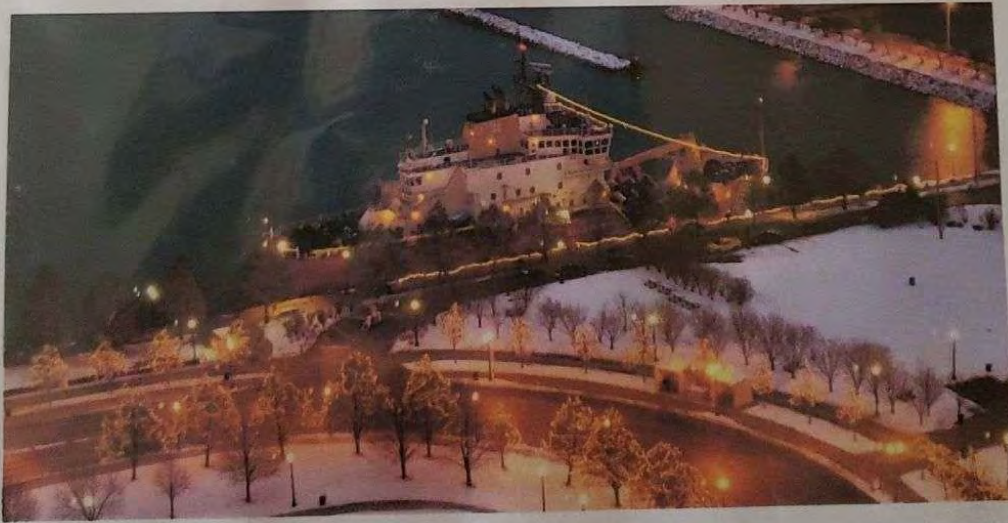


*Christmas Trees  
from Thompson  
to Chicago  
December 5 & 6, 2008  
Navy Pier  
Book 2*



*U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Mackinaw docked at Navy Pier, Chicago  
December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
(Photo by Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee)*

# December 5th, 2008



Arriving at Navy Pier at 7:30 a.m., the first thing we saw as we walked out of the parking garage was the U.S.C.G.C. *Mackinaw*. At 8:00 a.m., the ship was scheduled to begin its last leg of the trip as she made her way to dockside.



The Mackinaw was escorted into the harbor at Navy Pier by the Chicago Fire Department and Police boats.







The Christmas trees were piled high on deck but by now they were covered with a blanket of snow. As excited as we were to watch as our trees finally arrived in Chicago, we also were aware of the historical significance of this project. Calls to home were made as the band played and the *Mackinaw* laid on her horn.



The Chicago Military Academy Band





No tree was tied to the mast of the ship as Captain Schuenemann was known to do, but a beautiful wreath was hung by the crew. Captain George Lisner had cut boughs from the trees on board while out on the lake. While over the wreckage site of the Rouse Simmons, one of the wreaths were tossed overboard while the crew onboard took part in a brief ceremony.



There was a flurry of activity at dockside as soon as the Mackinaw had stopped. While we stood watching, a ramp was laid down to allow people to get on and off the ship. A few minutes later, we were personally invited to board and waiting on deck to greet us were Commander Scott J. Smith, Captain George Lisner and other crew members from the ship. We were speechless, honored and proud.

Within a few minutes we were escorted to the ward room where we would be taking part in the school presentations later in the morning.

(Left Photo: Our trees had been separated during the trip and were piled on deck waiting to be unloaded the next day.)





(L to R): Beth Malloch, Deanna Fish, Meg Wnuk, Laurie Jasmin, Commander Scott J. Smith, Captain George Lisner, Pam Zom, Karen Klaus & Shirley Leitgeb.



Prior to the morning school presentations, we were all invited to take part in a tour of the ship.  
Top: Committee Member Deanna Fish  
Right: Beth Malloch sits in the Captains chair.





Pam created a map and a storyboard on Thompson to bring along for our presentation. For two hours, groups of 10 to 15 children would come in to hear about our connection to the *Rouse Simmons*.



