

St. Charles Streetcar

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the Free Tours by Foot audio tour of the St. Charles Avenue Streetcar. I'm Andrew, a guide with Free Tours by Foot and a regular user of the streetcar.

By taking this ride, you'll be leaving the historic heart of the city and making your way through areas built up in the 19th century, after this land became part of the United States. When the streetcar was new in 1835, it connected New Orleans with several other small cities, now neighborhoods, built gradually further up the Mississippi - so for the most part, as you ride, you'll be going forward in time.

If you'd like to go further back in time, our tours of the French Quarter, live or audio, can shed some light on the 18th century and the days when France and Spain were in charge.

Nowadays, the parts of town you'll be seeing are mostly more residential than the French Quarter, including some impressive mansions, but there's also lots to do on or near St. Charles by way of sightseeing, shopping, eating, and drinking.

So while you can do the whole tour in an hour more or less, depending on the time of day and the time of year, the ride alone just scratches the surface - you can easily make a day or a week of it, and I'll be providing some suggestions as to how. All the sights and businesses I'll mention are current as of 2019.

First, a few logistics. The tour covers the St Charles Avenue Streetcar line, which is the oldest of several in town. We'll have some guidance for getting on the streetcar at the end of this track. The tour is designed for the ride most visitors take - boarding the car on Canal Street at the edge of the French Quarter and riding it up through the downtown business district and the Garden District and to some scenic residential areas beyond there.

Specifically, we'll take you as far as Audubon Park and Tulane and Loyola Universities. That's only about half of the total route, but by that point, you've been through the most historic and scenic parts. We'll have some notes at the end of what you'll find if you go further along.

Once you've finished the ride, you have some choices about how to make the return trip. The streetcar doesn't go in a loop, so just riding it won't bring you back to the French Quarter - at the very least, you'd have to get off, switch tracks, and buy another ticket to go in the opposite direction. (The return route is slightly different at the end, so you would see a short stretch of new scenery.)

You could also return using the Magazine Street bus. Magazine is another uptown street, parallel to St. Charles, with a mix of residential and shopping and dining areas, and the bus that runs along it finishes at Canal Street, just a few blocks from where the St. Charles Streetcar starts. To get to Magazine at the end of the tour, you'd just walk through Audubon Park, the equivalent of a few blocks' distance through some beautiful greenery, and Magazine Street is right there on the opposite side.

Finally, if you want a fast trip back or if the weather presents a problem, it's easy to pick up a cab or rideshare from where the tour ends.

As far as fares - a single ride on the streetcar is \$1.25 for an adult, with various discounts available. It's paid onboard, so you don't have to get tickets in advance, and it's cash only. Exact change is a good idea - the only change you can get on the streetcar is a voucher, only redeemable on New Orleans public transit.

You can also ask the driver for a day pass, which is \$3 for an adult, and I highly recommend that option. The sightseeing is nice, but the point of the streetcar is to bring you places, and a day pass lets you step off, explore, and get back on as many times as you like within 24 hours. A day pass also works on the bus system, in case you liked the idea of using the Magazine bus.

For multi-day tickets, service disruptions, holiday operations, and a very approximate schedule of pickup times, confer with the local transit authority at www.norta.com or through the RTA GoMobile app, both linked in the description.

When you do decide to get off the streetcar, there's usually a stop available every other block, and you can pull the string above the seats or in some spots press a button to request a stop. The front doors open on their own, while the back door takes some pushing.

The tour is divided into sections based mostly on major cross-streets. All the cross-streets mentioned are at stoplights, and they're all stops for the streetcar too, so the name will be announced on the streetcar's audio system and written on the electronic screens. You can also use the map here in the app to know when you've reached the next section.

As far as how, where, and when to board - the beginning of the streetcar's route is at the intersection of Canal and Carondelet, at the edge of the French Quarter. (Carondelet is the street that becomes Bourbon Street when it enters the Quarter.) You can use the map in the app for reference.

At this spot, the St. Charles Streetcar briefly shares turf with the Canal Streetcar, so it can be a little confusing where to stand. The spot you want is on the sidewalk, not in the median of Canal Street, and the streetcar you want is green, not red. More often than not, there's a small crowd, maybe a big one, standing at the spot.

When the car stops, you'll have a minute to wait as all the downtown passengers get off - for them, this is the end of the line, so the car will empty out completely. Once they're off, you'll board from the front, pay or present your pass, and then find yourself a spot. Naturally, for sightseeing, the window seats are preferable, although neither side is better than the other.

