



HARDSCRABBLE

Newsletter of Ulysses S. Grant Camp #68, St. Louis, MO



Vol. 2015, Issue #3 – September 2015

Commander's Corner



Greetings fellow SUVCW members: Well it seems summer is over. Schools open again. There's still time to find things to do before cold weather gets here. Go visit the Civil War Museum at Jefferson Barracks.

They have interesting things to see and a continuous movie about 45 minutes long on the Civil War in Missouri. And they have fudge at the souvenir shop! Very good place to visit. Worth the 7 dollars. And if you haven't been, try to attend a Civil War reenactment as there are still several left on the schedule this year. Check Turner's Brigade web site for listings. Get and stay involved with history!

Bob Aubuchon
Commander

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Editor's Note....

The Grant Camp has had an active summer, beginning with the observance of Memorial Day at Jefferson Barracks and ending at the National Encampment in Richmond. A lot of good things going on. Hope you enjoy!

John Palmer
Senior Vice Commander & Editor

Grant Camp "Keeps Green the Memory" on Memorial Day at Jefferson Barracks



On May 25, members of the Grant Camp gathered at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery to participate in Memorial Day activities. Prior to the main program coordinated by the Inter-Veterans Memorial Day Committee, Camp members in uniform marched in the procession to the old flag circle where the main program was held. Sadly, the procession that frequently stretched across a major portion of the cemetery was now down to six organizations....a potential sign of the times.

At the conclusion of the main program, a follow-on program was held in the "Old Post" sections of the cemetery to commemorate the earliest Memorial Day programs held at Jefferson Barracks....programs that included participation from both Union and Confederate Civil War veterans.

Members of U.S. Grant Camp #68 and William T. Sherman Camp #65 of the SUVCW and Sterling Price Camp #145 of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, teamed up to honor the 12,000 Union and over 1,000 Confederate

veterans buried there. In the Union section, Grant Camp Commander Bob Aubuchon coordinated a program that included a historical overview by PCinC Don Palmer, a reading by PCC Joe Difani, Jr., musket and artillery salutes, and playing of Taps. A similar program was conducted in the Confederate section by Sterling Price Camp members Jim England and Ray Cobb. The Civil War-focused program was well attended by visitors to the cemetery.



Artillery Salute on Memorial Day at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery

150
YEAR
MISSOURI
CIVIL WAR
SESQUICENTENNIAL

The Sultana Disaster: Was There a St. Louis Connection?

On April 27, 1865, the worst maritime disaster in United States history occurred on the Mississippi River approximately 300 miles south of St. Louis. The side-wheel steamboat SS *Sultana*, carrying over 2000 former prisoners of war, exploded and burned on the Mississippi River, killing over 1700 passengers. The official cause of the disaster was a boiler explosion that ignited the mostly wooden ship, but like most tragedies, there were also conspiracy theories. But one question comes to mind...was there a St. Louis connection to this tragedy?

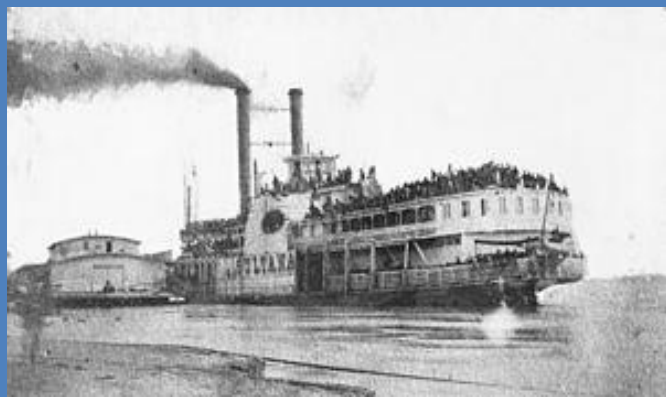
There are two obvious answers to this question. First, the *Sultana* was constructed in 1863 and intended to support the lower Mississippi cotton trade. For two years, she ran a regular route between St. Louis and New Orleans. Second, her commander, Captain J. Cass Mason, was a resident of St. Louis. But were there other connections? Before we attempt to answer, we need to first look at all the facts.

