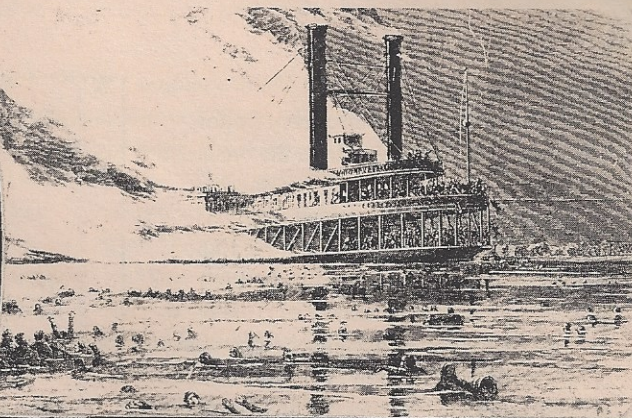


the SULTANA REMEMBERED



Newsletter of the Association of Sultana Descendants and Friends

April 27, 1865

SUMMER 2003

Memphis Memories, 2003

by Norman Shaw

This year's reunion was the second consecutive time our association met outside Knoxville since our initial meeting in 1988. The reward for the work and time donated in planning such an event is observing the excitement and fun experienced by all! Continuing the format started in Vicksburg last year, events were planned for Friday afternoon and evening and all day Saturday making this a truly weekend event! Expect something similar when we return to Knoxville next year for the 17th reunion.

Even though it would have been nice to break 100 in attendance, we still had a good number in about 80 folks for the weekend. We even had some first time visitors from the Memphis area who happened to hear on Friday afternoon a short radio broadcast about the Sultana played on a local station and produced by Todd Jarrell from Tenn.

Our Friday evening meeting allowed Gene Salecker to make a presentation on the lack of credibility of the sabotage theory. Gene's motivation came from a somewhat recent article in a national Civil War magazine which promoted sabotage as the cause of the Sultana explosion. As usual, Gene gave a detailed, well organized presentation complete with handouts and slides. Thanks, Gene, for waiting since Vicksburg to give this talk. If you were there, you know we did some other fun and informative things that evening. As you may know, Gene and Jerry Potter met through our organization, but I did not know the details on how their friendship grew. We all enjoyed what each had to say.

The displays were great and varied as usual. I finally did have time to examine

some. The displays add another level of variety to the evening and all are appreciated. Gene outdid himself again! One project contained every known photo of the Sultana men while another was a unique model of G.I. Joe-type action figures in Civil War dress jumping off the burning Sultana! Honorable mention would also have to go to the model of the Sultana boilers made by Jim Wallace of Memphis. Everyone had a better understanding of how the boilers worked and why they blew up from studying this display.

Not only did we have a fun, informative Friday evening, but the Sat. tour also went well. Naturally the tour guides were our two authors, Gene and Jerry, as they led us to relevant historical sites which concluded with the unique experience of standing in the Arkansas field beneath which rests the final remains of the Sultana. Usually a wet area, we were favored by Mother Nature as we walked to the Sultana location Sat. afternoon on dry land under a smiling sun!

Saturday's evening meal was held at Mud Island's banquet hall, a short distance from our hotel with a great view of the

**"Gene and Jerry
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Memphis waterfront. The food was excellent and everyone seemed to enjoy hearing our speakers for the night and in basic fellowshiping. The pass-the-hat donations garnered \$417.00 which greatly helped to offset the weekend expenses (see financial report). This is the second year we concluded the evening with a candlelight service of remembrance--a tradition worth continuing!

Other people who contributed to the weekend need our thanks:

1) Tracie Shelhart and Barbara Miller with the Ark. State Parks. Tracie is an interpreter with Parkin Archeological State Park who wore his Union reenactor uniform Sat. and participated in the ceremony at the Memphis National Cemetery.

2) Clyde Getman with the Sultana Camp of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. He led the ceremony at the National Cemetery, played Taps, and gave the blessing at Saturday's banquet.

