The Department of Tennessee of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVWC) held its 22nd Annual Encampment in Murfreesboro, TN, the location of the bloody 1862-1863 Battle of Stones River. Members of the Department, which includes Mississippi and Alabama, met on 4 March 2017 at the Heritage Center in downtown Murfreesboro.

Mark Day, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the SUVCW, attended the meeting representing the Commander-in-Chief, who could not attend because of other commitments on his schedule. Michael Downs, Department Commander for the past two years, presented a certificate to SVC-in-C Day in appreciation of his attendance and support of the Department. Day participated in a question and answer session answering a variety of questions regarding National SUVCW that had been solicited from the Department members prior to the Encampment.

During the meeting, Department Commander Downs presented Certificates of Commendation to Brothers Sam Gant and David McReynolds for their participation in the Central Regions Association meeting held in Franklin, TN in 2016. Both Brothers Gant and McReynolds gave educational presentations to those in attendance.

Recognition was also given to the Army of the Tennessee Camp No. 64 and its Camp Commander David DuBrucq for the great job they had done in hosting the 2017 Encampment.

Elections were held for Department officers for the year 2017-18. David McReynolds of the Major William McTeer Camp No. 39 in Maryville, TN, was elected Department Commander taking over from Michael Downs who served magnificently over the past two years. Elected Senior Vice Commander was Roger Tenney of the Fort Donelson Camp No. 62 based in Nashville. Junior Vice Commander will be Ben Jones of the Sultana Camp No. 1 based in Memphis. Secretary will be Michael Downs of the Maryville, TN based McTeer Camp No. 39. And the Treasurer will be Geoffrey Hintze of the Private Richard Taylor Camp No. 53 based in Huntsville, AL.

During the tenure of previous Command-
Downs, the Department received recognition nationally with two Grant Cups (2015 and 2016) for the greatest percentage increase in membership year to year. The McTeer Camp No. 39 of Maryville received in 2015 the Abraham Lincoln Commander-in-Chief’s Award as the most outstanding Camp in the SUVCW as well as the Horace Greeley Award for the most outstanding website. In 2016, the Sultana Camp No. 1 received the award for the most outstanding newsletter and Brother Doug Fidler of the McTeer Camp received the award as the most outstanding brother in the SUVCW. Tennessee is a very busy and active department for its size and geographic dispersion.

Brothers Michael Downs, David McReynolds, Doug Fidler and new Camp Commander Max Renfro represented the McTeer Camp No. 39 at the Department Encampment. With Brother Renfro attending, it gave him wonderful opportunities to interact with other Camp officers from throughout the Department. These interactions should prove beneficial as he takes the reins of the Camp for the 2016-2017 year.

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Camp Treasurer and Signals Officer David McReynolds has had a busy start to 2017 with 3 speaking engagements. This year, McReynolds has developed a program based on what was happening in East Tennessee prior to and immediately after secession in 1861.

First, he had a very enjoyable time speaking to his compatriots at the meeting of the Hiwassee Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) in Athens, TN on 6 Feb 2017.

Next, he spoke to the Lucinda Heatherly Detached Tent No. 20 of the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War (DUVCW) at Lenior City, TN on 18 March 2017.

Finally, he spoke to the McMinn County Historical Society in Athens, TN on Sunday, 2 April 2017.
In early 1866 the United States of America — now securely one nation again — was waking to the reality of recovery from war, and this had been a much different war. In previous conflicts the care of the veteran warrior was the province of the family or the community. Soldiers then were friends, relatives and neighbors who went off to fight—until the next planting or harvest. It was a community adventure and their fighting unit had a community flavor.

By the end of the Civil War, units had become less homogeneous, men from different communities and even different states were forced together by the exigencies of battle where new friendships and lasting trust was forged. With the advances in the care and movement of the wounded, many who would have surely died in earlier wars returned home to be cared for by a community structure weary from a protracted war and now also faced with the needs of widows and orphans. Veterans needed jobs, including a whole new group of veterans—the colored soldier and his entire, newly freed, family. It was often more than the fragile fabric of communities could bear.

State and federal leaders from President Lincoln down had promised to care for “those who have borne the burden, his widows and orphans,” but they had little knowledge of how to accomplish the task. There was also little political pressure to see that the promises were kept.

But probably the most profound emotion was emptiness. Men who had lived together, fought together, foraged together and survived, had developed an unique bond that could not be broken. As time went by the memories of the filthy and vile environment of camp life began to be remembered less harshly and eventually fondly. The horror and gore of battle lifted with the smoke and smell of burnt black powder and was replaced with the personal rain of tears for the departed comrades. Friendships forged in battle survived the separation and the warriors missed the warmth of trusting companionship that had asked only total and absolute commitment.

