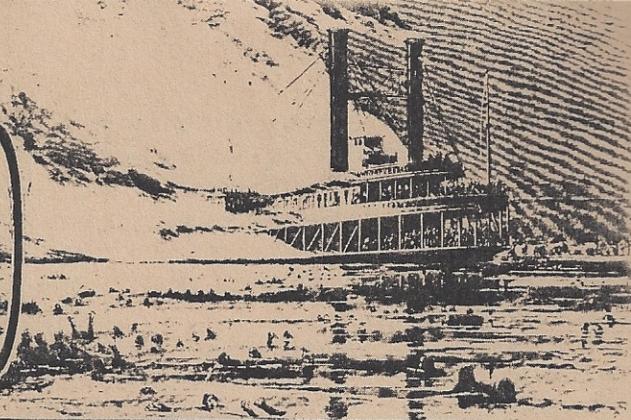


# the SULTANA REMEMBERED



Newsletter of the Association of Sultana Descendants and Friends

April 27, 1865

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## Indiana Men in the War and on the Sultana

By Gene Eric Salecker

When South Carolina and a number of other Southern states seceded from the Union in December of 1860, the people of the state of Indiana were at first a little reluctant to adopt a policy of coercion against the South. The territory of Indiana, prior to its admission as a state in 1816, had been claimed by the state of Virginia and a large portion of the Indiana people had migrated to the state from Kentucky and other Southern states. Being a predominantly agricultural society, the Hoosiers of Indiana found that they had more in common with their agrarian southern neighbors than with the industrial states of the Northeast. However, with the firing of the first shots on Fort Sumter, the hearts of Indiana men quickly turned to the loyal support of the Union.

Although largely unprepared for war because the state government had almost totally ignored the state militia, the Hoosiers responded quickly to President Lincoln's call for troops and in less than a week, 12,000 men had come forward to fight for the Union. This was almost three times the quota fixed for Indiana by the Federal government, and within a year Indiana would turn out 61,341 men, nearly twice as many men as required.

Despite their handicap of not being ready, Republican Governor Oliver P. Morton was quick to organize a number of training camps, buy war equipment, start a state arsenal and see to a number of other wartime duties. Staunchly loyal to the

Federal government, Gov. Morton believed that the Union had no other choice but to crush the rebellion in the South. Because of his unfailing support for the government, and because of his unfailing efforts to encourage Hoosier citizens to volunteer rather than be drafted, Gov. Morton in some regards is recognized as the best of the war-time governors.

As the men of Indiana rushed to their country's call they were enlisted into regiments and sent off for training. The numbering of the new regiments started with the Sixth, in deference to the memory of the five regiments that had been recruited for the War with Mexico. In all, Indiana would turn out 129 infantry regiments, twelve regiments and three companies of cavalry, 1 regiment of heavy artillery and

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"You have been  
wanting a fight -  
you have got it.  
Hell's before you."

- from the Diary of an Indiana soldier  
before the Battle of Fort Donelson,  
Feb., 1862

26 batteries of light artillery. A total of 194,826 white men and another 1,537 black men of the state would join the Federal army or navy for a total of 196,363 Hoosier soldiers and sailors. Of that number 7,243 would die in battle in more than 300 engagements in all theaters of the war and suffer another 17,785 deaths from disease and other causes.

Perhaps one of the first Indiana soldiers to see action during the Civil War was also the most controversial. Brigadier General Jefferson C. Davis, born at Clark City, Indiana, had begun the war as a lieutenant in charge of a battery of cannon at Fort Sumter. After his surrender at Fort Sumter Davis returned to Indiana and became the colonel of the 22nd Indiana, a position he gained from his political friendship with Gov. Morton. Handling his men skillfully at the battle of Wilson's Creek, Davis was promoted to a brigadier general and advanced to the command of a brigade at the battles of Pea Ridge and Corinth.

In the summer of 1862, when Confederate General Braxton Bragg drove his army into Kentucky and threatened Louisville, Davis went to the city to see what he could do. Appointed by Major General William Nelson to form a local defense battalion, Davis and Nelson soon quarreled over the handling of the situation. After both men had exchanged heated words, Nelson relieved Davis of his command and ordered him out of the city.