Top: Meg talked about the mill in Thompson and how lumber played an important part in the story.  
 Right: Deanna showed a photo of the dock panel and spoke about her Grandfather who was an early settler in Thompson.







Also on board and taking part in the presentation was Ruth Flesvig Gibson, her brother Robert Flesvig and family. Their mother, Ruth Erickson Flesvig was one of the children who waited patiently on the dock for the *Rouse Simmons* to arrive in 1912. They have written a childrens book, "The Christmas Tree Ship" and it tells of their family and their connection to this story.

Top Left: Ruth Flesvig Gibson and her book

Top: A family photo of the Flesvig's. The tree to the left of Ruth was recovered from the *Rouse Simmons* and was presented to her mother in 1990 by the Maritime Society. The tree replaced the one she did not receive in 1912.

Bottom Left: Robert Flesvig



Photos of just a few of the children who were at the presentation. They were also given a tour of the *Mackinaw* as part of their field trip. They were all such great listeners, very polite and respectful.



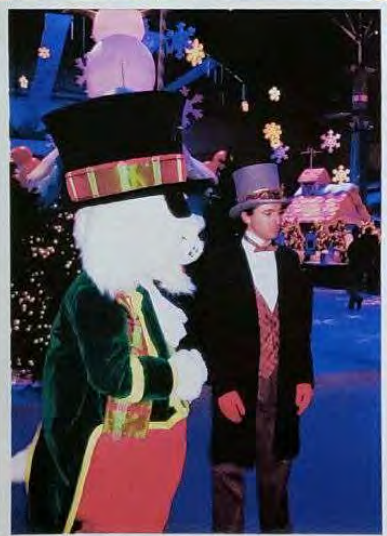
Captain George Lisner, Chairman of the Chicago Christmas Ship Committee. Captain Lisner was our main point of contact throughout the whole event and made sure that we were able to participate in all of the events during the two days.



Navy Pier  
December 5th, 2008  
A Special Ornament from the forests of Thompson, Michigan "Last Port of Call for the Historic Christmas Tree Ship"

As each child left the room, we presented them with a special ornament that was designed & crafted by Char Crosby along with a pencil that read "Last Port of Call—Thompson Michigan". Also in the gift bag was a brochure on Thompson.





Winter Wonderfest  
Navy Pier

After spending the morning with the children, it was time for lunch and a little shopping at Navy Pier. Of course, we couldn't pass us the chance to visit the winter wonderland and have our photo taken in the giant rocking chair. To be able to see that through the eyes of a child! Awesome!

## Chicago's Christmas Ship

Bringing Christmas trees to disadvantaged families  
www.christmasship.org

Ms. Laurie Jasmin  
Thompson Historical Advisory Committee  
Thompson Township, Michigan

November 22, 2008

Dear Ms. Jasmin:

On behalf of Chicago's Christmas Ship Executive Committee, I am pleased to invite you and your entire group to attend our VIP Reception aboard *M/V MYSTIC BLUE*, at Navy Pier from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm Friday, December 5, 2008. The ship is located on the south dock, toward the east end of Navy Pier. I suggest parking in the Navy Pier east parking lot as far east as possible to be close to the boarding area.

Please r.s.v.p. CAPT Bill Glynn 312-346-2700.

We look forward to seeing you there. Thank you for your efforts to support Chicago's Christmas Ship and participating in our educational program.

