

December 2023

Ports and Portholes

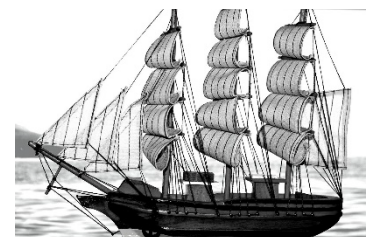


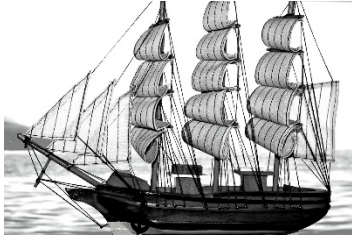
Christmas Cameos

I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In

The modern lyrics are from an 1833 version by the English lawyer and antiquarian [William Sandys](#), and consist of nine verses.

I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas day in the morning.





And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day?

\And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas day in the morning?

Our Saviour Christ and his lady,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
Our Saviour Christ and his lady,
On Christmas day in the morning.

Pray whither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day?
Pray whither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas day in the morning?

O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas day in the morning.

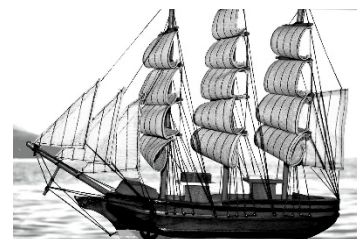
And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the Angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the Angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the Souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the Souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas day in the morning.

Then let us all rejoice *amain,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
Then let us all rejoice *amain,
On Christmas day in the morning.

This is a traditional and popular carol first published in 17th Century England. The lyrics of the carol say that the ships are sailing into Bethlehem, which could have been difficult because the Dead Sea is at least twenty miles away. Some scholars believe the lyrics were referring to the three ships carrying the Magi artifacts to Cologne Cathedral in the twelfth century. Others think the lyrics apply to Wenceslaus II, King of Bohemia. His coat of arms read "Azure three galleys argent." Still others believe that the ships could have been symbolic camels, because they were called "ships of the desert."



*amain means with
great speed or haste.

The Christmas Blizzard of 1983

<https://www.weather.gov/cle/xmas1983blizzard>

Christmas of 1983 was the coldest Christmas ever with blizzard conditions across northeast Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania. The combination of the arctic cold temperatures and the wide-open Great Lakes set the stage for the development of a



Lake Effect blizzard. Snow fell across northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania on December 24th and 25th. Winds of 40 to 50 mph whipped between 6 and 20 inches of new snow into 10-to-15-foot drifts. WJET-TV 24 Meteorologist remembered the high winds and incredible snow drifts that developed from the fine snow because the air was so cold making the snow lighter. Visibilities were zero for several hours and virtually all roads were closed from just east of Cleveland, Ohio to Buffalo, New York. Utilities were out for several hours and hundreds of residents and travelers had to go to shelter areas. The City of Ashtabula was declared a disaster area and the National Guard was activated. Several people

suffered frostbite as air temperatures fell below zero.

Former WJW-TV 8 and WFMJ-TV 21 Meteorologist Mark Koontz reflected on this event and stated that the Shoreway in Cleveland was "quite surreal". There was no activity on the Shoreway during the blizzard. Mark stated the high winds and wind chill values were unreal and the city of Cleveland virtually did not exist and was shut down and became a ghost town. The Lakeside Yacht Club near Burke Lakefront Airport sustained significant damage with docks ripped up by at least 12-foot waves. The Shoreway was shut down due to visibilities being reduced to a 100 feet or less and drifting snow. Spray from the large waves hitting the bank along the Shoreway was deposited on the Shoreway making it extremely slippery. Spray even blew over 100 yards to the North side of the WJW TV station and accumulated ice. Cleveland Hopkins International Airport was also shut down for the duration of the storm. Stranded passengers had to live in the airport until flights were resumed.

Kirk Lombardy, Meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Cleveland, Ohio recalled watching Mark Koontz on the air at WJW-TV 8 talking about the great Christmas blizzard. Kirk said Mark displayed the old WSR-74C radar imagery while on the air and the entire scope was filled with green indicating a lot of snow. Kirk even remembered that every Christmas Eve service was cancelled that evening because of the extreme weather.

The entire region suffered from December 22nd through the 26th as record cold temperatures persisted for several days. Many areas experienced the coldest Christmas ever. Temperatures remained below 0 for 60 hours in some areas.

The coldest Christmas on record came one year after the warmest Christmas in 1982. This record cold wave affected all of the continental United States except in the southwestern deserts. Some meteorologists called this the "Great Freeze of '83" and the worst cold weather event of the century in the United States (Mogil, Stern, and Hagan 1984).

The arctic blast developed over Alaska on December 15th and moved southeast over western Canada and the northern Plains. The arctic air mass remained in place for several days over the snow-covered arctic darkness of Alaska before moving southeast toward the Great Lakes region. The arctic high pressure intensified rapidly and spread into the central United States on December 22nd and 23rd. Snow covered 74 percent of North America in December resulting in the Great Freeze of '83. All time December cold records were set in cities across 29 states from Washington to North Dakota and Florida.