The backs of the bench seats are also reversible, so if you're riding with a group, you can make the seats face each other. Bear in mind, the streetcar can get pretty crowded - that's one reason it's better to board at the start of the route, so you have the best chance of getting a seat. But timing can help too. A morning trip helps you avoid the biggest tourist demand, but tourists only make up about a quarter of the passengers, so you'll also want to avoid work commute hours.

Given all those other people on the streetcar, I strongly recommend listening to the tour with headphones once you board, both so you can hear and out of politeness to your fellow riders.

The next track is about Canal Street and some of the basic history of the streetcar and the part of the city it passes through, so it can be listened to in advance of your ride or while you're waiting for the streetcar to show up.

Canal Street

If you arrive on Canal Street coming from the French Quarter, it couldn't be much clearer that you've left one thing and reached another. After the narrow streets of the Quarter and its historic

buildings that cap out at three stories, Canal is one of the widest streets in the country and lined with tall hotels.

With a little squinting, you can picture what it was like as much as a century ago; for much of the 20th century, this was the city's main shopping area, and a few of the hotel buildings still have the logos of old department stores on top.

It's harder to picture what this was like at the start of the 19th century. Back then, when this land first became American, the French Quarter was more or less the whole city, and all you'd see of it from today's Canal Street was a diagonal wall with crumbling fortresses at either end, soon to be leveled. A few buildings had just popped up outside the wall in what's now the Central Business District, but other than that, someone coming this way was more likely to be going hunting than anything. For Americans, this was the frontier, and it looked like it.

New Orleans came into American hands through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The idea had been to buy just New Orleans from Napoleon, and that was the offer made by agents of then-President Thomas Jefferson.

At the time, most American goods were being transported down the Mississippi and through New Orleans, meaning the young country was relying on a foreign city as its main port.

Napoleon agreed to sell New Orleans if and only if the Americans would take all of Louisiana – which back then meant everything from the river to the Rocky Mountains. Much of that land became what is now thought of as the American frontier, known for armed conflict and aggressive treaties with Native Americans.

New Orleans was the urban frontier, and here the new American arrivals set up a different kind of battle lines with the old established Creole people of the French Quarter. And Canal Street was ground zero.

You can see the separation of cultures along Canal Street through one easy clue: the street names. If you look at the signs, you can see the names are different on each side. Carondelet, where the streetcar picks up, becomes Bourbon; St. Charles becomes Royal. Not only that, the addresses count upward going in opposite directions.

This is a vestige of a time when these neighborhoods were two separate cities. Americans tended to stand apart from the Creoles where they could, and so they built upriver from the French Quarter – first in what's now the Central Business District, back then called the Faubourg St. Marie, then in other towns further upstream, like today's Garden District.

In 1835, the streetcar came into existence to connect these cities, so a working man could live in a mansion a mile away and commute here to work. You'll be doing his commute home.

That said, you won't be experiencing much of what he did. His ride would have passed through stretches where nothing had been built, and his streetcar would have been pulled by a loud steam engine, or later by horses. All that's left of the 1835 streetcar is its route.

The cars you see on the St. Charles line today date to the 1920s and run quietly on electricity from the overhead cable. In the 20s, you could have taken streetcars through the French Quarter, or transferred from the St. Charles line to any number of intersecting lines; but in the decades after that, people were buying cars and public transit was trending toward buses, and the city tore down every line but this one.

Today, this line is a National Historic Landmark and the oldest continually operating streetcar line in the world.

The next track is for once you're on the streetcar and moving. For this portion, the important sights will be on the right.

Central Business District

The first neighborhood the streetcar rolls through is the Central Business District or CBD. It's much more a destination for business travelers than folks who are here for pleasure, and at a glance, it looks like a pretty typical American downtown – 1980s skyscrapers, Convention Center, Starbuck's, Brooks Brothers.

But these all work as monuments to the neighborhood's history. This was the first area where Americans came to live after the Louisiana Purchase, and they came here for opportunity. As the country's main port, New Orleans presented business opportunities in shipping, and there was also trade in the goods being shipped – sugar from the lower part of the river, cotton from further up. And these were labor-intensive crops, so the slave trade was also booming.

The classic picture of an American frontiersman is a working, maybe middle-class man, maybe single, maybe with a family, escaping the class constrictions of his home for the promise of a land grant from the US government to farm. Here, the new arrivals were often already well-off and looking to become more so. They had the resources and the will to transform this place suddenly, and sometimes it had jarring effects.

