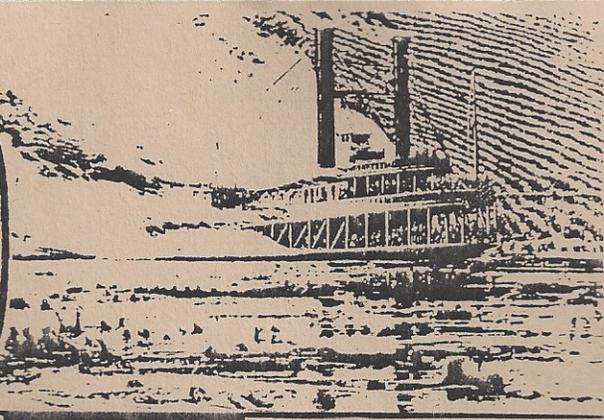


the

SULTANA REMEMBERED



Newsletter of the Association of Sultana Descendants and Friends

April 27, 1865

SPRING 1995

Memorial Day: "Sacred to the Memory of the glorified dead."

By Pam Newhouse

In 1867 the *New York Tribune* printed a paragraph simply stating that "the women of Columbus, Mississippi have shown themselves impartial in their offering made to the memory of the (Civil War) dead. They strewed flowers alike on the graves of the Confederates and of the National soldiers." Francis Miles Finch was then inspired by the ladies' charity to write a poem, "The Blue and the Gray", which became the credo of Decoration Day in the early 1900's:

"...From the silence of sorrowful hours
The desolate mourners go,
Lovingly laden with flowers
Alike for the friend and the foe:
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment-day;
Under the roses, the Blue,
Under the lilies, the Gray."

Chancey M. Depew commented, "As news of this touching tribute flashed over the North it roused, as nothing else could have ever done, national amity and love and allayed sectional animosity and passion. Thus, out of sorrows common alike to North and South came this beautiful custom (the placing of flowers on the graves of the Civil War dead)".

A year later, in 1868, the Union army veterans organization, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) got involved when its National Commander, John A. Logan, issued an order setting aside each May 30 as a day "for strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of com-

rades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, or hamlet churchyard in the land...It is the purpose of the commander-in-chief to inaugurate this observance with the hope that it will be kept up from year to year while (any) survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of the departed."

The custom spread rapidly and by 1911 all state legislatures except Arkansas, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, Texas, and West Virginia had enacted it into law, making it a legal American holiday.

The original name, Decoration Day, was soon changed to Memorial Day. The feeling was that the original name was "too superficial to express the profound ideas and emotions to which the occasion is dedicated."

Sectional bitterness began to further

"..Love and tears
for the Blue,
Tears and love
for the Gray."

- from the last verse of the poem
"The Blue and the Gray," by Francis
Miles Finch.

subside as years passed, and Northerners and Southerners were more willing to give honor to each other's dead. In 1890 an unknown writer wrote in high Victorian prose: "(Memorial Day) is sacred to the memory of the glorified dead who consecrated themselves to their country.... it is well that, in the hurry and press of our times, we should pause for a period to dwell upon the memory of the illustrious dead who gave their lives for their country, and who typify that higher and truer Americanism which lies within us still... ready to spring to the surface whenever the needs of the country issue a new call to arms.We... remember with pride the achievements of our soldiers and ...acknowledge that they had foemen worthy of their steel, and that a common country gave birth to both. 'Love and tears for the Blue, Tears and love for the Gray'."

Not everyone in every American community welcomed the new holiday. In 1869, as GAR members began organizing Memorial Day events in the town of Wayne, Michigan, they ran into stiff opposition and bitterness. The following are excerpts from the report submitted by the Wayne GAR post to State Headquarters: "One would suppose that if friends and comrades desired to visit the sacred graves of fallen heroes, even on Sunday, they could do so in peace, and those who did not want to could also stay away in peace. But no sooner were the notices out than there was violent opposition to the whole movement (Memorial Day), on the part of some who have more notoriety than wisdom or piety. One well known lawyer (?) here [original question mark] declared that he "would give \$25. to decorate a rebel's grave, and would like to erect a monument to J. Wilkes Booth, as large as the depot

