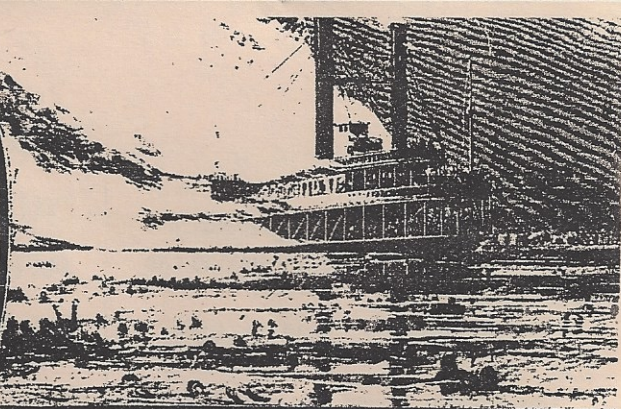


the SULTANA REMEMBERED



Newsletter of the Association of Sultana Descendants and Friends

April 27, 1865

FALL 2008/WINTER 2009

Reunion in Knoxville, April 24th and 25th, 2009 - Homecoming!

-by Norman Shaw

It's been a few years now since we last met in Knoxville, so it's time to come home for our 22nd Sultana reunion! As you may know, our association met here for the first fourteen years before we first ventured out of town to Vicksburg, MS.

It's been a challenge to find just the right hotel for our use for two nights. The goal was a place that was reasonably priced yet could provide us with a banquet room and buffet meal for Saturday night. With Pam's help, and after reading several reviews on-line for various motels, one was found in Alcoa. Let me give you the basic details below:

Name: Courtyard by Marriott (two years old) Phone: 865/977-8333

Address: 141 Furrow Way, Alcoa, TN, 37701 (a short side street off Alcoa Highway)

Cost per room: \$99.00 each night plus tax (group rate)

Rooms on hold: 20. Everyone will make their own reservation direct with the motel under the name of the Sultana Association. You can get either a room with one king bed (with a sofa that makes into a bed for a third person) or two queen beds. All amenities included. Even if we fill up

the 20 rooms, we can still add more if available.

Note: As you probably know, I am very price conscious and try to get the best deal possible, especially during these bad economic times.

Even though we want to be sure that all of the 20 rooms are booked at the Courtyard (www.marriott.com/tyskx), there are several other motels nearby that cost less if the \$99 is more than you want to pay. Of course, you risk giving up some quality.

Here's our itinerary for the two days:

Friday Evening: 7:00 p.m. - at Mt. Olive Baptist Church, 2500 Maryville Pike, Knoxville, TN, 37920 (The easiest way to get to the church is turn right onto Maloney Road off Alcoa Highway, as you are driving north, toward Knoxville. This turn is exactly 7 miles from the hotel and right next to a large church called Sevier Heights Baptist Church. Then, go one mile and Maloney dead ends at Maryville Pike. Mt. Olive is immediately across the road. Enter the hall through the back of the building. I will put up a Sultana sign on the corner of Alcoa Highway and Maloney Road.)

Many of you will remember the great room we used in the past in the church's fellowship hall. Plenty

of space for 100 people plus a small stage we can use. Also, once again I want to encourage folks to bring display items to tell your ancestor's story or some aspect of the Sultana tragedy. There will be tables available and an area set aside for this important part of our activities.

The theme for Friday night will be "Civil War Music." Several talented musicians from Kentucky have offered to play at no cost but will have tapes and CDs for sale. Also, my wife's group, the Appalachian Harmonizers, will sing a few songs as in prior meetings. I might come up with some other ideas, too.

Saturday Bus Tour--9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (load up at the Courtyard hotel)

Something we have never done before is have a tour of Civil War sites in Knoxville, following the route that our local Civil War Roundtable put together some time ago. I will be one tour guide, and I will find another for the second bus. The last stop will be our unique Sultana monument in the cemetery of Mt. Olive Baptist Church. I believe I can find a way during the tour to have a couple of wreaths tossed off one of our bridges into the Tennessee River, as Sultana survivors did at their earlier reunions here.

Two 48 passenger school buses are reserved for the tour. The cost will only be \$10.00 per person, which needs to be prepaid by mailing a check made out to me, Norman Shaw, to P. O. Box 30372, Knoxville, TN, 37930.

Lunch will be at one of the downtown restaurants. I hope we will be able to eat at a favorite place called Calhoun's on the River. Everyone can order off the menu.

