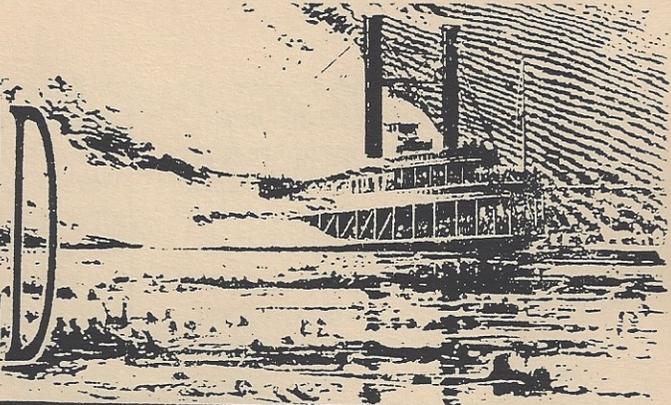


the SULTANA REMEMBERED



Newsletter of the Association of Sultana Descendants and Friends

April 27, 1865

WINTER 1998

Paying for Their Misery: The Sultana's Civilian Passengers

(Part 1)

By Gene Eric Salecker

Almost forgotten amidst the horror of the *Sultana* disaster is the plight of the civilian passengers who were on board the boat on the terrible Thursday night in April of 1865. By the best estimate, there were probably 100 paying passengers on the *Sultana* when her boilers exploded. Some boarded the boat at New Orleans, some got on at Vicksburg and some walked aboard at Memphis. A few were lucky - they got off before the explosion occurred - but the majority stayed aboard and suffered the same catastrophic fate as the paroled prisoners.

The *Sultana* was a moderately large boat and had the reputation of being a fast boat. In fact, the *Sultana* sported, high up on the cross bracings between her twin smokestacks, a coveted pair of elks antlers, the sign to passengers and freight agents that this steamboat was a speedy boat. The *Sultana* had been awarded the elks antlers on her previous trip up river from New Orleans to St. Louis after she had set the season record with the fastest run, making the entire trip in four days and seven hours.

Among those paying passengers that got on at New Orleans was the Spikes family. With the war over, Samuel and Elethia Spikes, married on Oct. 31, 1837, were moving their entire family - three sons, three daughters and a niece, from Assumption Parrish, Louisiana, to Illinois. Known members of the family included their eighteen or nineteen year old son, DeWitt Clinton; daughters Elizabeth and Susan, and their niece Adeline. By some accounts, DeWitt Clinton Spikes was said to

have served a number of years in the Confederate army.

Although the occupation of Samuel Spikes is unknown, he may have had a lucrative business during the war. When he boarded the *Sultana* on April 21, he brought aboard \$17,000 in gold, which he promptly deposited in the steamer's safe.

Another couple that got on the *Sultana* at New Orleans was Seth W. Hardin, Jr. and his new bride. Hardin, Jr. was formerly the adjutant of the 53rd Illinois Infantry and currently a banker with the Chicago firm of Cushman, Hardin, & Co. The couple had gone south on their wedding tour and boarded the *Sultana* with trunk load of clothes and several thousand dollars.

Daniel McLeod was another ex-soldier that boarded at New Orleans, with a final destination of St. Louis. McLeod had been a private in Co. F, 18th Illinois Infantry and had been shot in the right knee at the Battle

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of Shiloh, Tennessee, on April 6, 1862. Taken from the battlefield on a hospital steamboat, McLeod was hustled about from hospital to hospital and from doctor to doctor as each gave a prognosis of the wound. Although the overwhelming consensus was to amputate his right leg above the knee, McLeod still had his leg two years later when he was discharged from the army in June, 1864. Unable to bend his knee for the rest of his life, he was granted a United States pension of \$8 per month.

Lt. Col. Charles E. Compton was still in the army when he crossed the *Sultana's* stageplank at New Orleans. An officer with the 53rd United States Colored Troops, Compton had booked passage to Memphis.

Fifty-two year old Enoch Bent boarded the *Sultana* with a heavy heart. A Justice of the Peace in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Bent had traveled to New Orleans to attend to the burial of his twenty-seven year old soldier son, Elijah. The younger Bent had enlisted in Co. A, 95th Illinois Infantry in September of 1864 and had died at New Orleans, the victim of some unknown disease. On April 14, 1865, having seen to the decent burial of his son., the elder Bent boarded the *Sultana* at the New Orleans wharf, perhaps hoping to leave this terrible war behind him forever.