Sincerely,

CAPT George T. Lisner  
Chairman, Executive Committee  
Chicago's Christmas Ship  
1284 Prairie Avenue  
Des Plaines, IL 60016  
[lisner@lisner.us](mailto:lisner@lisner.us)

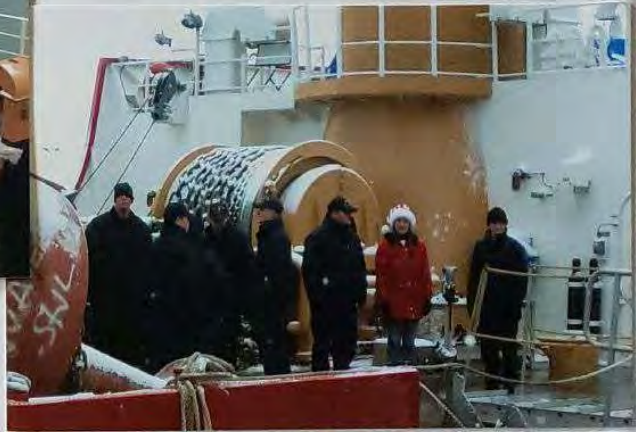


Our final event for Friday evening was the formal reception aboard the Mystic Blue. Attendees included sponsors, participating organizations along with the charitable groups who would be distributing the trees throughout the city.





Day Two  
December 6th, 2008



The centerpiece of Chicago's Christmas Ship event, is the statue, "Captain at the Helm". This statue was a gift from the Chicago Lodge of Shipmasters International, the professional association of ship Captains who are licensed as Masters of inspected vessels that carry America's cargo and passengers on the waterways and high seas.

What a day this will turn out to be! Despite the cold, we walked the four blocks down to Navy Pier. There must have been 200 or more volunteers who braved the weather so they could take part in this annual event. It was all carried out so effortlessly and there was not a face in the crowd without a smile. The empty trucks were lined up along the curb waiting for the trees to be loaded. Captain Lisner has told us the night before that our trees would be followed throughout the city and showcased during the ceremony, so we were anxiously waiting for them to appear.





Two ramps were laid out side-by-side. One side for boarding and the other to leave the ship with a tree in your arms. Wrapped in twine, the trees from Cheboygan, were being piled high as they were brought down from the upper deck of the ship.

In the bottom photos, you can see the buoys that were picked up during the voyage down to Chicago.















Captain Dave Truitt  
&  
Captain Walter Lisowski  
Followed by the  
Coast Guard Mascot



Top: Although hard to see in the photos, each of the two trees and the Mackinaw were decorated with Christmas lights.  
Right: Three of our trees had been selected for the ceremony.  
Bottom: The Taft High School Eagle Singers. Before the ceremony began, we were entertained with Christmas Carols.





**SEA  
CADET  
HONOR  
GUARD**



**Shipmasters  
Honor Guard**





Below: Reverend Kevin McBrien, Chaplain officiated at the Blessing of the Wreath memorial ceremony. This ceremony honored the Great Lakes Ship Captains and their Crews who have perished at sea. Particular attention was given to Captain Herman Schuenemann and the entire crew of the ill-fated *House Simmons*.



Left: As the wreath was laid at the foot of the statue, "Captain at the Helm", the military saluted and a silence fell over the crowd. It was a dignified yet solemn moment.



Pictured Above

- Commander Scott J. Smith, USCGC *Mackinaw*
- Rear Admiral Clifford Sharpe, USN Commander Naval Service Training Command, Great Lakes
- Captain George Lisner Merchant Marine & Chairperson of Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee
- Rick Renick, Master of Ceremonies



Above: As Commander Smith addressed the crowd, he graciously acknowledged the trees on board the ship that came from Thompson.

Left: Speaker, Rear Admiral Clifford Sharp



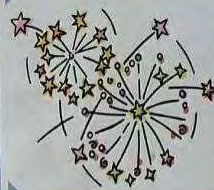




Captain Lisner brought two families on stage and presented each with a tree. After the ceremony he spoke with me and commented on how beautiful our trees were. We were to find out later that some families received decorations and present to put under their Christmas tree.



Left: One of the trucks as it leaves Navy Pier with a load of trees.



For the grand finale of the program, we were surprised and delighted when a small cannon was fired out over the water. It was a dignified and appropriate way to end the ceremony.

The ceremony was over, the trucks had departed, and all that was left on board the *Mackinaw* were millions of needles and the wonderful scent of pine. Commander Smith said the crew would be able to smell the pine for weeks afterwards.