Saturday Evening Banquet--6:30 p.m.

Our hotel will serve us a buffet meal at the reasonable cost of \$18.34 per person (which includes tax and gratuity). We will have a choice of two meats, three vegetables, salad, rolls, dessert, and drink. This meal must be prepaid by mailing a check to me at P. O. Box 30372, Knoxville, TN, 37930. I will give the hotel a final count and pay for the reserved meals at least 72 hours prior to Sat., April 25th. Naturally, those not staying at the hotel can dine with everyone else by prepaying, as explained above.

Those are the details as of this writing. Expect some updates in the next newsletter, which will come out near the reunion date. If you need to contact me, send an e-mail to shawclan4@bellsouth.net.

I look forward to seeing many familiar faces in April and, hopefully, several new ones. We always have a grand time!

- Norman Shaw

**Summary of prepaid items,
(per person):**

Sat. Civil War Tour--\$10.00

Sat. Evening Buffet--\$18.34

The Travails of our Immigrant Ancestors

I read somewhere that the word "travel" comes from the ancient French word, "travail." In those times, traveling was very risky, uncomfortable, and dangerous. You didn't do it unless it was absolutely necessary.

What follows is an account of a family whose immigration from France to the United States in 1852 turned out to be a real "travail." I think this story is worth sharing because it is probably similar to that of many of our immigrant ancestors.

I am chagrined to say that the person who gave this to me has to remain unnamed for now - until they identify themselves - because I neglected to make note of from whom it came. :-(-Editor

Frenchman Joseph Pick, a miller by profession, was born in 1798 in Niederauerbach, Alsace-Lorraine, which was then a part of Germany. He married a Frenchwoman, Barbara Fath, and they had nine children.

In 1852, fifty-four year old Joseph sold his property, settled his accounts, packed up his family (including Christine, his wife's younger sister), secured his money in a belt around his waist, and traveled to the port of Le Havre, via Paris.

Here they boarded the sailing vessel *Elizabeth*, and settled in with the rest of the passengers in the hold of the ship. The ships' officers quarters occupied one end of the hold.

There were bunks, one above the other, which were arranged along the sides with an aisle down the center.

Each family carried its own bedding. Other belongings - bundles, pans, kettles, luggage - were tied to the bunk posts and often broke loose as the vessel lurched and rolled from side to side.

Food and fuel were provided, and, weather permitting, each family prepared meals on a community stove on the upper deck. In rainy or stormy weather, the hatch was battened down and no cooking was done. If insufficient fuel was furnished to cook certain foods, such as dried beans, two families would combine their fuel and cooked the food together. Some-

times, the wind was so calm for days that the ship made no headway. On other days the sea was rough and the ship was tossed about like a cork in a rain barrel.

During the trip, Barbara gave birth to a baby girl. They named her Claudia.

After the *Elizabeth* had been on the ocean for well over a month, the food and water gave out. The passengers nearly starved. Mothers with babies in their arms begged the Captain for crackers.

Four days after provisions were gone the ship came in sight of land: St. John, the seaport capital of Antigua in the British West Indies. Here, a supply of crackers and turtles (for soup) were laid in as food for the rest of the journey. Eighteen days were spent sailing from Cuba to New Orleans. When they stepped ashore in this Louisiana city, an epidemic of cholera was sweeping the South.

After a two week stay in New Orleans, the Picks took a steamboat to Cincinnati, Ohio. (All in all, passage from Le Havre to Cincinnati took seventy-two days) On the way, forty-two people died of cholera. Boat carpenters were kept busy making coffins, and from time to time the boat landed to bury the bodies on the river banks.

The second day after their arrival in Cincinnati, Barbara Pick died of cholera. She was forty-two and was the third person to be buried in St. John's Cemetery in St. Bernard (a northern suburb of Cincinnati).

Claudia, the baby born on the ocean, and George, a baby brother, died within three weeks. Joseph found himself "a stranger in a strange land, a strange language, and no friends."

He found work at Taylor's tanning yard by tanning bark in the mill. His son Joseph Jr. was bound out to work for someone else.

About a year later, Joseph Sr. married his sister-in-law, Christine, who had come with the family from France. Christine later gave birth to a son, George, and a daughter, Louisa.

Joseph Pick lived in Cincinnati for twenty-four years before dying in 1876 and was buried beside his first wife. He had lived to see all but two of his children married.