Subzero weather moved into Ohio and western Pennsylvania on Thursday evening, December 22nd in advance of the massive southward movement of arctic air. Temperatures dipped to -52 degrees in Butte, Montana, and a new contiguous United States record high barometric pressure of 31.42 inches was set at Miles City, Montana. This was an indication of how cold the air was that was headed southeast.

Temperatures on Christmas morning were -10 to -15 degrees in southern Ohio and near Lake Erie. Elsewhere across the area temperatures fell to -15 to -20 degrees. This record cold exceeded the Christmas temperatures of 1924.

The bitter cold temperatures combined with the strong winds caused wind chills of -50 degrees. Diehard shoppers still filled the suburban shopping malls on Christmas Eve.

Those who go down to
the sea in ships.

Captain Orlo James Mason: Lighthouse Keeper, Soldier, and Entrepreneur



Captain Orlo James Mason: Appomattox to Ashtabula, Fredericksburg to Fort Niagara and Railroad Cars in Between

Music, lighthouses, rivers including the St. Lawrence, Detroit, and Ashtabula Rivers and lakes like Lake Ontario and Lake Erie played important roles in the life of Civil War veteran and veteran lighthouse keeper Orlo James Mason. Despite the lure and challenges of the open waters of rivers and lakes, Captain Orlo James Mason valued his wife Isabelle (Belle), his daughter Maebelle, and his grandson Orlo James Connell above anything else.

Orlo Mason learned to appreciate family early in his life, because he lost both parents before he reached his teenage years. Born on July 26, 1835, in LaFargeville, New York, where the Chaumont River flowing southwest from Lake Ontario flows through the center of the community, he was the son of Johnson and Mary Mason. His mother Mary died in June 1843, and his father died in February 1847 and both of them are buried in Grove Cemetery in LaFargeville. Twelve-year-old Orlo went to live with a farm family, and in 1850 at age 15, he worked on the farm of the Henry Martin family and attended school in the winter months.

WAR, RIVERS, AND RAILROAD CARS

By 1853, his ambition to get ahead in the world led Orlo Mason to leave the farm and move to LaFargeville to learn the carpenter's trade. After three years of learning and practicing carpentry, in 1856 he moved on to learn the ropes of organ and piano manufacturing at a company in Clayton, New York, which is nestled along the St. Lawrence River.

In 1861, swept into the currents of patriotism and the bugle calls to adventure of the Civil War, Orlo James Mason enlisted in Company B, 94th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment on October 21, 1861. His regiment was assigned duty with the Army of the Potomac, where he battled with his ex-countrymen, now the enemy, at the second version of the Battle of Bull Run, a tributary of the Occoquan River in Virginia. He became slightly acquainted with the Potomac River and its watersheds at South Mountain, and met Antietam Creek, a tributary of the Potomac at the Battle of Antietam.

On December 13, 1862, Orlo James Mason again confronted the Potomac River, which marked the border between Virginia and Maryland and the Rappahannock River as well as the Confederate enemy while his regiment fought at Fredericksburg. Orlo suffered a serious wound in this battle which caused him to spend seven months in the hospital. After he recovered, Orlo rejoined his regiment which was stationed before Petersburg which acquainted him with the Appomattox River. His 94th New York Regiment played an important role in the battle the Fifth Corps under General Gouverneur Kemble Warren. On June 12, 1864, Orlo was commissioned a second lieutenant.

In 1864, Orlo reenlisted as a veteran near Fredericksburg, Virginia, and in December 1864, he took part in the fighting around Petersburg, Richmond where he met the James River, and Five Forks. He marched in support of General William Tecumseh Sherman's cavalry which headed off the Confederates at Appomattox and the Appomattox River, after Richmond fell. He was honorably

discharged as a captain in Albany, New York, backdropped by the Hudson River, on July 31, 1865.

PIANOS, ORGANS, MARINE ENGINES, AND RAILROAD CARS

After his discharge, Orlo James returned to Clayton, New York and resumed his old job manufacturing pianos and organs. Soon his adventurous spirit led him to live and work beside yet another river, this time the Detroit River. Flowing west and south from Lake St. Clair to Lake Erie for 24, nautical miles, the Detroit River is a strait in the Great lakes system. In the spring of 1866, he went to Detroit to work as a carpenter at the newly established Dry Dock Engine Works, located a stone's throw from the River. For three years, Orlo helped this new company build marine engines and between 1867 and 1894, Dry Dock Engine Works produced 129 of them.

The year 1867 marked a major milestone in Captain Orlo Mason's life. He married Miss Belle M. Mills, daughter of Captain Andrew H. Mills, a well-known vessel and tug owner of Detroit, on February 14, 1867. Belle was community spirited, charitable, and a talented musician. She and Orlo had music in common, because Orlo had worked for a piano and organ manufacturer back in his home state of New York. Her father Captain Andrew H. Mills, a well-known vessel and tug owner of Detroit, had a profitable year in 1867 as well. The Detroit Free Press of Saturday, December 21, 1867, recorded one of his vessel transactions: Tug Jennie Bell, Wm. Mitchell to Johnson & Mills, \$5,000.

