowds came aboard to pick over the trees. The sounds of excitement and laughter mingled with the clop-clop of horses across the bridge and the pleasant smell of evergreens. The *Simmons* and her predecessors were left over from the heyday of lumbering when forests of white pine and spruce were cut out of Michigan and Wisconsin...It was a pleasant way to end the shipping season – surrounded by happy families a short ride from the Schuenemann home...It was the children that made it so joyous. They loved the Christmas Tree Ship as much as the Schuenemanns loved having them aboard. Yes, it was a good end for a hard summer on the lake. Despite the warm glow of Yuletide feelings, life for the Schuenemann brothers was for the most part hard work and danger. But hard work and danger were things sailors had been used to since they first put to sea. Besides, it was their life. The brothers would buy old lumber schooners for a song and wring the last bit of life out of them, nosing into every port along the lake, seeking cargo. It was a chancy business made even chancier by the tempestuous nature of the lake, where storms were universally feared. No one knew better than Herman Schuenemann how dangerous late-season voyages on Lake Michigan could be...Had the *Rouse Simmons* been anything other than the Christmas Tree Ship, her loss probably would never have been remembered. Half a dozen other ships were missing after the same storm that claimed the *Simmons*, and none of their names are remembered. But because the *Simmons* was something special to the people of Chicago, the Christmas Tree Ship earned her place in legend and history...For the sentimental, there is the thought that men were willing to risk – and lose – their lives to make Christmas brighter. To historians, the Christmas Tree Ship symbolizes the end of an era – the death of commercial sailing on the Great Lakes. World War I was about to begin, and steam alone could keep pace with the demands of a nation preparing for war...Perhaps it was best that Captain Schuenemann, his crew, and the *Rouse Simmons* died the way they did. In a few short years the world would know that there are worse ways for men and ships to die.

The world had changed. Although schooners had dominated the waters for a time, that time had passed. By 1912 few schooners remained on the Great Lakes, and those that did were looked upon as insignificant ships hauling insignificant cargoes. The *Simmons* had lived beyond her time and was very old for a wooden schooner when tragedy took her. Although the *Rouse Simmons* survived the storm that sank the *S. Thal* – a blow that had de-masted every schooner on the lake except the *Simmons*, the *Simmons*' days were numbered. Captain August Schuenemann met his fate while hauling a cargo of Christmas trees on the *S. Thal*, and Captain Herman met a

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similar fate aboard the *Simmons*. Yet the time-honored tradition the captains represented lives on to this day through the *Rouse Simmons*' story, one of the most storied shipwrecks in Lake Michigan history.

The Great Storm of 1912

It was November 1912. Winter was spreading across Lake Michigan, freezing the waters of the small bays and harbors on the north end of Lake Michigan. There was still time for Captain Herman Schuenemann to make his last trip of the season, but he needed to hurry if he did not want to meet Old Man Winter, face-to-face, in the worst possible place – on the open lake. A storm was brewing, and ominous clouds hung low on the horizon. Yet Captain Schuenemann believed that if he hurried, he and his ship could beat the storm. On November 22, 1912, he gave the order to sail. It was a fatal decision, and the lives of everyone on board were tied to it.

November was a notorious month on the Great Lakes. The losses suffered in the 1800s and early 1900s during November were hard to swallow. It was a month that claimed many lives on the lakes, despite the fact that there were few ships left on the open waters. Captain Schuenemann knew the dangers of sailing in November - the most treacherous month of the year - as well as anyone could have. He had been delivering his Christmas trees across these stormy waters for nearly a quarter of a century by this time. Many captains refused to sail in this feared month, and saw to it that their vessels were off the Great Lakes by the end of October. However, this was not an option a Christmas tree merchant had the luxury of exercising. Late afternoon on November 22, 1912, the aging schooner *Rouse Simmons*, fully loaded with evergreens, departed Thompson, Michigan, for its final voyage. The barometer was falling and the winds were rising - a deadly combination. If Captain Schuenemann had any question about his ability to navigate his vessel safely to Chicago, his question would be answered before the sun set on a single day more. The "Big Storm" of 1912 hit in full force sometime during the late evening hours of November 22 and the very early morning hours of November 23, 1912. Temperatures plummeted. Heavy rains turned to swirling snow. Winds intensified. It was not long before Lake Michigan's waters were heaving like an earthquake, with great walls of water being thrown at the *Simmons*. The storm closed in on Captain Schuenemann, and he and his crew were in serious trouble.

Several theories exist as to why Captain Schuenemann made his decision to sail. Some believe he was trying to get ahead of the storm in an attempt to outrun it. Others believed Schuenemann risked the possibility of becoming iced into the harbor if he delayed sailing, having to winter over in Michigan with a decaying cargo of trees. Some believe Schuenemann was concerned about gale force winds dashing his fully loaded ship against the docks if he remained moored when the storm hit. Still others are of the opinion Captain Schuenemann was trying to get to Chicago as quickly as possible because the tree market would be most profitable if he arrived sooner rather than later.

Captain Schuenemann was no stranger to bad weather. He had fought his way through more than one severe storm in his day. According to the *Milwaukee Journal* of December 8, 1892, Schuenemann was "an experienced sailor who had come through a fierce season of gales unscathed" during one particularly rough autumn "when

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dozens of other vessels had been destroyed." Captain Schuenemann knew the risks of shipping during the November storms. On November 23, 1912, the *Rouse Simmons* was fighting to free itself from the grip of a terrible storm. Winds were howling. Gale force gusts hit 60-80 m.p.h. Ice was freezing to beards and brows, numbing sailors to the bone, and towering seas were now climbing aboard the *Simmons*, invading it, penetrating every nook and cranny.

All around the lake, similar battles were being fought by other vessels trying to stay afloat in the brutal storm. Directly across the lake from the *Simmons*, near Pentwater, Michigan, the ship *Two Brothers* sank, and its entire crew was drowned. To the north of the *Simmons*, the men aboard the *Three Sisters* were taking their final breaths. Reports began to surface almost immediately of damage done and lives lost. Terrifying details made headlines. The *Ludington Chronicle* said the storm was "one of the nastiest on the lake that boatmen have experienced in a long time," and the *Saginaw Courier Herald*, another Michigan newspaper, reported the storm was "the worst snow storm this city has experienced at this time of year in many seasons." *The Sheboygan Press* in Wisconsin reported the storm to be "one of the worst on Lake Michigan in three years." Lake Captains also weighed in with comments. Captain Lofesberg of Racine, Wisconsin, was quoted as saying the storm was "the worst experienced in this section for the last two years," while Captain Hans Hermanson said the storm was the worst he experienced in twenty years of service on the Great Lakes. Captain Martin Kjelson from Sheboygan, Wisconsin, reported that he and his crew thought it was probably the worst storm they had ever experienced. Although several ships were lost in the same storm responsible for the *Simmons* tragedy, only the *Rouse Simmons* went to the bottom without an eye-witness to its demise. The *South Shore* shipwreck, as well as the *Two Brothers* shipwreck, occurred within sight of life saving crews. Although the *Three Sisters* tragedy took place before a life saving crew arrived, civilians were gathered on shore, attempting to give whatever aid they could to the drowning sailors (*Kewaunee Enterprise* 1912).