3) Mike and Mark Marshall are making a Sultana documentary entitled "Soldiers of Misfortune, the Sultana Disaster." The ten minute segment of interviews from the film shown on Friday held everyone's attention. When will the final tape be ready for purchase?

4) Kay Brockwell with the staff of the City of Marion, Arkansas, planned our Sat. noon program and hired the caterer who supplied our tasty lunch.

5) Bill Dries, reporter for the Memphis Commercial Appeal, came to our activities and wrote a nice article which came out the Monday following our weekend event.

6) Tommy Coleman from the Alabama State Park at Cahaba (near Selma) who faithfully attends our yearly meetings.

7) Our real Sultana son, Robert Warner from Texas, and real Sultana daughter, Glenna Green from Tenn., attended and amazed everyone with their vitality and telling of their respective father's survival

and life histories.

8) Pam Newhouse and Jerry Potter, who worked with me to make the weekend a success.

I hope all will plan to visit us in Knoxville for next year's reunion. I know everyone will enjoy seeing the Sultana marble monument dedicated in 1916 by Sultana survivors with the etched names of nearly 400 Tenn. men. For the last several years we have met at the Mt. Olive Baptist Church in South Knoxville which is one of several churches in the area where the Tenn. Sultana Survivors Association held their annual gatherings. The church is only a few miles from the airport with many motels nearby. In my initial planning for next year, I think we should book the local steamship for a ride down the Tennessee River and return for lunch at one of the restaurants on the recently upscaled Knoxville waterfront. I am also considering catering a southern BBQ dinner for Saturday evening at the church fellowship hall from a local, popular BBQ eatery. Sound like fun? Then I expect to see you all in Knoxville in 2004.

-Norman C. Shaw, Founder, Association of Sultana Descendants and Friends

FINANCIAL REPORT FROM REUNION

Income from registration:
- \$2,425.00
Pass-the-hat Sat.
donations, \$417.00
TOTAL \$2,842.00

Expenses:
-Top Notch Travel (bus
service): \$925.00
-Mud Island Banquet Hall
Rental: \$550.00

-Extreme Events (banquet
meal): \$802.99
-Wyndham Garden Hotel
(room rental): \$130.00
-Melissa Hardage
(Sat. lunches): \$400.00
-Refunds for cancelled reg
istrations: \$192.00

TOTAL \$2,999.99

Loss: (\$157.99)

Real Daughter Elsie Huffaker Passes On



ELSIE AT THE 1993 KNOXVILLE
SULTANA REUNION

Last year, one of our real daughters passed away here in Knoxville. Elsie Huffaker, in her late nineties, was the daughter of Jesse Huffaker, a Third Tenn. Cavalry (U. S.) survivor. She spent her last few years in a local nursing home. I have a fond memory of visiting Elsie at her rural home with my wife, Peggy, around 1987 after I became fascinated with the Sultana story and discovered the Knoxville connection through the 3rd Tenn. Cavalry. Elsie was a gracious host and shared all she knew about the Sultana and her father's experiences. She let me make a copy of both Jesse's original Civil War photo and his written Civil War experiences. I have a great picture I took at our first Sultana Association meeting in 1988 of Elsie sitting in a lawn chair at the Sultana monument with two other real children, Edgar (Si) Keeble, son of Plez Keeble, and Mrs. Malcolm Bloom, daughter of John Simpson. Neither had met the other before that day! All three have passed on, but it was a great pleasure to know each one.

- Norman C. Shaw



SULTANA REUNION ATTENDEES ON THE FIELD WHERE THE SULTANA LIES BURIED.

The present Mississippi River lies beyond the tree line in the distance. In 1865, the land on which we were walking was the river bed. The remains of the Sultana lie 20 to 30 feet below. It was an awesome experience to walk on this site, and we spent quite a while here just walking, talking, and thinking back about the events of that long night of April 27th, 1865. Special thanks to Kay Brockwell who got permission from the owner of the land to let us come here.

