

Volunteer Fire Companies of Leading Citizens Famed for Heroism and Splendor

Lives Sacrificed Freely by Unpaid and Poorly Equipped Members of Clubs and Gala Parades Also Brought Out Their Supreme Efforts

By Ruth St. Cyr
 "Nearly every day there's a fire somewhere in New Orleans. Sometimes a cottage or maybe a manufacturing plant is left a charred ruin. But more times than can be imagined, trained, efficient officers of a daring vocation are promptly on hand with their modern machinery to smother the flames. That's the thrill of a fire today.
 But what of yesterday? What of the days when the call of fire sent a chill up and down everybody's spine, when the urge to rush to the scene was too great to be ignored, and when the "fire ladders" were none other than the leading citizens? Philanthropists in the broadest sense of the term, these men were who condescended themselves gladly to periods of arduous and dangerous labor, constant watchfulness and risk and all for not one cent of pay.
 Their struggles in combating one of the greatest enemies known to man is one of the interesting stories in the history of New Orleans.
Early Fires Disastrous
 For nearly 100 years after Bienville selected the site on which our city now stands, New Orleans had no organized fire protection. Even after several conflagrations, one which in 1788 destroyed 600 dwellings and public buildings with a loss of \$2,500,000, leaving 7000 persons homeless, and another six years later which swept away almost half of the city, only feeble attempts were made to combat fires.
 Citizens were ordered by the city authorities to "keep two fire buckets handy on the premises," and the unlucky citizens whose homes happened to catch on fire either helped put out the flames or did not get them put out with a few bucketfuls of water thrown on. Various methods ultimately were tried, and a few fire engines finally were purchased by the city with but little relief.
 However, in the spring of 1820, probably under the stimulus of the "vogue" of the volunteer firemen in other cities, with their hilarious joys and opportunities for heroism, death, and undoubtedly with the realization of the urgent need for adequate fire protection for their city, 24 gentlemen of courage and great public spirit formed themselves into Volunteer Fire Company No. 1.
Uniforms of Linen
 The original officers were: Henry Buckman, foreman; Hiram Houghton, assistant foreman; Lu Galen, treasurer; A. Hendrickson, secretary; S. Short, clerk. The motto, "We Jolly and Fear Not," was adopted and the uniforms were of duck linen. For many years the company was nicknamed "Cotton Press Company," because the New Orleans cotton press was the scene of the first meeting. The city council appropriated a small amount to this company, which, however, did not fully cover its expenditures. Individual members contributed materially to its maintenance, and in the minutes of the city council for 1830 there is a vote thanks to Henry Buckman for procuring and keeping in condition at his own expense the hand engine of Volunteer Company No. 1.
 Horse power was used to pull the engine, but because the company did not own a horse, a standing reward of \$2 was offered to the citizen who should ride the engine house first after the church tolled the bell announcing a fire and designated the destination by a series of single, double and triple taps.
 The company's first occasion for distinguished service was in 1830, when a fire broke out in a cotton press at the corner of St. Charles and Common streets, just opposite the St. Charles hotel. The record for the succeeding years was a very honorable one, and owing to the success of this first company, both in caring for the city's interests and in having a grand, glorious time, five more companies were formed.
Company Early on Job
 First among them was Mississippi No. 2, members of which were also among the most aristocratic and wealthy men in the city. Mississippi No. 2 had the honor of starting its fire before the company was formally organized in 1830. A conflagration at 1142½ street, such leading citizens as George Went, Myford McDougall, D. S. Woodruff and John L. Bever, hurried to the scene and the engine owned by Jeterick Leeds, father of Charles J. Leeds. Such effective service was rendered by the company with this comparatively primitive engine that it doubled its membership the following year and also came into possession of an engine of its own.
 Also in 1831, the company, in commemorative of their gallantry in action, the first trophies that were awarded to any company in the department. Two silver plaques were presented to the company by Captain Sam Walker in behalf of the owners of the steamer, Missisquoi, which the company preserved from destruction in 1828, and the Louisiana Fire Insurance Company presented the organization with a silver trumpet. In recognition of excellent service rendered at another fire.
 No longer had Mississippi organized when, like volunteer No. 1, it began the missionary work of starting other companies. Among these were the St. Charles No. 2, which was organized later under the name of Vigilant No. 2. The original records of the company were written entirely by its German.
Lively Contests Held
 Eagle No. 1 was organized in 1836 with 27 members. This company was noted largely for the fact that it was the victor in the many contests with which the firemen enjoyed their spare time. No. 7 earned its title of Eagle when it won the trophy offered by Mayor William Freest to the company whose engine could throw the highest stream of water over a stuffed eagle placed on a lofty pole. Eagle obtained this stuffed fowl, which occupied a prominent place in its engine house. Among the members of the company were G. H. Hall, Peter Connelly, A. D. Crossman, and T. M. Dowle. Eagle was noted for its fine horses, with which the firemen were as proud as any sportsman of the day. The company was won by Ducky Bob, who lived to a good old age and won many silver trophies for his company.
 Eagle No. 2 had among its mem-