A bottle of the Algoma wine was shared with our friends, Dr. & Mrs. William Ehling and their daughter Barbara. To have Captain Schuenemann's grandson and family there to witness this renewal of history was humbling. They have become such dear friends of the committee members and we hope we can continue this tradition in their honor for years to come.

We boarded the *Mackinaw* one last time to say our good-byes and share a bottle of wine with the Commander and Captain Lisner. As we were preparing to leave for the hotel, there would be one final surprise. Commander Smith invited me and one guest to join him for lunch on board the ship. Little did I know when I accepted the invitation, that I would be on my own, as Meg, Pam & Deanna decided to head back to the hotel.

The other guests at the table were very impressive, which made eating almost impossible! In addition to Commander Smith, I had the pleasure of dining with Rear Admiral & Mrs. Clifford Sharpe, Captain George Lisner, Captain Dave Truitt, Captain William Glynn and Captain Brady. Our lunch was served on "official" dinnerware by the chef and included Minestrone soup, Caesar salad, Chicken Parmesan with Fettuccini and a brownie for dessert. It was an honor to sit at the table with such dignified men and women and I am positive it is an experience I will remember for a lifetime.

As soon as lunch was finished, it was time for me to go. A thousand thank yous were expressed over the past two days and I can only hope that our gratitude was felt by everyone in Chicago along with the entire crew of the *Mackinaw*. They made our dream come true!



# Chicago's Christmas Ship



"Christmas Tree Schooner" by Charles Vickery  
*(used with permission)*

December 5-6, 2008

## Chicago's Christmas Ship Contributor List

Partner (\$5,000)

**tawanifoundation**  
distinction through transformation

Sponsor (\$1,000 to \$4,999)

Mr. Chip Collopy, Shoreline Marine Company  
International Shipmasters Association, Inc.

Tree Contributors (\$100 to \$999)

Albany Bank & Trust Company	Commander Lynn M. Koepke
American Legion Post 46	Mr. David N. Kostush
Mr. and Mrs. William Bell	Captain Dean L. Larson
Clipper Ship Galleries	Captain George and Dr. Arlyss Lisner
Mr. Lawrence R. Conlin	Captain Walter "Sonny" Lisowski
Mr. Geoffrey Cooper-Stanton	Mr. and Mrs. William E. McMillan
Commodore David L. Dobbs	Mr. Jerry E. Metzger
Ms. Emily Doyle	Ms. Marsha L. Montemayor
Mr. Bobby Ferguson	Mr. Ernest W. Nash
Mr. and Mrs. Morgan L. Fitch	In Loving Memory of Jason R. Nash CE2
Fox Design, Inc.	Commodore Fred W. Poppe
Friends of the Marine Community	Hon. James J. Richards
Captain William C. Glynn	Mr. and Mrs. Theodore F. Rock
Mr. Joseph X. Grassi	Captain Camilla B. Ross
Mr. and Mrs. William J. Hagenah	Major General Dean C. Sangalis, USMC
Mr. Henry J. Hebron	Mr. Stephen S. Stack
Mr. Bert Jacobs	Mr. and Mrs. Frederick W. Weber
Mr. Lloyd Karzen	Commodore James H. Wright

Donors (Up to \$100)

Ms. Serene Altman	Ms. Regina L. Lipetzky
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Broeckl	Mr. John Mariner
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Corrin	Captain Francis D. O'Brien
Dr. William E. Ehling and Family	Mr. and Mrs. Edward W. Osga
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Fritz	Captain William D. Parsons
Mr. Jim Folk	George N. and Mary T. Volk
Mr. Dayl Haefner	Ms. Jane M. Zimmer
Mr. Ralph N. Hall	

