

In and about Washington

September 2023
FREE—TAKE ONE

Excessive Heat Warning Today
From 10 AM to 7 PM CDT

Key Message
Dangerous heat expected with heat index values of 110° to 117°.

Hazards

- Heat exhaustion
- Heat Stroke
- Dehydration

Actions

- Drink plenty of water and/or beverages with electrolytes.
- Avoid strenuous activity and prolonged time outside.
- Heat illness possible.

National Weather Service
Lake Charles, LA

We saw dangerous heat almost daily during August.

.We've never seen heat like this

Here are some of the reasons why you are right in thinking this has been the most miserable summer you've ever seen.

◆ June and July each were south Louisiana's hottest ever. August will beat its own record by an even wider margin.

◆ From June 9 through August 28, when this newsletter went to the printer, R&D Research, just east of Washington, recorded 80 consecutive days when the high temperature was 90 or higher. More were forecast. We rarely see 10 days straight.

◆ In the 31 days between July 28 and August 28 the high was 100 or more on 21 days, and 99 degrees on 6 others.

◆ The average temperature at Washington for the months May through August over the past five years is 79.7 degrees. This year that average is 82.7 degrees, the hottest of record.

THE WEATHER August 1-28

High: 105, Aug. 27
Average High: 100.5
Low: 64, Aug. 17
Average Low: 75.4
Aug. Rainfall: 0.54
Avg. for Month: 4.33
Rain for 2023: 30.54
Avg. Yearly: 34.45

◆ Less than 5 inches of rain fell here during that time. The average is 13.5 inches. St. Landry Parish is listed in the "severe" drought category.

◆ Sporadic showers late in the month dropped highs only into the middle and upper 90s.

◆ Water temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico are the highest ever seen. That means cooling breezes aren't so cool, higher humidity here, and a bigger chance of strong hurricanes.

Six parish officers unopposed Oct. 14

Washington voters will find only a handful of local offices on the October 14 election ballot, but will face a long list of statewide candidates.

Sheriff Bobby Guidroz, assessor Sherri Zeringue McGovern, coroner Zeb Sterns, parish council member Mildred Thierry, and senator Gerald Boudreaux are unopposed. Richard Lewis III the only opponent for Jessie Bellard, the incumbent parish president, was disqualified.

Charles Jagneaux will face Jan Deville of Sunset in the clerk of court race, and representative Dustin Miller is opposed by Allen Guillory of Lawtell.

Sixteen candidates want to replace governor John Bel Edwards, who cannot run again. Six are challenging lieutenant governor Billy Nungesser. Eight hopefuls seek to replace attorney general Jeff Landry, and two to replace treasurer John Schroeder. Landry and Schroeder are running for governor.

Eight people are running to replace secretary of state Kyle Ardoin, who is retiring. Tim Temple of Baton Rouge will replace retiring insurance commissioner Jim Donelon without opposition, and Agriculture Commissioner Mike Strain is also unopposed.

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Of Note

THE ST. LANDRY Community Action Agency will take applications for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for Washington residents from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. September 11 at the Community Center on Veterans Memorial (Hwy. 103). Proof of need is required. Call 337 948-3651 for details.

A RED TAPE TANGLE appears to have been unsnarled to allow renovation to resume on the Plonsky building on Main Street. Architect Steven Ortego plans to turn it into a boutique hotel.

JACOB CRAWFORD of the New Orleans ministry to the homeless will preach at the regular service at Washington Baptist on September 10.

THE CHURCH OFFICE has been moved from the Immaculate Conception rectory to the parish hall.

THE FALL antique fair and yard sale at the Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall is scheduled for October 13-15.

THE HEALTH BUGGY offers free screening for blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol from 8 to 11 a.m. each third Friday. on the Immaculate Conception parking lot.



Joubert Park rededicated

June Serile, Simon Malveaux, Hilton Williams, Trina Joubert, Sharron Hicks and Jacob Joubert Jr. (above) were among those who helped rededicate the Jacob Joubert Park on August 17.

Volunteers have revived the neglected park, Hill at Prescott streets, aided by donations from Judge Alonzo Harris, right, and other Harris family members.

“Mr. Jake,” died in 1996. He was a town employee and school bus driver known for helping others.