The first major permanent building constructed here was a theater, and to get to it, you'd hike on planks laid through the mud along a path lined with a super-modern gas lighting system. You'd arrive at a splendid Greek Revival building with nothing else in sight but a few warehouses and residences, still rural enough to hear the croaking of the alligators in the swamp nearby, and inside you'd hear a world-class opera company perform the latest from Europe.

One particular building to note – on the right, three blocks in, just past the intersection with Union Street, there's a building that says "United Fruit Company" on the front. The company isn't here anymore, but we'll come back to them and the New Orleans fruit industry later.

Not long after that, on the same side, is a huge white building, the corporate headquarters of Shell Oil.

Just past that is the first major intersection with Poydras Street. If you look right as you cross Poydras, you may glimpse the edge of the Louisiana Superdome, home of the New Orleans Saints football team.

The next track is meant to start as the streetcar is crossing Poydras. The main sight is on the right, but there'll be things to see on both sides.

Poydras

A block past Poydras, you'll come to Lafayette Square. On the left there'll be a park, and just beyond it the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals building; on the right, there'll be a Greek Revival building called Gallier Hall, which was New Orleans' City Hall for about a century starting in 1853.

Today, it's still the ceremonial city hall - Mardi Gras parades pass by this spot on their way down St. Charles, opposite the way the streetcar is going, and the leaders of the parade will pause here to raise a toast to the mayor.

As much as the name Lafayette Square jibes with our French-speaking background, it's named by early Americans, after the single Frenchman they loved most - the Marquis de Lafayette, who became a major backer of the American Revolution. Streets and squares and towns are named after him all across the US, many of them, including this one, renamed on the occasion of his long trip through the US in the 1820s, almost fifty years after the war he helped fight.

The other historical figures referenced here are also popular American heroes of the same era - the statue in the middle is of Henry Clay, known as a negotiator of compromises in some of the early conflicts between northern and southern states in the US, and the one on the far side is Benjamin Franklin, a thinker, inventor, diplomat, and otherwise early framer of and spokesman for the United States.

The whole square could pass for being in Washington DC, and that's because Americans came to New Orleans with a strong sense of national identity that they wanted to replicate. That meant statues of their heroes and government buildings that looked like Greek temples. Although a lot of the time, Ben Franklin is wearing Mardi Gras beads.

Today, Lafayette Square is a popular spot for festivals - during the spring, there are block parties here every Wednesday in the early evening with food and live music, and several major events, like the Crescent City Blues and BBQ Festival and the Fried Chicken Fest, take place here annually.

Beyond Lafayette Square, you'll get into a part of the CBD that changed fast in the 2010s. Prior to that time, when this was more just a business district, the boom and bust cycle of oil prices left long stretches of empty or underused buildings.

But with the steady growth of the National World War II Museum nearby, plus general boosts in tourism in the 2010s and the fact that living downtown is cool again, the CBD has seen lots of space repurposed to residences, retail, food, and so on.

Soon you'll reach a roundabout in the street called Lee Circle. The main attraction here is the National World War II Museum, which is just a block over to the left.

Around that same spot are the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, the Contemporary Arts Center, and Confederate Memorial Hall.

Julia Street nearby is full of art galleries, and a little beyond the museums is a Louisiana restaurant called Cochon. It's mostly for dinner, but they also have a deli called Butcher, so if you end up on foot around here and you get hungry, you can get a sandwich to go.

Start the next track once you're moving from Lee Circle.

Lee Circle and Lower Garden District

If you look left as the streetcar goes around the circle, you'll get a glimpse of the World War II Museum - huge unusually shaped gray buildings - and in the foreground, a building of rough red stone that houses the Confederate Memorial Hall Museum.

The building is in a style called Richardsonian Romanesque, named for the New Orleans-born architect Henry Hobson Richardson, who's often considered one of the three definitive American architects. His style is now most often associated with university buildings and large public structures. This is a design by him, built after his death, so it's the closest thing to a Richardson building in his home city.

The Circle itself has served a few purposes in its time - circuses and other big events used to occupy it, and it was also home for a little over a century to a statue of Robert E Lee, a general for the Confederacy.

Today it's mostly known as a great but very crowded spot to watch Mardi Gras parades. The rest of the year it's pretty quiet here, apart from the Circle Bar, located on the World War II Museum side of the Circle, which does a great lineup of local bands in the evenings.

