

GIROD STREET LINE SACRED TO MEMORY.

It Has Seen Many Changes in the Old Thoroughfare,
 Passed Many Spots Where Local History Was Made,
 And Finally Retained Fame as the Sole Survivor
 of the Slow Mule System, Which Has Given Way to Rapid Electric Transit.

The last vestige of a bygone civilization, as far as street car service is concerned, has disappeared from the heart of the city, and no more can the stranger from other cities point the finger of scorn at the old, lumbering and exceedingly slow Girod street car and say, "New Orleans is twenty years behind the age."

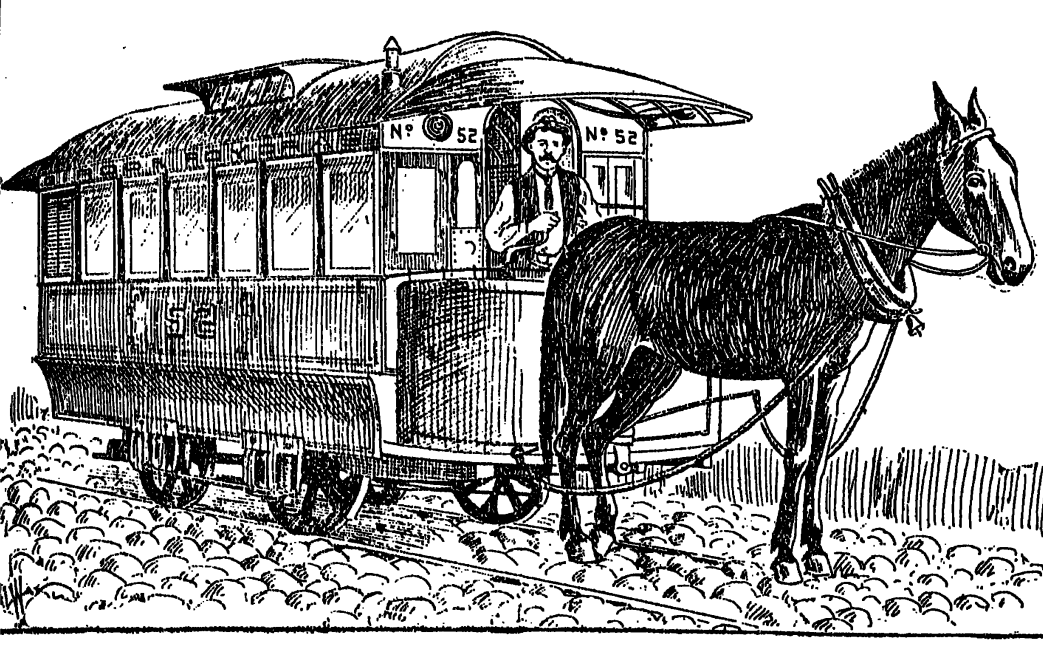
From the time that the first mule rumbled along the cobblestone pavement, rather than trotting over the rough surface, up to the time that the steam car of this line was relegated to the status of a relic, the Girod street line of cars has been the subject of every joke or every mean thing that could be said about an innocent and inoffensive street

innovation, as is also the large warehouse at the corner of Magazine street. From this point to St. Charles street, Girod street is perhaps better known to the public than any other portion of the street; but once upon a time, as the story-tellers say, Girod street, between Carondelet and St. Charles, enjoyed distinction of popularity. Then the Washington Artillery arsenal was on Girod street, Columbia 5, an old volunteer fire company occupied quarters there, and American 2, a hook and ladder company, also a volunteer company, had quarters adjoining.

The engine-house has been removed and the old arsenal, upon the walls of which can still be seen the crossed cannons and the piles of imitation cannon balls, has been converted into the more respectable tenancy of a steam laundry. Once it was a mineral water or "spa" factory, but this is no more in existence. From this point on to Carondelet street a row of quite handsome houses occupy and have long occupied the ground.

Once the building at the corner of Carondelet and Girod streets, on the downtown woods side, was police headquarters. It was during the metropolitan police times, when George L. Cain was superintendent. He was succeeded by General Badger. The building did not, however, answer the purposes of the police department and it was removed to Davidson court, which has since been demolished and is now the garden in the rear of Mr. Frank Howard's St. Charles street residence.