Although angered, Davis left the city and did not return until late September where, in a chance meeting he happened to meet General Nelson in the lobby of a Louisville hotel and demanded an apology for the earlier incident. When Nelson refused, Davis crumbled up a hotel visiting card and threw it in the

senior officer's face. Nelson responded by slapping Davis in the face and then leaving the room. Feeling that his honor had been tarnished, Brigadier General Jefferson C. Davis, borrowed a pistol, stalked Nelson through the hotel and shot him to death at point blank range!

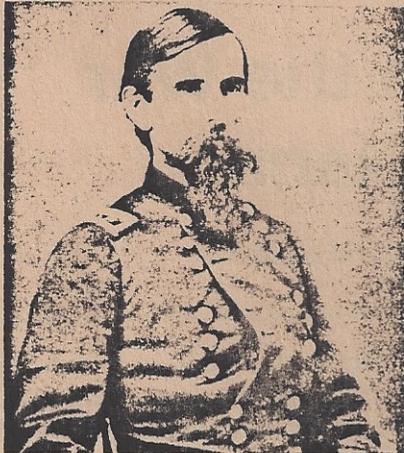
While the murder was witnessed by many, including Gov. Morton, Davis was never brought to trial. Although arrested he was soon released as his services were needed elsewhere. Regaining a division command, Davis fought with distinction at the battles of Stones River and Chickamauga, and was soon leading a corps of troops in Sherman's advance to Atlanta. Although capable of attaining a higher rank, he was never able to achieve it because of his rash and murderous act in the lobby of a Louisville hotel.

Twenty-one native Hoosiers attained the rank of General in the Civil War and a few became well-known. Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, born at Liberty, Indiana, would rise to command the Army of the Potomac and fight against General Robert E. Lee, despite having doubts of his own ability. Burnside had gained notoriety at Antietam when he ordered his men to take a bridge by frontal assault that they could easily have side-stepped by crossing the river at a ford less than a mile downstream.



**Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside was best remembered for his "sideburns".**

Reluctant to take command of the Army of the Potomac, Burnside turned the command down twice but finally accepted it on the third offer. At the Battle of Fredericksburg Burnside's stubborn insistence on frontal assaults cost him almost 13,000 casualties to Lee's 5,000. Relieved of command shortly thereafter, Burnside is best remembered for his thick, bushy side whiskers which to the present day bear his name: sideburns!



**Gen. Lew Wallace later wrote a memorable book.**

The last of the noted Generals born in Indiana is Major General Lew Wallace, born in Brookville, Indiana. Wallace was a politician who used his influence to get him a command of Indiana soldiers. Although he had proved himself capable in early actions, Wallace raised the ire of General Grant when he and his division got lost while marching to the Battle of Shiloh. Kept from important commands, Wallace was lucky enough to find himself in command of a small command of troops that were the only Federal soldiers standing between Confederate General Jubal Early and Washington, D.C. Although Wallace was defeated by Early at Monocacy, his delaying action gave Washington time to fortify against the Rebel attack. Undoubtedly Wallace is best remembered, however, for the novel he wrote after the war titled Ben Hur!

Many other soldiers, not born in the state of Indiana but living in the state at the time of the war managed to attain the rank of General. Probably the most famous was Benjamin Harrison. Although Harrison was born in Ohio he would enter the Civil War as the commander of the 70th Indiana

and eventually go on to become the 23rd President of the United States.



**U.S. President Benjamin Harrison, Indiana Civil War veteran.**

Closer to the hearts of the people of Indiana were the common soldiers, the Hoosiers in the ranks. Some 44 Hoosiers would attain the nation's highest honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor, while a couple of her regiments would go on to immortal fame as some of the hardest fighting units in the Union Army.

By far the most famous regiment from Indiana was the 19th Indiana. Formed in late July of 1861 it was quickly sent to Washington, D.C. where, for the most part it did relatively light duty until August of 1862. Attached now to a brigade of troops that included the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin, the 19th Indiana's first engagement was a two-hour "knock down drag out fight" with the veterans of Confederate General "Stonewall" Jackson at Groveton, Virginia on August 28, 1862. Standing firm in their tall black felt hats, the Hoosiers lost 259 of 432 engaged, but held their ground stubbornly until nightfall.

At the Battle of South Mountain, (September 14, 1862) the 19th Indiana, along with the Wisconsin regiments, put up such a gallant fight that Major General Joseph Hooker dubbed them his "Iron Brigade". Forever after they would be known by that hard-earned sobriquet.