An 1883 Reunion

On September 5th and 6th of 1883 the 102nd Ohio Volunteer Infantry held their first reunion near McConnellsburg, Ohio at a pavilion at O'Dell's Lake. (September 6th, 1862 was the day the Regiment mustered in to U.S. service on Covington, KY). The vets were not aged; most were probably in their 40s. One hundred sixty-five members of the regiment were on the Sultana, and some of these men were at the reunion. Richard Troup, whose ancestor Manuel Harnly was with the 102nd (and died on the Sultana) has the original reunion program. What follows are excerpts from it.

Wednesday, September 5th.

"The various Committees together with many of the comrades were early on duty at the camp completing the necessary preliminaries, decorating the Pavilion and the camp.

The early afternoon trains brought the comrades from every direction (*Ed. note: all but four attendees were from Ohio; two came from Illinois, one from Pennsylvania, and one, from Indiana*), many coming accompanied by their wives and children, who were met by the Committee and made to feel at home.

At 4 P.M. the comrades were marshalled into the Pavilion adjoining the Lake House, by the martial band in attendance, and Capt. J. M Sloan was called to the Chair.

First in order was signing in the roster. by each comrade present, name, residence, and post office." (After this was done)... "it was moved and carried that an 'experience meeting' be held. Comrade J.F. Hughes called the roll, and as each comrade's name was called, he was required to rise in his place and give his experience since his muster out or discharge. Where he had been, his occupation, whether married or single, and if married, the number of children and anything more that would be of interest to the comrades. Many interesting and amusing experiences were told by many of the comrades, as called up, and was

continued until quite late, and was kept up around the camp-fire at night until 'taps.'

The early trains on **September 6th** brought many fresh recruits and a large number came by private conveyance overland."

(At 9 A.M. the men met in the Pavilion for business and the election of officers.)

"The association was then addressed by comrade Florien Giauque giving his experience and relating many incidents of his extensive travels in the Southern States since the close of the war." Letters were then read from those who couldn't be present, including one special invited guest, Br. Maj. Gen. R.S Granger, who stated: "...I can now conscientiously assert that of all the troops that came under my command in the late war - not less than seventy Regiments of infantry, cavalry, and batteries of artillery - there was not one that excelled the Regiments of your brigade - in any of the high qualities that make up a perfect military organization. For courage, discipline and moral character they were all the most exacting martinet could demand.

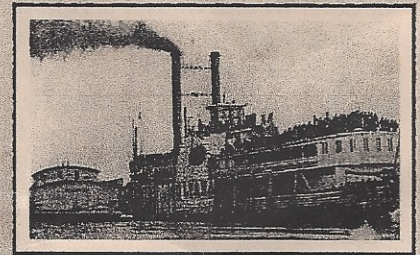
For courage, I take pleasure in calling to your minds, the magnificent conduct of the detachment of the 102d Ohio and 18th Michigan, under the command of your gallant Lt. Col. Elliot, when sent to the relief of the post at Athens. Here is an extract of my report, referring to their conduct on that occasion. 'The conduct of the detachment of the 102d Ohio and 18th Michigan under their gallant leader Lt. Col Elliot was as heroic, as that of Col. Campbell, was base and cowardly. When within less than four mile of Athens, they met and drove back and entire brigade of the enemy, eleven hundred strong, and forced their way to the very walls of the fort, and this in the face of all of Forest's (sic) command. So much boldness, and determination, did these men show until the fall of their leader, that Forest (sic), after the surrender, accused the officers of intoxicating their men, insisting that no troops would fight with that much determination unless under the influence of liquor.'

Gen. Granger was promptly elected an Honorary Member of the 102nd OVI. Several other Honorary Members were also named.

Before adjourning, a permanent committee was formed to oversee future reunions of the regiment."

River Reunion

A Boy's Story



the last days of the Sultana

Alice Morrison, who attended the Sultana reunion in Athens, Alabama, has written an historical fiction book about the last days of the Sultana. While it is geared toward middle-school aged kids, adults will be interested as well as it is based on the facts surrounding the event. Although many of the characters are non-fictional, Alice's "adopted" ancestor is Winfield Scott Colvin, 6th Kentucky Cavalry, great- great-grandfather of her good friend, Laurie Bries.