On April 21, 1865, the *Sultana* left New Orleans with 75 to 100 cabin passengers, deck passengers, and a small amount of livestock. About an hour south of Vicksburg, one of the *Sultana's* four boilers sprang a leak. Under reduced pressure, the steamboat limped into Vicksburg to get the boiler repaired and to pick up a load of prisoners of war that were held in Confederate prison camps at Cahaba (near Selma, AL) and Andersonville (in SW Georgia).

While at Vicksburg, Mason was approached by Lt. Col. Reuben Hatch, the chief quartermaster at Vicksburg. Hatch had a deal for Mason. The U.S. government would pay \$5 per enlisted man and \$10 per officer to any steamboat captain that would take a group north. Knowing that Mason was in need of money, Hatch suggested that if he could guarantee Mason a full load of about 1,400 prisoners, Mason would guarantee to give Hatch a kickback. Hoping to walk away with a pocketful of cash, Mason quickly agreed to the offered bribe.

While the paroled prisoners, primarily from the states of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia, were brought from the parole camp to the *Sultana*, a mechanic was brought down to work on the leaky boiler. Although the mechanic wanted to cut out and replace a ruptured seam, Mason knew that such a job would take a few days and cost him his precious load of

prisoners. By the time the repairs would be completed, the prisoners would have been sent home on other boats. Instead, Mason and his chief engineer, Nathan Wintringer, convinced the mechanic to make temporary repairs, hammering back the bulged boiler plate and riveting a patch of lesser thickness over the seam. Instead of taking two or three days, the temporary repair took only one. During her time in port, and while the repair was being made, the *Sultana* took on the paroled prisoners. Although Hatch had suggested that Mason might get as many as 1,400 released Union prisoners, a mix-up with the parole camp books and suspicion of bribery from other steamboat captains, caused the Union officer in charge of the loading, Captain George Williams, to place every man at the parole camp on board the *Sultana*. Although the *Sultana* had a legal capacity of only 376, by the time she backed away from Vicksburg on the night of April 24, 1865, she was severely overcrowded with more than 2,100 paroled prisoners. Many of the men had been weakened by their incarceration in the Confederate prison camps and associated illnesses. The men were packed into every available space, and the overflow was so severe that in some places, the decks began to creak and sag and had to be supported with heavy wooden beams.



Only Known Photo of the SS *Sultana* Overloaded with Passengers the Day Before the Tragedy

At approximately 2:00 a.m. on April 27, 1865, when the *Sultana* was just seven miles north of Memphis, her boilers suddenly exploded. First one boiler exploded, followed a split second later by two more. The cause of the explosion was too much pressure and low water in the boilers.



The Sultana Disaster: Was There a St. Louis Connection?

There was reason to believe allowable working steam pressure was exceeded in an attempt to overcome the spring river current. The enormous explosion flung some of the passengers on deck into the water, and destroyed a large section of the boat. The forward part of the upper decks collapsed into the exposed furnace boxes which soon caught fire and turned the remaining superstructure into an inferno.

Passengers who survived the initial explosion had to risk their lives in the icy spring runoff of the Mississippi or burn with the boat. Many died of drowning or hypothermia. Some survivors were plucked from the tops of semi-submerged trees along the Arkansas shore. Bodies of victims continued to be found downriver for months, some as far as Vicksburg. Many bodies were never recovered. *Sultana's* officers, including Captain Mason, were among those who perished.

About 700 survivors, many with horrible burns, were transported to hospitals in Memphis. Up to 200 of them died later from burns or exposure. Newspaper accounts indicate that the people of Memphis had sympathy for the victims despite the fact that they had recently been enemies.



The SS Sultana Engulfed in Flames as Depicted on the Cover of Harpers Weekly

In spite of the enormity of the disaster, no one was ever held accountable. Capt. Frederick Speed, a Union officer who sent the 2,100 paroled prisoners into Vicksburg from the parole camp, was charged with grossly overcrowding the *Sultana* and found guilty. However, the guilty verdict was overturned by the judge advocate general of the

army on grounds that Speed had been at the parole camp all day and had never placed one single soldier on board the *Sultana*. Captain Williams, who had placed the men on board, was a regular army officer and graduate of West Point, so the military refused to go after one of their own. And Colonel Hatch, who had concocted a bribe with Captain Mason to crowd as many men as possible on the *Sultana*, had quickly quit the service and was no longer accountable to a military court. In the end, no one was ever held accountable for the greatest maritime disaster in United States history.