Ever restless and eager for new challenges, in 1868, Orlo turned his talents to working in the car shops on Crogan Street, a bit farther from the Detroit River, but still close enough to continue his nautical sensibilities. He used his talents as a joiner to help build the first Pullman Palace Car. Following his inquisitive nature, Captain Mason quickly learned that in 1869, George Pullman had purchased the Detroit Car and Manufacturing Company to consolidate all of his manufacturing concerns into one factory. George Pullman built hotel cars, parlor cars, reclining room cars, sleepers, and diners. Captain Mason contributed his talents.

Charles F. Clark and Company's Annual City Directory for Detroit for 1868-1869 lists Orlo J. Mason as a joiner.

ST. LOUIS CAR SHOPS

In May 1868, the Masons migrated to St. Louis, Missouri, where Orlo worked in the car shops of the Iron Mountain Railroad Company for two years. Incorporated in 1851, the founders of the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad built it to haul

iron ore from deposits around Ironton and Pilot Knob south of St. Louis to the foundries in St. Louis. The new railroad could transport the iron ore faster and cheaper than the existing roads and rivers.

In 1880. Orla Mason took a job at the Franklin Avenue Car shops and worked there for two years.



Intersection of 9th and Franklin Streets, Missouri State Archives. Franklin Avenue trolley tracks.

During the ten years Orlo worked for the Broadway Streetcar Company, he and his wife Belle had a daughter, Maebelle, born in July 1876. Maebelle inherited her mother's musical talent and her father's ability to take quick action and efficiently complete tasks. She would put these talents to use early in her life.

COMING HOME TO DETROIT AND TENDING LIGHTHOUSES FOR 33 YEARS



In 1882, when their daughter Maebelle turned six years old, the Masons returned to Detroit, and Orlo Mason again went to work in the Pullman car shops. It is quite probable that the Masons returned to Detroit because his wife, Isabelle's family came from the area, and the industrial advantages of Detroit continued to fascinate and lure Orlo back. He had a long history of working as a carpenter and joiner and a passion for making railroad cars.

The Detroit City Directory for 1884 lists Orlo J. Mason, car builder; Mrs. Orlo J. Mason, music teacher, and the J.W. Weeks & Company's Detroit City Directory for 1885, shows Orlo J. Mason, Pattern Cutter, Pen Car Company and Mrs. Orlo J. Mason, music teacher. Charles L. Freer and Frank J. Hecker founded the Peninsular Car Company, a railroad rolling stock manufacturer, in 1885. In 1892, the company merged with Michigan Car Company, the Russel Wheel and Foundry Company, the Detroit Car Wheel Company and several smaller manufacturers to form the Michigan Peninsular Car Company.

Captain Orlo Mason's death certificate cites one of his causes of death as chronic bronchitis which could have been aggravated by his working in the car shops. His father-in-law Captain Andrew H. Mills was a maritime man and he and his wife had reared Isabelle, Orlo's wife, along the Detroit River. Orlo himself had always lived in close proximity with rivers and lakes. These reasons and others lost to history may have convinced Captain Orlo Mason that light keeping would be the next logical step on his career ladder.

Captain Orlo James Mason applied for the position, and in June 1885, the government appointed Captain Mason keeper of the Mamajuda Lighthouse in the Detroit River. The island is named for Mamajuda, an American Indian woman who regularly camped on the island during fishing season. In 1849, the United States government built the Mamajuda Lighthouse on the island with the lighthouse keeper and his family the island's only residents. The lighthouse had to be rebuilt in 1866, but eventually erosion washed away the lighthouse in 1950. The unstable composition of the island caused slow erosion to wash it entirely away by 1960, with only a few boulders occasionally breaking the surface.



In Orlo Mason's time, Mamajuda Island and Mamajuda Lighthouse were solidly present and he served there for nine years, performing his duties so conscientiously that no one entered a single complaint against him. During Captain Mason's time at Mamajuda light, his daughter Maebelle, then 14, performed an act of heroism worthy of her father's service in the Civil War. On May 11, 1890, a man in a rowboat threw a line for a tow to the steamer C.W. Elphicke. The steamer's Captain Charles Z. Montague was passing on the Detroit River halfway between Mamajuda Light and Grassy Isle. The line missed the steamer, but it caught just right to capsize the boat and the man spilled into the river.

Captain Montague couldn't rescue the man, but as he passed Mamajuda Light, he signaled the lightkeeper that there was a man in the river in danger of drowning. Captain Mason had taken the government boat across to Detroit to do some shopping. The only one available to help was Isabelle Mason and her daughter

Maebelle. The only boat left for Mrs. Mason and Maebelle was a small flat-bottomed punt which they hauled out of the dock at the lighthouse. They launched the punt and after some discussion decided that Maebelle should row to the aid of the drowning man. After about a mile of hard rowing, Maebelle came upon the man near his upturned boat. She pulled him aboard her punt in a very exhausted condition. Then she rowed back to the lighthouse, towing the man's rowboat behind her. The stranger thanked her profusely.

The United States Government thanked Maebelle for her bravery by presenting her with a lifesaving medal of the second class. It was obtained through the efforts of Captain Charles V. Gridley who in 1890 was government inspector of the Tenth Lighthouse District. His term expired before the medal was finished, so Commander E.W. Woodward of the United States Navy, presented the medal to Maebelle. She received it at the Cadillac Hotel in Detroit during the National Convention of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1890.

