

SS General Lyon Dedication (IL)

U.S. Army Transport SS *General Lyon* (not to be confused with the USS *General Lyon*, a U.S Navy sidewheel steamer of the same era) was a screw steamer of 1026 tons built at East Haddam, Conn. in the spring of 1864 and chartered by the Federal government in March 1864. It was used as a troop transport on the eastern seaboard, taking part in the campaigns against Battery Wagner, the Bermuda Hundred and Fort Fisher.

Late in the war, *General Lyon* was extensively used by the US Army to carry Federal troops from Wilmington North Carolina to Fortress Monroe, Virginia and New York. On board when the vessel sailed from Wilmington on March 28, 1865 were a large number of discharged Union soldiers returning from the war, along with a number of paroled prisoners of war, approximately 120 refugees and other civilians.

On March 31, 1865, three days into the voyage, the ship hit rough weather off Cape Hatteras and a fire broke out in the engine room, quickly spreading through the ship. Of the passengers on board, approximately 500 lost their lives, including all but five members of a 205-man contingent of the US 56th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. There were only 29 survivors of the disaster in total, 28 of them named in the New York Times. Isaac Wilhite of the 56th Illinois also survived.

Dedication of memorials to lost members of the 56th Illinois to be held at the Golconda, IL courthouse.