Sultana Memorial in Knoxville, TN

Now, back to the question about additional connections to St. Louis. In 1888, a St. Louis resident named William Streetor claimed that his former business partner, Robert Loudon, made a death bed confession of having sabotaged *Sultana* using a "coal torpedo". Loudon, a former Confederate agent and saboteur who operated in and around St. Louis, had the opportunity and motive to attack it and may have had access to the means. Loudon was said to be the primary messenger for delivering messages from Sterling Price to Confederate regulars and bushwhackers. He was involved with the sinking of several Union steamboats in St. Louis. Loudon died of yellow fever in New Orleans in 1867.

A series of articles were published in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat between April 23 and May 6, 1888 that provided details on Streetor's explanations, including Loudon's alleged deathbed confession. Supporting Loudon's claim are eyewitness reports that a piece of artillery shell was observed in the wreckage. Loudon's claim is controversial, however, and most scholars support the official explanation. The location of the explosion, from the top rear of the boilers, far away from the fireboxes, tends to indicate that Loudon's claim of sabotage was pure bravado.



State Capitol Hosts 2015 Missouri Department Encampment

The 20th annual Missouri Department Encampment (since the Department was re-chartered in 1996) was held on June 6 at the State Capitol in Jefferson City. A total of 19 brothers representing seven Missouri Camps were in attendance.

As far as key business, there was significant discussion on the Department by-laws, specifically as it related to membership and awards. It had been several years since the by-laws underwent a detailed review. Since no changes can be made outside a Department Encampment, it was suggested that the By-Laws Committee compile a list of proposed changes no later than the March business meeting such that camps have ample time to review the proposals and the proposed changes meet the 30-day advance notice. One recommendation made to the By-Laws committee was to remove all sections that relate to awards criteria as this information is better suited for a policy.

Several resolutions were brought forward for the Department to consider:

- Resolution from the Westport Camp tasking the National organization to establish a process for supplemental applications for additional qualifying ancestors (similar to a process used by the Sons of the American Revolution). This resolution was previously passed by the Department, but for some reason, was never sent to the National organization for action.
- Resolution from the Grant Camp to allow a Past Commander-in-Chief in good standing to maintain this title if he transfers from one Department to another. This would require a change to the regulations, which required the resolution be submitted at least 30 days in advance of the National Encampment.
- Resolution from the Grant Camp tasking the National organization to sponsor a display at the National Genealogical Society annual convention.
- Resolution from the Grant Camp supporting the nomination of PDC Bob Petrovic for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

Motions were made in support of these resolutions and all four motions were passed by vote of the Encampment.

These resolutions now adopted by the Department of Missouri will be forwarded to the National organization for consideration of the National Encampment.

A number of Department awards were presented by Department Commander Glen Alsop. The following were awarded to the Grant Camp and/or a member of the Grant Camp:

- Grant Camp #68 was presented with the James B. Eads award for outstanding Camp. The Grant Camp was one of two Camps to receive this award. Camp Commander Bob Aubuchon received the award on behalf of the Camp.
- Grant Camp member PDC Bob Petrovic was presented with the Department Meritorious Service award for his 30 years of service to the SUVCW in Missouri.



Department Commander Glen Alsop Presenting Awards to (L) PDC Bob Petrovic and (R) Bob Aubuchon

As a last order of business, elections for the 2015-2016 administrative year were held. Grant Camp member Marty Aubuchon was elected Department Commander. This will be his second term as he previously served as Department Commander during the 2012-2013 administrative year.



PDC Marty Aubuchon Being Installed as Department Commander by PCinC Ed Krieser



Highlights of the 134th National Encampment in Richmond, VA

The 134th National Encampment of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War was held from August 20-23 in Richmond, VA. This historically significant site reflected the 150th anniversary of the fall of Richmond and the eventual surrender at Appomattox. This was the second time in five years that the National Encampment was held in Virginia. In 2011, the Encampment was held in Reston, VA, near the location of the Bull Run battlefield, to reflect the 150th anniversary of the first major battle of the Civil War.