**Chicago's Christmas Ship  
Ceremony**

**Introduction**

Master of Ceremonies Rick Renik

**Presentation of Colors**

Sea Cadet Color Guard

**Shipmasters' Memorial Wreath Ceremony**

Reverend Kevin McBrien, Chaplain

Captain Joseph O'Connor, President  
Shipmasters Memorial

Captain William Russell  
Shipmasters Honor Guard

**Remarks**

Rear Admiral Clifford S. Sharpe, USN  
Commander, Naval Service Training Command, Great Lakes

Commander Scott Smith, USCG  
Commanding Officer, USCGC MACKINAW (WLBB-30)

Captain George Lisner  
Chair, Chicago's Christmas Ship

**Presentation of the Christmas Trees**

Captain George Lisner  
Commodore James Wright, Chicago Yachting Association  
Commodore Peter Pallas, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

**Chicago's Christmas Ship  
Participating Organizations**

Ada S. McKinley Community Services  
George Jones, Jr., Executive Director  
Dinah Judah-Peterson

Chicago Council, Navy League of the United States

Chicago Marine Heritage Society

Chicago Yachting Association

Friends of the Marine Community

International Shipmasters Association

United States Coast Guard

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary

Navy Pier

Army Corps of Engineers

Helicopter and Marine Unit, Chicago Police Department

Chicago Fire Department

*Special Thanks to:*

Hyman Rickover Naval Academy High School  
Junior Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Military Band

Taft High School

Junior Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Choir

The Kenilworth Press

Mystic Blue Cruises, Inc.







The smiles  
that made  
this  
all  
worthwhile!





Donnita Travis, who helped deliver our trees at one of the distribution points wrote:  
"Thank you again for bringing the Christmas Spirit to our children & families. It was a glorious day."  
Donnita sent us the photos of the families along with some quotes that she recorded.





The following quotes were recorded as families were retrieving their trees.  
Words that will warm your heart!

"This helps save money to buy more presents for the kids." Erica

"It's great to know there are people in the world who care." Jerol

"This means everything to us, this is our first real tree." Darnielle

"This is good for the kids." Ronald

"This is my son's first tree." Valerie

"This helps out, now we have a tree." Zachary

"This makes our holiday." Kathy

"We can't afford a tree, it's a blessing." Vanessa

"This tree signified the holiday season." Maurice

"Now we get to decorate a tree for my granddaughter." Jessie

"This makes a happy Christmas for the kids." Sarara

"Now kids have a tree." Joyce

"This tree brings thankfulness and joy." Twonte

"Our tree brings love and togetherness." Armando

"Our tree always marks the beginning of our Christmas celebration." Octavia



Laurie - Congrats on  
the wonderful  
success of the 2008  
Christmas Tree Ship!  
You all are not only  
preserving important  
history - you're  
making it!  
Carol

www.ConsumerReports.org  
FOUNDATION  
**Consumer Reports**  
12/9/08  
DEAR LAURIE:  
WHAT AN ACCOMPLISH-  
MENT! ENCLOSED  
IS MY CHECK AS A  
CONTRIBUTION TO HOPE  
YOU CAN CONTINUE  
THE TRADITION FOR  
A LONG TIME.  
Winnie  
Blake

Hi Laurie,  
Great pictures and congratulations  
for making this happen. Hope you  
have a joyous holiday season.  
John Little  






COMMANDING OFFICER  
USCGC MACKINAW (WLBB-30)



December 14, 2008

Mrs. Laurie Jasmin  
Thompson Historical Advisory Committee, Chairperson  
1251 South North Stanley Road  
Manistique, MI 49854

Dear Mrs. Jasmin,

On behalf of the crew of USCGC MACKINAW (WLBB 30) I would like to thank you and the Thompson Historical Advisory Committee for working with us during the Chicago Christmas Tree Event. Your commitment to maritime history, namely the Rouse Simmons, is admirable. Your passion for the Christmas Tree Ship is obvious. Thank you for taking time to dine with us during lunch, we were honored. My crew and I look forward to having you onboard next year and continuing the tradition.

Again, thank you!

