

In and about Washington

May 2023
FREE—TAKE ONE



Lightning fells tree, cuts power

Traffic was blocked in both lanes of Main Street and power knocked out for much of the town when a large tree near the Main Street Grocery was struck by lightning about 6 p.m. April 6. Cleco crews were interrupted by several substantial downpours as they worked to cut away the tree, replace poles, and install two transformers but had power restored by 9:30 p.m. No one was hurt. A stalled front brought 4.97 inches of rain to the St. Landry airport April 6 and 7.

Police department “making significant strides”

Grants, reorganization, and a “fresh focus” have helped the Washington police department make some significant strides in recent months, the mayor and chief report.

The town’s long-neglected police station has finally been repaired and renovated; broken-down patrol cars have been replaced by two brand-new units, with the possibility of a third one soon; the fleet has also been augmented by vehicles donated by other towns; a highly regarded assistant chief and a part-time administrator are at work; new patrol officers are on the beat; and “we’re not through,” the mayor says.

Renovations to the police station were funded largely through the federal funds. They include a new roof, mold abatement, and upgrades to the lobby, offices, dispatch and officer work stations, and jail.

Assistant Chief Easton Shelvin, a 20-year enforcement veteran, has been at work since February, primarily overseeing enforcement, allowing Chief William Worthy to focus on administration. Since March Worthy has been aided by retired trooper Willie Williams, part-time office administrator.

The department is also planning to use part of the recreation center on Martin Luther King as a training facility and to house Junior Police and other youth-oriented programs.



Of Note

BINGO IS BACK, at 2 p.m. on each second and fourth Tuesday, beginning May 9 at the Recreational Center, on Bridge St. at Martin Luther King.

PROCEEDS FROM a yard sale at the town pavilion from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 6 will be used to maintain Ethel Park and Jacob Joubert Memorial Park. Clothing, housewares, books, jewelry, and arts and crafts will be on sale, along with barbeque and catfish dinners. For information call Johnnie Fontenot, 337 308-2442.

DR STEVE BENNETT will be the speaker at the Washington Baptist service on May 21.

THE STEAMBOAT CITY Association is accepting applications for two \$750 scholarships for graduating high school seniors from Washington and nearby. Contact Jim Bradshaw, P.O. Box 1121, Washington 70589, or jimbradshaw4321@gmail.com.

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.



Mathilda Comeaux turns 104

Mayor Dwight Landreneau and Elizabeth Lamb helped Matilda Comeaux, the town's oldest resident, celebrate her 104th birthday on March 27.



April sale

Rain dampened Saturday's sales, but bright days Friday and Sunday brought good crowds to the April yard sale at the Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall.

Legion cook-off nets good eating, new roof

Fourteen teams cooked rabbit, dove, quail, squirrel, venison, goose, and wild pig when the Jasper Neyland American Legion Post 209 hosted its first wild game cook-off and auction April 1. Proceeds will be used to renovate the Legion home. Guns, an overnight fishing trip, and other items were auctioned during the day.

At the end of the day an anonymous donor called in with the promise of a new roof for the historic Quirk McCaffery Home (circa 1920), which serves as the Legion headquarters.

Cajun comic show May 13

Cajun comic Jonathan Perry will bring his humor to the Washington Garden Club's Comedy Night at 6 p.m. on May 13, at the old St. John Episcopal Church.

A Mother's Day auction will follow the show.

Tickets are available at Ardoin's Grocery or from club members Ethel Landreneau, Pam Landreneau, Anne Jones, or Ginger Fontenot.

THE WEATHER April 1-27



High: 87, April 5
Average High: 76.0
Low: 45, April 17
Average Low: 57.4
April Rainfall: 7.40
Avg. for Month: 3.81
Rain for 2023: 21.92
Avg. Yearly: 17.68



Donated cars

Eunice Mayor Scott Fontenot and Chief Lebouef donated two police cars to Assistant Chief Easton Shelvin and Mayor Dwight Landreneau. These cars will become part of the Washington police fleet.

Another conservative budget expected

Another bare-bones town budget will be discussed and probably voted on at the May 15 meeting of the Town Council.