bers Governor Lewis Alfred Wiliz. One company, Perseverance No. 13, found itself under the necessity of furnishing a wooden leg for one of the members. But when the wooden leg arrived it was learned that the member had "walked off without it." Another humorous incident of life in the volunteer fire department is shown in the records of Orleans No. 2. Monsieur Delbot, not being able to express himself in English at a meeting, was granted permission to use French. B. Faith objected, which excited Monsieur Delbot so much that he made use of an expression entirely out of order for which he was promptly fined \$100. This dollar "on the stomach" caused him to use another devilish expression, "fine, \$300 more!"
Ladder Companies Formed
 Hook and ladder companies soon sprang into existence, and among these was the American No. 2 which was quartered on Girod street, near Carondelet. Cuthbert H. Gloucomb, who was captain of the famous Washington Artillery Company No. 5, was a member of the company. As the city expanded, fifth, sixth and seventh district companies were formed, and all did their share in this unselfish work. Election to the volunteer companies was conducted similar to the acceptance for membership in an exclusive club. However, democracy was the predominant spirit.
 "Things did not always run so smoothly. There were opponents of the volunteers in the city council, who, knowing that they could rely on personal generosity of the wealthy to write off any deficits of the department, made the municipal appropriations to the volunteer department very small and were lax about paying them—at that. The councilmen meddled openly in affairs of the volunteers. An ordinance passed in 1855, providing for the payment of firemen for service, was so repellent to the men, who looked upon their work as a civic duty requiring no remuneration, that in November, 1855, the entire group of companies surrendered their engines and equipment to the mayor in Lafayette Square.
Apparatus Bought Back
 The city administration found itself in hot water, for quietly drafted hired firemen soon learned that more than donning a fireman's hat and calling oneself a fireman was needed to put out a fire. Many disastrous losses occurred. The following year the volunteers entered successfully into the bidding for the fire contract which the city let, and also bought back the apparatus which had turned over to the city. Thus the fire department passed into the hands of the volunteers entirely, and remained there for 30 years.
**Many disastrous fires occurred in these years, with inadequate equipment and lack of city water supply blamed in nearly every instance. In 1837 two fires occurred within a week of each other, which first destroyed two entire city squares, containing 109 dwellings. The other swept away 60 buildings. In 1840, the City Exchange on St. Louis street burned with a loss of \$1,000,000. In 1842, the St. Charles theater, which was one of the most extensive and famous playhouses in the country, burned to the ground. A fire in 1854 lasted nearly the whole day, and the loss to 20 or more commission merchants was \$1,200,000.
 One of the most tragic fires in the history of the department was in 1852, when several of the volunteer companies were returning from their annual outing. The boiler of the excursion steamer St. James exploded and many lives were lost. Among those who perished were John McLeary and Nicholas Reed, who tried to rescue the prized horse of Protection No. 1 that had been the center of attraction on the trip. Michel Boyie, foreman of the Mechanics No. 4, leaped into the Mississippi river to get relief from the burns which enveloped his body while fighting the fire, in which five large vessels burned to the water's edge.
Monuments Erected
 These and many other men are the martyrs to whom their comrades erected monuments in Cypress Grove Fireman's cemetery, No. 4, located in 1827. The first monument to be erected was in memory of Brad Perry, foreman of Mississippi No. 2, who lost his life at a fire in 1827.
 The newspapers assisted in getting contributions for the widow Fox, whose son and only support perished in the fire which destroyed the Van der Grinte. Among the many contributions were the students of a fashionable girls' school on Prytanis street, some of whom were Emma Christ, Gertrude Pike, Edith Labatt and Louis.**