The *Rouse Simmons* was in serious trouble by the time she was abreast of Kewaunee the afternoon of November 23. A lookout at the Kewaunee Life-Saving Station sighted the *Rouse Simmons* several miles out in the lake, laboring southward in the heavy north gale and flying distress signals. The schooner was too far out in the lake and the sea too rough to attempt to reach the distressed schooner with the Kewaunee station's rowed life boat. Captain Craite, commander of the Kewaunee station, made efforts to secure the services of a tug to aid the *Simmons*, but none were available or willing to brave the angry lake. Shortly after, snow began falling heavily and the distressed vessel was lost to sight.

Captain Craite telephoned Captain Sogge, commander of the Two Rivers Life-Saving Station. The Two Rivers station had a gas-powered life boat that was immediately launched to intercept the *Rouse Simmons* as she neared Two Rivers (*Kewaunee Enterprise* 1912). The *Sturgeon Bay Advocate* of December 26, 1912, published Captain George Sogge account of the rescue attempt:

On November 23rd, at 3:10 p.m., I received a telephone message from Captain Craite,

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keeper of the Kewaunee station, saying that a three-masted schooner was sighted off that harbor, about five miles out, displaying signals of distress, with foresail and jib-top sail set and coming south. I immediately launched my power lifeboat and at 4:20 was rounding the Two River Point six miles north from the station. I then expected to see the schooner. We could see nearly to Kewaunee, but there was nothing to be seen. I kept on running north about eight miles from the point; then changed my heading out in the lake for one hour. By this time it was dark. There was nothing to be seen of the schooner, nor wreckage, nor signals. It started to snow heavy, and considering that we had been making a very thorough search for the distressed vessel, and that I had done all in my power, and all there was in my judgment to do in the case, we set our course for the station. The trip, as may well be imagined, was not a very pleasant one, but our only regrets were that we had put forth our best efforts in that direction without avail. My opinion about the schooner reported seen off Kewaunee is that the vessel was probably waterlogged, and that the crew was unable to keep her on her course and squared away before the wind and sea in order to keep the craft afloat. Being loaded with a cargo of green spruce – if this schooner was the *Rouse Simmons* – she foundered somewhere in mid-lake, as during the night of November 23rd a northwest gale was blowing and a very high sea running. It would only be by remarkable good luck and excellent handling that a vessel could have reached an east shore harbor that night.

Captain George Sogge's daughter, Louise, was interviewed on December 26, 1982, by the *Herald Times Reporter* of Manitowoc, Wisconsin, regarding her memories of the fateful night seventy years earlier when the *Rouse Simmons* went missing. "Our men got on their warm clothes and launched the boat. It was the worst blizzard and blowing storm I can ever remember," Louise said. "They went out the next day, too, but never found any trace of the ship." Louise said her sister, Esther Sogge, heard from Captain Schuenemann's girls and "they were so hurt because the Kewaunee men didn't try to save their father and crew." But there was no way the Kewaunee station could have helped, with only row boats, in that fierce storm. Even complete strangers questioned the decision-making process of the Kewaunee Life Saving Station captain. On January 9, 1913, the following Letter to the Editor appeared in the *Sturgeon Bay Advocate*:

Please give me space in the columns of the *Advocate* for a few words regarding the mishap to the schooner *Rouse Simmons*. I read in your paper of a recent issue Captain Sogge's statement of what he and his crew did after being notified by the Kewaunee station that a schooner was in distress about five miles out, running under foresail and jibtop sail. Now, what I want to ask is why did not the Kewaunee Lifesaving crew run out and respond to the signals of distress? And if they were unable, they surely could have secured a fish tug to do the work for them. It is my candid opinion that had this been done, every one of those 14 lives would have been saved. Captain Schuenemann and his crew knew there were stations at the canal, Kewaunee and Two Rivers Point, and that was his reason for having his signal of distress up,

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and it must have been awful for him and his men to pass within five miles of a Lifesaving Station in broad daylight without getting help. I ask for humanity's sake, what excuse has the captain of the Kewaunee Lifesaving Station to offer for his failure to respond? On the same afternoon a scow broke adrift at the Sturgeon Bay canal, and a current carried her out into the lake. Tugs went to her and towed the craft to Algoma. When this could be done with a scow, it is my belief the *Simmons* crew could have been saved easily. The *Rouse Simmons* yawl was also too small to accommodate 14 men. This was an unusual number for her to carry, which was on account of getting the trees from the woods. Of course, we can only guess what happened to the *Rouse Simmons*, and also where she foundered. It is my idea that she sank somewhere between Kewaunee and Two Rivers Point. The Kewaunee lifesaving crew should be able to give us some information, and we would like to know the exact time she was last seen by them. Would also like to hear from the captain of the schooner *Resumption* where he saw the *Simmons* yawl. There are probably some of the other masters that saw the vessel after she left Manistique, and passed wreckage from her. With the above information, I believe we will be able to guess pretty close to where the schooner sunk. Milwaukee, Wisconsin. January 4, 1913. Signed, G. C.

The letter was a scathing on attack on the Kewaunee Life Saving Station captain. The "candid opinion" of G.C. was that "every one of those 14 lives would have been saved" if the services of a tug had been secured and "the *Simmons* crew could have been saved easily." Ironically, Captain Craite of the Kewaunee Station had done *exactly* as had been suggested by G.C. in his letter. According to the *Kewaunee Enterprise* of November 29, 1912, Captain Craite gave testimony that he had, indeed, made effort to secure the services of a tug, although unsuccessfully, and then contacted Captain Sogge of the Two Rivers Station only after his attempt failed. Despite the controversy concerning certain aspects of the *Rouse Simmons* tragedy, one significant piece of the story was without dispute: the severity of the storm.