Maebelle accepted the medal modestly and said that she had simply performed an act of humanity. The Ship Masters Association also presented her with a gold lifesaving medal with a Maltese cross and gold chain attached. The medal was inscribed: "Presented to Miss Maebelle L. Mason for heroism in saving life, May 11, 1890, by the E.M.B.A. of Cleveland." From that date until it disappeared in 1960, all steamers flying the Ship Master's Association pennant saluted while passing the Mamajuda lighthouse.

On June 21, 1892, Maebelle Lewis Mason married James Leverett Connell and they lived in various places in Michigan, including Fenton, Marlette, Little Traverse, and Harbor Springs. The Connells had a daughter Corrine, and a son whom they named Orlo James in honor of Captain Orlo James Mason. Born April 19, 1896, Orlo James Connell was a World War I veteran, serving in the 124th Transportation Corps from June 13, 1918, to July 19, 1919. Orlo James married Hilda and they had three children. He died on February 16, 1956, and he is buried in St. Joseph's Catholic Cemetery in Lansing, Michigan. Maebelle and James Connell are buried in Lakeview Cemetery in Harbor Springs, Michigan.

CAPTAIN MASON IS TRANSFERRED TO ASHTABULA HARBOR OUTER PIER LIGHT

In June 1893, Captain Mason was transferred to Ashtabula, Ohio, where the Ashtabula River flows into Lake Erie after it begins in Monroe County, meanders 40 miles, and drains 137 square miles. He was put in charge of the outer pier light which had a rear range and fog signal. He and Belle lived in a house on the hill at

10 Walnut Street, overlooking the lake and harbor. Captain Mason and Belle would have found some familiar sights in this 1880 picture of the harbor.

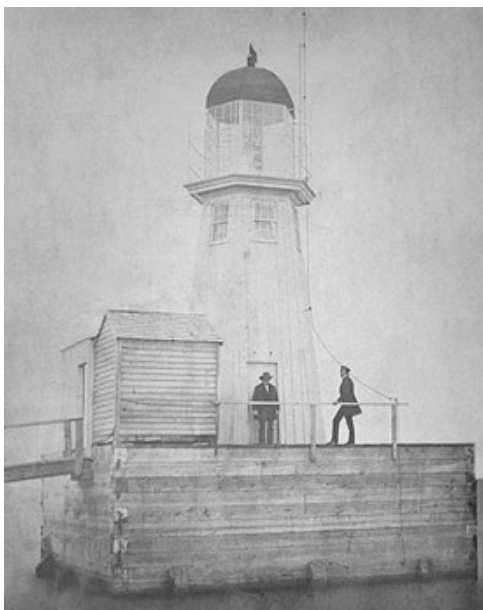


Photo Courtesy of Gordon Duff Brace

This vintage photograph shows Ashtabula Harbor in 1880. It was taken at the present day (1994) site of the Ashtabula Maritime Museum. Spanning the water is a pontoon bridge which was replaced by the present day (1994) lift bridge in 1925. A wooden package freighter can be seen at center, and a steam engine can be glimpsed at right. Part

of a lumberyard occupies the foreground.

ASHTABULA LIGHT HOUSE FAMILY TREE



This 1836 hexagonal tower was the first Ashtabula Harbor lighthouse. The tower sat on top of a forty-foot-square wooden crib that a ramp connected to the east pier of the Ashtabula River. Samuel Miniger, the first recorded light keeper, had the responsibility of keeping the beacon's eight lamps burning using sperm whale oil.

In 1855, the government installed a fifth-order Fresnel lens in the lantern room. This changed the light's character to a fixed white, interrupted every ninety seconds by a flash.

The second lighthouse, made of wood, had a fourth order Fresnel light. It was used until 1905, and the lighthouse keepers lived on shore at the lightkeepers house at 10 Walnut Boulevard and were ferried out to the lighthouse by boat. In later decades, the Walnut Boulevard lightkeepers house would become the Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum.

Ashtabula Light House before relocation and expansion.



Photo courtesy of Michael Forand.

In 1916, a few years after Captain Mason died in New York, the Ashtabula River was widened, and new docks were built along with a new lighthouse that would later be moved to the end of the newly built break wall. At this point, the lighthouse was placed atop a 59-foot concrete crib and

doubled in size. It was constructed with steel and concrete plates to ensure safety and stability against storms. Since the lighthouse had been increased in size, the keepers were now able to live in the lighthouse instead of the lightkeepers house on the hill on Walnut Boulevard.

NEXT LIGHTHOUSE STOP: SOUTH BASS ISLAND LIGHT HOUSE



On September 1, 1900, veteran lighthouse keeper Captain Orlo J. Mason was transferred from Ashtabula Lighthouse where he had served since 1893 to South Bass Island lighthouse. When Captain Mason and Belle had arrived in Ashtabula in 1893, many people already knew about the water rescues that he and their daughter Maebelle had performed. When he and Belle arrived at the South Bass Island lighthouse, first lit in

1897, the stories circulating there about former lighthouse keeper Harry H. Riley were not so positive. Captain Mason and Belle arrived in the middle of an epidemic and the resulting turmoil.