wood-piles, *composed of the skulls of Union soldiers* (original italics). Following in the wake of such expressions was the action of the Common Council, who declined to be present on the occasion, and members of which, with others, took vigilant pains to circulate reports around the country that the chaplain and orator's name had been used without their consent, that the affair had been postponed, and endeavored to persuade the chaplain, singers and others to abandon the movement, as the leaders in the affair were only using them to give respectability to a (GAR) training-day pow-wow." But notwithstanding all these obstacles, and the severe storm, a very large concourse gave, by their presence, their attestation of the occasion, while the ceremonies were very solemn, affecting and impressive."

Memorial Day celebrations in other Michigan communities went smoothly that year.

Over the years many articles and poetry have been inspired by the holiday. Schuyler Colfax observed, "The supporters of religion gave their lives for a principle. These (soldiers) gave their lives for an idea."

Some writers memorialized only one side, as did Robert Hughes in his poem "For Decoration Day":

"Make sorrow perfect with exultant pride -

Our vanished armies have not truly died;
They march to-day before the heavenly host;

And history's veterans raise a storm of cheers,

As the Yankee troops - with glory armed and shod -

In Grand Review swing past the throne of God."

Others chose to honor both Northern and Southern soldiers in poetry and prose:

"Twine laurels to lay o'er the Blue and the Gray, spread wreaths where our heroes rest;

Let the song of the North echo back from the South for the love that is truest and best!

Twin wreaths for the tombs of our Grant and our Lee, one anthem for Jackson and Meade,

And the flag above you is the banner for me- one people in name and in deed!" (from "Memorial Day 1889" by Samuel Ellsworth Kiser).

Thomas Baily Aldrich observed that

"Decoration Day is the most beautiful of our national holidays. How different from those sullen batteries which used to go rambling through our streets are the crowds of light carriages, laden with flowers or greenery, winding their way to the neighboring cemeteries!"

The veterans were proud of their part in the Civil War and their families were proud of them. Here is a poem that recalls a father and husband first going off to war:

"Her Papa", by Susie M. Best:

"My papa's all dressed up today,
He never looked so fine,
I thought when I first looked at him,
My papa wasn't mine.

He's got a beautiful new suit -
The old one was so old -
It's blue, with buttons, O, so bright,
I guess they must be gold.

And papa's sort o' glad and sort
O'sad - I wonder why?
And every time she looks at him
It makes my mama cry.

Who's Uncle Sam? My papa says
That he belongs to him:
But papa's joking, 'cause he knows
My uncle's name is Jim.

My papa just belongs to me
And mama. And I guess
The folks are blind who cannot see
His buttons, marked U. S.

U. S. spells us. He's ours - and yet
My mama can't help cry,
And papa tries to smile at me
And can't - I wonder why?"

As the soldiers got older there were fewer and fewer of them to lead the march up to the cemeteries on Memorial Day. Sometimes the old survivors had no special status in the community *except* on Memorial Day:

"The Last Veteran"

Cy Perkins is the last one left, an' Cy ain't extra strong,

His comrades, on the other side, won't be kept waitin' long.

An Cy, he knows the fight's nigh done an' peace is close at hand,

An' sort 'o revels in the thought as we can't understand.

He lives out in a little hut, so shiftless an' alone;

He rarely goes outside the lot he speaks of as his own,
Folks seldom stop to look his way - to either smile or frown,
But Decoration Day finds Cy the biggest man in town.

You never hear the argument: "Well, Cy thinks thus an' so,"

For no one seems to care a rap for what he thinks, you know.

You never hear him pointed out by any one with pride;

His name is never printed in The Weekly Fireside.

An' yet, on Decoration Day, you'll see him crowdin' through

The waitin' throng that stands aside for the old coat of blue.

He takes a seat way up in front, where flags are droopin' down,

An' every eye is turned on him - the biggest man in town.

He sits there, in the old church pew, as stiff as turned to stone;

He hears the soldiers' names read out an' answers all alone;

He hears the patriotic songs by girls jes' dressed in white

An' then the hard face seems to change an' grows exceedin' bright.

