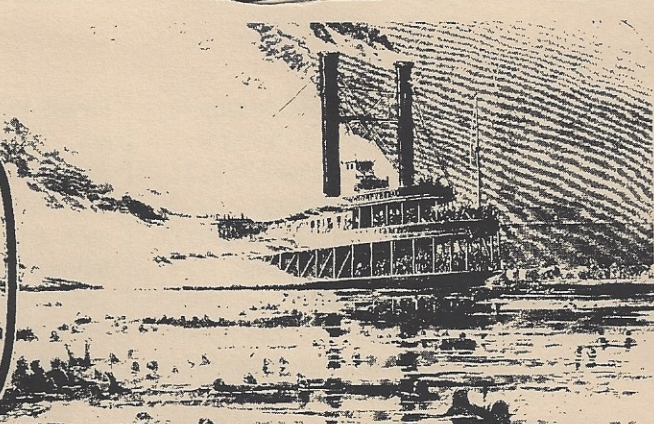


the SULTANA REMEMBERED



Newsletter of the Association of Sultana Descendants and Friends

April 27, 1865

FALL 2002

William Warner: Soldier, Sultana Survivor, Pioneer

William Warner was the father of Bob Warner, who attends our annual reunions. (This year, Bob's son, Craig Warner, and daughter, Gail Fitzgerald, also attended.) The following article appeared in the Wellington, Kansas newspaper a week after William died in May, 1933. He led an interesting life, and I thought subscribers would enjoy reading this. - Editor

" William Carter Warner was born in Cincinnati May 6, 1848. He was born in a settlement termed 'Across the Rhine', since it was a German settlement. When he was two and a half years old his mother died. His father moved to Fountaintown, Indiana, where he purchased a general merchandise store which he kept for a number of years. His father was a leader in the Methodist church, leading the Sunday school and the class meetings. Mr. Warner's grandfather Carter lived in Union City, Ohio, which was on the line between Ohio and Indiana. His grandfather and grandmother Carter had come from Jersey, the grandfather having married out of the church, since his father had been a Quaker. Taking their money which amounted to \$100 his Grandfather and Grandmother Carter had gone down to the Ohio River, made a raft and floated down to Cincinnati, spending the night on the raft.

When but a small boy Mr. Warner left home and went to Cincinnati where he met a boy who helped him to secure a job as 'cabin boy' on a tramp steamer which carried freight and passengers between Cincinnati and Pittsburg. He earned only \$11 per month but usually received fully as much in tips, since his task was to take care of the officer's quarters. The officers changed shifts at midnight and it was Mr. Warner's task to provide a lunch for them. He would gather together some of the choicest food served during the day: pies, cakes, and cold meats and get the coffee urn ready for their coffee.

The coffee urn was heated by a lamp.

He was called at four o'clock in the morning and it was his duty to clear the table of the lunch served the night before and polish the officers' boots and set the table downstairs. He also helped serve meals to the passengers.

The first boat he worked on was the *Robert B. Hamilton* and its captain was a Captain Bradley. Mrs. Bradley and their two children, a girl and a boy, often accompanied her husband on these trips. Both Captain and Mrs. Bradley become so fond of Mr. Warner that they offered to educate him and then see that he had a job on one of the boats if he wished when he finished school. Mr. Warner, who wished to travel and see the world, declined the offer.

The fare of the boats from Louisville to Cincinnati at this time was just the same as railroad fare and ones meals were included at that price. Mr. Warner served on a number of boats traveling between Louisville and Cincinnati and life on the river

"With other neighbors and friends, I was in the home at the time of (Mr. Warner's) passing, and with his many many friends, mourn the passing of a courtly gentleman, a kindly neighbor, and a trusted friend."

-Wellington, Kansas newspaper reporter

boats was a gay one. Every boat had a saloon and the bartenders wore loud clothes and flashing diamonds, the bigger the better. Dancing and poker playing went on all night and many were the passengers who lost considerable sums of money. Later Mr. Warner served on the *Melnot* which was one of the transport of 49 steamers and twelve gunboats carrying Unions soldiers and supplies. The boat traveled down the Ohio and up the Cumberland Rivers.

One of the thrills of Mr. Warner's life when but a small boy was when he had his first glimpse of the Erie Canal.