The Missouri Delegation – (L to R) Grant Camp members Marty Aubuchon, Walt Busch, Bob Petrovic, John Palmer, Don Palmer, Lincoln Camp #1 member Ed Krieser and Westport Camp #64 member Dale Crandall

The Encampment kicked off on Thursday, with optional tours of battlefields in the Richmond area, including Gaines Mill and Cold Harbor battlefields, as well as Petersburg National Battlefield. The pre-Encampment Council of Administration meeting was held Thursday night and was attended by several Grant Camp members.

On Friday, the formal events of the Encampment kicked off with the Memorial Service and Joint Opening. The unique aspect of this National Encampment was that this was the first Encampment in many years that was did not include the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic. Given this situation, the Memorial Service and Joint Opening were held together.

All-day business meetings were held on Friday and Saturday, with several actions of note for the Grant Camp and the Department of Missouri. Two resolutions brought forward by the Grant Camp and passed by the

Department of Missouri were presented to the National Encampment. These included:

- Resolution to allow a Past Commander-in-Chief in good standing to maintain this title if he transfers from one Department to another. This would require a change to the regulations, which required the resolution be submitted at least 30 days in advance of the Encampment.
- Resolution for the National organization to sponsor a display at the National Genealogical Society annual convention.

Motions were made in support of these resolutions and were passed by vote of the Encampment.

One major issue that was raised by National Treasurer Richard Orr was related to the status of the SUVCW application for conversion to 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service. He pointed out that only about 5% of SUVCW revenue can be considered “charitable”, which is viewed as a negative by the IRS. PCinC Orr presented several approaches to increase the charitable content, but he was pessimistic about that being enough to make a difference. PCinC Don Palmer noted that only about 40% of the Memorial Grant funds were expended for their intended purpose. He made a motion for the National Treasurer to take unexpended Memorial Grant funds each year and donate them to the National Park Service for battlefield preservation. This action would add some significant funds to the charitable column. After several amendments to the motion, it was passed by vote of the Encampment.

As the last order of business, elections were held and PDC Gene Mortorff from the Department of the Chesapeake was elected as the next Commander-in-Chief. Sadly, PDC and Grant Camp member Bob Petrovic lost out on his bid for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief to PDC Mark Day from the Department of Chesapeake.

The Allied Orders banquet was held on Saturday night, but due to work, school, etc., most of the Grant Camp members attending the Encampment chose to depart Richmond after business had concluded due to a desire to avoid having to make the 13-hour drive back in one day. But it was still an enjoyable weekend of fraternity and fellowship.



Grant Camp Takes Center Stage at Grant Remembrance Program at USGNHS

The annual Grant Remembrance program was held at Ulysses S, Grant National Historic Site on July 25. The Grant Camp has been instrumental in conducting this program over the past five years. The remembrance ceremony kicked off the program, with James Egbert serving as Master of Ceremonies, a historical overview presented by PCinC Don Palmer, the wreath laying presented by Commander Bob Aubuchon, invocation and benediction from Camp Chaplain Fr. Vincent Heier and taps played by Marc Garcia.

The feature program was presented by our own Fr. Heier entitled, "U.S. Grant: As Hollywood Has Portrayed Him". His program focused on the various actors and how they presented Grant in feature films and television series. These roles included his times as commander of Union forces during the Civil War and as President of the United States. There have been many books published on Grant and many different perspectives presented, but Grant's portrayal in movies and television was not as well known. The program was well attended by the general public.

On a sad note, the Grant Camp bid farewell to Arlene Jackson, who was leaving St. Louis for a new assignment at Colorado National Park. Arlene has served as interpretation lead at USGNHS for a number of years and has been a good friend of the Grant Camp. We wish her the best of luck in Colorado!