Letters From Home: Adam Farmer, 3rd Tennessee Cavalry

Note from his descendant, Ruth Carver: "The letters written by my ancestor, Adam Farmer, were destroyed in a house fire some years ago, but a cousin had made copies of them and we are thankful for that. We know that the letters were written by the camp writer because Adam could neither read nor write. The first letter was written to his wife Rebecca about three months after joining the Union army."

Nashville Tenn, November 4th, 1862
Rebecky Farmer. I take the present opportunity of writing you to let you know that I am well, hoping that this may find you enjoying the same blessing. Lish is here and is well. Bill Farmer landed safe with his company. It gave me grate satisfaction to hear that you was all well and doing well. Eli and John is well. We killed 7 rebs, wounded 2 and captured about 60. There was nobody hurt on our side. I got four holes shot in my coat and Eli one. I am confident that I shot one in the belly. I want you to try and take care of your crops the best you can and don't think the time long for me to come home for I expect to come about February if I can. I want you to take good care of the little girls. I would like to see them. I want you to write every chance and tell me how times go. I close with my best respect to you and all my friends.

Adam Farmer to Rebecky Farmer
"The second letter was written while Adam was at Camp Fisk in Vicksburg in March, 1865, and would ultimately be his last."

Camp near Vicksburg Miss, March 19th, 1865

Dear wife. I am glad to say to you that we have returned to our own lines once more. we are all enjoying good health. We reached our lines the 16th of this month. We are not exchanged yet, nor we don't know when we will be. It was agreed on by the rebels and our men that we be sent to this place and remain here until we be exchanged. We have a nice camp and plenty to eat. And will draw clothing today. It is said as soon as we are exchanged, that we will get a thirty day furlough. I don't know whether it be true or not. I want you to do the best you can about getting your crops planted. I

have no money to send you. I have not been paid for eight months. As soon as I am paid and can I will send you some. I want you to tell me if you know where Silas Graves is. We never knew whether he was killed or not. He was not captured with us. Let father and famiy see this. I haven't time to write to them, but I will write in a few days. Eli and Elisha will also write. I don't think there is any danger of anybody starving for we lived twelve days on three pints of meal. This is the kind of fare we had in prison. I want all to write us when you write direct:

Adam Farmer Com A 3rd
Tenn Cav Prison Camp near
Vicksburg, Miss So I will close for
this time
Adam Farmer

"While at Camp Fisk Adam was issued company clothing. In his military files, dated March 23, 1865, he received

One Blouse	\$4.00
One Trousers	\$4.75
One Shirt	\$2.32
One (ilegible)	\$1.60
One Stockings	.45
Total	\$13.21

Adam and the other men remained at Camp Fisk until they were released to go home in mid-April. On Adam's military papers it states that Adam was paroled at Vicksburg on or about April 21, 1865. He died on the Sultana six days later."

I AM AN AMERICAN

*Yes, I am an American
And I'm proud to say it
I wave the flag when e'er I can
I'm honored to display it.*

*Raw Courage made our fathers dare
To stand up to King George,
And fight to form a land that fair
'twas proved at Valley Forge.*

*I'll pledge my allegiance too
With hand upon my heart,
And "UNDER GOD" will still be true
For that's a major part.*

*I'm glad that I can speak my mind,
No matter what my view.
No need to fear I'll be confined,
If I don't think like you.*

*Much blood's been spilled and many tears
To keep this nation free.
If we're to live here without fears,
It's up to you and me.*

*I'm an American and I'm glad.
I hope it's plain to see.
Could not have had the life I've had,
But for this great country.*

*Some would like to take it from us.
We can't let them do it.
Let's make that a solemn promise,
And each year renew it.*

- by Gene Shields, gr grandson of Joseph Collins, 3rd TN Cav; died on the Sultana



A MODERN STREET SIGN CONTRASTS WITH THE COBBLESTONES OF THE 1865 WHARF AREA IN MEMPHIS WHERE REUNION ATTENDEES GATHERED.

