

RETURN OF THE CARROLLTON STREETCAR

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NEW ORLEANS STREETCAR RESUMES ALL ROUTES First Opening of the Carrollton Avenue Tracks Since Hurricane Katrina

New Orleans, LA—The 170-year-old St. Charles streetcar is opening its last line on Carrollton Avenue on June 22, 2008, nearly 3 years since wind from Hurricane Katrina destroyed much of the city's power infrastructure for this oldest form of New Orleans mass transit. Neighborhoods for blocks along Carrollton Avenue from the Mississippi River toward City Park—one of the largest public parks in the country—plan to celebrate on June 28 for the official public opening of the line with banners, live music, and dignitaries as is the rich tradition of New Orleans culture.

The streetcar line was a primary source of public transportation for many on the Carrollton route, as it was in the early 1800s. The streetcar originally was a steam railroad connecting the City of Carrollton to New Orleans. With the city expanding between these two towns, the railroad evolved into a horse-drawn streetcar line. It became an electric trolley line in 1893. The cars running now were built in 1924 and are the last conventional trolleys in service. Celebrations begin at St. Charles and Carrollton avenues, and at streetcar stops at other popular streets that intersect Carrollton such as Oak and Willow. Other events are planned at the end of the line at Palmer Park on Claiborne Avenue, which will be having its popular monthly Saturday Art Market. Claiborne Avenue is named in honor of William C. C. Claiborne, the first United States governor of Louisiana.

The Carrollton area is situated approximately 6 miles up the Mississippi River from the original city of New Orleans and formed the westernmost edge of Bienville's 1719 land grant from the King of France. Initially part of Jefferson Parish, the city of Carrollton was incorporated in 1833 and was the parish seat from 1852 until 1874 when the city was annexed by New Orleans. The circa 1855 Jefferson Parish courthouse still stands on Carrollton Avenue near St. Charles Avenue. The first home in the Carrollton area was constructed in 1835 with additional development spurred on by railroad lines—the precursor to today's streetcar line—running into New Orleans and out to Lake Pontchartrain. Most of the historic structures were built from 1880 to 1937 as the original city spread northward to include former dairy farms, closing in on the New Basin Canal and the district near current Xavier University.

Carrollton has a heritage of mixed ethnicity with upper class New Orleanians building the first homes as country residences, followed by African-Americans and Irish and Italian immigrants as the area developed. Famous sons and daughters of the Carrollton area include Mahalia Jackson, Allen Toussaint, and Pulitzer Prize winning author John Kennedy Toole. Buddy Bolden regularly performed in Gert Town, and The House of the Rising Sun is reputed to have been located in the Black Pearl. The primary commercial districts stretch along the streetcar route from the Riverbend neighborhood where St. Charles Avenue meets Carrollton Avenue with eclectic shops and restaurants stretching off at Maple and Oak streets.

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