Indeed, Captain Orlo and Belle Mason had been transferred into Samuel Anderson's lighthouse with its basement rumored to be full of snakes, but they managed to settle into their lighthouse quarters and establish themselves there. Lydia J. Ryall in her *Sketches and Stories of the Lake Erie Islands* described the scenery that the Captain Orlo Mason and his wife Belle encountered in their new

home. She wrote that “Put-In-Bay is located in the Lake Erie Islands in Sandusky Bay, and the lighthouse sits on Parker’s Point on the island’s southwestern tip. Captain and Mrs. Mason lived in the main building with the tower looming in back. From the tower stretched a beautiful view of the lake shore. Cedar trees framed by dark green leaves, craggy bluffs, fallen rock masses and in the winter, ice mountains, provided a variety of scenery that the Masons enjoyed.”

Lydia J. Ryall also states in her *Sketches and Stories of the Lake Erie Islands* that Captain Mason kept the Put-In-Bay Light for several years, before he transferred to the Ashtabula light, but several Lighthouse Board records state the opposite, that Captain Mason transferred from Ashtabula to Put-In-Bay.

Sandusky Daily Register stories of the time stated that Captain Mason and his wife kept a good station, and they greeted many visitors in the summer months. Winter months at an isolated lighthouse were usually quiet with few visitors besides friends and family of the keepers. Winters were quiet at the South Bass Island Lighthouse, but the friends and family of the Masons and other winter visitors found “welcome and good cheer” at the lighthouse.

The Masons left South Bass Island Lighthouse on April 18, 1908, and Captain Mason took over the position as keeper of the Fort Niagara Lighthouse on April 23, 1908. I Charles B. Duggan, 47, and his wife, Bertha, replaced the Masons at South Bass Island Light and enjoyed a good life at the lighthouse.

CAPTAIN ORLO J. MASON FINISHES HIS CAREER AT FORT NIAGARA LIGHTHOUSE



Captain Orlo J. Mason and his wife Belle left South Bass Island Lighthouse on April 18, 1908, and he took over the position as keeper of the Fort Niagara Lighthouse on April 23, 1908, serving there until October 1913.

Fort Niagara Light is located on the Niagara River on the south shore of Lake Ontario on the grounds of Fort Niagara. Built in 1782 on top of the French Castle

still located inside Old Fort Niagara, the tower was first lit in 1872, after it was removed from the French Castle to allow more room for officer’s quarters. The

Coast Guard deactivated the light in 1996, replacing it with a light beacon at the US Coast Guard Station Niagara near Youngstown, New York.

When Captain Mason and Belle arrived at Fort Niagara Lighthouse, they encountered some of the local color and legends as they had done at their previous light houses and even in their civilian lives. Music had always resounded in their family. Earlier in his career, Captain Mason had manufactured pianos and other musical instruments and his wife Belle was a talented musician and music teacher, and their daughter Maebelle had inherited their musical interests and talent. Captain Mason and Belle were undoubtedly as fascinated by the stories of the headless French soldier and the drunken fifer as are current visitors to Old Fort Niagara. They may have compared the stories of South Bass Island Keeper Harvey

In 1726, entrepreneurs from New France built the Fort at the mouth of the Niagara River where it enters Lake Ontario. Next, the British occupied the Fort and eventually the United States. Along with its legions of soldiers, many legends have occupied the history of Old Fort Niagara during its 295-year history. Samuel De Veaux, a local historian whose accuracy historians have often questioned, wrote a Niagara regional guidebook he called “The Falls of Niagara.” His book included a story about a drunken fifer named John Carroll as well as descriptions of the cataracts and other sites in Canada and the Niagara region.

The story of John Carroll, the drunken Irish fifer, would have resonated with Isabella, Orlo, and Maebell Mason’s musical sensibilities. The Fort Niagara legend features the colorful Irishman stationed at the fort before the War of 1812, and as Samuel De Veaux puts it, “of all things devoted to music and whiskey.”

One day on parade, John Carroll made a spectacle of himself and when a superior officer chastised him for his behavior, John reacted to the criticism so disrespectfully that he wound up under guard in the “blackhole,” for a night of solitary confinement. There, according to Samuel DeVeaux, the sentries heard “the most dismal sounds’ coming from fifer John Carroll’s cell.

John told the sentries that hobgoblins and all the devils in existence had visited him, and they had haunted him the entire night he had been confined to prison. Prison officials gave John a light, pen, and paper to take his mind off the blackhole. John put his talents to use and the next morning upon his release, he appeared with a new song he had written, “Carroll’s Thoughts on Eternity.”

Samuel De Veaux claimed that John Carroll composed many marches and waltzes before he died at Niagara when an epidemic swept the Army in 1812. Historians in succeeding generations doubted the accuracy of Samuel De Veaux’s stories or that

John Carroll had even existed until the late Twentieth Century in 1989, when former Old Fort Niagara director Brian L. Dunnigan and Geneseo State College professor Jim Kimball discovered significant documentation verifying that John Carroll had indeed been a real person.

Director Dunnigan had been proofreading a manuscript from a Fort Mackinac historian when he discovered a listing for a fifer named John Carroll. John Carroll had served with the U.S. 1st Regiment of Artillery at Fort Mackinac from 1796 to 1799. Although Director Dunnigan theorized that John Carroll had probably moved to Detroit and then on to Niagara with his unit, there were no records of his military service, punishment in solitary, or death in old Fort Niagara records.