With that as background, groups of men began joining together — first for camaraderie and then for political power. Emerging most powerful among the various organizations would be the Grand Army
of the Republic (GAR), which by 1890 would number 409,489 veterans of the “War of the Rebellion.”

Founded in Decatur, Illinois on April 6, 1866 by Benjamin F. Stephenson, membership was limited to honorably discharged veterans of the Union Army, Navy, Marine Corps or the Revenue Cutter Service who had served between April 12, 1861 and April 9, 1865. The community level organization was called a “Post” and each was numbered consecutively within each department. Most Posts also had a name and the rules for naming Posts included the requirement that the honored person be deceased and that no two Posts within the same Department could have the same name. The Departments generally consisted of the Posts within a state and, at the national level, the organization was operated by the elected “Commandery-in-Chief.”

Post Commanders were elected as were the Junior and Senior Vice Commanders and the members of Council. Each member was voted into membership using the Masonic system of casting black or white balls (except that more than one black ball was required to reject a candidate for membership). When a candidate was rejected, that rejection was reported to the Department which listed the rejection in general orders and those rejections were maintained in a “Black Book” at each Post meeting place. The meeting rituals and induction of members were similar to the Masonic rituals and have been handed down to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

The official body of the Department was the annual Encampment, which was presided over by the elected Department Commander, Senior and Junior Vice Commanders and the Council. Encampments were elaborate multi-day events which often included camping out, formal dinners and memorial events. In later years the Department Encampments were often held in conjunction with the Encampments of the Allied Orders, including Camps of the Sons of Veterans Reserve, which at the time were quasi-military in nature, often listed as a unit of the state militia or national guard.

National Encampments of the Grand Army of the Republic were presided over by a Commander-in-Chief who was elected in political events which rivaled national political party conventions. The Senior and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief as well as the National Council of Administration were also elected.

The GAR founded soldiers’ homes, was active in relief work and in pension legislation. Five members were elected President of the United States and, for a time, it was impossible to be nominated on the Republican ticket without the endorsement of the GAR voting block.

In 1868, Commander-in-Chief John A. Logan issued General Order No. 11 calling for all Departments and Posts to set aside the 30th of May as a day for remembering the sacrifices of fallen comrades, thereby beginning the celebration of Memorial Day.

With membership limited strictly to “veterans of the late unpleasantness,” the GAR encouraged the formation of Allied Orders to aid them in its various works. Numerous male organizations jostled for the backing of the GAR and the political battles became quite severe until the GAR finally endorsed the Sons of Veterans of the United States of America (later to become the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War) as its heir. A similar, but less protracted, battle took place between the Women’s Relief Corps (WRC) and the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic (LGAR) for the title “official auxiliary to the GAR.” That battle was won by the WRC, which is the only Allied Order open to women who do not have an hereditary ancestor who would have been eligible for the GAR. But in this case the LGAR retained its strength and was made one of the Allied Orders.

Coming along a bit later, the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, similar to the SUVCW but for women, also earned the designation as an Allied Order of the GAR. Rounding out the list of
Allied Orders is the Auxiliary to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, which is open to women with hereditary ties to a veteran or who is the spouse, sister or daughter of a member of the SUVCW.

The final Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic was held in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1949 and the last member, Albert Woolson, died in 1956 at the age of 109 years.

Source: http://www.suvcw.org/?page_id=167

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Above is a picture of the grave marker for Private Andrew J. Snow, probably the last surviving Union veteran in Loudon County. I see an opportunity for the Camp to do a very meaningful dedication for this grave and many more that our very active Graves Registration Officer has recently found.
Above is pictured Graves Registration Officer Richard Holmes (middle if you need him pointed out) with Jo Stakely (right) and Joy Locke (left) of the Monroe County Archives. Richard is presenting them with Certificates of Appreciation on behalf of our Major William A. McTeer Camp No. 30 of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. We also give Brother Holmes a big Huzzah for his continued hard work to honor and preserve the memory of veterans who fought to preserve the Union, 1861-1865.
If you are interested in the role President Lincoln played in the final days of the Civil War I have a very interesting book for you; Lincoln’s Greatest Journey – Sixteen Days that Changed a Presidency, March 24 – April 8, 1865 by Noah Andre Trudeau. The author is a well known Civil War historian who has written seven earlier books about the war focusing on the struggle that evolved between the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia. The book itself is very time specific in reviewing the longest period, sixteen days, that Lincoln was away from the White House. Initially the author contrasts the period of time that our sixteenth President was absent from the Capital to our more recent national leaders such as Dwight Eisenhower who spent 456 days outside of Washington, Lyndon Johnson 484 days and George W. Bush at 1,020 days on non-governmental trips. During this March-April trip Lincoln held meetings with Generals Grant, Sherman and Admiral Porter, visited Petersburg and Richmond and talked to hundreds of wounded Union soldiers at a military hospital while attempting to mediate a running feud between Mary Todd Lincoln and Julia Grant. Some vacation!!!