If you take the streetcar back to Canal Street, Lee Circle will mark the start of new sights - here, the tracks for the downtown-bound car split off and go one block over to Carondelet, so as to accommodate the one-way streets in the CBD.

Lee Circle stands at the edge between the CBD and the Lower Garden District, so you'll get a change of atmosphere after you pass under the bridge.

The bridge is called the Crescent City Connection, and it crosses the Mississippi a little ways further to the left. It's part of the interstate highway system, which here was able to take advantage of the existing lay of the land - this was a shipping canal, and there's still a warehouse character to some of the buildings that border it.

After the bridge, St. Charles divides two neighborhoods - the Lower Garden District on the left and Central City on the right. Central City has moved throughout its history from being mostly German and Eastern European to mostly Jewish to mostly black, so in a few places, you can see churches in buildings built as synagogues.

A few blocks into Central City is Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard, home to several good restaurants and the Ashe Cultural Arts Center, the main home base for African diaspora arts in the city.

Originally, the Lower Garden District and the nearer part of Central City were part of the same development - a garden suburb, built on land bought from several plantations and carefully designed by Barthelemy Lafon, a Frenchman with connections to both the US government and local piracy.

A couple of blocks to the left along Coliseum and Camp Streets, you can see what he was imagining - oak-lined streets, fountains, a central park bordered with classical houses. It's an easy walk to Coliseum Square Park, or you'd see it if you do the return trip along the Magazine Street bus.

The homes are a little less extravagant than the ones in the Garden District next door - the Garden District is sort of a cast of divas, while the Lower Garden District is more of an ensemble. And the Garden District ended up attracting the wealthiest, while the Lower Garden District was mixed - many of the new arrivals to New Orleans were poor immigrants, and many of them ended up living in rows of shacks along the neighborhood's edge, or mansions turned apartment buildings.

One of the main traces of the original plan is the street names - starting from the overpass, the streets are named for the Greek goddesses of the arts, the Muses. St. Charles itself used to be called Naiades Street, after the spirits of rivers from Greek mythology, referencing the fact that St. Charles almost matches the shape of the Mississippi.

After the last of the Muses, you'll pass Felicity Street, named for a nun who signed off on the deal to sell the Ursuline Plantation land to Barthelemy Lafon. Other than the French Quarter, the whole city used to be plantations, which little by little got sold to developers.

Today, all you can see of those plantations are their edges – St. Charles Avenue bends a bit to the right at Felicity Street, and whenever you see a small turn like that, you're crossing between plantations.

There's also a historic marker at the intersection with Felicity Street noting the former location of Higgins Industries, the company responsible for designing and building the Higgins Boats used in the Normandy Invasion during World War II. Normandy required ships to land on a beach rather than in a harbor, so special boats were needed, and the design ended up being based on craft used for navigating the shallow swamps of Louisiana – the same kind of boat you might take a swamp tour on.

The Higgins Boats were key to the American involvement in World War II, hence in large part the New Orleans connection for the National World War II Museum – it started off as a D-Day Museum, then added exhibits until it became the most comprehensive resource on the subject in the country.

You've got a few food and drink options on this part of St Charles, and it's unusually heavy toward Asian food, particularly Japanese. There's a cluster of restaurants right around Melpomene Street – which is how the locals of today say the name of the Muse Melpomene – and shortly after that you'll find the Avenue Pub, which looks a little divey but has one of the most extensive beer menus in the city and an excellent food menu too.

If you prefer cocktails to beer, then your best bet is Hot Tin, the rooftop bar in the Hotel Pontchartrain, just shy of Jackson Avenue. New Orleans isn't exactly a skyline town, but you can get a look back over where you've been so far, notice the bend between plantations, and follow the bridge you passed under earlier out to the Mississippi.

The Hotel Pontchartrain itself might ring a bell if you've read the work of Anne Rice, the novelist behind *Interview with the Vampire* and lots of other New Orleans-set fantasy - she references it and plenty other landmarks in this area.

One last thing - if you look left a little before Jackson Avenue, you'll see a piece of the Eiffel Tower. Since it's one of the most visited places in the world, naturally a restaurant was added in 1937, which eventually proved to be too heavy and was replaced. The original one got broken down, crated up, and shipped here. The idea was to open it for business on the occasion of the 1984 World's Fair. (It was another World's Fair that occasioned the building of the Tower in the first place.) But it missed that mark by a few years, and the restaurant that finally opened didn't last. It's never remotely seen the traffic it used to get in Paris, but it's getting by as a venue for private events.