At least two other known passengers boarded the *Sultana* at New Orleans. Very little is known of William Long, who took passage in stateroom #10, and Mrs. Sallie B. Woolfolk, from somewhere in Kentucky. Although little is known of her past, Mrs. Woolfolk was thought to be a "respectable lady." She was said to be "a very handsome lady" with long brown hair, dark blue eyes, a "straight nose, not very small," and

having a slight scar across her chin. Physically she was described as being about twenty years old, about five feet, five inches in height, with "full features" and a "stout" build.

Although these are the only known civilian passengers to book passage on the *Sultana* at New Orleans, the steamboat actually left the Crescent City on April 21, 1865 with about forty paying passengers. Along with a crew of about eighty, the total number of about 120 people on board the *Sultana* was well below her legal carrying capacity of 376.

Despite traveling up river against a heavy Spring flood, nothing unusual happened on the *Sultana*. Col. Compton reported, "From New Orleans to Natchez (Mississippi)...she ran at usual rate of speed," which was nine miles per hour, but shortly after midnight on April 23, her speed dropped considerably. As Col. Compton wrote, "From ...Natchez to Vicksburg, she ran much slower, as it was stated to us by some on the boat that 'there was a defect in one of the boilers.'"

Having sprung a leak in the middle larboard (left) boiler, the engineers decreased pressure in the *Sultana's* four boilers and proceeded slowly and cautiously towards Vicksburg. Col. Compton, perhaps expecting a speedy trip after seeing the pair of elks antlers on the smokestack bracings, may have expressed the feelings of all of the paying passengers when he said, "The passage therefore was unusually tedious to me on account of the slowness."

After reaching Vicksburg without further incident, the *Sultana* nosed into the wharfboat around 6 PM. Immediately, the engineer of the *Sultana* sought a capable boiler mechanic while the captain of the boat sought a load of paroled Union prisoners to take North. While much has been written about both events, the repair of the boiler and the overcrowding of the paroled prisoners, little has been written about some of the other people that boarded the *Sultana* at Vicksburg.

In spite of the mass of humanity that was apparently being crammed into every nook and cranny of the steamboat, a number of paying passengers got on the *Sultana* at Vicksburg. Although the question may be asked, why would these people get on such a crowded boat, the answer may not be so simple. Tickets were usually purchased some time in advance, before the boat arrived, and the

civilian passengers may not have had the option to cancel their trip and take another boat. The tickets may have been nonrefundable and the passengers may have been stuck with the *Sultana*. I can only equate that the reason these civilians got on board - even though they saw the overcrowding - to a present day passenger that waits on standby for a certain airplane, or stand in line for five or ten minutes for a taxi. Perhaps they had told loved ones or relatives that they would arrive at their destination at a certain time and date. There were no telephones to place a call if there was a change in plans and the telegraph wires between the north and Vicksburg had been cut during the war. For most of the paying passengers, I suspect, it was merely a case of putting up with a bit of crowding and inconvenience for a few days in order to keep to a preplanned schedule.

Three of the paying passengers that got on at Vicksburg on April 24 during the loading of the prisoners did so because they had a connection to the paroled men. Almost nothing is known about one man, a Mr. Erwin, listed as a "U.S. Scout." Another passenger, J. T. Farris, was a member of the Indiana Sanitary commission, a sort of Civil War U.S.O. And finally, Mr Safford, also a member of the Indiana Sanitary commission, had come down to Vicksburg to be with his prisoner son. Pvt. George M. Safford (Co. H., 10th Indiana Cavalry). Now that his son was being sent home, Mr. Safford bought a ticket and boarded the *Sultana* with the others.

Twelve women, Sisters of Charity of the US. Christian Commission, a branch of the Young Men's Christian Association, also took passage in connection to the paroled soldiers. They came on board with the sole purpose of caring for the numerous weak and sick prisoners that could not take care of themselves. (All twelve would perish in the disaster.)