Abraham Lincoln, soon after his second inauguration, described his health to a friend as “very unwell” and in need of a get away from the terrible emotional pressure that he had endured during the first four years of his Presidency. Thus he decided to travel to City Point, Virginia, the military headquarters of Lieutenant General U. S. Grant and the Army of the Potomac. During his discussions with his top military leaders it became evident, that after almost four rough years of fighting, the war was finally near an end but what was still unknown to all was the question if the rebel forces would out right surrender or decide to continue their struggle utilizing a guerrilla style of warfare. It was decided that if the Southern forces did surrender that they should be “let up easy” while at the same time trying to insure that the South would accept the United States Constitution as their governing principle. Trudeau stresses that this meant that the former slave population would be recognized, by the Southern States, as citizens having full Constitutional rights which would later, also include, the right to vote. Lincoln was hoping for the final military victory to occur while he was on his tour of the frontlines but Robert E. Lee did not finally surrender his army to Northern forces until the President was back in the White House on April the 9th, 1865 and then, of course, he was killed six days later.

Also during this trip the President visited the Cockade City (Petersburg) soon after its fall to Union forces. This visit was led by Admiral Porter who, during the trip, began to worry about not having an adequate force to protect Lincoln during his tour into the very heart of
Rebeldom. For his second trip, this time to the Capital of the Confederacy, the Admiral made sure that the President had an escort of Naval Marines. The author did a great deal of research trying to separate the various myths concerning this trip especially examining the number of Blacks that came out to see Lincoln and what they said to him while also debunking the tale that he sat in the President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis’s chair at their White House. The President was very impressed with the destruction of Richmond and he quickly realized the need for some type of assistance to be able to rebuild the Capital of Virginia and the South overall. Trudeau also goes to great lengths in an attempt to separate what Admiral Porter actually did during Lincoln’s visit to City Point from what he later wrote in his history of this time period.

The chapter that I found most interesting was the story of Presidents Lincoln’s visit to one of the largest Union field infirmaries called the “Depot Field Hospital.” It was a triage facility composed of 735 tents supplemented by at least 90 log barracks in addition to support buildings such as kitchens, dining halls, laundries, dispensaries, staff quarters and offices. At the time of his visit there were between 5,000 and 6,000 wounded soldiers due to the casualties that occurred during the Rebel attack on Union Fort Stedman and then the drive to capture the Army of Northern Virginia. The President spent the entire day of Saturday, April 8, 1865 talking with every soldier in the hospital while shaking hands with as many as possible. The author does an excellent job of documenting this visit by finding letters written by these wounded soldiers and publishing several in the book.

This is probably one of the most original books that examines Civil War that I have read in a long time. It is a rather short read being only 261 pages long, with academic footnoting and includes an excellent bibliography. This isn’t to say that I did not find some troubling aspects of the author’s work. First, I found his writing to have the typical Eastern Theater bias so often seen in Civil War historians. Because most of their research has involved an examination of the battles fought between the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia they have come to believe that it was the most critical area of the war. Additionally Trudeau just could not help himself and writes on page four a very disparaging remark about Major General George H. Thomas, who fought primarily in the Western Theater and how he was merely sitting and wasting time in Nashville. Of course he had just destroyed the rebel Army of Tennessee at the Battles of Franklin and Nashville in December of 1864 while Grant was doing nothing in front of Richmond during the same time period. Also he talks about Sherman’s “hardscrabble youth” while I would not call living with and being raised by the Ewing family as being too deprived. Also on page 118 Trudeau writes about a meeting between Lincoln and Stanton which could not have happened when the President was visiting City Point. Actually the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, was holding the reins of power, rather firmly, back in Washington while Lincoln was in Virginia. However the Secretary of State, William Seward, was indeed at the same location as the President and the two of them were meeting with each other, specifically on March 31, 1865. And finally the author teases the reader about the General Governor Warren – Phillip Sheridan controversy during the Battle of Five Forks instead of examining the issues that arose between the two generals while the President was at City Point. However on a scale of ten I would rate Lincoln’s Greatest Journey as a nine for its original research and its contribution to our knowledge about the Civil War. Especially interesting is the author’s “Appendix One” where he details, chapter by chapter, what and where he had to travel to track down some of the new material he used, this included a trip to Winnipeg, Canada in an attempt to locate the letters of Dr. Anson Buck who was at City Point during Lincoln’s visit.