School supplies distributed

Rep. Dustin Miller and Town Council member Tanya Doucet led school supply drives for Washington students. Miller’s sponsors included United Healthcare, Louisiana Healthcare Connections, Acadiana Practitioners, and Healthy Blue. Doucet, right, shown with Washington Elementary principal Brenda Lavergne, delivered 18 boxes of supplies. She thanked Mayor Dwight Landreneau, and the congregations of Immaculate Conception, Holy Trinity, and Washington Baptist churches.



DA's office recognized

The St. Landry District Attorney's office was awarded the Leaders in Law Enforcement Award and a \$40,000 grant to be used "in the furtherance of public safety." The statewide award, given by the Community Foundation of Acadiana, recognized Washington native Chad Pitre and his staff for "its successful convictions, courtroom efficiency, and a reduction of backlogged cases."



Grant buys new tractor

The Town continues to use grants to upgrade machinery needed for maintenance. A U.S. Department of Agriculture grant was used to buy a new tractor with a front loader and cutter. Mayor Dwight Landreneau also received word that a second USDA grant has been approved to purchase three zero-turn lawnmowers.

From Town Hall

AS EXPECTED, the Town Council extended the Cleco electric franchise for another 20 years. Other items on the August meeting agenda were routine measures. Minutes of past town meetings are posted on the town website

A REPLICA whistle is on its way to bring the sound of steamboats back to Washington. The three-toned whistle will be installed at the town pavilion. An electronic timer can sound the whistle at a pre-set time and it can also be tooted manually.

UTILITY CUSTOMERS are reminded that bill payments are due on the 17th of each month and that payments received after 3 p.m. are posted on the next business day. A \$10 late fee is charged if the bill is not paid on time. A \$50 delinquent fee is assessed and utilities will be disconnected if the bill is not paid by the 22nd of the month.

REGULAR MEETINGS of the Town Council are at 6 p.m. on each third Monday at Town Hall. This month's meeting will be on September 18. The agenda is posted on the town website beforehand.

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1902 fire was “awful,” “frenzied,” “most destructive”

The fire that destroyed Washington’s business section on August 5, 1902, was described as a frenzied monster determined to consume the entire town. The *St. Landry Clarion* reported: “Every building in the town was not burned, but the business portion, the heart and life of the town, is now represented by heaps of ashes and yet smoldering coals. It is a pitiable sight; even a mournful sight, for the groups of men and women and children who are gathered ’round the ruins every hour of the day, silent and downcast, give the scene a mournful, graveyard appearance.”



Looking Back

The fire started in the Abram Meyer livery stable, “where, it is said, a careless employe had been smoking a cigar just before the fire broke out, [and] is no doubt responsible for this great calamity,” the *Opelousas Clarion* said. Four blocks were burned, including “everything, some 40 buildings,” from Sittig to Dupre streets, and from St. John to Washington streets.”

A bucket line from Bayou Courtableau was too little, too late. Flames quickly spread from the stable to the opera house and other adjoining buildings. “The large building of A. Meyer was soon consumed. The two-story building of G. R. Ballio then fell a victim to the flames. The postoffice (*sic*) and the Jacob Plonsky residence, the drug store of Lynch Bros., the Washington State Bank building and the residence and store of Carl Wolff were all burned,” according to the *Courier*.

The Hope Hook and Ladder Company rushed from Opelousas but found the fire “well under way,” when they got to Washington, “several buildings having already been burned – in fact the fire was then beyond immediate control. It was burning on both sides of Main Street,” the account continued. “The town was at the mercy of the fiery fiend, a toy in its awful embrace.

“It did look indeed like the battle was futile; that the fire would have to be permitted to burn to its heart’s content, or until there were no more buildings left to feed its appetite. The town seemed doomed. The fiery monster seemed determined to wipe it from the map. One building after another, north, south, east, and west, went under. One building was not well afire before the red monster would shoot out its tongue and lick the hot roof of a building on the other side.

“The ... fire ... swept everything before it, climbing tall oaks and pecan trees, then going down after low-roofed cabins, encircling stately residences, and wrapping its fiery arms around prosperous business establishments, was intermingled with the shrieks and moans and cries of women and children. Mother would embrace baby and call to Heaven to save their little home. ... It was an awful, frenzied sight.” The firefighters could do nothing except tear down buildings away from the fire to remove fuel from its path.

The *Clarion* concluded, “For nearly four hours the battle was fought, and when victory crowned the efforts of the exhausted fighters, a sigh of relief and thankfulness went around.”

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