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Breckenridge News

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER, 1893.

THE VIKING SHIP.

Thousands of People View the Strange Norse Craft.

Capt. Anderson [sic.] Explains the History of Its Building and Gives a Slight Sketch of the Old Pirates—Its Future Trip.

MAKING A TOUR OF THE ILLINOIS AND MISSISSIPPI RIVERS.

(Globe Democrat)

The Viking ship is attracting more attention on its tour down the, Illinois and Mississippi rivers than when" moored at Jackson Park, Chicago. At no time during its stay of five months at the World's Fair was it besieged by such crowds as gathered on the Levee yesterday to see the little ship, with its foreign flag. Thousands of St. Louis' best people visited the craft yesterday, which is of historic interest, apparently, to every one. At the World's Fair the more pretentious displays attracted the masses, and, in the maze of architectural splendor and rich exhibits, the little Norwegian craft was lost sight of by many. Now that she is touring the country to a limited extent the people take time from home and business cares to pay their respects to her. From early morning till dark the Levee was lined by people to view the craft. The larger number appear to be content with a superficial view of the vessel, but others will not rest until they are able to say that they have been aboard it. The crowd became so dense during the afternoon that only these in the "front rows" were able to get a satisfactory view of the exterior of the craft. She was opened up to the public at noon, and was crowded with visitors from that time till nightfall at 10¢ a head for adults and 5¢ for children.

It was not intended to charge an admission fee for going aboard, but since leaving Chicago the strange craft has attracted so much attention that Capt. Anderson [sic.] has been obliged to exact a small fee in order to keep back the crowd which would avail itself of the privileges of the craft were they allowed free admission. The fund raised from this source, as well as that from lectures delivered by Capt. Anderson [sic.], is intended for the establishment of a home for aged and indigent seamen in Norway.

The weather of yesterday was very favorable for a stroll along the wharf, and it appeared that all these out for a stroll bent their steps in that direction, and the side-walks on Olive and Locust streets leading to the river were lined by pedestrians going to and fro from the ship. Others went in carriages and hacks, while a number o [sic.] bicyclists rode their silent steeds riverward. Fashionably dressed ladies and children and gents with silk hats mingled with these wearing coarser fabric in their efforts to get to the ship with as little delay as possible. Policemen stood at the entrance and exit gang planks warning the people not to crowd, and it became necessary to employ extra help to prevent the possibility of visitors being pushed into the river, so great was the press. One of the sailors, who acted as ticket taker, warned the people not to be in a rush as the ship would be at the wharf for several days, and other opportunities would be offered to view the craft, but this did not appear to have the desired effect, as these on the wharf wanted to take in the sights without the necessity of a second visit.

"We are practically indifferent to the fact of whether or not the people go aboard the ship," said Capt. Anderson [sic.] in conversation to a Globe-Democrat representative, as the people that I represent do not seek to make any money by exhibiting the ship. They are paying the expenses. I decided to contribute whatever we secured in this way to the establishment of an old sailors' home, but the American people need not feel that their money is being used entirely for a foreign charity. Large numbers of young men from Norway become sailors. Perhaps 25 per cent of them quit this sort of life after a few years service. Another 25 per cent are promoted to officers of ships or agents, 25 per cent die and the remaining 25, perhaps being unfit for other business follow the sea until they are incapacitated by old age. They are then left in all parts of the world and America has its share of them. Once out of employment the old sailor naturally gravitates toward his native land. A home of this sort is therefore, a

sort of cosmopolitan charity."

Being asked respecting the origin of the Viking Capt. Anderson [sic.] said:

"I was the first to mention it. I thought of the project first in 1889. At that time I was living in New York, and had been off the sea about three years. I had been successful in establishing a Norwegian-American Seamen's Association for bettering the condition of Norwegian sailors in America, and on our badge we inscribed the year in which Leif Erickson arrived in America, as well as the date of establishment of the Association. I read an article in the New York Herald respecting the proposed World's Fair. Then it was contemplated to hold it in New York. I told my wife that the most appropriate thing that Norway could contribute to the World's Fair would be an exact copy of the Viking ship which had been sailed over in the manner of the early mariners. I went back home and established a daily paper at Christiana. I wrote a few articles suggesting such a measure over an initial, without letting any one know who was the writer. They were answered by a few persons, but no immediate attention was given. The World's Fair was located at Chicago, and I thought nothing more about the matter until early in 1892, when H. R. Astrup, ex-Minister of Public Works, who had been appointed a Commissioner of the Norwegian exhibit at the World's Fair, spoke to me about the matter. I had given it up, but told him that if the measure was taken up I would support it the best I could. He was anxious for me to take hold of the matter, but I refused. The measure was agitated to some extent when a call was made [sic.] upon 120 business men to become a committee to further the enterprise. Ninety-three of them responded, and on May 17, the Norwegian Day of Independence, the books were opened for subscriptions. A rival paper opposed the measure and the scheme came near being dropped, but I was then unwilling to forsake it and kept agitating the matter. I got the sailors interested and we finally succeeded in raising the funds.