Life of George Schepperle, Jr. 1840-1865

As a Civil War Soldier

- By Palmer William Nicholas Schepperle

Johann "George" Schepperle, Jr., farmer and soldier, was born April 13, 1840, first son and third child born to Johann "George" Sr. and Ann Katharina (nee Koenig) Schepperle in the small village of Plienigen, now a suburb of Stuttgart, Germany. His father was a weaver. In the 1840s the weavery became mechanized, thereafter making it difficult for weavers to make a living. Also, in some years harvests turned out to be very bad and many people who could make their living before could no longer do so. Professions were broken, there was no income, there was no food, and what there was, was too expensive for the common man. In June of 1847 the family decided to immigrate to North America. George, Jr. at the age of seven years therefore came to the United States with his parents, brother John, and three sisters, Anna, Catherine and Barbara. Barbara was only six months old and was so sickly that the relatives of her parents in Plieninger, fearing for her life, volunteered to keep her and raise her. But her parents wanted to leave as a family, and took the baby with them. Unfortunately, little Barbara died en route to America and was buried at sea.

After arriving in America, they came as far west as Cleveland, Ohio, and soon after settled on a farm in Smithville (Wayne County), Ohio, a short distance north of Wooster. Two more children were born in Smithville: Joseph (my grandfather), on December 5 1849, and Maria Regina (Mary, as she was known), born on February 4, 1851. Several years later (exact date not known), the family moved to Springville, Ohio, a short distance southwest of Wooster. Little is known about their farm life in Smithville and Springville, but we believe that the family members were active as orchardists, because growing apple trees became a tradition of the Schepperle (Schepperle) family. Just a few years before "Johnny Appleseed" (John Chapman) had become a part of the rich Ohio Valley legend and apple trees then strengthened the economy of the rich pioneer farming areas of Wayne County and north central Ohio.

Young George Jr. enlisted in the United States army on August 8, 1862 in Wooster,

Ohio at the age of 22 years. His service record lists his name as George Shepperly. Since coming to Ohio 1847, he probably had not been beyond the borders of Wayne County in his young life, and he may have looked upon enlisting in the United States military as an opportunity to see the country as well as a way to serve his adopted country. He was mustered into service as a recruit on September 6, 1862 in Covington, Kentucky, in Company F of the 102nd Regiment in the Ohio Infantry Volunteers, under the command of Captain J. J. Rowes. He was to serve "3 years or the duration of the war." The 102nd was organized at Mansfield, Ohio on August 18, 1862 and then moved to Covington, Kentucky, on the 4th and 5th of September where George was mustered in on the 6th. He was paid a \$2.00 premium for enlisting. George was described as 5 feet 6 inches high (tall), sandy complexion, hazel eyes, sandy hair and by occupation, a farmer. George's regiment then moved to Cincinnati where it participated in the defense of that city until September 22nd. From there the 102nd was transferred to Louisville, Kentucky as a part of that city's defense from September 24th until October 5, 1862. The 5th and 6th of October saw the regiment guarding rail lines between Louisville and Shelbyville, Kentucky. At the battle of Perryville on October 8th George's unit was held in reserve and did not participate in the fighting. On October 9th they marched to Crab Orchard and thence to Bowling Green, Kentucky on the 30th, where they remained until marching to Clarksville, Tennessee where they were on duty from December 25, 1862 until September 21, 1863. In August of 1863 George was detailed as a bridge builder by order of Col. Bruce. From November 1863 to February 1864 he was detached to guard woodchoppers on the Cumberland River and at Headly Bend, Tennessee under the order of General R. S. Granger. On the 28th of September George's regiment moved against Joe Wheeler's Tennessee raids and participated in sporadic engagements until the 30th of October 1863. At the conclusion of Wheeler's threat they moved to Nashville where they were to remain until April 26th, 1864 and then embarked for Tullahoma, Tennessee where they guarded the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad until June 6, 1864. On June 6th George and his regiment were ordered to cross the Cumberland Mountains to do outpost duty

on the Tennessee River between Stevenson and Decatur, Alabama and remained there until September 1, 1864. The 15th of September again saw them on the move to Decatur where they patrolled the Tennessee and Alabama Railroad. On the 24th of September 1864, George's regiment, under the command of Col. Lathrop, was engaged in combat at Sulphur Creek Trestle against the Confederate forces of General Nathan Bedford Forrest, about one mile east of Athens, Alabama with disastrous results: 10 killed, 11 wounded, and 169 captured, including George, who was listed as "missing in action" until December of 1864. His status then changed from "missing in action" to "prisoner of war" at Stevenson, Alabama. George and those captured with him were then transported from Stevenson to Cahaba Prison on the Alabama River near Selma, Alabama. On March 12, 1865 George was admitted to the hospital at Cahaba for ulcers.

