

men waited in the flooded prison.

At the time for departure, many were in such deplorable and weakening stages of disease, sickness, injury and malnutrition, they had to be assisted by comrades of lesser misfortune, to board.

It was noted that the camp commander at Cahaba, Captain H.A.M. **Henderson**, was a fair man with humane qualities which was more than could be said for the commander at Andersonville. Also, unlike Andersonville, Cahaba's death rate was unusually low.

The soldiers were crowded into every nook and cranny of the boat with barely a place for each to sit down and the homeward trip was begun on April 21, 1865.

This overcrowding beyond intended capacity for this vessel was not necessary and could have been greatly lessened if they had agreed to share the passenger load with other steamers waiting in the port. The "Lady Gay" and the "Pauline Carroll" were two such steamers waiting to receive word if they would be receiving any of the overflow of the north bound soldiers. They were told that all passengers could fit on the Sultana and they would not be needed. It was reported that the captain of the Sultana had actually lost count of the number of people who boarded his boat, thinking it to be considerably less until the vessel was already underway.

In addition to the many soldiers, there were approximately one hundred civilians (which accounts for the women and children being involved), twenty-plus military guards and a large store of freight.

Included in the freight were 250 hogshead of sugar (each weighing over 1,200 pounds), 95 cases of wine, around 100 mules and horses left over from the war, and 100 hogs.

The state of mind of those on board was one of exhilaration and joy at the thought of going home to family and loved ones despite the crowded conditions. But this euphoric and safe feeling, which came from knowing the war had ended and they were homeward bound, would be swiftly and tragically ended on April 27th, just a few miles north of Memphis, Tennessee on the flooded Mississippi. The river, being at flood stage, was reportedly as much as four mile wide in places.

Due to the vast number of passengers and their eagerness to board the ship and began their trip, the authorities decided not to make out the muster rolls in advance as was customary. The decision that the rolls would be made out on board after the vessel had sailed, would be one of the primary factors causing the uncertainty and confusion in determining the exact number and names of those involved in the tragedy.

Prior to that fateful day on April 26th, 1865, a problem had been found with the