God Bless you, Cy Perkins, in your old, torn coat of blue!

God bless your heart! for none of us can boast of one more true.

The feeble hand, the totterin' step, the wrinkled face, an' brown,

God bless you, Cy - the last one left - the biggest man in town!

(by Louis E. Thayer in the *Hartford Times*, 1901.)

And then, they were gone. The last *Sultana* Survivor died in 1930; the last known Civil War veteran, in 1956. But a grateful nation still remembers their sacrifices every May 30th, Memorial Day. Pray God we never forget. ■

Sources consulted for this article:

• Cravath, I.M. (editor/compiler).

Manual of the GAR/Memorial Day in 1869, 1869.

• Kerr, Helen. Personal collection.

• Schaffler, Robert Haven (editor). Memorial Day, 1916.

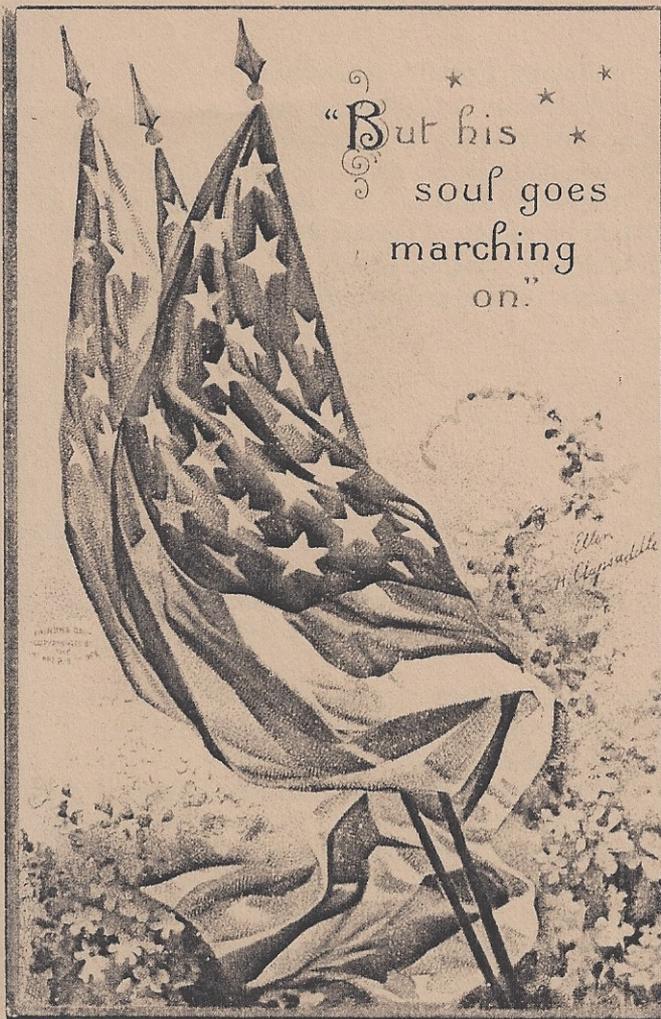
• _____ Michigan Special Holidays, State of Michigan Dept. of Public Instruction, 1911.