Lincoln’s Greatest Journey – Sixteen Days that Changed a Presidency, March 24 – April 8, 1865 was published by Savas Beatie of El Dorado Hills, California in 2016. And while I paid thirty-three Dollars for my book you are always welcome to borrow my copy, if it sounds interesting.
Dear Brothers,

Having recently attended the Department Encampment, I was able to talk with other members of Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi camps. One thing that stood out to me was our comparative membership level and camp involvement. I attribute this success to our monthly camp mess and quarterly meetings that was lacking in the other camps. Although our recent quarterly meeting was not very well attended, most have been and I understand that sometimes circumstances occur that prevent ones presence.

I would like to thank Jason and Alex McTeer for promoting SUVC W Camp #39 at the Tanasi program at Maryville College recently. Also I would like to acknowledge Richard Holmes’ continuing work with Civil War grave marking. These efforts help bring attention to our camp and our goals.

Our flags that we take to events are in a cardboard box that is in dire need of replacement. We are in need of a much more permanent container.

The Sultana Remembrance event will be April 30 and will be a topic for discussion at our April 11th camp mess. It’s an opportunity for everyone to get involved.

I look forward to everyone’s input on these subjects.

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty,

Max Renfro

Camp Commander
Above is the Sultana Memorial at the Mount Olive Baptist Church Cemetery. It was the first memorial to those who lost their lives in this tragic event—the greatest maritime disaster in United States history. More than 1,800 lost their lives with nearly 400 from Tennessee and many from the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry, the unit of Major William A. McTeer. We need everyone to come out and help us once again show our respect to these brave men who died in an unexpected way when they were on their way home on the steamboat Sultana after the war had been won. Let us all do our duty! Huzzah!!
2017 Calendar

The Major William A. McTeer Camp No. 39 is based in Maryville, Tennessee and serves a broad geographic area from Athens, Tennessee in the south to the Tri-Cities in the north, including the Knoxville metropolitan area. The camp holds a monthly Camp Mess meeting the second Tuesday of each month at the Calhoun's on the Creek Restaurant in Maryville. It also holds three quarterly educational meetings and an Annual Encampment, which are currently held at the East Tennessee History Center and Museum in Knoxville, Tennessee. All who are interested in Civil War history and honoring those who served to preserve the Union, whether they have a direct ancestor or not, are welcome to join. Information and an application to join may be found on the camp’s web site, www.mcteer39.org. The camp was honored to have received the 2014-2015 Abraham Lincoln Commander-in-Chief’s Award as the Most Outstanding Camp in the SUVCW.

Second Tuesday of Every Month -

Remember to come to our Camp Mess meetings that are held at Calhoun’s on the Creek Restaurant in Maryville, TN starting at 12:30 PM. We do most of our planning at these lunch meetings and they are a great opportunity to spend time together building upon the brotherhood of the order.

11 April       Camp Mess
22 April       Thompson Brown House Living History Day
30 April       Ceremony at Sultana Monument/Memorial
9 May          Camp Mess
29 May         Memorial Day Holiday – Knoxville National Cemetery
30 May (Tues.) Memorial Day – (Small) Ceremony at Grave of Will McTeer
13 June        Camp Mess
25 June        Quarterly Meeting
4 July         Independence Day
11 July        Camp Mess
23 July (Sun.) (Small) Ceremony at Grave of William Brownlow (Readmission Day)
Be sure and visit our Camp Website at www.mcteer39.org.

There is a page with a complete Calendar of Events that is updated regularly. Check back often for news of changes in time or place!

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<td>12 September</td>
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<td>Ceremony at new Veterans Memorial at Blount County Courthouse to honor all Blount County Civil Veterans</td>
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<td>10 October</td>
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<td>11 November</td>
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<td>14 November</td>
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<td>28 November (?)</td>
<td>Annual Encampment</td>
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<td>Maryville/Alcoa Jaycees Christmas Parade</td>
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How to Join the SUVCW

- It's easy to join the SUVCW. Hereditary membership is available to a male descendant over age 14 of a Union soldier, sailor, marine or member of the Revenue Cutter Service between 12 April 1861 and 9 April 1865. You may either be a direct descendent or descended from a brother or sister of the person who served.
- Associate membership is available to men who do not have the ancestry to qualify for hereditary membership.
- Junior hereditary or associate memberships are also available to males 6-14 years old.
- One option is to go to the national website (www.suvcw.org), click on the “Membership” tab and follow the directions to access and submit an application. Be sure to include your interest in our camp—Maj. Wm. A. McTeer Camp No. 39, Department of Tennessee.
- Or, you can go to our Camp Website, www.mcteer39.org, fill out a Camp Application, print it and follow the directions to submit it directly to our camp for rapid processing.
- Or you can message us on Facebook or just express your interest to any current SUVCW member. They will be glad to help you.
- Or, simply contact our Junior Vice Commander Doug Fidler at dkfidler@charter.net. This method is likely the most efficient and economical path to membership.