Sincerely,

*S. J. Smith*  
S. J. SMITH, Commander  
Commanding Officer  
USCGC MACKINAW (WLBB-30)

## Letters to the Editor newsroom@pioneertribune.com

### Letter to the Editor:

I have just returned from getting the greatest present of 2008. It wasn't a material gift or a monetary gift. It was the sight of the arrival of the Christmas trees and the families receiving the Christmas trees sent to Chicago by the Thompson Historical Committee on the Coast Guard cutter Mackinaw.

Only 24 token trees were sent from our area (others came from Cheboygan) but the Thompson committee tagged each tree with a large bell, information on Thompson, and a CD of the finding of the original Christmas Tree Ship near Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

Many Coast Guard and Navy personnel are involved in the endeavor of making sure needy families of Chicago received a Christmas tree and decorations made by area school children.

It was an honor for me to send several trees from our family farms and watch the dignified manner in which each was handled and put into trucks to be delivered. Stories were told of children who were asked to draw or color a picture of what a happy Christmas looked like and EVERYONE drew a tree!

My friends and I had a wonderful experience and we

THANK the Thompson committee. I hope they continue with this project so all Schoolcraft residents and visitors learn the importance of the Christmas Tree Ship to our area.

**Karen Klaus  
Cooks**

P.S. Thanks, Paul, for the wonderful coverage.

*Dear Laurie;*  
*Please extend my congratulations to the committee for their successful completion of recent historical projects. At the age of 13 I spent the final two weeks of my grandmother's life with her in Thompson. Edith (Brown) Nelson-Edwardson was the sister of Kate (Brown) Squires. Thank you for sending the Christmas Tree Memorial brochure. I am involved in the genealogy of the*

Wishing You  
All the Beauty of the Season

*Brown family & Eric and Joe Peterson (cousins) have been an immense help. Happy Holidays to all - Bonnie (Fakety) Ferry*





Scenes from last week's trip to Chicago by the Thompson Historical Advisory Committee and other local residents. The group went to the Windy City to celebrate the delivery of 24 local trees, which were shipped with more than 1,100 others aboard the Coast Guard cutter Mackinaw. The project was part of Chicago's Christmas Ship, an annual effort to provide trees to families that cannot afford them. This was the first year the Thompson group was involved with the campaign, but members pledge to make it a yearly occurrence. The committee's involvement gave members the chance to promote Schoolcraft County and make a direct connection between the current project and the most famous Christmas Tree Ship — the ill-fated Rouse Simmons, which sailed from Thompson in 1912, loaded with Christmas trees for Chicago, only to go down with all hands in a Lake Michigan gale.



Top left: On their way to Chicago, the local contingent stopped at the Rogers Street Fishing Museum in Two Rivers, Wis., where they posed with the wheel from the Rouse Simmons. From left: Karen Klaus, Shirley Leitgeb, Beth Malloch, Pam Zorn, Laurie Jasmin, Deanna Fish and Meg Wnuk.

Top right: The cutter Mackinaw, loaded with the Michigan trees, arrives at Chicago's Navy Pier Friday morning.

Middle Right: Pam Zorn conducts one of several presentations for Chicago school children, telling them about Thompson, Capt. Herman Schuenemann and the Christmas Tree Ship.

Bottom right: The first trees are distributed to families in need. (Submitted photos)





Contest winners

Page 3A



# THE MINING Journal

Challenge



The Upper Peninsula's largest daily newspaper

Marquette, Mich., December 21, 2008

SUNDAY

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## WEATHER

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Monday



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Good morning

**James Bartanen**  
Thank you for subscribing  
to The Mining Journal



4 8445 74020 3

## Christmas Tree Ship sails again

By JOHN PEPIN

**Journal Mining Bureau**  
**THOMPSON** — For the first time in nearly a century, holiday trees from the Upper Peninsula were taken by ship to Chicago this month — retracing the journey of the famed Rouse Simmons, the three-masted schooner called the Christmas Tree Ship.

The sojourn was made possible with the help of the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker Mackinaw, working to benefit hundreds of needy families.