Mr. Warner enlisted in Company B, Ninth Regiment of the Indiana Cavalry October 24, 1863 (he was 15 years old) and served until his discharge July 12, 1865. He was first stationed at Camp Shanks for four months. The winter was a bitterly cold one and many of the soldiers froze to death.

They went by train to Madison, Indiana where they took a boat for Louisville. Here they were encamped for about a month and from Louisville went on horseback to Nashville. On their way down to Nashville they stopped at Bowling Green, Ky., and were given their first pay, which was \$13 per month plus a bounty of \$500 from the Federal Government for their enlistment. This five hundred dollars as well as most of his monthly pay during the war, he gave to his father.

After they left Bowling Green they crossed Rolling Fork River which was a hard river to ford. Their first night out was spent at a farmer's home. The soldiers carried away most of the farmer's food supplies. Meeting the soldiers at his door with a loaded gun, the farmer was going to shoot them but his wife and daughter dissuaded him

from doing so. Afterwards while they were in the neighborhood, then saw the house go up in flames. It probably had been set afire by Union soldiers.

There were now about 1000 men in the group, most of them on horseback. They made camp at Pulaski, Tenn., about ten miles from Nashville. A party of Hood's army of 50,000 men were going north after leaving Sherman who was going toward the sea, and were guarding Sulphur Trestle where there was a block house to help protect the railroad. Here the Northern soldiers dug earthworks and attacked the Southern soldiers. The Northern soldiers who were greatly outnumbered entrenched themselves in the earthworks and would shoot over the top. Mr. Warner said that every time a shell went over, he knows that he sank three feet in the ground. The Union soldiers ran out of ammunition. Their commanding officer was finally killed and Mr. Warner's commander ordered to surrender. About 600 of the 1000 men were left. Their horses were taken from them and they were marched on foot to Muscle Shoals where Hood's army crossed the river. They used pontoon boats for the crossing and about 15 to 20 men were taken across in each boat. They were then taken to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, by train. The Union soldiers were put into the open cars with the horses and it rained on them all night. They were taken to Meridian, Mississippi, and then to Selma, Alabama and from there had to march on foot ten miles to Cahaba Prison. Cahaba Prison proved to be a large cotton warehouse. It was of brick construction with only the earth for a floor. A high stockade of boards, 20 feet high, surrounded the warehouse. Here they spent six months in prison. Their only light at night was the fires built in the corners of the building on the floor - fires of pitch pine. Three feet around the building was what was known as the 'dead line.' Here the guards with their loaded muskets marched to and fro day and night and the men must not cross the deadline.

Outside the building was the cookyard within the high stockade. Here the men spent their time during the day and cooked their own food. The men were divided into groups of six and occasionally they could be given a pint of flour. Cow peas was their principal food and once in a great while they received fresh meat which was always raw. They longed most

for salt to season their food but seldom had any. Their cooking was done in dutch ovens and green wood was their only fuel. They policed their own organization in the cook yard and lots of stealing of other fellows' rations took place. Their days were spent in gambling. Some of the men had a little money which had been overlooked when they had been searched upon their entrance into the prison. Many were the clever ways in which they had hidden their money or valuables. A Sergeant Anderson had had considerable money so he had tucked his greenbacks around the legs of his pants and then carefully rolled up the legs to the top of his boots. Then he waded through the heaviest mud which dried and made a safe hiding place. 'Chuck-a-luck' was the principal game. Dice were thrown and much betting went on as to which numbers would come up. About three thousand men were confined in the prison at that time. At night they were brought into the warehouse and most of the men slept on the ground. Mr. Warner was very fortunate and was permitted to sleep in the officer's office on a sort of bunk. The men were kept busy each day fighting 'graybacks' (lice) which almost ate them up.



ROBERT WARNER,
son of William Warner.

Photo taken by Cherie Hagen (Sultana ancestor, Joseph Gage) at the 2001 Vicksburg Sultana Reunion.

Mr. Warner was a favorite with the Captain and he gave him a goose on Christmas for his dinner. In January 1865, some new men were brought into the prison and they brought news of the capture of Pensacola, Fla. by the Union soldiers.

