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R2012-462

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City Council Document Tracking Sheet

<b>Meeting Date:</b>	4/18/2012
<b>Sponsor(s):</b>	Smith, Michele (43)
<b>Type:</b>	Resolution
<b>Title:</b>	Commemoration of 100th anniversary of sinking of Rouse Simmons
<b>Committee(s) Assignment:</b>	

**TRIBUTE TO THE SINKING OF THE ROUSE SIMMONS CENTENNIAL**

WHEREAS, St. Pauls United Church of Christ is commemorating the centennial anniversary of the sinking of the "Rouse Simmons", known as the Christmas Tree Ship, that brought the joy and the spirit of Christmas to the Chicago area in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries; and

WHEREAS, For more than 25 years, the Christmas Tree Ship sailed up the Chicago River with a load full of Christmas conifers from northern Michigan. The ship's captain, Herman Schuenemann, was called "Captain Santa". His wife Barbara and his daughters Elsie, Hazel, and Pearl helped sell the Christmas trees directly to the public; and

WHEREAS, On November 23, 1912, while underway to Chicago, the Christmas Tree Ship sank in Lake Michigan off Two Rivers, Wisconsin. Everyone on board was lost. The shipwreck wasn't located until 1971 by a diver. Due to its reputation, the Christmas Tree Ship and Captain Santa were on the covers of various newspapers for many days with headlines reading "Christmas Ship Lost", "Fear Christmas Boat Sank", and "Santa Claus Ship Lost in Lake"; and

WHEREAS, In spite of the fact that Herman Schuenemann was among 50 other captains with ships who carried cargos of Christmas trees, he was the only one who was able to capture the public's imagination. His trees were less expensive compared to his competitors. Instead of selling them to grocery stores, he would sell them directly to the public thus saving the "middle-man" cost. Families enjoyed going to the deck of the "Rouse Simmons" to pick out their Christmas trees. Chicago Mayor Carter Harrison was one of his regular customers; and

WHEREAS, Many of Herman's Christmas trees were seen in lobbies of the grand hotels and civic buildings of that era. In 1912, near the Art Institute, the first civic Christmas tree was lit with a great ceremony. The tree had been donated in honor of Herman and August, an older brother who had also perished while bringing Christmas trees to Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Herman was very generous with the Christmas trees, giving them free of charge to many poor families, churches, and orphanages; and

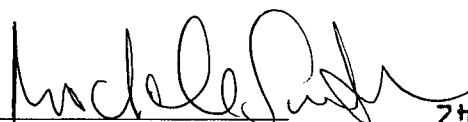
WHEREAS, Herman's wife, Barbara, and his daughters continued his tradition until her death in 1933 by transporting trees by rail and then transferring them to the schooner "Oneida"; and

WHEREAS, The Lincoln Park neighborhood was home to the Schuenemann family who took an active role in Saint Pauls German United Evangelical Lutheran Congregation that is today St. Pauls United Church of Christ; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable Michele Smith, Alderman of the 43rd Ward, has informed this august body of the 100-year memorial of the "Rouse Simmons" sinking; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED That we, the Mayor and members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered together this 18th Day of April, 2012 AD, do hereby take note of St. Pauls United Church of Christ's observance of the centennial marking the loss of the "Rouse Simmons" Christmas Tree Ship and pause in remembrance of the ship, the lives lost in its sinking, and the Schuenemann family's commitment to bringing Christmas joy to the citizens of Chicago at the turn of the last century.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to St. Pauls Church.

  
MICHELE SMITH  
Alderman - 43<sup>rd</sup> Ward

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