



The Christmas Tree Ship

Carol Crane

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It was November of 1912. With Captain Herman Scheunemann at its helm, the Rouse Simmons set off from the small Northern Michigan town of Manistique with its traditional load of trees bound for Chicago. The captain would sell the trees for 50 cents or \$1.00 and even gave many away to needy families. The ship had been affectionately nicknamed the Christmas Tree Ship. Using stories she loved to hear her grandfather Axel Anderson tell, author Carol Crane weaves this heartwarming fictional tale based on the true events of the little schooner carrying up to 5,000 trees.

Carol recalls Grandpa Axel sitting in his remembering rocker carving a wooden ornament just as he is in the Christmas Tree Ship as he tells his grandchildren of the storm that took the shipmen's lives, their festive cargo, and the Rouse Simmons down to its final watery resting place. True to the newspaper accounts Carol artfully explains and eloquently includes how Captain Scheunemann's wife, ever dedicated to her husband's memory, carries on his tradition of sailing schooners to deliver Christmas trees to the Chicago market.

The grandchildren listen to Grandpa, spellbound, waiting for who will be chosen to hang the special schooner ornament this year.

Beyond a Great Lakes tale, this is a timeless story for all who love Christmas, its traditions and stories, and especially stories of the sea, including the vast inland sea that is Lake Michigan.

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