"It's been a dream come true," said Meg Wnuk, of Thompson. "We've always had a goal of getting some trees back onto the Christmas Ship and this year it came true."

Wnuk is one of a handful of Thompson Township residents who have worked for the past several years on several endeavors as the Thompson Historical Advisory Committee.

The group works to preserve and promote local history in hopes of attracting new visitors to the area.

"We've been trying to get this project up and running for about four years," said Laurie



The U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker Mackinaw is shown docked in Chicago after delivering 1,100 holiday trees for needy families. (Chicago Christmas Tree Ship Committee photo)

Jasmin, committee chairwoman.

Thompson was the last port of call for the Rouse Simmons, nicknamed the Christmas Ship or Christmas Tree Ship because the 124-foot schooner was used extensively to bring holiday trees from the U.P. to downtown Chicago.

The Simmons sank in a Lake Michigan storm in 1912. In 1971, the shipwreck was discovered near Green Bay, Wis.,

with trees still tied to the deck.

No trees have been hauled via water from the U.P. to Chicago since the Simmons sank — until this year.

For the last nine years, the Mackinaw has been hauling about 1,000 Christmas trees each December from downtown Cheboygan — the Mackinaw's home port — to Chicago, in a tradition steeped in true holiday spirit.

"It is very well-known and

very popular," said Delores Robinson, assistant director of public relations for the Navy Pier in Chicago. "This is a big event in Chicago."

Working with Chicago's Christmas Ship Committee, local social service organizations find families needing a tree for the holidays.

"They are disadvantaged families that can't afford a

tree. See Trees Page 10A, col. 1

Check us out on the Internet at [www.miningjournal.net](http://www.miningjournal.net)





Commander Scott Smith of the ice breaker Mackinaw, right, addresses the crowd following the delivery of 1,100 Christmas trees to Chicago. With Smith are Capt. George Lisner, left, and Rear Admiral Clifford Sharp of the Great Lakes Naval Academy. (Thompson Historical Advisory Committee photo)

## Trees

Continued from page 1A

Christmas tree," Jasmin said. "The trees were unloaded from the ship by volunteers. They were loaded onto trucks and then the trucks would deliver them to distribution points."

This year, there were 1,100 trees purchased by the Coast Guard and brought to Chicago, along with two dozen trees that were donated from the Thompson area and given special attention throughout the voyage.

Each of the trees from Thompson — from balsam fir to blue spruce — was wrapped specially and bore a tag from the donors. Jasmin said the Thompson trees were referred to as "the official trees."

The trees were trucked from Schoolcraft County to Cheboygan. Next year, the committee hopes the Coast Guard will pick up trees from nearby Port Inland, further strengthening local historical ties.

Some of the committee members traveled to Chicago, stopping along the way to see places significant in the history of the Rouse Simmons.

"It was an exceptional experience," Jasmin said. "The Coast Guard and the people in Chicago treated us so graciously."

Jasmin said they wanted to leave a donation with the Chicago Christmas Tree committee organizers, but the group responded by saying, "money is nice but you've brought something to us that we didn't have before, and



Volunteers unload trees from the Mackinaw in Chicago. (Thompson Historical Advisory Committee photo)

that's history."

Jasmin said Thompson area residents are already inquiring about getting more trees for next year.

"The excitement in the community has really been rewarding," Jasmin said.