Not always, of course, did the firemen finish their work saddened from the loss of a member or the hopeless attempt to extinguish a blaze. On many occasions they sang popular songs as they marched home, and the populace showed appreciation of their efforts by joining in the singing.
 The most important later event in the history of the volunteer fire companies was the organization in 1851 of the Firemen's Charitable Association. It was first formed to provide relief for the needy and for the families of deceased members, and this was its principal work for 20 years. But in the end, it became the fire department itself, and for a time a third of a century it administered the fire service of New Orleans as an independent body. With a board of directors to manage the internal affairs, a cemetery committee, a finance committee, a widow and orphan's committee, a general relief committee, together with a board of commissioners to manage the fire contract, the Firemen's Charitable Association was a model of activity as a great charity and also as a formal city department.
Marks Long President
 The president who for 36 consecutive years presided over the affairs of the association with dignity, foresight and skill was Isaac N. Marks, who also served for many years as grand marshal. Another prominent member who figured in the affairs of the association was Thomas O'Connor, who was chief engineer for 23 years. The association was incorporated on March 4, 1879, and its data for the annual firemen's pa-

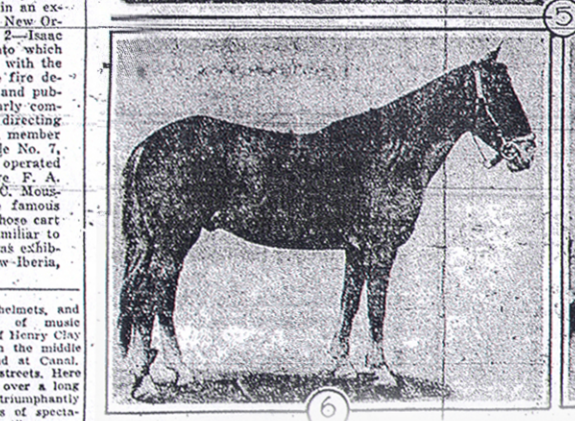
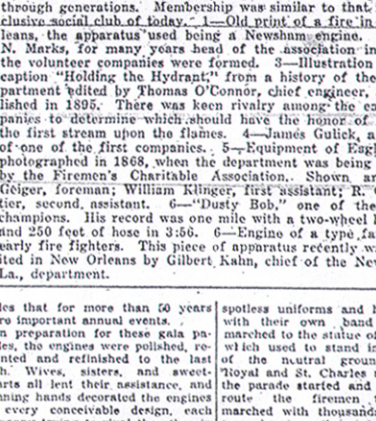
rades that for more than 60 years were important annual events. In preparation for these gala parades, the engines were polished, repainted and refinished to the last inch. Wives, sisters, and sweethearts all lent their assistance, and cunning hands decorated the engines in every conceivable design, each company trying to rival the other in gorgeousness and style. Wreaths of flowers, yards of ribbon, banners of silk and even clusters of ostrich plumes were used in the decorations. As many of the companies' trophies as could be found room for were placed on the engines, with a specially decorated seat reserved for the company's dog.
 Men drew the engines and the beautiful pet horses of each company were paraded wearing silken saddles and harness mounted with gold and silver. Brides wore of golden cord. Tails and manes were plaited with ribbons. Many of these "heroines" had proud records of which their companies boasted. And they undoubtedly sensed the importance of "making a good showing" as they catwalked to the music.
 Members of each company put on

spots uniforms and helmets, and with their own band of music marched to the statue of Henry Clay which used to stand in the middle of the neutral ground at Canal, Royal and St. Charles streets. Here the parade started and over a long route, the firemen triumphantly marched with thousands of spectators cheering them lustily every step of the way.
 Always somewhere near the front of the procession was "George," called around-useful George) the old-fashioned, fat, too, put on his best suit, and any medals that he could beg or borrow, and on this day he was undoubtedly the proudest and happiest negro in the whole South. George never missed a Fourth of March parade, and even years after the volunteer firemen disbanded in 1891, George went around and collected money from the merchants each year with which he hired a band, and with all of his medals and miscellaneous decorations paraded through the streets all by himself. George died parading on one Fourth of March. He had become too old to walk in his parade so he hired a band to