The Chicago Opera Troupe, a traveling minstrel show, also came aboard at Vicksburg. Although the number of members is unknown, it is known that they were traveling from Vicksburg to Memphis, where they were scheduled to give a series of performances, including "New Songs, Burlesques and Dances," at Atheneum Hall. (They would later give a benefit performance for the *Sultana* survivors.)

And finally, among the people that

boarded at Vicksburg was 2nd Lt. Harvey Annis (Company G. 51st U.S. Colored Troop), his wife Ann, and his seven year old daughter Isabella (Belle). Lieutenant Annis had been stationed in Vicksburg and had become ill, asking his wife in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to come and tend to him. A dutiful wife, Ann had come to Vicksburg with her youngest daughter, and tried to nurse him back to health. In January of 1865, Lieutenant Annis decided to resign his commission and go home. The approval for his resignation came through in early February but Lieutenant Annis never learned of his discharge. When he boarded the *Sultana* on April 24, he wore his Civil War uniform.

A little after 9 PM the loading was finished and the *Sultana* backed away from the Vicksburg wharfboat. In addition to over 2,000 paroled prisoners, a small guard unit of twenty-two, and a crew of 80, the *Sultana* also carried an estimated 100 paying passengers. An additional sixty civilian passengers had boarded the *Sultana* at Vicksburg, in spite of the overcrowding and the dangerous condition of the steamboat's boilers.

From April 24-26 the overcrowded *Sultana* plowed steadily northward against the spring flood. Although the *Sultana* is usually thought to have been crowded from front to back and top to bottom, I feel that there was some room left for the paying passengers so that the civilians could stroll out onto the deck and enjoy the sun and the weather without having to step around or over a reclining soldier. In the famous photograph of the *Sultana* taken at Helena, Arkansas, the deck space on the second deck, from the paddlewheel box straight back to the stern, appears to be devoid of prisoners. Although the men are crowded onto every other available piece of space, this deck area appears strangely free of men. It is my belief that the after-part of the second deck was off limits to the paroled prisoners.

But, while this deck space was left empty, every other piece of deck space was covered with human freight. J. T. Farris of the Indiana Sanitary Commission found it appalling that so many men were crowded onto the *Sultana*. "Only about 800 soldiers should [have been] taken....[O]ne third of the prisoners were fit subjects for the care of a physician"

Lt. Harvey Annis and his wife Anne became slightly alarmed when they noticed that the crew of the steamboat had put a number of support beams in place to buttress the sagging upper deck.

In spite of the crowding, the civilians and paroled prisoners tried to make the best of their conditions. The Chicago Opera Troupe gave a number of impromptu performances on the bow of the main deck for the men, singing and dancing and going through their burlesque routines.

At 7 PM on April 26, the Sultana reached Memphis. During the next five hours, the crew of the boat unloaded a large amount of freight. At the same time a number of civilians left the boat while a like number came aboard. Among those leaving the boat were the members of the Chicago Opera Troup and Lt. Col Charles E. Compton. Among those coming aboard was Mrs. Lucy Ross, the new bride of Pvt. Buck Ross, a soldier with the 47th Illinois Infantry stationed in

Memphis. The Illinois regiment had been selected to go home and Mrs. Ross had purchased passage on the Sultana in hope of reaching her new home before her husband.

One other known passenger boarded at Memphis. Thirty-three year old William Dunham Snow was a senator-elect from Arkansas on his way to Washington, D.C. to take his seat in the U.S. Senate. Boarding the Sultana near 10 PM, he took a stateroom near the rear of the boat.

When the Sultana left Memphis near midnight on April 26, she carried about 100 civilian passengers. Listed below are all of the known civilians that boarded at known destinations. Four more identified civilians were on board the steamer when she left Memphis but it is uncertain where or when they boarded. Very little is known of Mrs. Hoge, with the exception that she was listed as "a passenger on the Sultana." A male passenger, J. D. Fontaine was from Dallas City, Illinois. He may have been a wealthy man since he came aboard with fine shirts marked with his name and home city.