On September 17th, 1862, the 19th Indiana fought at Antietam. Heavily engaged in the West Woods, the 19th was able to flank a Confederate unit

and inflict heavy casualties before it too was flanked and hit hard by Rebels led by Jubal Early. Although the colonel of the 19th was mortally wounded, the regiment held on so stubbornly that the commanding officer of the Union Army later told Gov. Morton that he possessed "no better regiment" than the 19th Indiana!

After the fight at Antietam, the 19th was not engaged again until the first of July, 1863, at Gettysburg. The Confederates, who had thought that they were only fighting a group of Pennsylvania militia were shocked to see the now-familiar black felt hats of the Iron Brigade. As the Rebels fell back, they cried in dismay, "There are those damned black-hatted fellows again! 'Taint no militia. It's the Army of the Potomac!"

ended with 160 killed and wounded and another 50 listed as missing, for a loss of 219 men!

The stubborn defense at Gettysburg destroyed the Iron Brigade and had cost the 19th dearly. In the next few weeks the regiment was forced to try to recruit more able-bodied men to take the place of those that had fallen. Although the 19th would continue with the Army of the Potomac in all of its major battles, it had lost much of its core and in time would be consolidated with the 20th Indiana, thus finally losing its regimental identity.

While regiments such as the 19th Indiana and the hard-fought 27th Indiana would gain everlasting fame for the regiments and the men, the Hoosiers aboard the *Sultana* would be forgotten by all but their family

cavalry regiments and three artillery battalions were represented on the *Sultana* and while the majority have only one or two individuals, including the 19th with one soldier who lived, a few regiments were highly represented. Some six Indiana regiments had 20 or more soldiers on board: the 40th Infantry - 26 men; the 57th Infantry - 24 men; the 124th Infantry - 21 men; the 7th Cavalry - 22 men; the 10th Cavalry - 26 men, and the all-time leader among the Hoosiers, the 9th Cavalry with 113 men!

I have been able to collect the reminiscences of twenty-seven Indiana soldiers and, from their writings, it appears that the Hoosiers were spread out over every deck of the boat. Of the men I have information for, 3 were on the texas roof, 9 on the hurricane deck, 5 outside the cabin, 5 inside the cabin (these are officers), 3 on the main deck and two unknown. All of their reminiscences make great reading but some more so than others:

J. Walter Elliott, from South Hanover, Indiana, was a captain with the 44th U. S. Colored Troops. Being an officer he was considered one of the privileged and was given a cot to sleep on inside the main cabin on the second deck. Sound asleep at the time of the explosion, he rushed forward and found a gaping hole in the cabin floor and mangled bodies lying in the burning wreckage. Amidst all the confusion Elliott heard a calm voice asking for help. Daniel McLeod, a passenger had been injured by the explosion, with both ankles broken and the bones protruding through the skin. McLeod had tied a tourniquet around his ankles to stop from bleeding to death and asked Elliott to help him into the water so as not to be burned to death. Not only did Elliott help McLeod, but he remained on the boat long after others had left, throwing floatable items to those in the water.

Finally compelled to leave because of the fire, Elliott took a mattress and jumped in. Another man grabbed onto the mattress and the two men floated to a drift where Elliott was able to get off. He tried to get his companion to get up but the man was too chilled. Taking a switch Elliott beat the man repeatedly in an attempt to get the man's circulation going. Although the man pleaded for Elliott to



A soldier wearing the dreaded "Black Hat" of the Iron Brigade.

Attacking with fury, the 19th Indiana and the newly mustered in 24th Michigan shattered the brigade of Confederate General James J. Archer just northwest of the town. Holding stubbornly to their position throughout most of the day, the Iron Brigade was finally forced to retreat, but only after repeated attacks and only after being outflanked. The 19th Indiana had started the day with 338 soldiers and

and friends. In May of 1865 the Indianapolis Daily Gazette reported that there were 413 Indiana men on board the *Sultana* and that only 166 were known to have been saved. Over the years I have worked to compile an accurate computer list of the men on board the *Sultana* and at the present time I list 408 Hoosiers with 169 known to have been saved.

Some 44 Indiana infantry regiments, 12

stop, the beating had its effect and the man was soon able to climb onto the drift with Elliott. The two men were eventually rescued by the steamer *Jenny Lind*. As the steamer returned to Memphis, it stopped to pick up one more person, Daniel McLeod. Elliott himself personally helped lift McLeod aboard and give him a drink of whiskey!