One week after this statement was published, a bottle was found with a note inside written on a page of the ship's log and signed by Captain Schuenemann: "Friday - Everybody good-bye. I guess we are all through. Sea washed over our deckload Thursday. During the night, the small boat was washed over. Leaking bad. Ingvald and Steve fell overboard Thursday. God help us. Herman Schuenemann." A second note, found approximately six months later on a beach north of the *Simmons*' sinking, seemed to support the idea that one or more of the men aboard the ship may have been lost in raging seas. This note, signed by Captain Charles Nelson, Captain Schuenemann's partner, was dated November 23, 1912. Captain Nelson wrote: "Nov. 23, 1912. These lines were written at 10:30 p.m. Schooner *Rouse Simmons* ready to go down about 20 miles southwest of Two Rivers Point, between 15 and 20 miles offshore. All hands lashed to one line. Goodbye. Capt. Charley Nelson." If the accuracy of this letter is relied upon, Captain Nelson tells us an important detail regarding the storm's severity. "All hands lashed to one line" meant that every man on board was tied to the other men with a rope linked around each sailor's waist. The end of the rope would then have been tied to the ship's mast to prevent the waves from washing crew members overboard. Sailors lashed themselves together only in the most severe

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storms when the danger of someone being washed overboard was close at hand. If two crew members had already been washed off the ship, as indicated by the Schuenemann note, the remaining men were attempting to make sure this did not happen again.

Although the authenticity of the bottled notes has been a point of much debate, there is no debate regarding the intensity of the storm that hit November 22-24, 1912. It was remembered as "one of the most terrific storms that ever thrashed Lake Michigan" (*Manistique Pioneer-Tribune* 1924). Winter's fury continued throughout the next couple of weeks, bringing additional treacherous weather to the Great Lakes while search efforts were underway for the missing *Rouse Simmons*. Despite diligent search through storm-tossed waters, all hope for the ship was finally abandoned shortly before Christmas of 1912. The *Rouse Simmons* ended its once-proud days in a hard fought battle against wind and wave.

There was much controversy concerning the number of men aboard the *Rouse Simmons* when it went down, as well as their identities. In addition to the crew, it was said there were as many as a dozen lumberjacks who asked Captain Schuenemann if they could "hitch a ride" on the *Simmons* to Chicago in order to spend Christmas with their families. There were also reports of crew members leaving the *Simmons* in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan after seeing rats deserting the ship, a very bad mariner's omen. These sailors refused to return to Chicago aboard the *Simmons* and returned by rail instead. Some men got off the ship, and others got on. But who? The *Chicago Daily Journal* of December 4, 1912, reported the following list of missing men:

Capt. Herman Schuenemann, 1638 North Clark Street; owner of the boat
Capt. Charles Nelson and Mrs. Nelson, 1634 Humboldt Avenue
Stephen Nelson, mate; Chicago
Charles Nelson, sailor; Chicago
Albert Lykstad, cook; 420 North Desplaines Street
Gilbert Swensen, tree cutter, Chicago; home was near Humboldt Park
Frank Carlson, tree cutter; Austin
Two lumber shovers, names not known
Two or more lumber shovers believed to have been taken aboard on Michigan shores.

According to the above information, Captain Nelson's wife was aboard the schooner when it went down. Other accounts said Captain Schuenemann's wife was also on the vessel. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* of December 4, 1912, published the following statement: "Captain Herman Schuleman, with his wife, and fourteen hands, are lost." Despite these initial reports, neither woman was on board. Captain Nelson's wife was no longer alive (she had died years earlier), and Captain Schuenemann's wife was waiting in Chicago for her husband's return. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* of December 5, 1912, also reported a woman was on the ship when it sunk: "The lone woman aboard the *Rouse Simmons*," reported the newspaper, "was the wife of the captain, Oscar Nelson, who was in command." Not only was there confusion in regards to how many persons from the Nelson family were on board, there was also confusion as to the reason they were sailing on the *Simmons*. Some reports indicated

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the vessel sailed "with Captain Christian Nelson and his wife as guests," while other reports indicated Captain Nelson was at the wheel of the ship instead of Captain Schuenemann. Most researchers agree that Captain Nelson was not along as "a visitor" but was a critical member of the ship. "Among the crew," reported the *Sault Ste. Marie Evening News* of December 4, 1912, "was Charles Nelson, a former sea captain who joined the crew to assist Captain Schuenemann in weathering the heavy gales that were expected."

On December 5, 1912, the *Chicago Daily Journal* published a revised list of crew members that were believed to have perished. The list read:

Capt. Charles Nelson, North Avenue and Robey Street; skipper and part owner
Capt. Herman Schuenemann, 1638 North Clark Street, charterer of vessel and owner of cargo
Steve E. Nelson, mate; Chicago
Gilbert Svenson, sailor; Humboldt Park, Chicago
Frank Carlson, sailor; Austin
Albert Lykstad, cook; 420 North Desplaines Street
Ingvald Nyhous, sailor; 420 North Desplaines Street
William Oberg, lumber shover
Sven Inglehart, lumber shover
Jacob Johnson, tree cutter
Andrew Danielson, tree cutter

Five additional names appear on the *Chicago Daily Journal's* revised list on December 5, 1912, than appeared the day before. (Mrs. Nelson's name was removed on the corrected list along with the second "Charles Nelson" name listed as "sailor.") On the same day as the *Chicago Daily Journal's* revised list ran, another list was published by the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. This list read:

Captain [Herman] Schuenemann, Captain Nelson's partner in the Christmas tree venture
Alex Johnson, first mate
Edward Minogue, sailor
Frank Sobata, sailor
George Watson, sailor
Ray Davis, sailor
Conrad Griffin, sailor
George Quinn, sailor
Edward Murphy, sailor
John Morwauski, sailor
"Stump" Morris, sailor
Greely Peterson, sailor
Frank Faul, sailor

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Edward Hogan, sailor
Philip Bauswein, sailor

The name "Edward Murphy" sparked additional press coverage in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The *Manitowoc Daily Herald* ran the following article on December 6, 1912, after receiving word of the crew list circulated in Chicago: "One Manitowoc man may have been lost with the Christmas ship *Rouse Simmons* when the boat went down, it is believed off Two Rivers Point, north of this city. The name of Edward Murphy appears in the crew of the *Simmons* and it is feared that its owner was a Manitowoc man of that name, a son of the late Maurice Murphy, who had not been heard from by relatives for some time. Inquiry is being made in all effort to establish whether Murphy was on the *Simmons*, and relatives are anxiously awaiting the result."

Although Edward Murphy's name appeared on the list published by the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, it was not included on the list published by the *Chicago American* on December 13, 1912:

Captain Herman Schuenemann, whose home was at 1638 North Clark Street.
Captain Charles C. Nelson, part owner of the vessel, 1624 Humboldt Avenue.
Andrew Danielson, of 6044 North Paulina Street.
Gilbert Svenson.
Engwald Newhouse (probably the Engwald referred to in the message), who lived at 420 North Desplaines Street.
Philip Larson.
John Pitt, of 1144 Chatham Court.
Andrew Danielson, of Haddon Avenue and Rockwell Street.
Philip Bauswein, of 3624 S. La Salle Street.
Jack Johnson, who lived at 1629 North Artesian Avenue.
Stephen Nelson (the Steve referred to in the note in the bottle).
Albert Lykstad, of 420 North Desplaines Street.
Frank Carlson, of Austin.