At this time their "Trusty Sergeant" who was allowed to go out to the wharf to get their rations came back with the news that there was a supply of guns stored there. The prisoners conceived the idea of a break and it was planned to take about 100 men, capture the inside guards with their arms and make a getaway. The inside guards were taken and their guns secured. Among the prisoners was one mentally deficient man and when he saw the guards being captured he began to yell. The guards on top of the stockade gave the alarm and in a short time they had a regiment of men there and ran their artillery through the port holes. They demanded the immediate surrender of the men and their arms. They sent orders to bring them out or they would fire the artillery right down the center of the prison. The Union men told them if they fired a shot they would kill every guard they had captured. Finally one ringleader confessed in return for his freedom, and seven men were put to death and a number kept in such close confinement that they could not lie down.

There was a great deal of rain throughout February and the prison was on the bank of the Alabama River. Along the last of February the river rose till it covered the prison from one to four feet deep. The next morning about 1200 of the men were taken from the prison. Mr. Warner was not released for some time. Then, he, with others, was taken from Cahaba down the Alabama River to Mobile to an exchange of prisoners. The Union forces were still stationed at the entrance to Mobile. The men were taken up the Tombigbee River to Gainsville, Alabama to the end of a branch railroad. They were put aboard a train pulled by a tiny engine and taken to the main line where they were taken to Jackson, Mississippi and detrained. Here they crossed the Pearl River in pontoon boats. They were taken into the woods where they drew rations of nothing but corn meal. They built fires and cooked their food on the ground. They were taken on a fifty mile march to Black River and crossed the Black River into neutral

ground, 4 miles back of Vicksburg where an exchange of prisoners took place. In camp the men had a great time playing pranks. They were in camp here when Lee surrendered and when Lincoln was assassinated.

On April 25, 1865 they were ordered to the wharf at Vicksburg and put on the steamer *Sultana* which plied between New Orleans and St. Louis. At the time the Mississippi River was on a rampage. The steamer stopped at Memphis on the evening of April 26 about three o'clock to unload some freight and passengers. During the night the steamer started up the river. It had proceeded perhaps 8 or ten miles above Memphis when about two o'clock in the morning of April 27th, the steamer exploded and then burned. Mr. Warner and a friend named John Mooney were sleeping on the cabin deck out over the big wheel that propelled the steamer. They were both thrown into the river by the force of the explosion. Mr. Warner thought he was about a mile from the boat when he regained consciousness as he came up out of the water. He saw men everywhere on pieces of decking and he swam to some of them and climbed on a part of the wreckage. Many of the men were praying and everyone was frantic with fear. Seeing a lot of cattle swimming toward the wreckage, Mr. Warner felt they would probably be drowned, seized some floating boards and left the wreckage. The cattle swam under the wreckage and the other men went down.

His underwear was impeding his progress so he took off his drawers and wrapped them around the board to help him keep his hold. A stiff hat floated down the river and Mr. Warner put it on. When he was rescued by a steamer he had on only his undershirt and the stiff hat and was almost unconscious from the cold water.

He and two others were pulled aboard the boiler deck of a steamer, warmed, and given a pair of pants. They then took them to a hospital in Memphis where the survivors were given brandy and their dinner. Mr. Warner was looking out of a window in the dinner hall of the hospital when whom should he see going by but his old friend, John Mooney. He called to Mooney who left his soldier escort and ran in to embrace Mr. Warner. "Well, Warner," said Mooney, "we never expected to see you again." Mooney had had a similar experience and had swum

out. Of the 2300 on board the steamer, 1700 lives were lost.

After three days they were put aboard another steamer going to Cairo, Illinois. Here they were placed aboard a train which was to take them to Terrehaute, Indiana, and then to a detraining camp in Ohio. All through Illinois and Indiana they were met at train stations by men and women with great baskets of food and delicacies and everywhere the hotels and saloons were opened to them.

Mr. Warner and John Mooney hid in the baggage car of the train going to Indianapolis. Here they went to the home of a woman who reared John Mooney and she furnished them money to get home. Later, an army man secured Mr. Warner's discharge for him when he was convinced that Mr. Warner really had not known that he was deserting the army. Reaching home he found his father very ill but overjoyed that his son was safe and unharmed.

