

FIRST REGIMENT IN A NEW ARMORY,

Camping Last Night in the Girod
Street Arsenal,

From Which Louisiana Soldiers
Marched to Glorious Deeds

In the Days of Nearly Forty Years
Ago.

The Old Structure Modernized and
Made Into a Cosy Home for
the Volunteers.

It has been many years since the old Girod street armory echoed with the martial tread of armed men, their shouts and cheers and merry laughter. The old Girod street armory, erected for the Washington Artillery in 1858, after a varied career of commercial life extending over a score of years, is restored once more to the purpose for which it was built. The First Louisiana Regiment of Infantry, under command of Colonel George M. Hodgdon, took possession of the place yesterday evening.

There was general satisfaction all around. The men and officers of the regiment are proud of the command's new home, and even the old building seemed proud of the fact that it was to be occupied by the First Regiment, and seemed to take on new life. It is changed now. Few of the old soldiers who marched from its portals to fight under the stars and bars would recognize it. The cannon balls, the cross cannon and the head of Washington are still prominent on the building's face, just as they were forty-two years ago, but the interior of the building has been largely remodeled and thoroughly renovated. Despite the trials and tribulations of its commercial life, and the buffetings of the years as this concern moved in and that moved out, it still stands like a veteran, and even a laundry could not wash from its face the features which made it, at the time it was built, one of the finest militia armories in the country.

Strange it may be that from the old building soldiers marched to take part in one war and another generation of soldiers, true but not tried, marched back from a much different conflict and found the old building almost the same as it had been left by the men of 1860. The old Girod armory stands for an historical epoch, not only in the annals of New Orleans and Louisiana, but the nation as well. It was built in the troublous times of 1858, when already the grim war clouds were beginning to gather for the impending storm, which, when it broke, shook the nation from Maine to California, or, as would be said to-day, from Alaska to Porto Rico, and from New Jersey to the Philippines. But it was different then, and the boys who marched in last night returned two years ago from a successful war of acquisition, and those who marched out in '61 went to an unsuccessful war of dissolution, from which hardly half of the original number returned.

General Cottraux, Colonel Richardson and Major Isaacson, and many of the other Washington Artillery veterans remember the armory as it was in the old days. Major Isaacson, in fact, is the only surviving member of the committee which erected the building in 1858. Captain J. B. Walton was chairman of the committee, and it was composed of Lieutenant O. Voorhies, Lieutenant R. Banister, Sergeant H. M. Isaacson, Corporal Josh Ross and Private C. H. Slocomb. The building was built by Josh Peebles, on the plans drawn up by W. A. Fretet.

Captain Walton, as he was at the time the armory was built, commanded the Washington Artillery in the Mexican war, and served in the Ilo Grande campaign under General Taylor. After the war the Washington Artillery ceased to be a regimental organization, and Colonel Walton became Captain Walton, still the commander of the organization, which he was up to the time of his death in 1885. Lieutenant R. J. Banister was wounded in Williamsport, in 1864; he was captured, exchanged and drowned in the Mississippi river in 1864, while on a furlough. Private Slocomb rose to the grade of captain, was wounded at Shiloh and died some years ago.

While the Washington Artillery was in the service of the Confederacy, the Girod street arsenal was confiscated and passed into the hands of the city during the reconstruction period. The building was sold and the money realized passed into the city treasury during the administration of Mayor Flanders. When the command returned in 1865 the old home was gone and all attempts to regain possession of it were futile. Hope of ever regaining the place was finally given up and in 1880 the Washington Artillery purchased the present handsome arsenal on St. Charles street.

Since the organization of the First Infantry it has been quartered in a building on Baronne street which was found unsatisfactory and entirely too small to accommodate a thousand men. Colonel Hodgdon appointed a committee, composed of Lieutenant Colonel Harry A. Benners, chairman; Captain J. L. Madden, Captain A. J. Parody and Captain R. H. Le Blanc, to select a suitable location and report to the commander. The committee examined a number of buildings, but none were found which suited as well as the Girod street armory. Mr. Del Orto, the present owner, agreed to make such alterations in the building as would be necessary for its occupation by a military command, and for the last four weeks the carpenters have been busily employed. The big green doors with the iron arrows have been removed. The entire ground floor has been Schillingered, and other extensive repairs were made, including the erection of a bath apartment. The interior of the building was treated to a new coat of paint, and when the upholsterers and furnishers get through the armory will be one of the handsomest in the south. The big room down stairs will be used for drills and the upstairs hall can be utilized as a drillroom or a dance hall. A large room upstairs has been fitted up by the officers for their own use. A rear room will later be fitted up as a billiard, pool and card room, and a downstairs room will be used as the parlor for the men. A handsome new piano was installed in the room yesterday and some of the more talented members entertained their comrades with martial music and ragtime melodies.

The command assembled at the old armory on Baronne street and marched to their new home. Refreshments, pipes, tobacco and cigars were distributed liberally, and the men christened the new home with right hearty cheer.

The invited guests were received by the house committee and escorted to the officers' parlor. General John Glynn, Jr., was one of the first to arrive. Major Isaacson, Captain Allison Owen and Captain J. C. Rebigier, of the Washington Artillery, came in soon after. General E. P. Cottraux, Colonel E. C. Fenner and Colonel Vinet were also present and later in the evening Congressman R. C. Davey joined the group. Commander J. W. Bostick, of the Naval Battalion, came in later, and other officers dropped in as the evening advanced. It was a right merry crowd. Major Isaacson related some anecdotes of forty years ago, when his command occupied the building. Major Juste Fontaine disturbed the group with a proffer of two big boxes of cigars. He looked real formidable, though that is not the reason he is called Captain Dreyfous. He ran into Colonel Fenner first, and the colonel was impressed with the formidableness of the infantry major. Perhaps that was why he said, "Are you going to charge San Juan hill?" but Major Fontaine was ready. "No," was his reply; "we are going to charge Sandwich hill." And he was as good as his word.

Colonel Hodgdon and the officers of the First Regiment, as well as the members, are justly proud of their new armory, and all the visiting officers congratulated the colonel on the success of his new departure. But Colonel Hodgdon is not going to stop there. The acquisition of a handsome armory is but a step on the ladder which leads to success, and Colonel Hodgdon does not intend skipping a rung. Soon he will have a command which can compete with any in the country.