The *Chicago Inter Ocean*, as well as the *Chicago Record Herald*, also published crew lists which varied from others. Nineteenth century communications were not what they are today, and thus, it was a long, slow process for relatives on their quest for answers. Information was also unclear due to the fact that many sailors, particularly unmarried men, joined crews at the last minute, signing themselves on board a vessel at one of the many hiring halls along the waters. The *Chicago Record Herald* of December 6, 1912, reported:

The rooms of the Lake Seamen's Union at North Jefferson and South Lake Streets was besieged during the day by friends and relatives of the sailors on the *Rouse Simmons*. On board the vessel were two close companions, Albert Luxtad and Engwald Newhouse, who had been brought up together and had sailed on the same vessels for nearly forty years.

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When Newhouse learned that his 'mate' had signed as cook on the *Simmons*, he went aboard as a foremast hand. Luxtad's sister, Mrs. Lena Dahl, who lives at 3319 South Oakley Avenue, stood about the office of the union yesterday waiting for tidings from the *Simmons*. Thomas A. Hanson, who is in charge of the office, said all hope of the schooner being heard from definitely had been practically abandoned by sailors who are well acquainted with the dangers of the lakes. In the crew of eleven men were three lumber shovers, John Johnson, known as 'Pink Jack', whose sister, Mrs. Benjamin Knudon, lives at 4577 Elston Avenue; Frank Carlson, known as 'Ananias', and Andrew Anderson, known as 'Big Andy'. The three lived at 418 Desplaines Street, a sailors' rooming house.

Although the above article makes reference to eleven men on board the *Simmons*, it was only a guess. On the same day, the *Milwaukee Daily News* stated the *Rouse Simmons* carried a crew of from fifteen to seventeen persons, "according to the best advices." These numbers, too, were only guesses, and may not have adjusted for the lumberjacks who hitched a ride to their graves. Approximately six months after the ill-fated *Simmons* was lost, a trunk washed ashore bearing the inscription: "ROUSE SIMMONS - J. E. LATHROP". This discovery was another point of mystery since the name "Lathrop" never appeared on any of the crew lists. Exactly who was on board is a question that has never been adequately answered.

It is important to note that crew lists included only those names of persons believed to have perished – *not* names of survivors. Two survivors from the original crew who sailed from Chicago with Captain Schuenemann on October 3, 1912, included Hogan Hoganson and Big Bill Sullivan. Each of these men deserted the ship in the Upper Peninsula reportedly after sighting rats departing the ship. If rodents were sighted deserting a ship, this was considered the worst omen. It was a warning that a dark and dreary fate awaited the ship...*and soon*. In the case of the *Rouse Simmons*, the rats were said to be leaving in droves just before the ship lifted its anchor in Michigan (there were also reports of rats deserting the eve before the *Simmons* sailed, as well as in Chicago before the journey began). Rodents were believed by many to be "the wisest of mariners," and able to foresee the shadow cast upon the *Simmons* before she set sail. At least three sailors (the exact number varies) refused to set sail with Captain Schuenemann for the return trip back to Chicago. Some reports indicate three men left, and other reports indicate four. The decision to not to return to Chicago aboard the *Simmons* cost the sailors dearly, as each forfeited his wages because those aboard were only entitled to their pay if they completed the voyage to Chicago as they had agreed. Those who chose to sail made a decision that cost them even more: their lives.

On December 7, 1912, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported "wives of several sailors visited headquarters of the Lake Sailors Union and gave a description of their husbands to Secretary T. A. Hanson, so if a body was found identity could be established without delay." The gathering at the Lake Sailors headquarters was the result of an article published by the *Chicago American* the previous day. It read: "An unidentified body, believed to be that of one of the eighteen men on the lost schooner, *Rouse Simmons*, was cast up by the waves near Pentwater, Michigan, late today. The body was that of a man six feet tall and about fifty years old." Needless to say, relatives, at their wits end with worry, feared the worst when they learned of the victim. As it turned out, the

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body was not from the *Simmons* but was, rather, from another vessel destroyed in the same storm. This "good news" restored hope, however brief, to the hearts of those awaiting word on the Christmas Ship.

Problems with newspaper reporting were not limited to the crew lists. Family members were hurled back and forth from hope to despair as the *Simmons* was reported "lost" and then "safe," and then "lost" again. On November 28, 1912, the *Sturgeon Bay Advocate* reported: "The schooner *Rouse Simmons*, Captain Schuenemann, recently arrived in Chicago with a cargo of Christmas trees." Despite the newspaper's best efforts to report marine news of local interest, the *Simmons* had, in fact, not arrived in Chicago. One of many hopeful reports was published on November 30, 1912, in the *Chicago Record Herald* under the headline "Christmas Tree Boat Safe." This news seemed too good to be true, and all too soon it would be learned that it was. The article read, "Fears aroused for the safety of the Christmas tree boat, the *Rouse Simmons*, captained by Herman Schuenemann, were quieted yesterday when it was learned that the craft had been sighted off Bailey's Harbor, 175 miles from Chicago. The ship is five days overdue, but is expected to arrive in Chicago sometime today." When the ship failed to dock in Chicago, the *Grand Haven Daily Tribune* of Grand Haven, Michigan, reported on December 3, 1912: "The old schooner *Rouse Simmons*, loaded with Christmas trees and greens...has not as yet arrived in Chicago, and fears are again felt for her safety."

On December 4, 1912, the *Chicago American* reported another sighting: "A ship captain said he thought he had seen the *Simmons* Monday [December 2, 1912] making fair progress toward Chicago." On December 5, 1912, the same paper ran the headline "Christmas Tree Schooner Sighted/Santa Claus Ship May be Safe." This article detailed another possible sighting: "The missing schooner, *Rouse Simmons*, was sighted in Lake Michigan, three miles off shore south of Racine [Wisconsin] twenty-four hours ago. This report was received today by Captain Berry of the United States revenue cutter... If in fact it was the schooner *Rouse Simmons* which the *George W. Orr* sighted, it seemed probable that the ship had been deserted or swept of its crew." The key words in the above article are "if in fact it was." It was later learned it was not. The officers aboard the *George W. Orr* had been mistaken.