"This ship is the result, and it is an exact copy of the old Viking ship now in the University of Norway at Christian [sic.], which was dug up by two sailors near Sandefjord, a small seaport, thirteen years ago. The two sailors had nothing to do and concluded to put in their time digging in a certain mound which was the object of common talk in the country, the people agreeing that there was something under it and those who cared to explore it would be richly repaid. They kept digging and found the ship. It was buried in blue clay, which accounts for its good state of preservation. In olden times it was the custom to bury pirate chiefs with their ships, and this was the resting place of some noted chief. Everything in the construction of the Viking is true in detail with that of the old craft, even to the rivets of which there are the same number. Some are clinched on the outside, the same way that we found them in the old ship, The "mast-fish," or the piece in which the mast is placed, is 36 inches square in the largest and 16 feet long. The back part of this is in the shape of the tail of a fish; from this the "mast-fish" originated. At the present day they have propped the form of a fish in building ships, but this piece still retains the same name.

"The rudder, you see, is on the right hand, or starboard side, the 'stearboard' [sic.] side of olden time.

"On our voyage," Continued Capt. Anderson [sic.], "we left Burgen, [sic.] Norway; on April, 30 last, and sighted Newfoundland on May 27. We passed sixteen days without seeing a vessel. We were well to the north; further north then [sic.] we intended to sail. On May 8, 9 and 10 we passed through heavy storms. We didn't try to make any headway during the storm, but let the ship ride the waves without sail in order to incur the least danger. We had twelve men on board, plenty of provisions and a little galley to cook on, and experienced comparatively little trouble. On the coast of Newfoundland, we encountered icebergs and rather heavy weather. We didn't pretend to play Vikings, we wanted to prove the worthiness of the ship. We contend that the model of the old Viking ship, is the best that has ever been designed, both for sailing qualities and for carrying capacity. Her sailing qualities are superior. We sighted Cape Cod, our first sight of the United States, on June 11, and landed at New London, Conn., two days later.

"On the question of having copied a pirate's ship, we don't want it understood that Norway is a nation of pirates, or that it ever was such. We claim, and history bears us out, that the

country was ruled by the church even before the period that we are in a measure representing. Of course, numerous pirates, had their homes there, but they were not the representative people of the country. On this trip we don't pretend to imitate the Vikings in dress or otherwise. We haven't authentic descriptions of their dress, and this argument was used against our enterprise at the outset.

"Norway is a seafaring nation, and at least one-third of the population, including the fishermen, are dependent upon the sea. Many of the sons of wealthy Norwegians go to sea for a few years as a means of acquiring, an extended knowledge of the world. The result is that when they settle down to business, if they ever do, they have broader ideas and are better fitted for commercial life. Merchants who forsake the sea, having accumulated fortunes, frequently invest their gains in manufacturing industries, and it is not uncommon to see points formerly noted for their shipping interests only filled with manufactories now. In some of these places, the shipping interests are much on the wane.

"We have been greeted with crowds at all points that we stopped since leaving Chicago. At some places the school children were marched down to the river to see the ship. We will remain here till Saturday, or perhaps Sunday.

"I will lecture at Entertainment Hall Friday afternoon to school children and on Friday night to older persons, on Norsemen and the Discovery of America, the old Vikings, the voyage across the Atlantic, and I usually devote ten or fifteen minutes to an account of a trip made by myself and the second mate across the Atlantic in an open boat, in which we spent sixty days on the water. We had intended going to St. Paul, but when I got to Grafton [sic.] I found that the water was too shallow to attempt the trip. We will continue down the river and probably reach New Orleans by Christmas. There I will have the ship docked and put in good condition for a sea voyage. From that point we intend to go to Philadelphia, New York and Boston. I have not yet determined at what point on the coast we will stop, but yesterday I received a letter from the citizens of Savannah, Ga. asking me to stop there. The question of whether we shall sail the ship back to Norway has not been determined. The Norwegians are generally proud of the record we have made, and they have written to me to bring the ship back. On the other hand, many prominent Americans want the vessel to remain in this country. Only a week ago a subscription was started in Chicago to retain the vessel as part of the historical collection of this country at Washington, D. C. The Norwegians have contributed quite liberally to the Exhibit. Our expenses up to the time that we left Chicago were about \$16,000."