MEMORIAL DAY

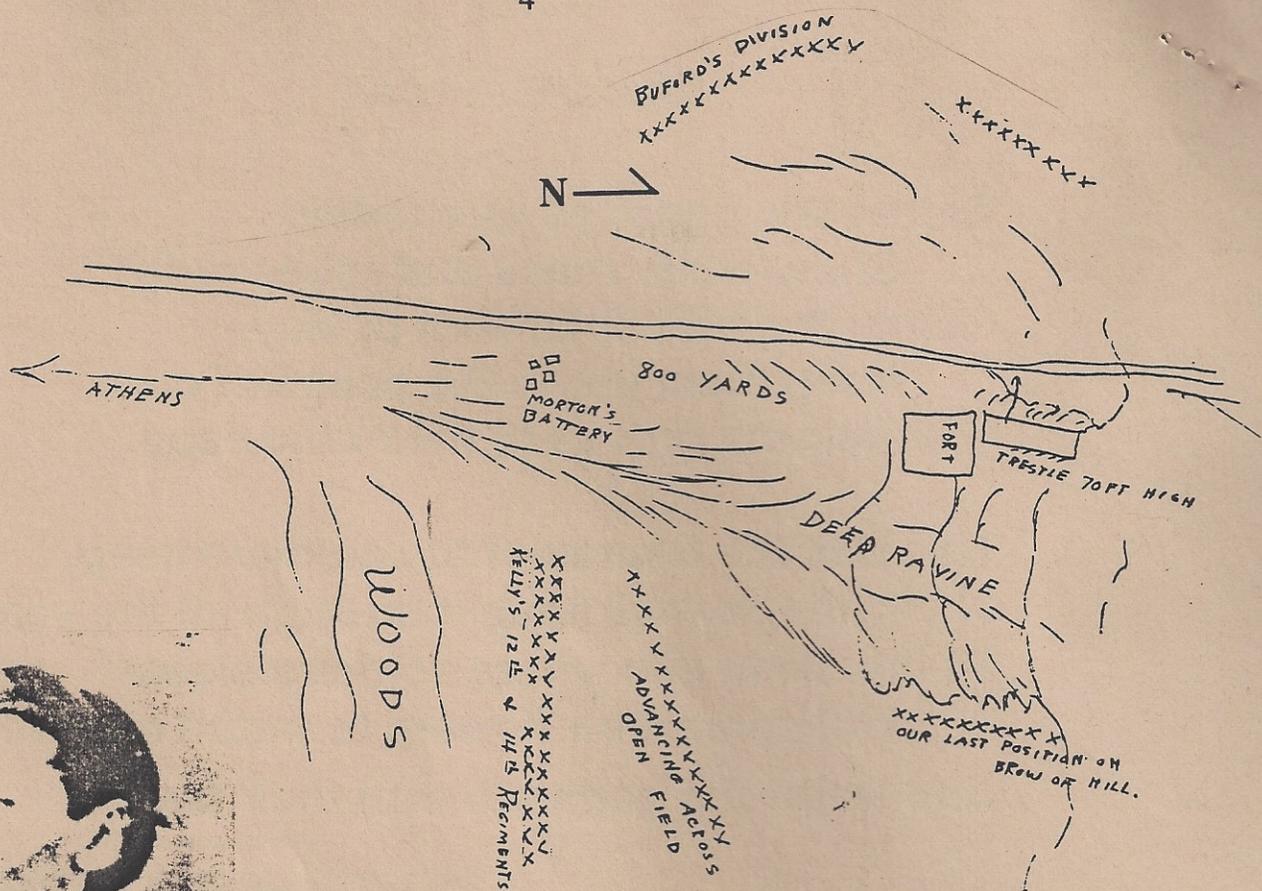
Gather the garlands rare today,
 Snow-white roses and roses red;
 Gather the fairest flowers of May,
 Heap them up on the heaps of clay,
 Gladden the graves of the noble dead.

This day the friends of the soldiers keep,
 And they will keep it through all the years;
 To the silent city where soldiers sleep
 Will come with flowers to watch and weep
 And water the garlands with their tears.

(Anonymous, circa 1911)



Memorial Day postcards, circa 1900



MAJOR ELI LILLY

Sulphur Trestle, Alabama

John Johnson of Tennessee, a Confederate cavalryman with Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, sketched this rough map of the battle of Sulphur Trestle (September 25, 1864) to show how his regiment attacked the Yankee fort south of Elkmont. The map shows the railroad and the position of attacking dismounted cavalry and artillery. Major Eli Lilly (pictured) commanded the fort during much of the battle. He later founded Eli Lilly and Company Drugs.