The tug-of-war between news of life and news of death continued. On December 6, 1912, hope was restored, once again, when the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported: "Several reports were current that the boat had put up at a harbor from which there were no telegraphic connections, and that it was waiting there for favorable winds to bring it to Chicago." The *Milwaukee Daily News*, on the same day, reported a sighting of the ship's yawl [a type of small boat carried aboard ships] seen floating empty in the middle of Lake Michigan. It was identified as belonging to the *Simmons*. "The ship's yawl has been seen in midlake," reported the *Milwaukee Daily News*, "indicating that a part, at least, of the fifteen persons on the schooner attempted to make their escape from the wreck in the small boat, but perished." Moment-by-moment, the story unfolded. Reports during a single 24-hour period could vary greatly due to the fact some newspapers published multiple editions of their papers each day, and details that developed in the morning could be entirely different by nightfall.

The final word on the lives lost continued to be lived out in headlines. "Ship of Christmas Now Overdue,"

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reported the *Sault Ste. Marie Evening News* of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on December 3, 1912. "Find Wreckage from Schooner," reported the *Duluth Herald* of Duluth, Minnesota, on December 4, 1912. "No Hope for Boat and her Crew of Sixteen," reported *The Detroit News* the same day. And from the *Toledo Blade* in Toledo, Ohio, readers learned on December 4, 1912: "Ship Carrying Christmas Trees Goes Down in Lake." Eight dreadful words summarized the belief of many; the lives of those on board were reduced to headlines. "Tree Tops Point to Doom of Santa Ship" was printed in bold typeset in the *Chicago Daily News* on December 5, 1912. This was the same day the *Chicago American* ran a headline that read: "Santa Claus Boat Lost." Despite hopeful reports scattered in between these headlines, hope was not to last. Hope was abandoned soonest by two U.S. Life Saving Station rescue crews. One crew was from Kewaunee, Wisconsin, and the other was from Two Rivers, Wisconsin. Both the Kewaunee and Two Rivers crews were involved in the final moments the *Rouse Simmons* spent afloat, although many erroneous reports were published detailing sightings and rescue attempts by several different Life Saving crews on both sides of Lake Michigan.

In the days and weeks following the *Simmons*' loss, beach patrols continued to be in operation all over the lake. Captains were asked to keep an eye out for the missing ship. The human factor of the Christmas Tree Ship story had far-reaching effects. Those who heard about the ship's loss found it difficult to grasp the timing of the tragedy as it contrasted with the holiday season.

People were passionate about wanting answers because of their love for the story. Chicago had taken ownership of the Christmas Tree Ship and the Schuenemann family years earlier. The story connected to people on a very human level, and although the tragedy of 1912 amplified this, the love people felt for the Christmas Tree Ship had existed long before the demise of the *Simmons*, and it continued to exist long afterwards. Still, there was a sense of sadness in articles published by the Chicago press during the initial days the *Simmons* went missing when the city realized it may be losing the great and grand tradition it had come to know.

Several schooners similar to the *Rouse Simmons* began to limp into ports. Many of these ships had been reported missing, as the *Simmons* had, and hope was elevated for the *Simmons*' safety as each arrived. Government officials from Chicago to Washington D.C., including a Senator, as well as the Secretary of the Treasury, were involved in examining details of the *Simmons*' loss from every angle. Old-timers at the docks speculated on possibilities. Some believed the ship might be floating helpless in the middle of the lake if its masts or sails had been damaged in the storm. The vessel would then be at the mercy of the wind, and the ship could be anywhere. Others believed the ship and crew were possibly stranded on an island. They unfolded maps and made their case. Another concern was that many small communities did not have telephone communications, and the crew might not have access to "a wireless." Some sailors wondered if the crew attempted to escape the vessel in its yawl. If so, did they make it to shore? No one knew. Memories were also recalled of other ships from previous years that seemingly vanished, but later presented themselves safe. Sailors looked at every possibility from every angle, as they would hope someone would do for them.

While this was going on, search efforts were conducted across the lake. On December 5, 1912, the *Menominee*

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Herald Leader of Menominee, Michigan, reported: "The *Rouse Simmons* has now been missing for fifteen days. Its disappearance, if it remains as inexplicable as it is now, bids fair to become one of the great mysteries of the Great Lakes."

The ship was not discovered until 1971, and the only person yet alive from the captain's family was his daughter, Pearl. Over half a century had passed before she knew for certain what had happened to her father's ship. Even then, people were still interested in the history of the ship. On December 13, 1974, the *Chicago Daily News* published the following question from one of its readers: "What was the name of the master of the Christmas Tree Ship of Chicago legend? Signed, Mrs. D. L. Wilmette." A heartwarming summary of Captain Schuenemann was published in answer to Mrs. Wilmette's question. The editorial began with the words "once upon a time" and told of a man who was "as merry and warm a man as Santa Claus himself." "Every year he would bring to Chicago from the far north, Michigan's Upper Peninsula," wrote the paper, "a shipload of bright, tangy balsams and tall, thick pines to help the city - particularly the poor - have a merry Christmas." Fifty-two years had passed since this "merry" man had perished, yet time had not forgotten him. Neither had the city he loved. The *Chicago Daily News* devoted a lengthy column to the re-telling of his story, as it had done in past years, and would do again in the future. What is it about this story, and this family, that keeps people searching for them? Even complete strangers show up at the Acacia Cemetery in Chicago asking for directions to the Schuenemann gravesite. The cemetery office keeps the Schuenemann information card within easy reach because of the many inquiries they have had through the years.

The Schuenemann's and the Christmas Tree Ship's Legacy

It was not uncommon for fragments of a ship to be washed ashore following a wreck: a plank of wood, a tattered boot, a piece of rope. But in the case of the *Rouse Simmons*, the frigid waters of Lake Michigan carried more to shore than remains of an ordinary vessel. With every tree cast up during the decades following - *thousands* of them - came memories of the grand tradition the Christmas Ship and her captain once represented (although the trees may have come from other ships carrying a Christmas tree cargo). Evergreens continued to find their way to the shorelines on both sides of the lake for a great many years, long after the Yuletide season of 1912, usually immediately after a storm that was strong enough to stir the lake's bottom. It was also common for trees to become tangled in fishermen's nets. The story was literally being kept alive tree-by-tree. Eventually the trees became needleless, mere skeletons, but in the early years many of the first trees that washed ashore were taken home and decorated. Some of these trees looked as if they had been freshly cut, preserved by the lake's frigid waters. Trunks from some of the skeleton trees in later years were cut up with saws, sliced up like a stick of summer sausage into small, wooden circles. These were then made into ornaments. A Christmas tree was painted in the center of each circle, and the words "*Rouse Simmons* 1868-1912" were carved below.