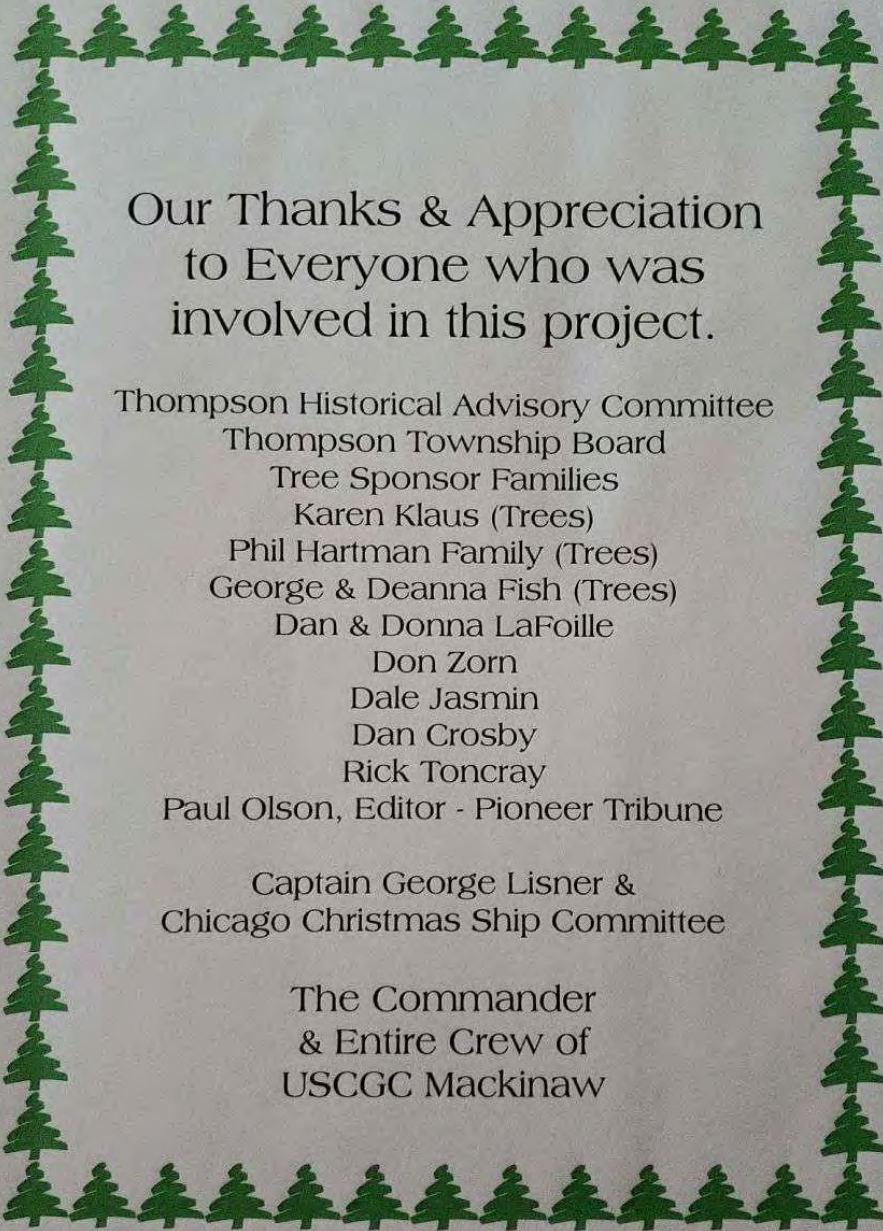
Wnuk said the committee wants to keep the tradition alive and growing, undoubtedly looking toward the centen-

ennial of the Rouse Simmons sinking in 2012.

"If this makes somebody's life brighter at a tough time of the year, that's really terrific," Wnuk said.

For more information on the Christmas Tree Ship efforts, contact Jasmin at 341-6338. To learn more about the Chicago effort, visit: [www.christmasship.org](http://www.christmasship.org)





Our Thanks & Appreciation  
to Everyone who was  
involved in this project.

Thompson Historical Advisory Committee

Thompson Township Board

Tree Sponsor Families

Karen Klaus (Trees)

Phil Hartman Family (Trees)

George & Deanna Fish (Trees)

Dan & Donna LaFolle

Don Zorn

Dale Jasmin

Dan Crosby

Rick Toncray

Paul Olson, Editor - Pioneer Tribune

Captain George Lisner &

Chicago Christmas Ship Committee

The Commander

& Entire Crew of

USCGC Mackinaw