Another Illinois resident known to have been on the Sultana on April 26 was J. A. Butterfield, form Oregon, Illinois. Originally a lawyer, Butterfield had just been admitted to the bar when the war broke out. Enlisting in company A. 2nd Illinois Cavalry, he served out his three year enlistment before becoming a chief citizen clerk for the army at a considerable salary. With the war over he resigned his position and boarded the Sultana with he intention of running for Sheriff of Ogle County, Illinois. When he stepped on board the boat, he deposited a "large sum of money" in the Sultana's safe.

And finally, Mrs. Perry, from Cincinnati, was the wife of a Mr. C. Perry a chief engineer on the sidewheel steamboat Tennessee, now a part of the Union fleet at the mouth of the Red River. Mrs. Perry was returning to her home from a visit to her husband when she booked passage on the Sultana.

(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE)

KNOWN CIVILIAN PASSENGERS

Annis, Lt. Harvey	Citizen (ex-soldier)	Died - Body never found.
Annis, Ann	Citizen (wife)	Lived
Annis, Isabelle	Citizen (daughter)	Died - Body never found.
Bent, Enoch	Citizen	Died - Body never found.
Butterfield, J.A.B.	Citizen (ex-soldier)	Died - Body never found.
Erwin, Mr.	U.S. Scout	Lived
Farris, J.T.	Indiana San. Com. Agent	Lived
Fontaine, J.D.	Citizen	Died - Body recovered.
Hardin, Seth W., Jr.	Citizen	Lived
Hardin, Mrs. Seth W., Jr.	Citizen	Died - Body never found.
Hoge, Mrs.	Citizen	Died - Body recovered.
Long, William	Citizen	Lived.
McLeod, Daniel	Citizen (ex-soldier)	Lived.
Perry, Mrs.	Citizen	Lived.
Safford, Mr.	Indiana San. Com. Agent	Lived.
Smith-Ross, Lucy	Citizen	Died - Body never found.
Snow, William D.	Citizen, senator-elect	Lived.
Spikes, Samuel B.	Citizen (husband)	Died - Body never found.
Spikes, Elethia	Citizen (wife)	Died - Body recovered.
Spikes, Elizabeth	Citizen (daughter)	Died - Body never found.
Spikes, Susan	Citizen (daughter)	Died - Body recovered.
Spikes, female	Citizen (daughter)	Died - Body never found.
Spikes, DeWitt Clinton	Citizen (son)	Lived.
Spikes, male	Citizen (son)	Died - May have lived.
Spikes, male	Citizen (son)	Died.
Spikes, Adeline	Citizen (niece)	Died.
Woolfolk, Sallie B.	Citizen	Died - Body recovered.

Sultana Soldiers' Son and Daughters

I think it is always timely to recognize those active individuals in our group who had fathers aboard the *Sultana*: Robert Warner from San Angelo, TX; Glenna Green from Chattanooga, TN; and Elsie Huffaker from Knoxville, TN. Elsie, along with Cy Keeble and Mrs. Malcolm Bloom (Mr. Keeble and Mrs. Bloom are now deceased), attended our very first meeting as we gathered around the *Sultana* monument in April of 1987. A picture of these three taken at that time is one I treasure. It is reproduced here along with the actual Civil War photographs of each person's father. Mr. Keeble's father (Plez Keeble) and Mrs. Bloom's father (John Simpson) were very good friends. They were the last two survivors of the *Sultana* Survivors Association with Simpson passing away in 1929 and Keeble in 1931. -NORMAN SHAW



CY KEEBLE

MRS. MALCOLM BLOOM

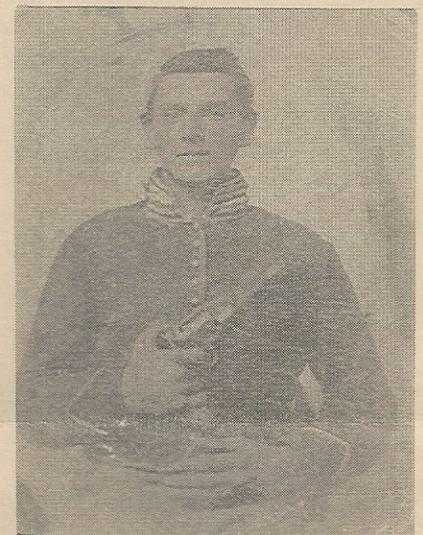
ELSIE HUFFAKER



PLEASANT (PLEZ) KEEBLE



JOHN SIMPSON, 3RD TN CAV.