(Tennessee Archives and Eli Lilly Company)

"THE HONOR ROLL OF THE DEAD"

Continuing the original Sultana Survivors Associations' custom of calling out the names of the *Sultana* soldiers who had passed away since the previous reunion, we carry on by calling out the names of Union soldiers from the great state of Michigan:

18th Michigan Infantry: Nelson D. Wright, Daniel Harmon. 20th Michigan Infantry: Chester D. Berry author of *The Loss of the Sultana and Reminiscences of Survivors*. 1892). 21st Michigan Infantry: George Meade, Rueban Smead. 22nd Michigan Infantry: James H. Lane, Richard Peer, Edward Boyce, Alonzo K. Smith. 23rd Michigan Infantry: David Cole, George Froeland, Albert E. Ludlum, A. Van Couver, George Westrip. 24th Michigan Infantry: Israel Harris, James S. Innes. 25th Michigan Infantry: D. Luchane, George Bement. 29th Michigan Infantry: Moses. B. Hershey. 4th Michigan Infantry: J. Wesley Thompson, Newman A. Eastick. 5th Michigan Artillery: David Gardner. 1st Michigan Cavalry: S.S. Royal, Myron Castice, Francis M. Phillips, Joseph. H. Watson. 2nd Michigan Cavalry: Fred Albeck, Marshman Maxmon, Hiram Tubbs, John S. Corliss, James Doddard, George F. Robinson, Lemuel E. Brooks, George G. Gleason, Daniel Hill, John Johnston, James Keating, John Olney, Martin Pettitt, Simeon F. Dickinson, Jacob Blakely, Joseph Byron, McKenzie Dingman, Ogilvie E. Hamblin, Charles Hennich, David Herren, James Kendricks, William F. Langley, William L. Lindsay, Frank Mason, O. Nolen, James Scudding, J. P. Thomas, Jerry Parker, Francis M. Perkins, Francis Monroe, Alfred Rex, David C. Worden, R. Haller, Charles Olmstead, Joseph Gage, Jeremiah Mahoney, Franklin Barker, Louis Strouser, Porter A. Libarker, M. C. Free...

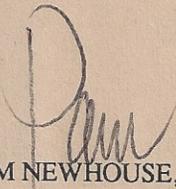
FROM THE EDITOR

Our annual reunion is fast approaching and I hope you are all planning to attend! As we did two years ago, we will again be meeting at the Mt. Olive Baptist Church, which is very near the site of the previous church building where the Sultana Survivors met. This place is doubly meaningful to us because next to the church is the Mt. Olive Cemetery where a large Sultana monument stands; erected while many of the Sultana survivors were still living. This locally erected monument meant a lot to these men, who were never able to get the Federal government to memorialize the Sultana dead in any way.

We are fortunate to have author Robert Dunnivant, Jr. as our speaker this year. His book, The Railroad War: N. B. Forrest's 1864 Raid Through Northern Alabama & Middle Tennessee tells, among other things, the story of the capture of the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry by Nathan Bedford Forrest at Sulphur Trestle. Mr. Dunnivant has an extensive journalism background and has written four books on American History topics. Hopefully he still has some books left to sell at the reunion. The cost is \$15.

Over the years we have have tried various reunion formats. This year we have planned to have the reunion between meals, hoping to have more "meeting time" and less "eating time". Would everyone/family group please bring a finger food to pass (up north we call these "snack foods")? We will bring the beverages. And as always, we will "pass the hat" for donations to cover the beverages, paper products, and cleanup fee. If everyone will give \$3.-\$4. we should come out all right.

Looking forward to seeing you all.