In 1872 Mr. Warner came to Cherryvale, Kansas, which was then the end of the Southern Kansas Railway. He first took a job as baggageman in Cherryvale. Later in 1874 he became baggageman and then brakeman for the Leavenworth, Lawrence and Galveston Railway. The railroad men termed it the "Lousy, Lazy, and Greasy." This railroad went into the hands of the receiver and the Kansas City, Ft. Scott and Gulf took it over. He then took a leave of absence and went east where he was employed as baggageman, brakeman, and conductor on the Chicago and Grand Trunk Railway, which ran between Battle Creek and Lansing, Michigan. In those days whiskey was shipped in barrels on coal cars and the railroad men never had to buy any whiskey, as they would drive a nail in the barrel and get themselves a jug full.

Mr. Warner then came back to Kansas and worked for the Southern Kansas out the Ottawa. The division point was moved to Chanute and Mr. Warner went to Chanute, serving under J. L. Barnes, superintendent, who had also been superintendent when he worked on the L. L. & G. Mr. Warner was transferred to San Marcial, New Mexico, where he was conductor on the A.T. & S.F. in 1882 and 1883, leaving there in February 1883. In those days men would board the train armed with six shooters and many times would refuse to pay their fare. Sometimes Mr. Warner would be able to talk them

into paying, sometimes he could not and had to take dreadful abuse from them. He never lost his composure and oftentimes would get their money because of his gentlemanly demeanor toward them. In those days the lights used were kerosene and they had no air brakes. As time went on Mr. Warner returned to Wellington where the Southern Kansas connected with the S. T. & S. F. The Santa Fe continued building west and Mr. Warner became a conductor on a freight train, later being promoted to the passenger service.

Mr. Warner had many letters from high officials of roads for which he worked showing that he had the respect and good will of not only the officials of the road and other railroad men but of the general public as well. During the years that Mr. Warner traveled over the country and he traveled extensively, visiting almost every state in the union and Old Mexico and Canada, he seldom had to buy a railroad ticket. The officials of the road gave letters of recommendation and introduction to the officials of other roads and these served as passes.

When Mr. Warner left the Santa Fe he bought a fruit farm near Grand Junction, Colorado, and operated it for several years. He sold this farm and came back to Wellington in 1904.

During the time he has been railroading here he bought a farm about four miles southeast of town and put out a large orchard, which was known as the McCloud Farm. On his return from Colorado he came to this farm where he spent several years.

On April 11, 1910, he was united in marriage to Miss Jessie Barnes of this city. To this union were born two children, William and Robert. William has just completed his sophomore year at the Kansas State Agricultural college at Manhattan and Robert has completed his sophomore year at the local high school.

Mr. Warner was acting as commander of the James Shield Post No. 208, G.A.R. at the time of his death on May 18, 1933. Since his May 6th birthday came on Saturday that year, the regular meeting day of the Post, the W.R.C. ladies planned a birthday surprise at the City Hall in his honor. A huge birthday cake was a part of the refreshments served preceding a program planned in his honor and a lovely plant was given him. He was the recipient of many birthday remembrances and expressed the desire that he might live for

another birthday. He was busy making plans for the coming Decoration Day where he was to have been the guest of honor.

Twelve days later, at 8:30 o'clock, Mr. Warner passed away at his home. He was active until within a few days of his death.

He was happiest when working in his garden or his strawberry patch and his greatest delight was in sharing with his neighbors his choicest vegetables and berries.

He was a great reader and enjoyed keeping up with the times. He was especially interested in affairs of the government. My neighbor and friend for many years, I consider it rare privilege that to me in entrusted this data for publication two months before his death, recounting to me his experiences. With other neighbors and friends, I was in the home at the time of his passing and with his many, many friends mourn the passing of a courtly gentleman, a kindly neighbor, and a trusted friend."