Based on contemporary resources, it is an accurate portrayal of what happened on the Sultana's last trip, as told through the eyes of a 13-year-old boy who experienced more than he bargained for as a stowaway on board the boat. He overhears the deal making, the down-playing of the condition of the boilers, witnesses their insufficient patching, sees the unbelievable overloading, and finally experiences the explosion, as he and thousands of passengers fight for survival in the icy waters of the Mississippi.

Alice will bring a limited number of books to sell at our Knoxville reunion. Hot off the press, the price is not yet set, but should be somewhere around \$10.

Any questions for Alice? Or maybe you'd like to tell her to reserve a copy for you. E-mail her at: freewrite40@yahoo.com

Alice, I am looking forward to buying this book. And it sounds as if it would be a good one to pass on to our grandchildren. Unless we, who are aware of the Sultana's story, tell it to the younger generations, the story will be lost, and our ancestors "gone" forever. -Pam Newhouse

Sultana Descendants' Deaths

I am so sorry to have to report the deaths of three of our faithful members.

Gene Shields: died, 7/7/2008

I had no idea that when I printed the poem (to the right) in the last newsletter that this would be the last poem Gene would write. Gene and Anne were faithful attendees of our reunions until the last couple of years. Gene will be sorely missed by us all.

Gene was born in 1927 in Tulsa, OK and was a WWII Navy vet. He was member of the Sons of the American Revolution and a 22-year member of the Ft. Worth, TX Opera Chorus. He and Anne were married for 45 years. They have three sons and one daughter, 12 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren.

Gene's Sultana ancestor was J. R. Collins, 3rd Tennessee Cavalry, Co. F.

Helen Kerr: died 5/25/2008

Helen and her husband John, Maryville, TN, residents, were with us from the beginning of our descendant's organization. Larry and I always looked forward to getting together with the Kerrs on our trips to Knoxville. Helen's ancestor, Sam Pickens, was secretary of the original Sultana Survivors Association, which met in Knoxville until 1930. She was a kind and gentle person, interested in genealogy and photography and actively involved in her church. She and John loved to travel. She leaves two daughters and a son and two grandchildren. She and John (who preceded her in death) were married for 60 years. Helen was 85.

Harry Herman: died 5/22/2007

Harry was born in 1928 in Fredericksburg. A history buff, he often related the story of his Sultana ancestor, Wilson S. Tracey, 102nd OH Inf., who was captured at Sulphur Trestle in 1864 and was taken to Cahaba prison. Wilson endured the spring floods, standing in water up to his knees while keeping an eye on the rats and snakes in the rafters. He buried his frying pan in the ashes to keep it from being stolen. He survived the Sultana disaster and walked home, surprising his family when they saw him walking across the cornfield.

Harry attended several Sultana reunions and visited the Cahaba prison site. He and his wife Elizabeth have two children and three grandchildren, who also share Harry's love of history and the story of the Sultana.

To Roaming

Now that my life is nearly done
I'm glad I have a home.
I've reached to age of eighty one
And can no longer roam.

I've roamed to Germany and to France
Not just once but twice.
I'm thankful that I had the chance,
But I can't make it thrice.

I've roamed to all the fifty states
Now that took some doing.
Texas is still the one that rates.
Are the others booing?

God made many pretty places
For us to go and see.
Kentucky with its big horse races -
The winner wasn't me

Roamed the cathedral there in York.
Roamed to British Cornwall.
Oh yes I roamed to County Cork
In Scotland - had a ball.

Roamed through the Carrabean sea
Aboard a great big boat.
Castles in Europe roamed to see,
But never swam a moat

We spent lots of time on the go
And oft away from home.
It's surprising, did you know
We never roamed to Rome.

-by Sultana descendant
Gene Shields, July 5, 2008

Endings.....and Beginnings

Endings are hard. The end of a friendship, the end of a life. We are told that endings are just a part of life, but that doesn't make them any easier.

When it comes to old friends, we just assume that they will be around forever, but the harsh reality is that they will not.

The poet Wordsworth must have known about the pain of loss when he wrote, "Though nothing can bring back the hour of the splendour in the grass, of the glory of the flower; we will grieve not, rather find, strength in what remains behind."

What remains behind are all the good memories we have of old friends and relatives passed on, and the friends and loved ones we still have.

Now, on to "beginnings." I remember the beginning of the Sultana experience for me. I was reading a old issue of *People* magazine in 1988 and there it was-- an article about the Sultana and a man named Jerry Potter who thought he had found the remains of the boat! I had just discovered that I had a great great grandfather on board-- but knew little else beside the fact that he was in the 183rd Ohio Infantry and was captured at Franklin and interred at Cahaba.

