

STATE OF ARKANSAS

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

PROCLAMATION

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME – GREETINGS:

WHEREAS: The steamboat *Sultana* was one of the largest business steamers constructed when it launched from Litherbury Boatyard in Cincinnati, Ohio, in February 1863. With a capacity of 376 passengers plus crewmembers, the United States Army commandeered the *Sultana* for use as a transport vessel during the Civil War due to its size and efficiency; and

WHEREAS: The United States Army chartered the *Sultana* to transport over 2,200 passengers, including nearly 2,000 Union prisoners-of-war recently released from the Andersonville and Cahaba prison camps in Georgia and Alabama, back to the North along the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS: At 2:00 A.M. on April 27th, 1865, the *Sultana* exploded and sank north of Marion, Arkansas, in a massive conflagration of fire resulting in the deaths of nearly 1,200 known souls. The explosion was caused by the boat's weakened and inadequately repaired boilers working to overcome the current of the flooded Mississippi River and the weight of the severely overcrowded boat. This tragic event is now officially acknowledged as the greatest maritime disaster in United States history; and

WHEREAS: Citizens of Crittenden County, Arkansas, waded into the freezing water to help rescue many of the over 900 passengers who were taken to five Memphis-area hospitals and shelters. Many later died as a result of their injuries, burns, and exposure to the frigid floodwaters, while more than 100 others were completely unaccounted for. Through their heroic actions, selfless Arkansas citizens were credited for saving dozens of lives; and

WHEREAS: The catastrophic event received little public attention, as it occurred soon after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and less than three weeks after the end of the Civil War; and

WHEREAS: The remains of the *Sultana* and its lost souls rest today under the soil of Marion in Crittenden County, Arkansas. The lives and service of the soldiers, passengers, crew, and local citizens involved in the event are honored by a temporary exhibit of *Sultana* artifacts in Marion, Arkansas, with plans for a permanent *Sultana* Disaster Museum by 2021;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ASA HUTCHINSON, Governor of the State of Arkansas, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of the State of Arkansas, do hereby proclaim April 27th, 2019, as

SULTANA DISASTER REMEMBRANCE DAY

across the State, and I urge all citizens to recognize and remember the greatest maritime disaster in United States history.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Arkansas to be affixed this 1st day of April, in the year of our Lord 2019.



Asa Hutchinson, Governor

John Thurston, Secretary Of State