Just beyond the Eiffel Society and the Pontchartrain Hotel is Jackson Avenue. Jackson is the beginning of the Garden District, and it's one possible spot to get off and walk around. The best-known site on Jackson is the Buckner Mansion - popularly known as the Coven House by fans of the show *American Horror Story*. It's a couple of blocks to the left from the intersection.

You could also wait and get out at Washington Avenue, the next light, which would put you at the start point for our Garden District audio tour or just a block from Lafayette Cemetery #1, which we also have an audio tour of. It's just a few blocks' difference, so you can also walk all of it.

The next track is made to start from Jackson Avenue, but you wouldn't be missing much in the way of sights if you got off here and got back on at Washington.

If you want to get just a taste of Magazine Street, the parts around here can be a good impression - right here by Jackson you have a portion with a vintage and antique store theme. Further along, at Washington and beyond, you'll find a variety of mostly local-flavored restaurants.

Jackson

After you cross Jackson, you'll quickly pass a few landmarks – on the left on the first block, with the long awning, the House of Broel, a historic home with a huge dollhouse collection, open by appointment; and on the right immediately past the intersection with Philip Street, the childhood home of Anne Rice.

This is also where the street's famous live oak trees really pick up. The houses here were often built in the style of a plantation home, and the rows of trees imitate the plantation atmosphere too – the drive to the house was often lined with an oak alley.

But human use aside, these trees are admirable on their own – they're some of the longest-lived trees in our region, with the ones here along the street mostly a century to a century and a half old, and the oldest one in the city, located out in City Park, about 800 – so it's ridden out several hundred hurricanes.

If you do the walk through Audubon Park, you'll see plenty more of them - the ones out there are bigger and freer to grow than these, and they're covered in Spanish moss, which won't grow right where cars pass regularly.

The Garden District is mostly known for its mansions, a few of which you can see on St. Charles. The neighborhood proper is pretty small – it ends at Louisiana Avenue, not far ahead, and it stretches just a few blocks to your left from St. Charles to Magazine – but the Garden District is just one of a lot of neighborhoods in the uptown area that have this vibe.

The houses here are a little older, 1830s to 70s, while the ones further ahead are younger, but the styles are similar. And while by and large the property in the Garden District is owned by old money New Orleanians, it's also known for celebrity owners like Sandra Bullock and John Goodman.

After the light at Washington comes another cluster of landmarks. On the right, just past Sixth Street, is Christ Church Cathedral, the current location of the first Protestant congregation in New Orleans, originally built on Canal Street.

And then, just before Eighth Street on the right, comes the Elms Mansion, the former location of the German Consulate, from which the consul reported to superiors on local port activity during the lead-up to World War II.

If you're on the left side and get a look over your shoulder at Harmony Street, you can get a glimpse of the very pink home of Beyoncé. And on that same side, just before Louisiana Avenue, is a long tan building, which speaks to New Orleans' habit of creative reuse – this was originally several homes, then built into each other to form a funeral home, later turned bookstore and then a grocery store.

The next track starts at Louisiana Avenue.

Louisiana

Within the first few blocks after Louisiana, you'll pass a couple of options for food and drink.

First, on your left in a distinctive yellow and turquoise building is Delachaise, a wine bar with a restaurant-quality menu, and then, just a few blocks later on the right after Peniston Street, the Columns Hotel. It's a converted house from the 1880s, with the social areas in the downstairs converted into a bar and restaurant - so if you were wondering what it was like inside all these mansions, here's a chance to find out.

Right around The Columns are a couple of other landmarks - a block before it on the right at 3711 St. Charles is a Victorian home formerly owned by Anne Rice.

And on the left, right across from The Columns, is a building with the word "Unity" across the front. It's an interfaith spiritual center in a modern building all based on circles, extremely different from its classical neighbors, and designed by Leonard Spangenberg, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright, who alongside the aforementioned Henry Hobson Richardson is called one of the three most notable American architects.

We've already talked about the live oak trees, but if you haven't already, it's worth looking up on the left to notice the strings of beads hanging from their branches. They're only on one side because that's the side where the Mardi Gras parades roll.