### J. Walter Elliott had to beat a fellow soldier in order to save his life.

Christian M. Nisley, 40th Indiana Infantry, was also on the cabin deck but he and a friend were sleeping outside of the main cabin, near the front of the deck. When the boilers exploded one of the tall smokestacks crashed down onto the deck above, crushing his friend and trapping Nisley under the debris. Working feverishly, Nisley was able to extricate himself. While trying to put out the fire, the deck gave way beneath his feet and he fell through to the deck below, burning himself and injuring his back. Despite his injuries Nisley remained on the *Sultana* for quite some time, throwing floating debris to the men in the water. One of the last men he talked to was the Captain of the *Sultana*, J. Cass Mason. He left Mason as he was throwing debris to the drowning men.

Perhaps one of the most resourceful Hoosiers on board the *Sultana* was Isaac Van Nuys of the 57th Indiana Infantry. Van Nuys was asleep on the hurricane deck before the disaster. Not being able to

swim

he decided to remain on the boat as long as he could and avoid the drowning men below. In time he jumped into the river and took refuge on one of the wheelhousings that had burned loose from the *Sultana* and had fallen into the river. Finding some loose boards near the wheelhouse, Van Nuys used a small board as a hammer and nailed two boards together in the shape of a raft! Setting out in his makeshift raft Van Nuys floated down the river, using another piece of wood as a rudder to steer around drowning victims and was eventually picked up near Memphis.

A couple of Hoosier cavalymen had an unusual experience on the upper decks. Asa Lee, 6th Indiana Cavalry, went to sleep on the hurricane deck but was rocketed into the sky by the blast of the boilers and landed in a heap on the crowded bow of the main deck! Charles Lahue, 13th Indiana Cavalry, was asleep on the texas deck. He awoke in mid-air and was quick enough to grab hold of the railing around the hurricane deck as he went flying past. Hanging along the side of the boat for awhile, Lahue finally dropped into the water where he heard a lady calling for her husband. He watched as a man with a broken arm helped the lady onto a floating door. This lady was Mrs. Anna Annis, the only female passenger to be rescued.

Some of the Indiana soldiers told about their exploits in the water. Lt. Elihue Swain, 9th Indiana Cavalry, had followed one of his men into the river and in spite of the danger to himself selflessly helped the man along, swimming behind him and pushing him along and encouraging him. When finally they reached some driftwood, Swain exhorted the soldier to climb up onto the wood. Despite his own weakened condition he tried to help the man up but could not. As he shifted to a new position, on the other side of the drift, the stricken man let loose of the drift and slid beneath the water.

William C. Warner, 9th Indiana Cavalry, was in the water and managed to get onto a piece of wreckage that already had a number of men on it. As they floated along, Warner heard a great splashing coming in their direction and grabbing a few loose boards quickly took to the water

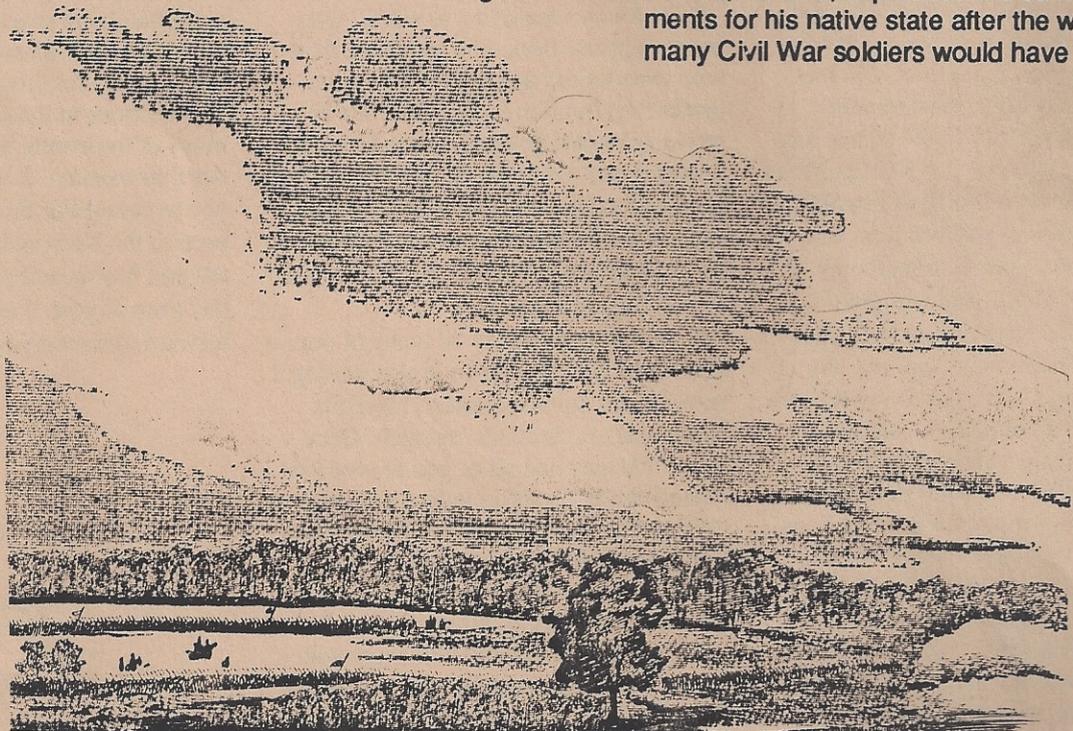
again. The splashing turned out to be a number of swimming cattle that eventually upset the piece of wreckage and knocked the others off. Warner took off his underwear and used it to tie his loose boards together. Floating along, he came upon an old hat and put it on his head. When he was taken out of the water he wore only the old stiff hat and his undershirt!

