

In and about Washington

January 2022
FREE—TAKE ONE



Town celebrates festive season

A rainy front cleared out just in time for the Christmas in Washington celebration to open a festive holiday season.

“It was a huge success and the committee is already planning next year’s celebration,” Mayor Dwight Landreneau said. “Thanks to the many volunteers who helped, especially chairwoman Brenda Pitre, Vickie Thibodeaux, Norma Moahmoud, Phil and Donna Dardeau, Carl Fontenot, and Darlene Bordelon. A special thanks to Greg and Renee Doucet for allowing the use of their lot to host the event.”



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Of Note

THE PUBLIC is invited to a free presentation by Dr. Theodore Foster on the Tuskegee Airmen at 6 p.m. on January 13 at the Washington Recreation Center (Brick House). Dr. Foster is an assistant professor of African-American history at UL.

GRADUATING high school students and enrolled college students from Washington are eligible for a \$2,000 scholarship awarded by the Louisiana Rural Water Association. Applications are due by March 4. Get information at 1-800-256-2591 or lrwa.org.

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

THE WEATHER



December 1-27

High: 82, Dec. 4, 16
Average High: 74.0
Low: 32, Dec. 21
Average Low: 50.5
Dec. Rainfall: 3.91
Avg. Dec. Rain: 4.16
Rain for 2021: 84.06
Avg. Yearly Rain: 53.30



Santa's surprise

Santa came to Washington Elementary a little early to present a new bicycle to each student. This was made possible by Al Jinn Temple #232 and Al Jinn Court #215.



Museum to reopen weekends

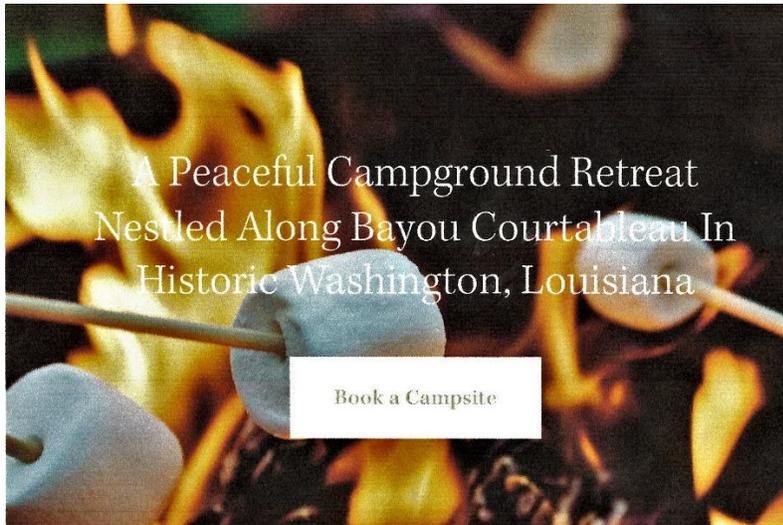
The Washington Museum and Tourist Center will reopen on weekends.

Mayor Dwight Landreneau said it will be open each Friday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"We are hoping to host art and cultural activities there," he said. "As things get situated, we will invite local artists and craftsmen to conduct programs and display their paintings and crafts. It will also be open for tour and school group visits."

The museum was closed in early 2020 due to budgetary restraints. Landreneau said the reopening has been made possible with help from the St. Landry Tourist Commission.





RV site changes

The town's RV rental sites at the festival grounds near I-49 are now being managed by The Ponderosa. Information about booking, availability, amenities and pricing can be found at <https://theponderosa-washington.com>.

Town making headway on debt

A new audit produced an "encouraging finding that we are making headway in addressing the town's past due debt," the mayor said. It has been reduced from \$640,000 to approximately \$329,000.00

"While we are not out of the woods yet we are definitely headed in the right direction," he said.

The auditors spent two weeks going over the town finances and the methods we employ for doing business.

"While this was a very intense time, the audit will help the town become more efficient with our daily operations and keep us in compliance with state audit requirements," he said.