Imagine! Here was a man who had found the Sultana! Thinking that he certainly must know more, I contacted him by using only the information that I had-- he was a lawyer in Memphis.

Jerry informed me that there was actually a group of Sultana descendants that had met for the first time that year in Knoxville and they were going to be meeting again soon. Would I like to go? Absolutely. So Larry and I went to the second reunion held in 1989. Norman Shaw organized and presided over it. I said I could publish a newsletter to keep the group informed of the upcoming reunions, and the first issue went out in 1990.

On the next page I have reprinted the *People* magazine article. It was a great beginning for me.

Pam

Land, Hoe! Lawyer Jerry Potter Seeks a Tragic Civil War Shipwreck Under An Arkansas Soybean Field

By Jane Sanderson

Men who were scalded and bruised were crawling over one another to get out of the fire"; "Men who were buried beneath the wreck were crying for help"; "Flames were madly rushing through the broken kindling of the boat cabin"; "The stench of burning flesh was intolerable."

It lacked the grandiosity of the Titanic, or the political impact of the Maine. But in the minds of the survivors quoted above, the sinking of the river-boat *Sultana* early on April 27, 1865 was one of the most horrible maritime accidents in American history. It was also historically the deadliest. After exploding and burning, the grossly overloaded steamer foundered in the Mississippi, about nine miles north of Memphis. It was carrying more than 2,200 passengers, most of them Union soldiers just released from Confederate prison camps. Some men, so badly wounded or sick they couldn't move, begged to be thrown overboard so they would not burn to death. Those in the water fought over floating planks. In all, 1,547 perished.

It is an old tragedy. But for Jerry Potter, 31, a Memphis lawyer and former history major at the University of Tennessee at Martin, it has a strange immediacy. After five years of research, Potter believes he has discovered the boat's long-lost wreckage—in a soybean field. Potter's interest in the *Sultana* was sparked when he saw a painting of the burning sidewheeler in the lobby of a Memphis bank. Soon investigating the riverboat tragedy became an obsession. He found himself waking at 5 each morning to read before work, and traveling to the Library of Congress and the National Archives to obtain old newspapers, maps and even a water-blurred passenger list. Puzzling questions emerged. Why had the 260-foot *Sultana*, with a listed capacity of 376 passengers, taken on 2,000 freed POWs at Vicksburg when two other empty steamboats were waiting at the dock? Was the fatal boiler explosion accidental or caused by a torpedo smuggled onto the boat by a diehard Confederate? Most perplexing, where was the wreckage, which a century ago seemed to disappear?

The first two questions are still open to historical dispute. But Potter concluded, along with other experts, that because the Mississippi has wandered away from its old bed, perhaps by three miles, the ship is probably now under dry land, across from Memphis near the river's Arkansas bank.

Last summer Potter approached Sam Oliver, a farmer in Mound City, Ark., and, indicating a point on a map showing Oliver's farm, said, "Sam, I think it's right here." "No, it's not," replied Oliver, "it's about 50 yards north." Oliver, who knew of the *Sultana* story, had idly wondered if odd pieces of cast iron he and his father, Dearmont, had run up against while clearing the area were part of the boat.

After a year's testing, Potter is now convinced that the metal is from the *Sultana*. Clive Cussler, an expert on lost ships who wrote the novel *Raise the Titanic!*, conferred with Potter and has said, "It looks like a 99 percent chance that we've got it." Metal detectors indicate a mass sizable enough to be the lost steamer, and Potter reckons it lies 10 to 15 feet underground. But the final answer to the hulk's identity will have to wait until Oliver has harvested his bean crop. Then he and Potter will drill core samples to locate the object they hope is the *Sultana* and remove the first few feet of topsoil. Potter plans to call in specialists for the dig's final stages. "If there's just one boot down there, we don't want to ruin that boot," he says. "We're not going to commit archaeological disaster down there."

There is likely to be more than just a boot. The *Sultana* was carrying 100 hogsheads of sugar, 1,000 bushels of coal, assorted livestock—and a ship's safe rumored to contain gold coins that would now be worth \$3 million. Any profits from the dig will go to the Olivers. Potter insists he isn't in it for the money. "History to me is alive," he says. "I can go out on the Shiloh battlefield, close my eyes and feel the agony. And if this is the *Sultana*, I'll be touching a very important fragment of American history that has not been touched for 117 years."