The story behind the finding of Captain "Santa" Schuenemann's pocketbook is nothing short of remarkable. A full twelve years after the *Simmons* went missing, Captain Schuenemann's wallet washed ashore in 1924 and was found by a fisherman and a lighthouse keeper near the very spot where the *Simmons* was last sighted. If

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finding the wallet of the Christmas Tree Ship’s captain was not amazing enough, the fisherman’s boat was, coincidentally, named the *Reindeer*. Identification of the wallet was easily made because the pocketbook had been wrapped in oilskin – a type of waterproof sailor’s packing – and then secured with a cord (some accounts say a rubber band). Everything inside was in excellent condition. According to the *Manistique Pioneer-Tribune* of April 17, 1924, Schuenemann’s personal card was inside the wallet, as well as expense receipts and newspaper clippings. Prior to his death, Captain Schuenemann would cut stories out of the newspaper that told of his famed Christmas voyages. He then carried them with him in his wallet. The articles, clipped from penny newspapers, were still readable when the wallet was found. This remarkable discovery was cast forth from the bottom of the lake, and it re-opened discussion of the Christmas Tree Ship once again. The *Rouse Simmons* and its captain were refusing to remain forgotten.

By 1924, the year Captain Schuenemann’s wallet was found, Barbara Schuenemann and her daughters had continued in the captain’s tradition of selling Christmas trees for twelve years. It was said of Mrs. Schuenemann and her girls in the following years by *Great Lakes Travel and Living*, “These gallant women brought their Christmas trees down the lake to grace the city of Chicago, and to sustain a living memorial to the *Rouse Simmons* and her crew.” Their work began almost immediately after the ship went missing, even while search efforts were still being carried out. At the peak of grieving for their lost husband and father, Barbara and her daughters pulled together the courage to carry on the family business. The trees sold that first Christmas season included evergreens shipped by rail from Upper Michigan, as well as salvaged trees recovered from shores. These trees, gathered from beaches, were then shipped to Chicago and sold for the benefit of all the fallen sailors’ families. According to the *Chicago Inter Ocean* of December 10, 1912, wreaths were also woven from wrecked trees and then sold.

Captain Herman Schuenemann lies at the heart of the Christmas Tree Ship legend - the gallant skipper who delivered evergreens to Chicago in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Born in 1865 to German immigrants in Ahnapee, Wisconsin (present day Algoma), to parents who immigrated from Mecklenburg, Germany, Herman grew up in a small home near the shores of Lake Michigan. He witnessed many hardships in those early years. Despite a childhood lived amid poverty and disease, the trials of his early life became the tool by which his adulthood would be shaped into one of compassion, generosity and courage. Perhaps it was destiny that Herman was born to a family surnamed Schuenemann – a German word meaning “wonderful man” – for more than a name, these words became Herman Schuenemann’s legacy. Each Christmas, Captain Schuenemann sailed from Chicago to northern Michigan where he picked up a load of freshly cut evergreens for the Chicago market. Back in Chicago he would dock his old schooner near the Clark Street Bridge and, once anchored, crowds would come aboard to find the perfect tree for Christmas. Year after year, the people of Chicago waited for the captain’s arrival. Vincent Starrett, a Chicago newspaper journalist who personally knew Captain Schuenemann in the early 1900s, reported that “the Christmas season didn’t really arrive until the Christmas Tree Ship tied up at Clark Street.” And according to the *Chicago Tribune* of December 22, 1974, Captain Herman and his boat became “as much a part of Chicago’s Christmas as Santa Claus.”

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Although the Schuenemann legacy rests primarily on Captain Herman and his family, the tradition actually began with two men, not one. Captain August Schuenemann, Herman's oldest brother, was the first Schuenemann to ship Christmas cargos, beginning in 1876. He continued the tradition until November of 1898 when his ship went down in a terrible November storm. All aboard were lost. Captain August, nicknamed "Christmas Tree Schuenemann," was bringing a load of trees to Chicago when his ship was lost. As fate would have it, Herman was not aboard his brother's ship when it sunk because he was home caring for his wife and their newly born twin daughters. Herman now needed to make a decision whether to continue the Schuenemann tradition, or to call it quits. Remarkably, despite his brother's death, and despite the ever-present danger of sailing November's storm-tossed waters, Captain Herman summoned the courage to load another cargo of evergreens that very same year and sail it to Chicago so the city would have their trees by Christmas.

At the time of Captain August's loss, the Schuenemann brothers were already entrenched in the legacy of the Chicago Christmas Tree ships. Reverend Rudolph A. John, pastor of St. Paul's in the late 1800s and early 1900s, recorded an entry in 1897 that read:

Our old sea dog, Captain Schuenemann, is back again safe and sound from his long voyage to the northern woods of Michigan. This summer he bought one of the most beautiful and best ships, a vessel he is properly very proud of. After a long trip he is back in the local harbor with a cargo load of the most beautiful Christmas trees. The *Mary Collins* is docked at the southwest corner of the Clark Street Bridge and is visited by thousands every day, who buy their trees and garlands from the always friendly captain. The giant Christmas tree, which shone during the bazaar in the [church] gymnasium, was brought to Chicago by Captain Schuenemann especially for the ladies, and is undoubtedly the largest and most beautiful tree which has ever been brought to Chicago for Christmas.

The language chosen to announce Captain Herman's arrival in 1897 was "safe and sound." The risk the Schuenemann brothers faced was well understood. Captain August's ship, the *S. Thal*, would succumb to the waves only one short year after this article was written, and then two years later, Captain Herman's vessel, the *Mary Collins*, would also be lost when it came ashore in Upper Michigan.

Fourteen years after Captain August perished, the Schuenemann family faced yet another tragedy when Captain Herman's ship, the *Rouse Simmons*, went down with all hands. It is here, with the loss of Captain Herman, that the story takes a curious turn. With both brothers now gone, only women remained. Captain August's wife, Rose, was yet living, as was Captain Herman's wife, Barbara, and Herman and Barbara's daughters, Elsie, Pearl and Hazel. The women continued the family business of selling trees to the Chicago market.

The *Chicago Daily News* of November 28, 1913, interviewed Barbara Schuenemann just prior to her schooner being loaded with Christmas trees one year after her husband's death. She had this to say: "We'll load the trees on it and tie up at the old dock, and our customers will come to us as they have in former years. They know

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where to find us. The *Rouse* is gone, and her captain is gone, and the crew is gone – but Christmas will find the survivors still on deck, and Chicago will have her Christmas trees as long as the Schuenemanns last." True to her word, the captain's wife continued in her task until her death. Prior to her passing, Pastor Jacob Pister wrote the following acknowledgment of Barbara Schuenemann's very last Christmas in 1932: "She is here to help bring joy this year like never before. She dispenses Christmas trees. You all know her. It is good Mother Schuenemann, the widow of ill-fated Captain Schuenemann, the Christmas ship man, who never returned to the shores, but with his great cargo of Christmas trees went down into the deep in that terrible night of storm. And since then Mother Schuenemann has felt the urge to carry on. The *Chicago Tribune* never fails to pay her a tribute of respect and honor."