JESSE HUFFAKER, 3RD TN CAV.

Are you a Descendant of Jacob Edwards?

Sultana Remembered subscriber Nina Edwards would like to hear from anyone who is a descendant of Cpl. Jacob Edwards, 40th Ohio Infantry, Co. I. Edwards was Nina's gr-gr-grandfather. He was a prisoner at Andersonville and died on the *Sultana*. Edwards had three brothers, two of whom died in the War. His third brother, Joseph, was wounded at Chickamauga. Write Nina at: 18980 Burnt Leaf Way, Monument, CO 80132.

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

- Dr. Gary Gallagher, 420 East Adams Ave., State College, PA, 16801
- Billie Jo Richter, 10420 Don Rico Rd., Spring Valley, CA 91978-1020 (Desc. of Pvt. Wyatt Bailey, 3rd TN Cav., Co. B)
- Niles D. Hamblin, 4316 Dohn Ave., Louisville, KY40216-3524 (Desc. of Pvt. Ogliva Hamblin, 2nd MI Cav., Co. H)
- John Hedges, 300 Azaela Dr., Mandeville, LA 70471-2904
- Cyndy Miller, 4318 SW Loop 820, Ft. Worth, TX 76109 (Desc. of Sgt. Andrew Thomas Peery, 3rd TN Cav., Col B)
- Dott Baker, 6f334 Chapman Highway, Knoxville, TN 37920 (Desc. of Pvt. Caleb Rule, 3rd TN Cav., Co. K.)
- Curtis Payne, 414 S. 70th E. Ave., Tulsa, OK 74112-1906
- Debi Schilling, 7909 Sylvan Oak Way, Citrus Heights, CA 95610
- Maurice J. F Sullivan, 1512 Pontiac Trail, Ann Arbor, MI 48105
- David Northam, 1128 N. Main St., Rushville, IN 46173-1257 (Desc. of Wm. H. Chance, 9th IN Cav. Co.. M)
- Ernest Chance, P.O. Box 39, Mays, IN 46155 (Desc. of Wm. H. Chance, 9th IN Cav., Co. M)
- Judith Rinker, Rt. 4, Box 6, Mt. Vernon, MO 65712 (Desc. of James Ellison, 3rd TN Cav., Co. D)
- Harry A. Herman, P.O. Box 265, Fredericksburg, OH 44627
- Roger Lettie, 989 Dogwood Tree Dr., Annapolis, MD 21401 (Desc. of WM. Smathers, 115 OH Inf., Co. C)
- Joan Ellis Gibson, 7518 Barrington Blvd., Powell, TN 37849-4964 (Desc. of John H. Campbell, 3rd TN Cav., Co. A)
- Howard Baver, 601 Pine Run Dr., Angola, IN 46703-1163

Date Change for 1998 Annual Sultana Reunion

We have always held our annual Knoxville, Tennessee reunion on the Saturday closest to the anniversary of the Sultana disaster, April 27. However, this year, due to conflict of schedules, we will be holding it a weekend earlier, Saturday, April 18. We hope this date will be clear for most of you. And do plan to come and join us! We are keeping the memory of the Sultana soldiers alive as well as making new friends (as well as greeting old ones) who share this common bond.

At noon we will meet at the *Sultana* monument in the cemetery next to the Mt. Olive Baptist Church and have a memorial service there. At 1 PM we will go into the Fellowship Hall of the church basement and have something to eat. We are asking everyone to bring some sort of finger foods or snack-type food. We will provide beverages. At some point in the afternoon we will "pass the hat" and ask you to put in a few dollars to cover the costs of the beverages and the church cleanup. At 2 PM we will have a short memorial service, much like the *Sultana* Survivors had when they met in this very church. Afterwards, we will begin the rest of our program, with introductions of all those present, and have a time to share and to visit with each other. There will be tables set up for display of your *Sultana*-related items, so bring them along!

