

YANK

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NEW ORLEANS After celebrating the end of the war prematurely three times, New Orleans let loose with everything it had when the official word finally came through from the White House.

A snowstorm of paper had pelted down from office buildings all during the afternoon as optimistic citizens hoped for an immediate announcement of the war's end. The feel of victory in the air kept office workers downtown past their normal working hours, and the announcement caught mobs of shoppers and workers on Canal Street.

So wary of unconfirmed rumors were the people of New Orleans that it took a newsboy three minutes to sell the first copy of the extra proclaiming the real peace. But once they were convinced, no Mardi Gras was ever as gay or as wild as the celebration that followed. Although all bars closed immediately for 24 hours on orders from the police, civilians and servicemen alike were not slow to bring out bottles.

Mobs jammed the "widest street in the world" from sidewalk to sidewalk. Traffic moved with the greatest difficulty in spite of the efforts of the 150 extra policemen called out to handle the crowds. Sailors swarmed up to street cars as they stopped, kissing willing girls through the open windows. A loaded watermelon truck stalled in traffic on the big street, and sailors took over, handing out the melons to passing celebrants.

As every type of paper, except toilet tissue, which was notably absent, fell to the streets in ankle-deep piles, the Commissioner of Public Works announced that three extra street crews would be put to work cleaning up the mess.

In direct contrast to the shouting in the streets was the quiet of a Jesuit church in the business district crowded with parents, wives, and sweet-hearts of servicemen, offering prayers of thanksgiving for the end of hostilities and the safety of their loved ones. Men and women clutching newspapers with the banner-line PEACE mingled in front of the church, wiping their eyes unashamedly.

With all the bars closed, the French quarter was deserted as both civilians and servicemen hurried to Canal Street to join the festivities. A scattering of foreign soldiers and sailors were seen among the joyful crowd. A young French aviator, seeking refuge in a recruiting booth, spread a newspaper on the floor in an effort to translate the headlines. A passer-by, seeing his problem, shouted "*La guerre est finie!*" and the aviator jumped to his feet with a shout and disappeared into the mob.

Shipyards, aircraft plants and other war industries ceased operations shortly after the news was announced.

The *Times-Picayune's* weather forecast read: "Peaceful showers and clouds will be enjoyed by New Orleanians. . . ."

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