Members of the SUVCW with Arlene Jackson at Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site



U.S. Grant Camp #68 2015 Officers

- Commander – Bob Aubuchon
- Senior Vice Commander – John Palmer
- Junior Vice Commander – Mike Hudson
- Secretary/Treasurer – Walter Busch
- Council - Bob Amsler
- Council - John Avery
- Council - Bob Petrovic
- Patriotic Instructor - Martin Aubuchon
- Chaplain - Fr. Vincent Heier

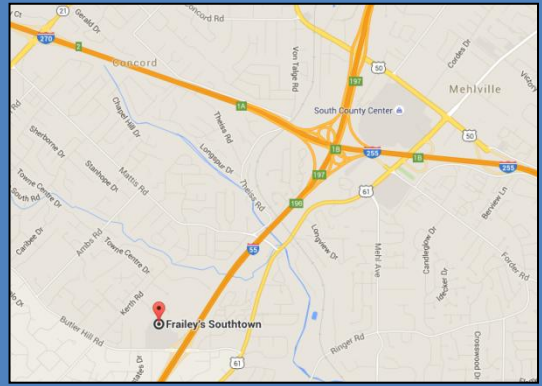
Membership Inquiries?

Please contact Junior Vice Commander Mike Hudson at HUDSON0268@yahoo.com.



U.S. Grant Camp #68 Meeting Information

- Meeting Dates: 2nd Monday of each month (no meeting in August)
- Meeting Time: 7:00 pm (many members gather for dinner prior to meeting at 6:00 pm)
- Meeting Location: Frailey's Southtown Grill
4329 Butler Hill Rd.
St. Louis, MO



Upcoming Events....

- Sep 14– Camp Meeting at Frailey’s Grill
- Oct 3 – Allied Orders of the GAR Central Region Conference at Dundee, MI
- Oct 12– Camp Meeting at Frailey’s Grill
- Oct 24 – Missouri Department Meeting at Jefferson City.
- Nov 9 – Camp Meeting at Frailey’s Grill
- Nov 11 – Veteran’s Day
- Nov 21 – Remembrance Day Parade/Events at Gettysburg Nat’l Military Park
- Dec 8 – Grant Camp Christmas Party at Greenbriar Hills Country Club
- Dec 12 – Wreaths Across America at Jefferson Barracks Nat’l Cemetery



Sons of Veterans Reserve Activities



Ninety years after his death, the military headstone for Pvt. Horace B. Locke, Sr. was dedicated. On June 13, 2015, members of the 4th. Military District, SVR, and SUVCW

Camps from eastern Missouri, as well as members of the local Masonic Order, conducted G.A.R. and Masonic Memorial Services at Valhalla Cemetery, St. Louis, MO. Services were under the direction of PDC John Avery, member of Co. A, 2nd Missouri Infantry, SVR and U.S. Grant Camp #68, SUVCW.

Pvt. Locke was born in Little Fort (Waukegan), IL, December 26, 1846 and died June 19, 1925. He was inducted into Co, I, 33 Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry on September 14, 1862, in Kenosha, WI, and served until September 1, 1865. He was also a member of Ransom Post 131, G.A.R., which met at the Jefferson Memorial Building in Forest Park, St. Louis, MO. In attendance, among other family members, was Pvt. Locke's Great Grandson, James Locke Lyon, who serves as Commander, Department of Illinois, SUVCW.



News from the Auxiliary

Julia Dent Grant Auxiliary #68, St. Louis, MO



PAP Cher Petrovic represented the Julia Dent Grant Auxiliary at the National Encampment in Richmond, VA. Although Missouri does not have an Auxiliary Department, the Julia Dent Grant Auxiliary is an Auxiliary-at-Large and can be represented at the National Encampment.

As was reported before, Sister Petrovic was appointed as National Supply Officer by National President Rachelle Campbell. She reported that sales during her partial year as Supply Officer exceeded those obtained by any other Supply Officer in recent memory. Great job!

A first at this National Encampment was the presentation of the inaugural “snowball shirt” presented to Sister Campbell.

The snowball shirt, a white polo with the Past National President’s badge, was developed by Sister Petrovic to provide the outgoing National President with a token of appreciation for their term in office. The Department of Missouri SUVCW frequently presents the “twinkie shirt”, a yellow polo shirt with the Past Commander-in-Chief’s badge, to the outgoing Commander-in-Chief. Sister Petrovic thought it was about time that the ladies had something comparable!

Elections were also held for new National Officers and Linda Kronberg from Michigan was elected as the new National President. Needless to say, given her excellent work, Sister Petrovic was re-appointed as National Supply Officer!