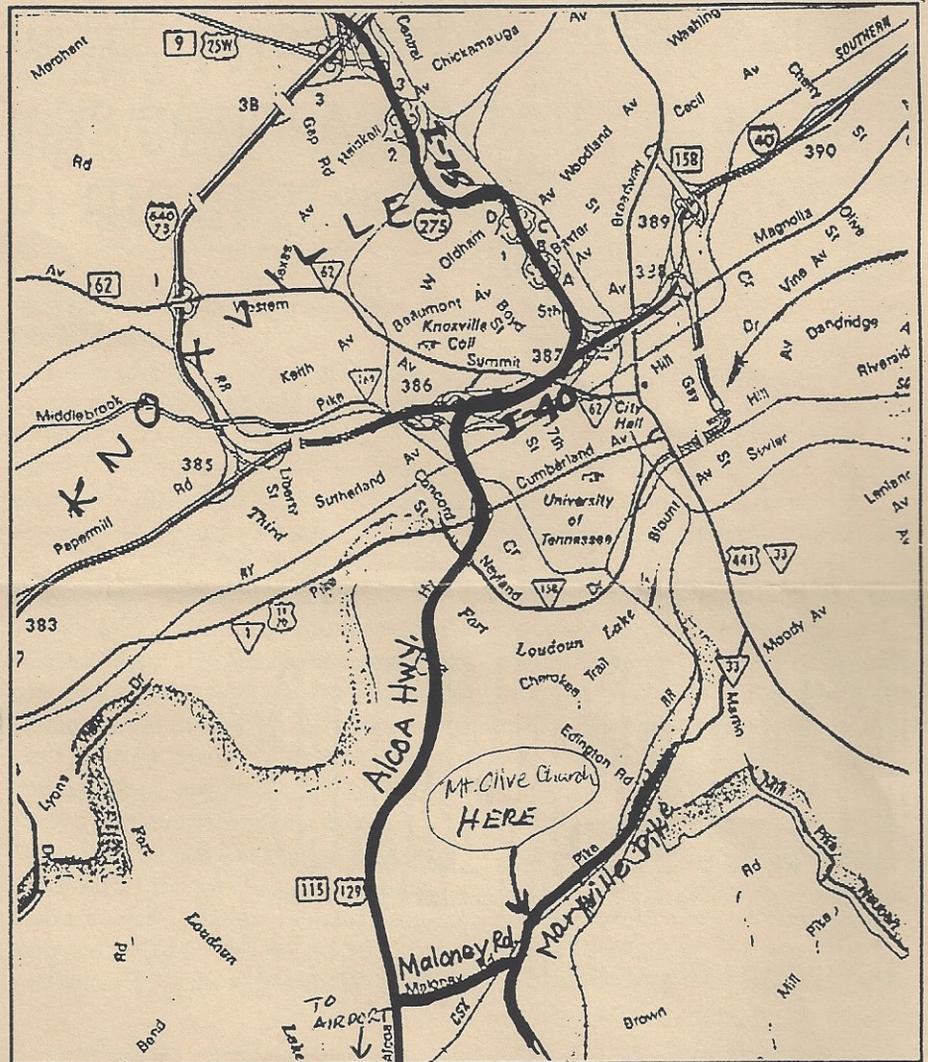
Reunion highlights this year: Knoxville journalist Fred Brown will again read excerpts from his historical novel based on the *Sultana* disaster. Everyone was spellbound last year, and so we asked him to return and read us more. David Frahley, descendant of a *Sultana* soldier and Director of Research and Genealogy at the Lotz House Museum in Franklin, TN will tell us about the Battle of Franklin, where numerous Union soldiers who later ended up on the *Sultana*, were captured. Gene Salecker will give us a comparison of the Titanic and *Sultana* disasters. And of course, we will hear from Jerry Potter. Norman Shaw, originator of our group, will conduct the the whole event. See you there!

-PAM NEWHOUSE, Editor

11th Annual Sultana Reunion

Mt. Olive Baptist Church
Knoxville, Tennessee

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 1998
Noon to 5 PM



DIRECTIONS TO MT. OLIVE BAPTIST CHURCH:

From the city: 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. The *Sultana* monument is not hard to find- the cemetery is small. Look for the people gathered there.)

From the airport: Take the Alcoa Highway from the airport- go north approximately 6 1/2 miles. Turn right on Maloney Road, a little less than a mile and a half after passing the Gov. John Sevier Highway (State Road 168). Follow directions above, (starting with Maloney Rd.) to church.