Next, Professor Jim Kimball who specialized in early regional dance music, contributed more documentation of John Carroll's life. Researching at the Newberry Library in Chicago, he discovered a 179-page, leather bound collection of songs compiled by "John Carroll, Fort N" between 1804 and 1812."

Included in the collection are 13 songs that John Carroll wrote, but never published. These unpublished songs include "Carroll's Whim," "The Niagara French Four," and "Fort Niagara Quick Step."

An inscription in the book noted that in November 1812, John Carroll had bequeathed the book to an Army contractor in the War of 1812. The contractor's name was S. De Veaux.

CAPTAIN MASON AND BELLE'S LEGACY

Captain Orlo James Mason and his wife Isabelle or Belle or Bella Mason's story has documentation inconsistencies as well. Some of the lighthouse sources list conflicting dates and places of service on the lights and their tombstones list their birthplaces as unknown or in other places, incorrectly, including the date that he resigned his position at the Old Fort Niagara Light. Some sources say he served from April 23, 1908, to his death on January 2, 1914. The Washington Post reported that Captain Mason resigned as keeper of the Old Fort Niagara Light in October 1913.

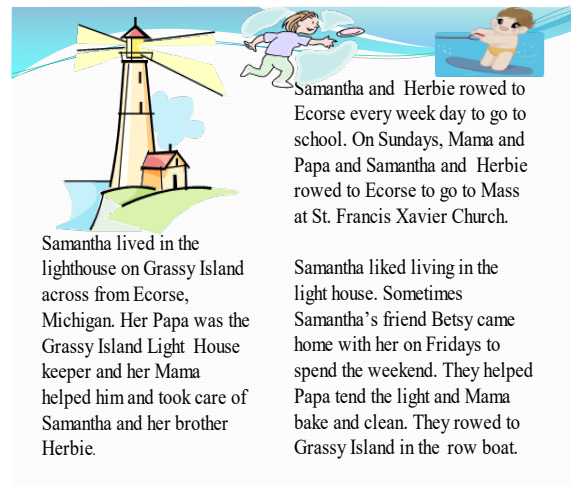
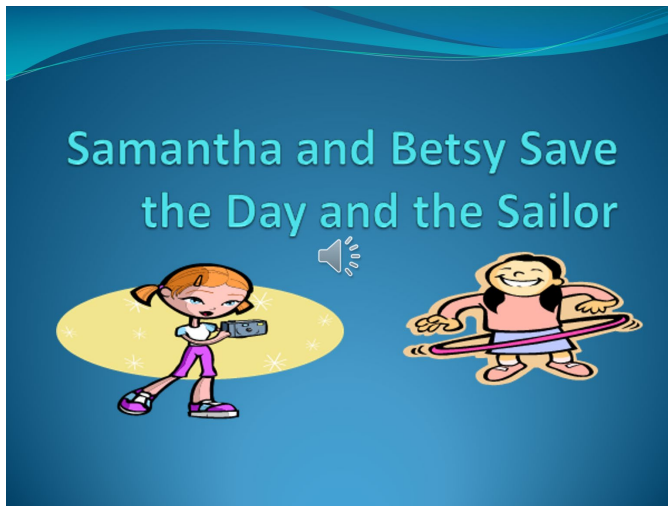
Captain Orlo James Mason died on January 23, 1914, in Youngstown, New York. His family, most likely his wife Belle and daughter Maebelle and her husband brought his body back to Detroit for burial in Woodmere Cemetery, Section A, Lot 467. On February 19, 1914, Belle filed a claim to her husband's Civil War Pension from Michigan.

The 1915 Detroit City Directory lists Belle M. Mason as the widow of Orlo James Mason, living at 443 Larned Street. She probably stayed in Michigan because her daughter Maebelle Connell and her husband and children lived near Detroit, and Michigan was where she had met Orlo, her husband of 47 years. Belle M. Mason died on June 7, 1915, and she is buried in Woodmere Cemetery, Section A, Lot 467 beside her husband.

Captain Orlo James Mason served bravely in the Civil War, and steadfastly and tirelessly maintaining lights to shine over the Detroit River, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario waters. He lived his goal of guiding mariner's safely to port, and it's not difficult to imagine fifer John Carroll playing him to heaven with his "Fort Niagara Two Step," with Belle keeping step with him.

Samantha and Betsy Save the Day and the Sailor

(A story based on the adventure of Maebelle Mason for the young at heart.)




One day in spring Samantha said to Betsy. "Can you come and help me with the spring cleaning? Then we can gather duck eggs in the marsh and collect feathers for feather pillows."

"That's little kid stuff," Betsy said. "My mother is helping me sew a dress for the school dance. It will take us all weekend to finish it."


Samantha was so quiet while she did her homework that Mama asked her, "What's wrong, Samantha?"

"Betsy's acting funny. I asked her to spend the weekend with us and she said that she has to sew her dress for the school dance. How can a school dance be more fun than rowing in the marshes by the Detroit River?"