Spotlight on: "The Whiskey Chute"

From *Disaster on the Mississippi*, by Gene E. Salecker: "At 7 PM PM on April 26 (1865)... the *Sultana* nosed up to the Memphis levee. Although soldiers had been warned not to leave the boat, Pvt. Walter G. Porter (Co. C, 18th Michigan Infantry) recalled, 'The moment the boat touched the wharf...the boys began to jump off.' Porter had to admit, 'I went with the rest..' Guards tried to stop the men, but a large number managed to slip through their grasp... Shortly before 11:00 PM Captain Mason gave the signal to ring the steamer's bell to call the soldiers who had gone into town back to the boat. Afraid of missing their ride to 'God's Country,' many had already returned, but others seemed intent on waiting until the last minute. Among these was a tall, gangly Tennessean who had wandered into one of the many saloons in Memphis and was rip-roaring drunk. (Jerry Potter, in his *The Sultana Tragedy*, states that this may have been Pvt. Richard M. Pierce, Co. D, 3rd Tennessee Cavalry). Shouting and cursing, the man was escorted back

to the *Sultana* by the guards of the 58th Ohio Infantry who had gone into town to hasten along the stragglers. The inebriated man managed to stumble his way up to the overcrowded hurricane deck..." (He would survive the *Sultana* disaster.)

Many of these soldiers had found the "Whiskey Chute."

"The first street identified with the raucous and rowdy nineteenth and early twentieth century Memphis reputation as a wide open city was really little more than an alley: 'Whiskey Chute' was the name given to the shortcut passageway extending from Main to Front Street between Court and Madison. Within this one block enclave was a string of saloons. Today this alley in the heart of downtown Memphis bears the very respectable name, Park Lane." (from *Cotton Row to Beale Street* by Robert A. Sagafoos)

The "Whiskey Chute" /Park Lane alley is still in use in Memphis. It is close to the Mississippi River and runs east/west between Madison and Court Streets.. It will be one of our stops on our Memphis tour during our 2003 annual Sultana Reunion in Memphis. (See Reunion info, next page.)

Memphis and its Role in the Civil War

From "Memphis Historic Preservation Plan, Vol. 1" (Memphis Landmarks Commission, 1997): "On the eve of the War, Memphis seemed to be essentially pro-Union because of its economic ties with the upper Mississippi area. Yet, when war began, Memphis voted soundly for secession.

By the end of 1861, Major General Gideon Pillow had made Memphis headquarters for the Army of Tennessee. The city enthusiastically followed and supported the war effort. And when Confederate forces won at the First Battle of Bull Run, Memphians renamed the easternmost road within the city "Manassas"

In early 1862, after the fall of Nashville to Union troops, Governor Isham Harris convened the Tennessee legislature in Memphis from February

20th to March 20th in a building located at the corner of Second and Madison. As Memphis seemed increasingly vulnerable, the legislature was moved again to Murfreesboro.

The Confederates had originally believed that no major fortification of the city was required. This proved false, when in the spring of 1862, Union troops took control of the Mississippi both to the north and south of Memphis, making a battle for Memphis inevitable.

The Battle of Memphis, which lasted only ninety minutes, took place on June 6th of 1862 and resulted in the defeat of the Confederate river vessels and the occupation of Memphis for the rest of the war. Because the battle was short and conducted on the Mississippi there was little physical harm to the city. In fact, the city was virtually unscathed physically throughout the War, although the Union troops requisitioned many buildings for their use.

It is believed that a number of existing building were used by the Union troops for housing or hospitals. In the Spring of 1863 thirteen buildings contained Union hospital facilities. However, compared to most occupied cities, relatively few Memphis buildings were taken for use by the Union forces. One of these which was, however, was the Hunt-Phelan House at 533 Beale Street (another stop on our Reunion tour. This house, known then as the 'Soldiers Home', was the place where lightly injured *Sultana* disaster victims were taken.)

Built in the 1830s and remodeled in 1855, the house had close associations with the Civil War. Jefferson Davis stayed in the home both before and after the War. The home served as General Leonidas Polk's headquarters while he organized the Provisional Army of Tennessee. It is purported to have served as General Ulysses S. Grant's headquarters while he planned the campaign on Vicksburg in 1862. In February of 1863 the house was converted to a Soldiers' Home for convalescing soldiers. It remained a convalescent home until the end of the War. The property also is the site of Freedman's Bureau School. Parts of the original school remain to this day, although in great disrepair.

While Union forces controlled the City they reconstructed Fort Pickering with earthen works from Chickasaw Mounds to Vance Avenue. However, little evidence remains of this use. The mounds were used as gun emplacements during the War to defend the Mississippi River. The area now

known as Ashburn Park was the citadel for the fort. Evidence suggests that the Mounds were not used for gun powder storage as tradition holds.