PAM NEWHOUSE, EDITOR

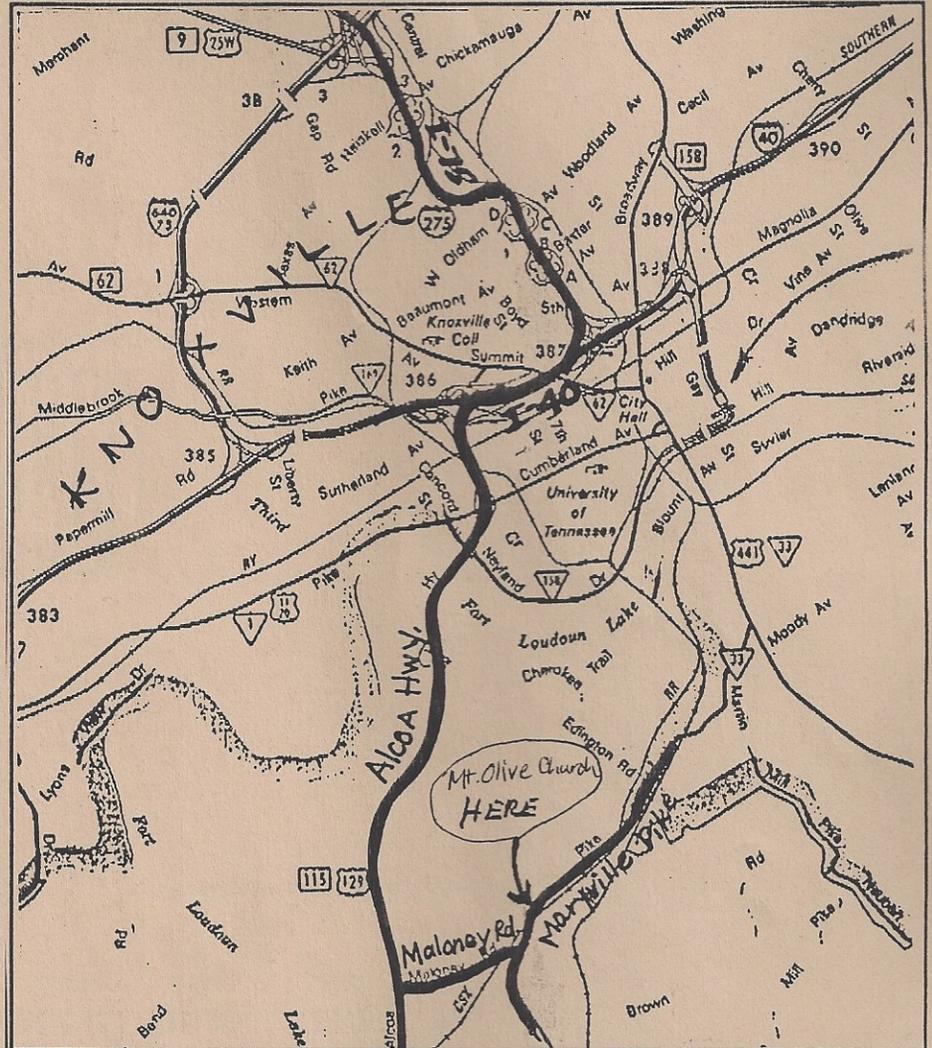
Sultana Annual Reunion

Mt. Olive Baptist Church

Knoxville, Tennessee

Saturday, April 22, 1995

1 P.M. - 6 P.M.



Take I-40 (near downtown Knoxville) to the Alcoa Highway (US 129, the "Airport" exit, 386B); go south on this (crossing over the Tennessee River and passing the University of Tennessee Hospital complex on the left) - about 2 to 3 miles. Turn left on Maloney Rd. (1 1/2 miles after passing the Southgate Shopping Center) and go to Maryville Pike. Straight in front of you, across the Pike is Mt. Olive Baptist Church. (To go to the cemetery, turn left here onto Maryville Pike and Mt. Olive Cemetery will be about 50 yds. down the Pike on your right.)

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

- Rober F. Waterbury, (desc. of Aaron V. Waterbury, 17, MI Inf.), 21207 S. Avalon Blvd, SP #88, Carson, CA 90745
- Even E. Millard, (desc. of Elcana Millard, 3rd TN Cav.) 1660 Tidwell Switch Rd., Dickson, TN 37055-3608
- Barbara E. Alley (desc. of John C. Ely, 115th Ohio Inf.) 28 Fairways Drive, Harwich, MA 02645
- Julian Allen Roadman (possible desc. of Thos. & Daniel Allen, 3rd TN Cav.) 50 Saint Walter Lane, Florissant, Missouri
- Rebecca Snoderly (desc. of Bart McMurray, 3rd TN Cav.), Rt. 4, Box 162, Clyde, NC 28721
- Dr. David A. Berry (desc. of Caleb Rule, 3rd TN Cav.) Chapman Hwy. at 411, 199-A Maryville Hwy., Seymour, TN 37865