Mother Schuenemann not only stayed the course in carrying on her husband's Christmas tree business, but also stayed the course in continuing on in her husband's commitment to the poor. Although Captain Schuenemann was a Christmas tree merchant who sold thousands of trees to Chicago families each year, he also gave generously to churches, orphanages, and poor families, as did his wife and daughters after he was gone. Chicago's Mayor Harrison was a regular patron of the Schuenemanns, as were many poor persons.

In 1912, the year of Captain Herman's death, the Schuenemann family suffered a particularly difficult year financially (many lean years followed the more prosperous years the family experienced in the late 1800s). Every penny the family owned in 1912 was invested in the cargo of evergreens Captain Herman had harvested that season, and, thus, every penny went to the bottom of Lake Michigan with the ship. It was an unspeakable loss. Despite this, Barbara Schuenemann, faced with certain financial ruin, made a point to deliver a Christmas tree to St. Paul's in 1912 during the peak of her grief. Recorded in the church records is written: "We must not send out this review of our great Sunday School work without adding a word about our Christmas celebrations. They were occasions so successful and so rich in blessings that we shall long remember them with a glow of satisfaction and gratitude. The big tree for the church was kindly donated by Mrs. Herman Schuenemann, who in the kindness of her heart positively refused pay for it."

Christmas came again to Chicago in 1913 and the city found the Schuenemanns as they had in Christmases past - on the docks - greeting their customers, selling their trees and weaving their wreaths.

Miss Elsie Schuenemann continued to support her mother in the family business until the mid-1930s. She became the backbone of the operation and would, too, acquire a nickname Chicago would come to know her by. (Mrs. Barbara Schuenemann had been lovingly referred to as "Mother Schuenemann" and her husband as "Captain Santa.") Miss Elsie was known as "The Queen of Christmas Trees." Elsie Schuenemann, age 20 in 1912, began weaving Christmas wreaths and making plans to dock a borrowed ship in the Chicago harbor to sell salvaged trees picked up along the beaches of Lake Michigan. "Captain" Elsie resumed her family's place at the Clark Street Bridge where her father's customers would have expected to find the Schuenemanns' vessel. By December 11, 1912, Barbara Schuenemann was beside Elsie selling trees, greeting the many persons who came to assist the family. Late on Christmas Day, 1912, a reporter from the *Chicago Record-Herald* came to

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Barbara Schuenemann's borrowed ship to interview her. He reported on the following day:

Mrs. Schuenemann's daughters, of whom there are three, came to the boat late in the evening, and the sad mother closed up shop to go home with her children for a cheerless Christmas night... There was no attempt at celebration in the little home at 1638 N. Clark Street. In fact, the greatest concern of members of the family was how they were going to keep that same little home from being swallowed up in the financial squall which has followed the skipper's loss. They are facing bankruptcy as a result of their disheartening failure to resuscitate the Christmas tree business left so unsteady by Captain Schuenemann's losing fight with a Lake Michigan gale. Their attempt resulted in a substantial loss, adding to the already long list of obligations which they had inherited... Uncomplaining, the widow spent most of her Christmas Day on the tree ship straightening up the books which had added so many financial worries to her already abundant supply. With all she expressed determination to keep on... 'I am still in the fight. We will continue next year, for our fight is to save our home...' With the season now past, Mrs. Schuenemann is confronted with the job of disposing of the vast stock left over. She must remove it from the schooner which was loaned her for the season. Then she is facing long payrolls that have grown out of her husband's ill-fated 1912 business. In Manistique, Michigan, where Captain Schuenemann had engineered the harvest of an unusually large stock of Christmas greens, there are scores of woodsmen waiting for their pay. On every hand she is finding the same situation, and the indebtedness of the business is estimated at \$8,000. 'If I can only pull through and manage to make good all the obligations contracted by my husband I will be happy,' said the widow in that connection. 'He had no doubts of his ability to make them good with the holiday business, and I know he would want me to make up every cent.

Reports such as this, carried in the city's tabloid press, kept the tragedy in the limelight and played with the readers' emotions.

Barbara Schuenemann carried on her husband's business as a Christmas tree merchant, a remarkable accomplishment given the fact that women did not have the right to vote when she and her daughters took the helm of the family operation. The *Fort Dearborn Magazine* of December 1921 reported: "In loyalty to her husband's purpose in life of providing the best of Christmas trees for Chicago, Mrs. Schuenemann took up the work after his death. Every year since, this brave sailor's wife has gone up into the forests of northern Michigan and Wisconsin, personally selected her trees, and returned with them to Chicago." The year 1925 was the final year trees were sold from a schooner docked in the harbor (*Chicago Tribune* 1933; *Algoma Record Herald* 1925), although the trees themselves were usually brought to the city by rail.

Chicago's first municipal Christmas tree was erected in December of 1913. The evergreen tree was gifted to the city as a memorial to commemorate two men who had been an integral part of Chicago's Christmas celebrations

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for a quarter of a century prior - Captain Herman and Captain August Schuenemann. The large tree was a gift to the city from Milwaukee Avenue tree dealer F. J. Jordan, a former partner of Captains August and Herman Schuenemann. The towering evergreen at the center of the festivities on Christmas Eve afternoon 1913 was a fitting memorial to the Schuenemann brothers who had supplied many families in the city with Christmas trees year after year, and decade after decade. Even Mayor Harrison had been a regular patron of the Schuenemanns. For many Chicago families, Christmas did not begin until the Schuenemann's ship arrived at the pier. It became a tradition for countless families to purchase their trees from the Schuenemanns, taking the evergreen right off the ship docked near a bridge at Clark Street.

Chicago saw many changes during the nearly fifty years the Schuenemanns supplied Christmas trees to the city, and the Christmas tree business has continued to evolve through the years. During Captain Herman's lifetime, trees were sold directly from a schooner, but the family's evergreen trade ended with the Schuenemann daughters selling trees in the 1930s from a little store on LaSalle Street after their mother's death. The name of their store was "*Captain and Mrs. H. Schuenemann's Daughters*" - which showed that the Schuenemann name continued to be recognized in the city of Chicago.

The legacy of the *Rouse Simmons* continues today through the efforts of a tireless group of volunteers with the Chicago Christmas Ship Committee. Working closely with the United States Coast Guard and nearly 50 other volunteer organizations, the Committee ensures the *Rouse Simmons*' story continues through an effort to distribute thousands of Christmas trees to needy families. Each year in early December, Chicagoans gather along Chicago's Navy Pier to pay tribute to the *Rouse Simmons*, and to greet Chicago's "new" Christmas Ship, the United States Coast Guard Cutter *Mackinaw*. Since 2000, every December, the *Mackinaw* arrives in Chicago with a load of Christmas trees that were cut and bundled in Upper Michigan. Prior to distributing the cargo of Christmas trees, a memorial ceremony is held that honors Captain Herman Schuenemann and the sailors lost on the *Simmons*, as well as all those lost on the Great Lakes in the merchant marine trade.