The following are other sites associated with the Civil War: The Memphis National Cemetery, originally called the Mississippi River National Cemetery, was founded for the burial of Union soldiers who died in battles along the Mississippi. The cemetery contains 8,8676 unknown Union soldiers. Both the Memphis National Cemetery and Elmwood Cemetery contain remains of victims of the steamer *Sultana*. The *Sultana's* boiler exploded just north of Memphis while carrying soldiers released from Confederate prison camps. Elmwood Cemetery also contains the remains of many Civil War veterans and individuals who died as a result of the War.

Three parks are associated with memorials to the Civil War. These include the Jefferson Davis Park, Confederate Park, and Forrest Park (named for General Nathan Bedford Forrest). General Forrest lived in Memphis both before and after the War. He was one of the most influential slave traders before the war and one of the most successful generals during the war. He & his wife are buried in Forrest Park.

Notes from Norman

Sultana Reunion in 2003 to be Held in Memphis!

Plans are coming together quite nicely for our next annual reunion in Memphis, TN, for Friday and Saturday, April 26 & 27, 2003. Author and attorney Jerry Potter, who lives and works in Memphis, is our front man for making necessary arrangements. Pam and I are assisting by sharing ideas and assignments.

The Memphis reunion will be similar to last year's great Vicksburg event. Check-in will be during the day on Friday and display tables will be set up. One additional feature will be an evening gathering when author Gene Salecker will make a presentation on the conspiracy element that contributed to the *Sultana* explosion. Jerry and Gene will then field any and all questions from the audience

concerning the *Sultana* story. There may be other happenings as well.

Saturday will be an eventful day! The morning, and maybe part of the afternoon, will be spent touring by bus the *Sultana* sights in Memphis and neighboring Arkansas. The conclusion should prove to be an emotional time as we walk to the *Sultana's* final resting place in a field near Marion, AR (if the river doesn't rise, says Jerry). If you have one, refer to the Aug., 2000 issue of the *Blue and Gray Magazine* for some of the sites we will see on the tour such as the remnant of Ft. Pickering, the National Cemetery, Forrest Park, the cobblestoned wharf, and the monument at Elmwood Cemetery.

If the details can be worked out and the cost is not excessive, we may be eating our Saturday evening meal, followed by the customary annual program, on board the Memphis Queen steamboat! If this is not possible, there could still be the option of touring the Mississippi River by steamboat Friday afternoon and then have Saturday's dinner and program at the hotel.

Keep in mind that Memphis, my home state's largest city, makes a great destination for an extended weekend! Easily accessible by an international airport and two interstates, I-40 and I-55, Memphis is home of the Blues (Beale Street) and Rock and Roll (Elvis Presley's Graceland Mansion). You will also find variety in dining, especially BBQ. For our history minded group, there are many sites to visit

including the Miss. River Museum at Mud Island, the Peabody Place Museum, the Gibson guitar shop, The National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel where Martin Luther King was killed, and many more. Call the Memphis Convention & Visitors Bureau (1-800-873-6282) for an excellent, free visitor's guide.

More details about costs, lodging, and registration will be given in the next newsletter. Plan on joining us for a two day historical adventure!

Regarding the proposed mural of the *Sultana* to be painted on the floodwall in downtown Vicksburg, very near where the *Sultana* took on her cargo of soldiers, I received a letter from Nellie Caldwell, Chairman of the Riverfront Mural Project dated April 30, 2002. (Nellie had presented this idea at our Reunion banquet in Vicksburg, and asked for donations from our group. Everyone responded generously.) Her letter reads, in part:

"What a wonderful surprise to get a call Saturday night from Lamar Roberts telling me that we now have \$601.85 in the fund for the *Sultana* mural. I did not expect that so soon but I am truly appreciative.

"It was such an honor for me to be with all of you Saturday and to be able to tell you about our plans for the floodwall. We are so excited about the events that will be portrayed and the impact it will have on our children and grandchildren. We will be anxious for all of you to come back in the near future to see the *Sultana* mural...."

-NORMAN SHAW