From Baronne street back on the uptown side is a row of little brick tenement houses, while on the downtown side are several neat dwelling houses. Back of Baronne street is the Shakspeare foundry, which has long existed there, and from thence on squallid tenements, occupied principally by negroes, are the rule. At the uptown woods side corner of Rampart and Girod streets, stands an old dilapidated-looking brick building, which, from time immemorial, has been used as a cooper shop. McDonogh Schoolhouse No. 13 occupies the opposite corner and is one and perhaps the principal improvement made



A RELIC OF SLOW TIME.

and the equally innocent and patient mule which drew it. The Girod street line of cars has performed its allotted mission, and is gone to return no more. The inhabitants of the old brick houses which line this street in front of Magazine street, as well as those who occupy the modern houses which border this street from Magazine back, will no more be greeted with the tinkling of the little wheels which adorned the harness of the street car mule. No more will they hear the "pop, pop," of the iron-shod feet of the patient animal. He is gone, and a great deal of fun used to be poked at the line of cars. For a long time past they had been neglected. The cars were dirty-looking and dirty, the mules were sleek, thin and the most melancholy-looking animals it is possible to conceive, while the drivers (those who had grown gray in the service) got into the soporific system of the line, and grew lazy to even get angry. A standing joke about the Girod street line of cars was that it was the most accommodating in the city. If the car met a loaded team coming in an opposite direction (they were always too slow to overhaul or pass a team), it was said that the car would get out of the way half the road; in other words, the car would move to one side and leave the rails so that the vehicle would go by. Another thing that was said about the line, too, was that the car could run as well over the cobblestone pavements as it could on the tracks; in fact the patrons of the road, all about half a dozen people, said that they had become so accustomed to jouncing over the rails that they really did not tell when the car was off the track or on unless they looked out of the door.

When the line was originally built it served some patronage, not enough to be millionaires but of the stockholders, sufficient to pay for the feed of the mules and the hire of the drivers. In late years, however, but few people called themselves of these means of getting the central portions of the city, and the line became neglected. Added to this was the cost of maintenance of the road. On Poydras street the traffic tended to keep the tracks in good shape, and it was by no means unusual circumstances to see a rail sticking across the line or off to one side. The loose rail did not obstruct the track, the fact that it was not in line but little difference to the driver, he kept right on, bouncing over the rails where the rail should have been, depending upon chance to strike the rail when it was encountered. The Girod street line could at best be considered a branch road, for it left the main stem at the intersection of Carondelet and Common streets. Then the car ran out Perdido to Carroll street, and a little street just one square back of Baronne street, up which street ran for its entire length one square Poydras, thence out to Delta and down to Canal street, where the terminal was located. Returning, the road ran up front street to Girod, thence out to Liberty, down to South Poydras street, Claiborne, to Common street, and out the barn at the corner of Rochambeau street.

Perhaps one reason why the Girod street line was not a financial success was the hurry and scurry which actuated the modern man and the up-to-date lady. We had time to wait until a car would come along—life was too short, and time precious.

But few improvements took place along the line of this line. True, some new things went up on Poydras street and the line saw the erection and demolition of the huge towers which were built up to carry the electric wires when some people thought that the electric wires did never work underground in this city, and some new buildings were erected on Poydras street, but Girod street is what it is now when the road was built, and from present indications will remain so for all time to come. No effort has ever been made to improve the street. Even when the line was first laid out that time an improvement and a step in the march of progress (Girod street maintained its botany and its life on and on, and is still sleeping. The Commercial Hotel, at the corner of Girod and Peters streets, stood there when the road was built, and many are still as well as merry, reminiscences which allusion to this old building brings forth. The old Commercial Hotel was a popular one time, and was the resort of the gold hunters from the El Dorado of California, or of those who were en route to that promised land. Latterly it was allowed to fall into disuse from lack of patronage and it was practically abandoned as a hotel. Then it was hired for balls and parties, and finally it was not even used for this purpose. It is on the line in its history Girod street is full of life and activity. The life of the lower order, dance halls, saloons and the like, and many is the best of blood that might be written if the leaves of the leaves of the street were the only drink sold, and generally occupying but one small ill-ventilated room with some lighted room were the business houses in the front portion of Girod street. Then even these were abandoned to a certain extent, and now they are very few and far between.