In all, almost 250 Indiana soldiers perished in the *Sultana* disaster. More Indiana soldiers died on the *Sultana* than were killed in any battle from any of the 1678 Indiana regiments. Throughout the whole four years of the Civil War, only 45 of the 168 Indiana regiments lost more than 250 soldiers from battle deaths, disease, etc. In terms of the amount of Hoosiers lost, the *Sultana* disaster ranks as one of the costliest killers in Indiana's sparkling Civil War history. ■



**Ain't God good to Indiana?  
Folks, a feller never knows  
Just how close he is to Eden  
Till sometimes, he ups and goes  
Seekin' fairer, greener pastures  
Than he has right here at home  
Where there's the sunshine in the clover  
An' the honey in the comb:  
Where th' ripples on th' river  
Kind o' chuckle as they flow,  
Ain't God good to Indiana?  
Ain't he fellows? Ain't he, though?**

- James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916), born in a 2-room log cabin in Greenfield, Indiana, expressed the same sentiments for his native state after the war that many Civil War soldiers would have held dear.



## "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 with the rare men of Virginia who fought for the Union:

Ninth Virginia: James Buckbee. First Virginia Artillery: George C. Lues. First Virginia Cavalry: Henry C. Foster, A. Manner, T.W. Richardson, Anthony Craig, James McHenry, A. Stephens, William Curtis, Charles Rupel, William Cruddes. Second Virginia Cavalry: Thomas Sharp. Third Virginia Cavalry: S.D.L. Stafford. Fourth Virginia Cavalry: Taylor Woodward. Fifth Virginia Cavalry: J.N. Steele. Sixth Virginia Cavalry: J. H. Lyons, Patrick Laules, J Talmadge, J.H. Martin, John Match, J.B. McCubber. Seventh Virginia Cavalry: G. Bradley, W.M. Cardeirle, G. W. Goodflasher, W. English, Robert Ragsdale, John Riley, C. Willhelm, J.R. Roberts, Thomas Scott, A.W. Green. Tenth Virginia Cavalry: J. Mattlinger. Twelfth Virginia Cavalry: J. Monday. Sixteenth Virginia Cavalry: S. Springer. The following men were from regiments unknown: Jacob Flick, Dock Jones, Edward Peachin, J. Talentine, H. Tift. First Alabama Cavalry: Jonathan Reach. 137th Illinois: Samuel F. Sanders. Forteenth Illinois: Epenetus W. McIntosh. 101st Indiana: A.J. Noss. 124th Indiana: Barton S. Beardon, Joseph M. Espy, James A. Hickerson, Thomas White, Joseph Taylor Elliott, Daniel V. Brown, Charles F. Bryant, Levi Donahue, James Elliott, John W. Galbreath, Patrick Harrington, Henry Miller, James A. Morton, James Payne, William H.H. Ryman, Sydney Shinnifield, James Tahan, John W. Thompson, James H. Kimberlin, Dennis Meher, David Palmer, L. Shemire, William Farrell. Sixteenth Indiana: William Lewis. Seventeenth Indiana: V.A. Johnson, J.W. Thahbonger, George L. Evans, Beam Lockman, Richard H. Sampson, James H. Tantlinger. Eighteenth Indiana: T.S. Leliman, O.O. Baker. 22nd Indiana: Moses Patrick. 23rd Indiana: David Smith. 24th Indiana: William Hughes, M.B. Simmermon. 26th Indiana: Samuel Vesser. 29th Indiana: J. Brown. 30th Indiana: S.M. Aldfant, S. Morris, George Washington Dawson. 31st Indiana: Otterbine G. Beard. 32nd Indiana: Evan Huber, Aloisious Schirmeyerre, Phillip Shoemaker. 34th Indiana: C.P. Rass. 35th Indiana: M.R. Hersher, Thomas Lynch, Peter Mulvany, M.O. Tanam, Edward O. Donnelson, Jesse Martin, A.H. Crum, Michael McQuire, James Morton. 36th Indiana: H.P. Hunt, John Mullick, Aaron Samshower, W. Beal, John H. Janney. 37th Indiana: Squire A. Taylor, L. Pike, (there are 326 more Indiana men to yet name)