Park planners shoot for spring opening

Planners for a little park across from Town Hall are hoping for a big opening in early spring.

Hallie Coreil, chairwoman of the committee, said she hoped the park could be ready in mid- to late-February, but "considering what we have left to do, I think early March is probably more realistic."



She said the committee is working with the Acadiana Native Plant Project "to ensure we have the right plants for the garden.

From Town Hall

TOWN OFFICIALS are again reminding residents that they must place address numbers on their houses and businesses where they can easily be seen.

"It is very hard for first responders, and delivery services such as FedEx, and UPS have a hard time finding the correct address," police chief Latoya Trent said. "As for first responders like the ambulance service and police officers, it makes it harder to find the residence where they need to be, making the response time longer," she said.

EFFECTIVE with the new year, Avenue Insights & Analytics will handle all the Town of Washington occupational licenses. Letters were sent from the agency for renewals. The town will continue handling beer and liquor permits.

WASHINGTON property taxes will no longer be collected at Town Hall. The Sheriff, who is the St. Landry Parish Tax Collector, will now collect Washington taxes.

CREDIT CARDS CAN now be used to pay all town bills after an upgrade in software and Web links at Town Hall. There will be a small transaction fee attached to card payments.

REGULAR MEETINGS of the Town Council are at 6 p.m. on each third Monday at Town Hall.

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Two grand schemers competed for Courtableau water

Remnants of the Schell canal, “a great irrigating canal” that would pump water from Bayou Courtableau and send it into south Louisiana rice fields can still be seen near Washington. It was the dream of J. Franklin Schell, who formed a company in 1906 to undertake what was called the largest engineering scheme ever in Louisiana. But he was not the first one to dream such large – and unrealized – dreams.

Welman Bradford, a civil engineer from Crowley, and state legislator Jonas W. Bailey Jr. were apparently the first to give serious thought to building a mammoth canal to irrigate the southwest Louisiana prairies.

The *St. Landry Clarion* reported in the spring of 1899 that Bradford and Bailey had raised enough money to begin work on “a huge canal, the head of which will be on bayou Courtableau ... commencing one and a half miles north of Washington on the Wartelle plantation.”

Bradford, the newspaper said, was “an authority on the irrigation of rice fields,” who “for years ... has been ... figuring out excavation work, pumpage, etc.,” to map out “the most ambitious irrigating plan ever contemplated in Louisiana.”

The canal would be 250 feet wide and more than 50 miles long, and would be filled by four pumps pulling 33,500 gallons of water per minute from the bayou. That would be enough to irrigate more than 100,000 acres. Boats on “the immense ditch,” would serve a rice mill and warehouses built “six or eight miles apart.” The mill would handle 3,000 sacks of rice a day and employ 300 people.

“The plan is a comprehensive one and has been thoroughly thought out and planned,” the newspaper reported. “It is estimated that the work will cost thirteen million dollars but, according to Mr. Bradford and others competent to judge, the expense will be slight compared with the perpetual benefits to be derived therefrom.”

Still, that was a lot of money; \$13 million then would be about \$415 million today. Schell’s grand scheme cost about the same and he and Bradford were trying to find investors at the same time. Bradford was a better engineer; Schell was a better fundraiser.

Bradford’s St. Landry Irrigation and Development Company broke ground first, but Schell was not far behind. The *Clarion* exulted in April 1903 that “the prospects of two mammoth canals through St. Landry Parish are glorious. ... A few weeks ago, actual work was begun on ... the Bradford Canal and now comes the cheering news that the one proposed by the Union Rice and Irrigation Company (or Schell) will be begun in the next ninety days.”

Bradford ran out of money quickly. Schell managed to build several miles of canal. In April 1911 his young daughter pushed a button and “powerful [pumps] jumped into action.”

They ran only a few years. Water flowed, but money didn’t. Schell built more than Bradford, but by 1915 his “largest engineering scheme ever” turned into the largest bankruptcy sale in St. Landry history.



Looking Back

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Washington

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