It was one of five ordinances introduced by title only at the regular meeting April 17. The others are primarily house-cleaning measures, codifying the town's procedures for public document requests, modifying an existing ordinance dealing with slow-moving vehicles, making changes to the town's traffic fine schedule to align it with state law, and amending the current budget to reflect actual spending, as required by law.

A public hearing will be scheduled before the May 15 meeting to discuss the full ordinances.

Mayor Dwight Landreneau said at the April meeting that CPAs and auditors were still working on the budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2034, which begins July 1, but that he anticipates that it will be not much different from the current year's \$1.5 million in total spending.

Town issues utility payment reminder

Town administrators have issued a reminder that utility 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.

Customers can pay automatically from a bank account. Payment will be withdrawn between the 5th and 10th of each month. Bills can also be paid online at <https://townofwashingtonla.net> with a credit/debit card.

In-person payment can be made at Town Hall by credit or debit card, check, money order, or cashier's check. Cash is not accepted. Payments can be made at any time using a drop box located near the front door. Payments by mail should be sent seven business days before the due date to ensure they are received on time. The address is Town of Washington, P.O. Box 218, Washington, LA 70589



From Town Hall

VOLUNTEERS helped pick up litter in Washington April 22 as part of the statewide Love the Boot litter removal campaign. Last year, 8,476 volunteers picked up 293 tons of litter in 54 parishes.

SECURITY CAMERAS

have been installed at all municipal buildings and they are receiving lighting upgrades by Cleco.

FACULTY FROM South Louisiana Community College met with Mayor Dwight Landreneau to discuss the possibility of GED classes for students and adults. Interested persons can call Town Hall, 337 826-3626.

Send items for *In and About Washington* to jimbradshaw4321@gmail.com

Wolff & Son went from steamboats to spaceships

For a full century, Washington shoppers could buy everything from hair pins to farm wagons at the Leon Wolff & Son store on Main Street. A 1955 advertisement proclaimed its long history, "Since the ... first ... steamers Warren, Trudeau, and Minnie, traveled Bayou Courtableau ... and even before the Southern Pacific railroad was completed from Lafayette to Cheneyville, this firm has been a part of the community," the ad said.

Leon Sylvain Wolff, for whom the store was named, was born in France in 1850 and came to St. Landry Parish in 1871. He worked for Sam Haas, a "beloved citizen and financier," at Bayou Chicot when he first arrived, and they opened the dry goods store in Washington in 1878. It was in a leased two-story building at Carriere and Main that was built in 1852 by Thomas Watkins as a saddler's shop.

Unfortunately, Watkins's business was short-lived. He died in the infamous yellow fever epidemic of 1853. The building was owned by planter, politician, and businessman Thomas C. Anderson when Wolff and Haas leased it. Haas bought the building for \$2,500 in 1879, about a year before the partnership was dissolved. Leon then rented the building from Haas and continued to operate the store.

His son Julian became a partner in the store in 1929, when it was named Leon Wolff & Son. Julian's mother was Leon's second wife, Rebecca Well. The Wolfs bought the building for \$4,500 in 1934 from a company that had purchased it from the Haas estate in 1933, and about that time enlarged and renovated it into the building standing today.

Julian took over active management of the store when Leon retired shortly before his death in 1937 and actually ran the store longer than his father had. When it was finally closed after Julian's death in 1973, the *Daily World* said the store had seen "reconstruction, carpetbaggers, steamboats, automobiles, and spaceships.

"Bags of seed and feed sold to farmers in the area were delivered in a 1949 Studebaker truck, purchased new and still running when the store closed. ... Prior to the truck ... a horse and wagon had been used for deliveries. But even the truck didn't sideline the horses – local deliveries were made in the wagon right up to about two years ago."

Bidders jammed the building on Saturday, May 19, 1973, when auctioneers sold everything "clean to the walls." The *Daily World* reported that "buyers carried home several items that they had never seen before and some that few will ever see again."

Wayne and Norma Guillory and Aubrey and Chick Soileau opened the Village Boutique in the old building in November 1975. It closed here in 1997, when the business moved to Opelousas. Former Washington resident Paul Olivier bought and began renovating the building about 2000. Café Opera used part of the building for about a year beginning in 2009. Since then, current owner Robert Fruge has used the building as the Wolff Banquet and Reception Hall.



Looking Back

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