Even though Mardi Gras is just a day, the parade season is several weeks long, somewhere between late January and early March, during which time the street is lined with tents, barbecues, ice chests, and custom ladders with booster seats for kids as the crowds, mostly local, watch dozens of parades pass by. Bead-throwing is the signature of New Orleans parades, so the trees are decorated with beads all year.

As you approach the next light at Napoleon Avenue, you'll be passing through streets named for places where Napoleon won battles.

And then there's General Pershing Street. It used to be called Berlin Street until World War I when anti-German sentiment led to a widespread renaming.

On the left just before General Pershing Street is Touro Synagogue, one of the oldest synagogues in the country. Judah Touro, the founder, is also the namesake of the major hospital located a few blocks away, one of his many philanthropic projects.

As far as things to do here, this area is pretty residential, but the walk along Napoleon to the left could bring you by another former property of Anne Rice - a huge building called St. Elizabeth's, formerly an orphanage, now condos.

Past that is another part of Magazine with plenty to see, including a local coffee shop and roaster called Hey Cafe, a Peaches record store, and a variety of food options.

Beyond Napoleon, there are also a few worthwhile stops on Prytania Street, which runs parallel with St. Charles two blocks to the left - it's got a locally beloved ice cream spot called Creole Creamery, plus some restaurants, maybe most notably Upperline, a Creole restaurant with upscale treatment but a homey, friendly vibe and an incredible local art collection.

Go ahead to the next track as the streetcar moves on from Napoleon.

Napoleon

Napoleon Avenue is where the parade route portion of St. Charles ends - most of the parades arrive on St. Charles from Napoleon, usually from the left side, so you may be able to see the trail of beads leading away.

Shortly past Napoleon on the right, you'll pass by the front of a huge brick building behind a fence. This is the Academy of the Sacred Heart, an all-girls Catholic school.

A little further on the right, just past Valence Street, you'll see a huge stone house called the Brown Mansion. At 14,000 square feet, it's the largest house on all of St. Charles, built in a style derived from Henry Hobson Richardson.

Beyond that, just past Robert Street on the left, there's a Tudor style house - white upper with dark brown trim. This is the former home of the Vaccaro brothers, immigrants from Sicily who, over a couple of decades, went from selling fruit in the French Market to importing it to owning plantations in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Haiti, to owning every ice factory in New Orleans just to refrigerate all their imports.

Their company, Standard Fruit, made most of its money on bananas, which went from novelty item in the late 19th century to the most consumed fruit in the US. Their main competitor was United Fruit, the company whose headquarters were back in the CBD, owned by Moldovan immigrant Sam Zemurray. We'll see his home later.

A bit further on the left, you'll see an imposing building with a whole block to itself. This is a former home turned public library - the Latter family for whom it's named bought it for the purpose of converting it and donating it to the public library system. The collection is mostly upstairs, while the downstairs mostly maintains the look of the home in its reception area and reading rooms. If you're lucky enough to be passing by on a Wednesday, you can pause to visit their weekly Friends of the Library book sale and get a souvenir.

Just a little further and you'll have LaSalle High School on your left, followed by the Jewish Community Center, then Jefferson Avenue, at which point you can start the next track.

Jefferson

To the left just after you pass through Jefferson, you'll see a Spanish Colonial Revival house. Besides repurposing historical structures, we're also pretty good at faking them - this one was finished in 2018.

And for another bit of anachronism, look on the right a couple of blocks later, just after Arabella Street, and there's a replica of Tara, the plantation house from *Gone with the Wind*, built-in 1941. A little past Tara on the left, you'll see a couple of particularly elaborate Victorian houses in tan and blue, then you'll cross through a light at Nashville Avenue.

Just past Nashville on the right is a street leading into a mansion-filled cul-de-sac coincidentally called Rosa Park, which was the first gated neighborhood in the city when it was created in 1896.

Past there are two traffic lights at State and Calhoun Streets, at which point you'll be reaching Audubon Park on the left and Tulane and Loyola Universities on the right. Our recommended spot for getting off the streetcar is around here; there are stops at either edge of Tulane's campus or two blocks after at Broadway.

If you decide to ride further, there'll be a little information on the next track about what to expect.

When you reach the universities, you'll see the red brick buildings of Loyola first, then the stone and occasionally Richardsonian buildings of Tulane. Like everything else in the area, these

campuses and the park are former plantation land - including that of Etienne de Boré, the first mayor of New Orleans and the first to oversee successful mass manufacturing of sugar in Louisiana, which became a cash crop in the late 18th century and remains one today.

