



Nearly 200 people attended last Saturday's dedication of the new state historic marker in Thompson. Located at the public access site on Lake Michigan, the marker discusses the history of the township on one side, and on the other commemorates Thompson as the last port of call of the historic Christmas Tree Ship. After the ceremony, the crowd adjourned to the nearby township hall for a historic and musical program. Above: Meg Wnuk of the Thompson Historical Advisory Committee welcomes the crowd. Below left: Thomas Truscott of the Michigan Historic Commission dedicates the marker as bagpiper Stu Haskell and members of the committee (Deanna Fish, Char Brosby, Laurie Jasmin, Wnuk and Pam Zorn) look on. Below right: True links to the past, Dr. William Ehling and his daughter Barbara pose by the marker. Dr. Ehling is the grandson and Barbara the great-granddaughter of Christmas Ship Captain Herman Schuenemann. (*Pioneer-Tribune photos*)



MICHIGAN HISTORIC SITE
CHRISTMAS TREE SHIP
 The *Rover Sissias* was one of the last schooners on the Great Lakes. Built in 1865 to carry lumber, the three-masted vessel became Chicago's "Christmas Tree Ship" when Herman Schuenemann purchased an interest in it in 1910. Around 1876 the Schuenemanns had begun transporting trees from northern Michigan and Wisconsin to Chicago. In November 1898 Herman's brother August perished in the wreck of the schooner *S. Thal*, but Herman continued the business. Bound for Chicago on November 22, 1912, he boarded the *Sissias*, which was loaded with trees from Thompson's forests, and sailed into a fierce snowstorm that plunged the ship and its crew and passengers to the lake bottom. Herman's wife and daughters delivered trees to Chicago each Christmas until around 1934.