Mama smiled. "Everything happens in its own time," she said. "Be patient with Betsy." Samantha was patient for two weeks, but then she lost her patience and asked Betsy to spend the weekend. She asked four times until Betsy said yes she would come. She came, but she brought her almost finished dress with her. "I have to finish the buttonholes," she explained.

Saturday morning dawned sunny and cold and waves rode up and down and around Grassy Island. Samantha and Betsy helped Papa turn off the light for the day. Betsy peered at the lamps. "You're low on lamp oil, Mr. Sherman," she said. "Do you have more in the supply shed?"





Papa hurried downstairs. When he came back, he looked worried. "I must go to the hardware store in Ecorse and buy some more lamp oil," he told Mama.

Mama said, "I was going to take the boat and visit Mrs. Johnson. She just had a baby boy last night and she could use some tending."

"We can go together," Papa said. "We will only be gone for the afternoon. The children will be fine."



Mama told them to be careful twelve times and waved goodbye at least fourteen times. Papa rowed quickly toward shore. After they had waved goodbye for the fifteenth time, Samantha said, "Let's go hunt duck eggs."

"I have to sew my buttonholes," Betsy said.

"Come with me, Herbie," Samantha said. "Let her stay here and do her sewing. She's a fraidy cat."

Betsy stamped her foot. "I am not a fraidy cat. I just want to finish my dress in time for the dance."

Samantha stuck out her tongue at Betsy. "Fraidy cat!"

Betsy put down her dress and got into the row boat with Samantha and Herbie. "I don't know why your Papa didn't take both of the boats." Betsy grumbled.

"He took the skiff because it's a sturdier boat," Herbie said. "Everybody knows that!"

Betsy didn't answer them. She sat on the row boat seat looking straight ahead, holding her shawl tightly around her. "I don't know how to row and I will never learn," she said.



Herbie had brought his fishing pole and before long he caught two fish. Samantha rowed in and out of the coves and inlets on the other side of Grassy Island from the lighthouse, but they didn't see any ducks. Samantha fished too.

Betsy jumped away from the fish as Herbie unhooked them and put them in a bucket on the bottom of the boat. "It's getting colder out here and the wind's picking up," she said. "We'd better go back."

"Fraidy cat," Samantha said. She kept rowing.



But the waves climbed higher and finally she turned the row boat around and headed back for the lighthouse. They had just rounded the southern point of Grassy Island when Betsy dropped her shawl so she could point at something in the water. "There's a man floating out there!" she said.



"A man! What would a man be doing floating in the middle of the Detroit River?" Herbie asked, not looking up from his fish.

"It is a man and he needs help," Samantha said.

"How can we help him? We don't have any extra life jackets," Betsy said.

"We can't leave him out here in the middle of the Detroit River in a storm," Samantha said. She reached under the seat and pulled out a length of rope. "I'll throw this out to him and Betsy and you and Herbie can help me pull him to safety."

Samantha threw the rope to the man struggling in the water. He grabbed it and Samantha, Herbie, and Betsy pulled him into the row boat. They tugged and pulled the man to get him into the boat until finally he rolled in and collapsed on the seat.

"Thank you," he said weakly. The man shivered so hard that Samantha gave him the wool jacket that she wore. Herbie took off his coat and put it over the shivering man.

"Don't worry, Mama and Papa will take care of you when we get back to the lighthouse," Samantha assured the man.

The sun was setting as they beached the boat in front of the lighthouse. Samantha and Betsy helped the man stumble up the path to the lighthouse. Herbie ran ahead shouting, "Papa! Papa, come and see what we found in the river!"





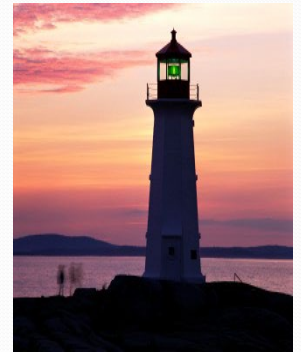
“Herbie, you know that Papa will be up in the tower lighting the lamps,” Samantha said.

“Mama, Mama, come and see what we found in the River!” Herbie shouted.

They pushed the man into the kitchen and helped him into a chair by the stove. “Mama, we need your help,” Samantha called.

The lighthouse living quarters were dark and silent. “Mama and Papa haven’t come back from Ecorse yet. Betsy, let’s building a fire in the stove and make him some hot tea,” Samantha said. “Herbie, go upstairs and get him some of Papa’s clothes.”

By the time the man was sitting by the kitchen stove wearing Papa’s dry clothes and drinking hot tea, darkness covered the lighthouse. Little streams of lamplight from Ecorse darted across the river, but the lighthouse was dark. “Mama and Papa must have been delayed because of the storm,” Samantha said. “They’re probably on their way home now.”



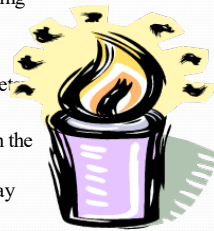
“How will they know where they’re going without the light?” Herbie asked, his eyes wide with fright.

“How will anyone know where they are going without the light?” Betsy said.

“We need to light the light,” Samantha said.

“How can we do that without lamp oil?” Betsy wondered.

“There are some candles in the cupboard in the bedroom. Let’s see how many we can collect,” Samantha said. “Herbie, you stay here and keep the man company.”