This area also speaks to the latter days of the fruit industry - just beyond the front of Tulane's campus is a gated neighborhood called Audubon Place, and just behind its gate is a columned white house built for Sam Zemurray, owner of United Fruit.

United Fruit was, again, the main competitor to the Vaccaro brothers' Standard Fruit, and both companies steered life in the Caribbean countries where their products grew, from building train networks to deposing elected leaders and installing dictatorships, sometimes with the backing of the US military and the CIA.

When the CIA attempted an invasion of communist Cuba through the Bay of Pigs, the ships used belonged to United Fruit, which had lost land in Cuba's revolution. And the failure of that invasion led in turn to the Cuban missile crisis.

Sam Zemurray died just a few years later, and his company was bought, but the name carried serious baggage, so today it's called Chiquita. Standard Fruit also sold to a company now called Dole.

As for Sam Zemurray's personal property, he left some gifts to Tulane - this house, which is now the university president's mansion, and a donation for a Middle American Research Institute - his own preferred industry term for what today tends to be called a Latin American Studies program.

The last track gets into things you could visit from here, including Audubon Park and what lies further along the streetcar line.

Audubon Park

Between its time as a plantation and as a park, Audubon was the site for the 1884 World Cotton Centennial and Exposition. It was like a World's Fair, and it was designed to tell the country that the Civil War and everything it stood for was behind us, Reconstruction was over, and the south was back and ready for industry. At the same time, it commemorated something that was very much of the old south - cotton cultivation. There was a huge central hall and lots of smaller pavilions, and countries and states and companies showed off their goods and inventions and cultures. The fair failed to attract the kind of attention or money its organizers hoped for, but it still has some major traces today. The Mexican delegation included a military brass band that took the city by storm and created a craze for Mexican sheet music - a fashion that gets some credit for nudging local musical culture toward the jazz sound. A chunk of iron ore from the Alabama exhibit is still standing in the middle of the park's golf course. And weirdest of all, a gift given out by the Japanese delegation is now all over the region - the water hyacinth, an invasive and aggressive aquatic plant which, just a few years later, was already choking out native plants, killing off fish, and even blocking ships from Louisiana to Florida. The problem got so serious that a Louisiana congressman wrote a bill proposing to introduce a predator - wild hippopotamuses. The idea was that they could solve two problems at once - the excess of water hyacinths and the shortage of meat in the US at the time, if you could get Americans used to eating hippo. A promoter even tried branding hippo meat as "lake cow bacon." Despite some moments of optimism, the bill didn't pass.

If you decide to explore the park, I'd suggest going in from the front and then around to the left. The designer, John Charles Olmsted, also known for New York's Central Park, put in a lagoon on that side, and an island in the lagoon has become a stopover for all kinds of migratory birds during some parts of the year. At its far left edge, the park is bordered by a path called Exposition Boulevard - it used to be a wide road, now it's a sidewalk that gets a street name and has interesting houses facing onto it. And toward the far end of the park, near Magazine Street, you can see an oak alley left over from the old Foucher Plantation. Magazine Street is the edge of the park, although Audubon's property continues on the other side with the Audubon Zoo, a riverfront park called the Fly, and, off to the left side of the zoo, a remarkable live oak known as the Tree of Life.

If you keep riding the streetcar beyond Audubon Park, you'll be making your way into another of the small cities the streetcar once connected - this one called Carrollton and founded in 1833. You'll know you're there because the streetcar will turn off of St. Charles onto Carrollton Avenue. Eventually, the streetcar line ends on Carrollton in an area more known for strip malls than local color, but there are a few things worth knowing about on the way. Right by that turn is Camellia Grill, a locally famous dive diner, plus plenty of other restaurants of various kinds, the most local probably being one called Boucherie. Otherwise, the main attraction of the Carrollton area is Oak Street, which runs perpendicular to Carrollton Avenue. The stretch near the streetcar begins with a coffee shop called Rue de la Course, then continues to the Maple Leaf, a favorite local music venue known especially for funk bands, and Jacques-Imo's, a bright-colored and culinarily creative Creole restaurant right next door.

If you like, Tulane and Loyola's campuses can also be worth exploring - they each have a main quad right by St. Charles and a student union a little further in. However you decide to explore the area, we hope you've enjoyed the scenery and stories on the way. Check out our website for more ideas, articles, and tour options. Thank you for listening, and please visit us again soon.