The war ended on April 9, 1865 and George was exchanged on April 22nd. Exchanged prisoners were picked up at Andersonville, Georgia and Cahaba, Alabama and taken to Camp Fisk, Mississippi, located a short distance (about 6 miles) outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Part of the trip from Andersonville to Cahaba had to be made on foot. Many of the men were weak from disease and lack of food and could therefore not complete the arduous trek, dying along the way.

Those that made it were loaded on steamboats that would take them from Vicksburg home, via the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. One such boat was the Sultana.

The Sultana left New Orleans on Friday, April 21, 1865. It docked at Vicksburg for repairs and when it pulled away from the wharf there were over 2400 POW passengers on board. After stopping at Helena, Arkansas and Memphis, Tennessee the boat was again underway, leaving Memphis at 1 AM, Thursday, April 27th. At 2 AM, on the flooded Mississippi near what is now Marion, Arkansas, the boiler exploded and burst into flames. George and over 1800 people perished in this great disaster. George's body, as far as we know, was never recovered. Those who were are now buried in the Memphis National Cemetery, some in marked graves, but many as "unknown."

Gene Salecker, author of "Disaster on the Mississippi" states in a letter to me that nobody can be certain where George

slept while on the Sultana nor can we be certain how he died. However, the 102nd Ohio Infantry was one of the largest units on board the Sultana, having 108 men on her decks. Seventy-three soldiers from the 102nd died in the disaster. Mr. Salecker also stated in his letter, "In my eighteen years of research I have been able to accumulate accounts from eighteen of the thirty-seven survivors of the 102nd Infantry, including accounts from one soldier from Company F. (George's unit, which had eight men on the Sultana. Only two survived.) The one soldier from Co. F, George C. Anderson, wrote that he slept on the wide-open hurricane deck near the pilothouse with two comrades and was blown off the boat by the explosion." Anderson did not tell who his two comrades were. Mr. Salecker also states "it appears that the member of the 102nd Ohio Infantry were congregated in three specific areas of the Sultana. A large group slept on the stern of the hurricane deck (from Co's E, F, H and K). Clustered around the texas cabin and reaching all the way back to the stern." Now, from the above information, it may be safe to calculate that George Schepperle (Shepperly) slept with his fellow soldiers from the 102nd Infantry, and specifically those from Co. F. This would put him on the hurricane deck near the texas cabin. The blast of the exploding boilers tore a hole upward and to the rear, almost totally disintegrating the texas cabin. Soldiers sleeping on or near the texas cabin were catapulted into the air like rag dolls. Some landed in the water, some landed on the far stern, atop their sleeping comrades. Almost immediately a wild panic gripped the men on the aft part of the hurricane deck and the men began jumping into the water, pushing and shoving people who were in front of them until they tumbled overboard.

The side-wheeler burned for an hour and a half. When the survivors began drifting into Memphis, a half dozen smaller boats got up steam and searched for more survivors.

Although we cannot be certain if George was killed by the explosion or in the mad struggle of drowning men below the stern or died later, while floating down the river, we do know that he was never rescued and taken to a hospital. His body, like so many others, was never identified. George was only 25 years of age.

Since 1988 there has been an annual Sultana Reunion of descendants

and friends of people who were on the Sultana and it is held in April, usually on or near the anniversary date (April 27) of the disaster. My wife and I have attended reunions in Knoxville, Tennessee, Vicksburg, Mississippi, and recently (2003) in Memphis, Tennessee. In 2000 we also attended a Sultana historic plaque dedication in Marion, Arkansas, in front of the City Hall. Marion is the closest community to the site where the Sultana now lies about 30 feet below a farmer's field.