The memorial ceremony begins with an Honor Guard of Shipmasters near the Captain at the Helm statue on Navy Pier. Standing at attention, the Honor Guard places a memorial wreath at the statue's feet. A second, larger wreath is placed on the "grave" of the fallen sailors buried at sea. The wreath is carried aboard a Coast Guard helicopter that approaches from the distant horizon and hovers above the crowd. The helicopter's pilot pauses, and then dips the front end of his craft slightly forward in a salute to the statue below. Honor Guard Shipmasters, in turn, salute the craft, which turns and slowly flies toward Lake Michigan, circles the lighthouse, and returns to the center of the waters where the crew pauses for several moments in memory and reverence before the wreath is released to the waters below. The haunting naval hymn, "Eternal Father," is played by the Great Lakes Naval Band as the helicopter departs, flying into the horizon until it can no longer be seen. Volunteers then begin unloading the *Mackinaw*'s load of Christmas trees destined for homes all around the city. The Chicago Christmas Ship Committee chooses one primary charitable organization (such as the Salvation Army or the United Way) who, in turn, selects recipient organizations to receive the trees. Ultimately, the trees are distributed to individual needy families through these charitable groups.

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The legacy of the Christmas tree ship is also carried on at other ports around Lake Michigan. In Manitowoc, Wisconsin, each December the McMullen and Pitz towing company loads one of its tugs with Christmas trees at the Rogers Street Fishing Village in Two Rivers. The load of Christmas trees is carried down the lake to Manitowoc, where the tug is greeted with a large fanfare as it docks at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum to distribute the trees.

In addition to the Christmas Ship reenactments, the *Rouse Simmons*' legacy is told to new audiences each year through theatrical plays such as *The Christmas Tree Ship*, taught to Michigan fourth graders, and the musical *The Christmas Schooner*, by John Reeger and Julie Shannon, performed throughout the Great Lakes region each holiday season, as well at theaters as far away as the Wayside Theatre in Middletown, Virginia. These plays are dramatic recreations of the Schuenemann story and are held at many different venues each Christmas season. The *Rouse Simmons* story has even caught the attention of the national media. In November 2004, the *Rouse Simmons* was the subject of an hour long special on a national cable television channel. Broadcast throughout the world, the program tells *Rouse Simmons*' story and perpetuates the memory of Captain Schuenemann worldwide.

Over the years, the tale of the *Rouse Simmons* and its captain has become part of a broader holiday story. However, the shipwreck itself has an important history worth recognizing. The wreck can yield substantial information about the construction and the working life of schooners. As a double centerboard schooner, she is also a rare vessel type within the lumber schooner class. One of three known double centerboarders in Wisconsin waters, the *Rouse Simmons* is an essential component to understanding why a few shipbuilders added two centerboards to their vessels, while most Great Lakes shipbuilders scorned them. In the area of history, the highly intact shipwreck tells the story of the commercial trade undertaken by the aging lumber schooners. Schooners, such as the *Rouse Simmons* were among the last sailing vessels to work the Great Lakes. The specialty trade in Christmas trees contributed to their romanticism. They were a tangible link to the past in an era of increasing industrialization.

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"Rouse Simmons" Shipwreck
Manitowoc County, Wisconsin

Boundary Description

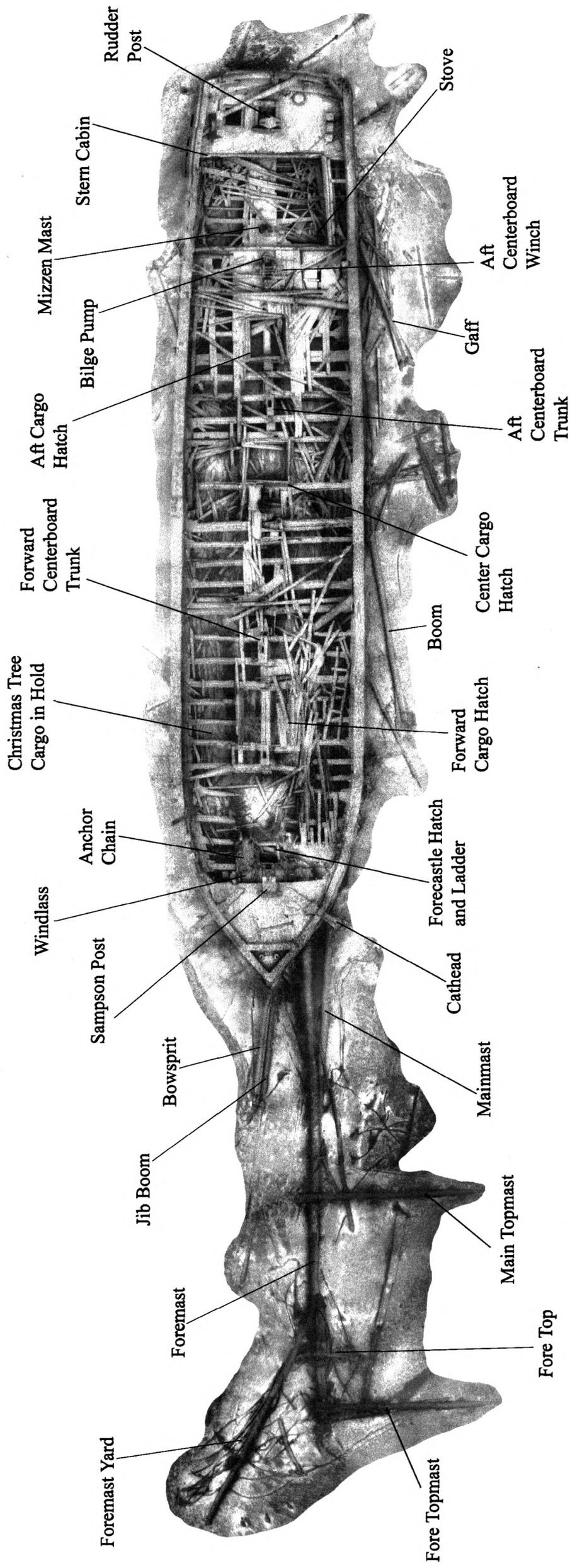
The boundary for the *Rouse Simmons* site is marked by a circle with a radius of 275 feet, centered on the UTM coordinates 466932 Easting, 4902759 Northing, Zone 16.

Boundary Justification

The site boundary was chosen to encompass the wreck site and associated debris field.

Schooner *Rouse Simmons*

August 2006



Wisconsin Historical Society
Maritime Preservation and Archaeology Program

Manitowoc County, Wisconsin