*To be continued...*

### FROM THE EDITOR.....

The Annual Reunion of Sultana Descendants and Friends will be held on April 24th in Knoxville, Tennessee, this being the Saturday closest to the date of the Sultana disaster (April 27). This year we will meet at Mt. Olive Baptist Church, near the original site (if not the building) of previous meetings of the original Sultana Survivors Association. We are tentatively planning to gather at 4 P.M. at the Sultana memorial monument in the church's cemetery for a short remembrance, including a gun salute. Then we will go into the church for a short program which will recreate as much as possible the main elements of past reunions of the Sultana Survivors Association. Peggy Shaw (Norman's wife) and her quartet, The Appalachian Harmonizers will sing for us; we will continue to call out the "Roll Call of the Dead", and we will strive to remember and honor those men who died on the Sultana and those who survived but had to live with the memories of that night for the rest of their lives.

Dinner will be cooked and served there at the church in the fellowship hall about 6 P.M.. **It is important to know approximately how many will be coming for dinner so enough food can be ordered and prepared.** Norman Shaw

has been pulling all of this together for us and asks that you send him your reservation of \$6. in advance for your dinner. Make the check out to him and send to this address:

Norman Shaw  
1120 Winding Way Dr.  
Knoxville, TN 37923  
(615)691-6777 (office)

Don't forget to include your names!

Jerry Potter would like to ask all who come to please bring him copies of men who were on the Sultana - in uniform, preferably, but also in later life. He is working toward getting a made-for-TV documentary made on the disaster. Those of you who want to talk to Jerry further about this can write him at 8618 Edney Ridge, Memphis, TN 38018. Phone (901) 372-0122 (home)

Gene Salecker, author of many of our newsletter feature, stories is also writing a book on the Sultana disaster, using his many years of thorough research. Gene would like any and all of you to send him related incidents, information, and photos for possible inclusion in it. I know it will be a great addition to existing Sultana literature and help to keep the memory of the "Sultana soldiers" alive. Gene will be with us in Knoxville and will share with us stories and information that he's found this past year. You can reach Gene at the

following address:

Gene Salecker  
2526 N. Davisson St.  
River Grove, IL 60171-1710  
(708)787-2320 (home)

I am planning to have a Sultana reunion item or two available for purchase. More specifics on this later.

And don't forget to bring your Sultana memorabilia to share with the rest of us to the Reunion. As usual, we will have tables set up for this purpose.

Directions to the church and confirmed times of the events will be published in the April newsletter. I would encourage all of you to come! For those of you who haven't been to the Knoxville area, I just want to tell you how beautiful it is, especially at that time of year. Larry and I are looking forward to seeing you all.

Pam Newhouse, Editor



REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
32nd ANNUAL REUNION  
OF THE  
NATIONAL  
SULTANA SURVIVORS'  
ASSOCIATION



HELD AT  
MEMORIAL HALL, TOLEDO, OHIO  
TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1915

*Minutes*

OF THE  
*27th Annual Reunion*

OF THE  
*Survivors of the Sultana*

HELD AT  
*Grand Army of the Republic Hall,  
in Memorial Hall Building,*

TOLEDO, OHIO

*Tuesday, April 27th, 1910.*

—FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. HELEN KERR

Program covers from the Annual Reunions of the National Sultana Survivors' Association (northern group)