Another memorial was dedicated on Nov. 10, 2001 in Mansfield, Ohio with all the names of the 102nd Ohio Infantry soldiers who perished (including George Shepperly), engraved in stone. In Vicksburg a memorial was dedicated on the 15th day of April 2002, on the 137th anniversary of the Sultana disaster. The ceremony took place on the riverfront where the POWs boarded the Sultana. The City of Vicksburg is planning to make the surrounding area into a park.

At the most recent reunion, in Memphis, (April 25-26, 2003) we toured the Nation-

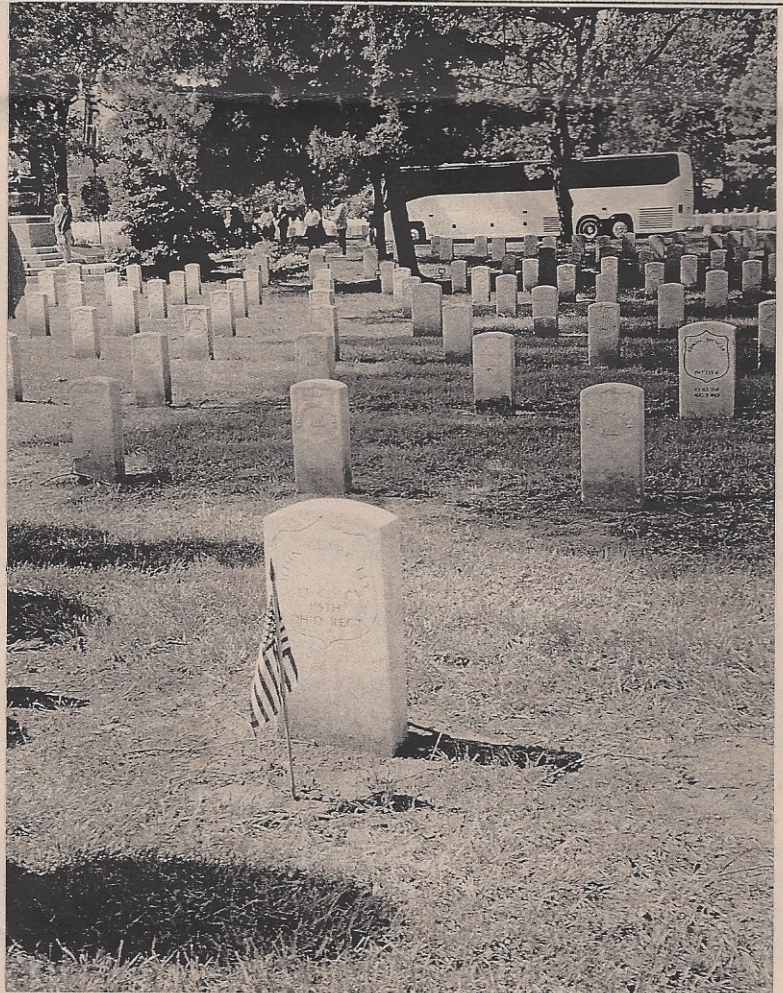
al Cemetery in Memphis for a memorial ceremony. Some of the soldiers which are buried here were victims of the Sultana disaster. The soldiers bodies that were recovered but never identified are also buried here with their gravestones marked "unknown." It is possible that George might be buried here.

The Schepperle family came to America looking for a better life. Little did they know, as they were leaving Plieningen, Wurtemberg, that in a few short years the strife that they left in Germany would re-surface here, and their new country would become a nation divided-- culminating in Civil War.

In conclusion, we know that George Schepperle gave the ultimate sacrifice for his adopted country, so that his family and all Americans could enjoy the freedoms that we still have today.

-Palmer William Nicholas Scheperle

(In 1867 George's family migrated westward to Cole County, Missouri by covered wagon in search of cheaper land.)



GRAVES OF SULTANA SOLDIERS AT THE NATIONAL CEMETERY IN MEMPHIS