help the Community Chest to balance the home's budget.
 Cabbage, kohlrabi, beets, carrots and lettuce are flourishing under Mr. Waller's care in the early March sunshine, and he is busy preparing for later crops of okra, snap beans, sweet peppers, onions, shallots, and tomatoes. All these vegetables, he says, "come easy" from the fertile earth, but just now he is having to wage active warfare against the army of bugs that ordinarily the cold weather would have killed.
 Mr. Waller has been at the home three years and is its youngest resident. He has been a shoer, structural iron worker and merchant at various times of his life, but always has "done a little gardening." Seeing him busy with his hoe and rake, it is difficult to believe that he has only one leg. His artificial

member is the result of a 48-foot fall a quarter-century ago.
 "See those sweet peas? I've already had 1 don't know how many crops, and as you see there are dozens of other flowers in bloom. I often walk around the neighborhood and talk with the florist or the gardener in the park. I tell you, there's nothing like a garden to keep a man full of pep."
PROHIBITION COURSE GIVEN
 (By The Associated Press.)
 Delaware, Ohio, March 5.—So encouraging has been the response to offering a course in prohibition by the political science department of Ohio Wesleyan university that the course probably will be repeated next year, says Dr. Ben A. Arason, department head. Prominent wet and dry speakers appeared before the class.

When Helmet and Trumpet Were Symbols of Social Prestige in New Orleans



The volunteer fire companies protected lives and property here through generations. Membership was similar to that in an exclusive social club of today. 1—Old print of a fire in New Orleans, the apparatus used being a Newsham engine. 2—Isaac N. Marks, for many years head of the association into which the volunteer companies were formed. 3—Illustration with the caption "Holding the Hydrant" from a history of the fire department edited by Thomas O'Connor, chief engineer, and published in 1895. There was keen rivalry among the early companies to determine which should have the honor of directing the first stream upon the flames. 4—James Gulick, a member of one of the first companies. 5—Equipment of Eagle No. 7, photographed in 1868, when the department was being operated by the Firemen's Charitable Association. Shown are F. A. Geiger, foreman; William Klingler, first assistant; R. C. Moutier, second assistant. 6—"Dusty Bob," one of the famous champions. His record was one mile with a two-wheel hose cart and 250 feet of hose in 3:56. 7—Engine of a type familiar to early fire fighters. This piece of apparatus recently was exhibited in New Orleans by Gilbert Kahn, chief of the New-Iberia, La., department.

Contrast Roses With Cabbages

Respective merits of their rose and cabbage gardens were the subject of rivalry between William B. Wilson (left) and Martin Waller, who are, respectively, in charge of the flower garden and the vegetable patch at the Protestant Home for the Aged. Community Chest institution at 6919 Magazine street. When Mr. Wilson boasts of an unusual bloom, Mr. Waller retorts that flowers fill no dinner plates, as do his vegetables for virtually the whole year!

RIVAL GARDENERS IN HOME FOR AGED DISPLAY PROWESS

Tract of Less Than Acre Supplies Vegetables to 60 Persons

A plot of less than an acre that supplies fresh vegetables to 60-old men and women the year around. That's one of the assets counted by the Protestant Home for the Aged, thanks to Martin Waller.

Between this 67-year-old vegetable gardener and his roommate, 72-year-old William B. Wilson, there is much friendly rivalry. For Wilson is in charge of the home's flower garden, which is one of the showplaces of upper Magazine street. Visitors to the home these spring days are likely to be taken to task by Mr. Wilson to view the floral results of New Orleans' past "winterless" season.

"The gardeners at Audubon Park say it don't bear flowers, but look at this!" he will say proudly, pointing the leaves of a giant aspidistra to reveal a heavy blossom-laden spike. As he does so he casts a triumphant glance in the direction of Mr. Waller.

Vegetables Supply Home
 But it is Mr. Waller's turn to be proud as he points out the features of the small but efficient vegetable patch which, he says, supplies the home table all year round, except for a few weeks in August and September. A Goodert, the superintendent, or "house father," as the old people call him—nods a vigorous assent as he pays tribute to the way in which the vegetables

for himself. At the corner of Polynat street and St. Charles avenue one year, the white soul of George went on its final parade to a fireman's heaven.

Here's the Medicine We Swear By!

Famous French Formula is a Concentrated Food-Tonic

DUCRO'S ELIXIR
 Strengthens, Stimulates, Feeds the Nerves

Louisiana takes off her hat to Ducro's Elixir! If ever there was a friend to men who need vitality—and heaps of it—Ducro's is that friend.

Just as New Orleans stands out in the minds of the nation as a city in love, with life, so Ducro's stands out in the minds of thousands of energetic folks here, as the way to zestful, healthful living.