From Magazine street the sound of the hammer ringing on the anvil or of the workings of machinery may be heard, but these are comparatively a modern

upon Girod street since the old mule line of cars commenced to run. Just back of this schoolhouse is the scene of a crime, which resulted in a great uprising of the people and the execution of rather lynching of a number of Italians or Sicilians. The assassination of Chief of Police Hennessy is alluded to. To this day the three holes in the wooden walls of the little one-story house adjoining the corner of Basin and Girod streets can be seen. They were made by three of the many bullets contained in the charge which caused the death of the chief of police. He was walking past the door of this house when the assassin fired the first shot at the unsuspecting victim, and the three bullets formed a triangle not more than half an inch apart, struck the building and passed through the wall and almost killed the occupants of a bed standing in the room, the bullets passing through the footboard. It was the remaining bullets contained in that gun which struck the chief and caused his death. He fired back at his assassins, desperately wounded as he was, but failed to hit them. But on the opposite side of the street the marks of the bullets which he fired can be seen, one of them remaining imbedded in the door frame of a two-story house.

A little further out is the house that the chief, with his aged mother, occupied. From thence on to Liberty street there are no buildings of importance sufficient to warrant particular mention or notice on the part of the general public.

Then comes the Girod Street cemetery, the resting place of many, many people distinguished in their days, and otherwise. This was what originally was called the old "American Burying Ground." This cemetery was at one time the only place of interment above Canal street, and as this section of the city was originally settled by the Americans or foreign residents, such as Germans, Irish and other nationalities, other than French or Spanish, the cemetery was opened for the interment of people residing above Canal street. Latterly the cemetery has been relegated almost entirely to the colored people, except such white families as have tombs therein.

From the cemetery down to Poydras street, except the little shanty at the corner of Lafayette and Liberty streets, there are no buildings of interest. In the little shanty referred to was committed some ten or more years ago a most cruel murder. An aged woman, Bridget Derry by name, who had accumulated a little money, was choked to death and robbed, and to this day the murder has remained a mystery, although the present chief of police, D. S. Gaster, and C. C. Cain, both of whom were then detectives, arrested a noted crook named McGeehee, and charged him with the robbery; but it was not proven, and he was acquitted on that charge, although convicted on another.

Prior to the completion of the Mississippi Valley Railroad, cotton presses abounded in the section of the city between Liberty and Claiborne streets, on Poydras, and considerable business was done in that line in that section. The Girod and Poydras street line of cars was running while this business was in full blast, and derived some revenue from employees of the presses and persons having business with them. When the Mississippi Valley Railroad was built and the passenger, as well as the freight depot, were located in this locality, the road also received compensation for the loss of business occasioned by the discontinuance of the cotton presses in transporting passengers to and from the depot, but when the Illinois Central absorbed the Mississippi Valley Railroad even this business was taken away from the Girod street line, and the result was that one, or probably two, passengers per trip was about the average of the line. This was not sufficient to pay for grooming and watering the mules, and the company ran the cars for charity's sake, so to speak. The Girod street line had no "good days," except, perhaps, on All Saints' day, and then the traffic was confined to a very few people, who out of sheer curiosity visited the city of the dead.

Like those who lie in that cemetery, the Girod street line sleeps its last, long sleep, as far as mule-power goes, and it is not to be even dreamt of that an electric line will ever replace the old cars on this street. Only one line of mule cars survive within the limits of the city, and that is in the suburbs from Canal street to the City park and return, and this line only runs one car, more for form's sake than aught else, for unless one is an absolute cripple and cannot walk at all, he can more easily reach the park from the end of Canal street afoot than by means of this car.

No more will the joker or humorist poke fun at the Girod street line, for henceforth it will probably never be heard of except to be the pseudonym for all that is slow.

Girod street is in wretched condition, and the square from Dryades to Rampart street is flooded even when there is no rain.