Betsy smiled at the man who had finally stopped shivering. “What’s your name, sir?” she asked.

The man smiled back. “I’m Jack Kelly from the schooner Argon. I fell overboard. Sure thought I was a goner until you came along and rescued me.”

“Excuse us, please. We have to rescue mama and Papa next,” Samantha said.



Betsy and Samantha searched for candles. They managed to find a candle holder with seven candles in it in the cupboard and three more candles in the desk drawer. “We don’t have enough to make a strong light,” Betsy said. “We’ll make do with what we have,” Samantha said. Grabbing some wooden matches from the kitchen, the two girls raced upstairs to the tower room. They put some of the candles inside the lantern and some beside the lens to reflect the light. They watched the candles burn, turning them so that the brightest light would shine out of the window across the water to make a path for Mama and Papa.



The candles burned for two hours, but Mama and Papa still didn’t come home. The candles flickered. Samantha paced up and down in front of them. “Where can Mama and Papa be? What are we going to do when the candles burn out? We don’t have anymore.”

Betsy put her arm around Samantha. “I have an idea,” she said. “We can use my buttons. Go downstairs and get my dress and bring up a cup of cooking oil.”



Samantha ran back upstairs with the dress and the cup of cooking oil. Betsy ripped off some threads from her dress and twisted them into a wick. She dipped the wick into the cooking oil.

Betsy and Samantha made makeshift candles from the cooking oil, and wicks from the thread. They threaded the wicks up through the buttons and set them in the cup of oil to burn. The cup candles didn't shine as brightly as the wax candles, but they sent a dim path across the water.

Samantha stared at the dim path. Suddenly she saw two figures rowing a skiff up the candle lit path. "Mama and Papa are home!" Samantha shouted.

Herbie ran to meet Mama and Papa. "We rescued Jack from the River," he told them.



Papa hurried to the lighthouse tower with a large can of lamp oil. Mama hurried to the kitchen to see to Jack.

Samantha walked down the stairs beside Betsy. "You're going to teach me how to sew the first thing in the morning," she told Betsy.

Betsy hugged Samantha. "You're going to teach me to row the first thing in the morning," she said.



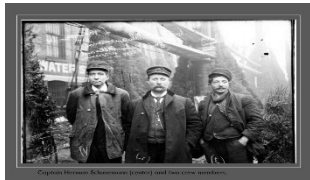
The story is fiction, but a similar rescue really did happen on the morning of May 11, 1890 off Mamajuda Island Light in the Detroit River across from Wyandotte, Michigan. Maebelle Mason was the teenage daughter of Captain and Mrs. Orlo J. Mason, the keeper of Mamajuda Island Light.

One morning he went to the mainland for supplies, leaving a small, flat bottomed skiff on the island beach. Shortly after the captain left, a freighter approached Mamajuda Island and leaning over the bridge rail, the freighter's captain shouted a message. A man was struggling in the water beside an overturned row boat about a mile upstream. Could the light keeper help him? The freighter steamed on and Maebelle launched the skiff into the river and rescued the man. She rowed the nearly unconscious man back to the island and she and her mother revived him. Word of Maebelle's daring rescue spread throughout the lakes and the marine magazines and Detroit and Cleveland newspapers told her story.

At a gala celebration in Detroit, Maebelle was awarded a United States Life Saving Medal and the Shipmaster's Association gave her a gold life saving medal. For years after skippers saluted Maebelle with their horns and whistles while steaming past Mamajuda Light.



The Christmas Tree Ship-The Rouse Simmons



Second guessers say the greedy neglectful captain overloaded his ship, Greedy because the captain and his crew loaded over 1,000 Christmas trees for a late November 1912 voyage. Neglectful because some say the captain did not tend his ship. I, Captain Herman Schuenenmann bought trees for the children and their families,

I, Captain Herman Schuenenmann, gave away Christmas trees, Took splinters out of the ship cat's paw, Scrubbed the wooden deck with the deck hands, The worn out and weak deck plank fastenings I planned to repair with the profits from this trip from Thompson, Michigan to Chicago. Winds and waves enjoyed romping room from one end of cucumber shaped Lake Michigan to the other.

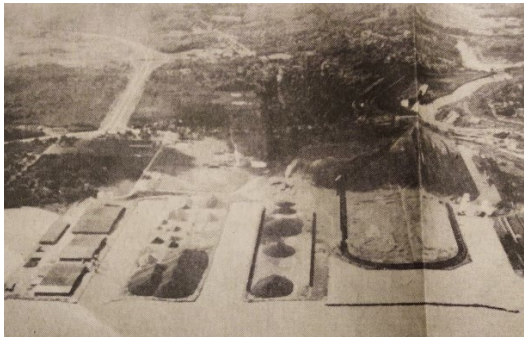
Romp they repeated around and through the Rouse Simmons. I decided to anchor and ride out the wind. My decision did not work. We rode the waves to the bottom. Many Christmas trees rode the waves to the shore. People took them, fresh and eager for Christmas. Twelve years later a fisherman netted my oilskin wallet.



Nearly 60 years later a Milwaukee scuba diver found my ship. A group of local mariners and the U.S. Coast guard collect over 3,000 Christmas trees every year to give to needy families.

I overseeing them, balance the numbers.

Pinney Dock



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