

In and about Washington

August 2023
FREE—TAKE ONE



Mural proposed

The town is awaiting final approval for a grant from St. Landry Tourism to paint a mural by artist Jerome Ford on the town pavilion wall facing Main Street.

New law adds incentive for renovation

People interested in renovating one of Washington's historic homes or businesses may be eligible for increased income tax credits under new state regulations taking effect August 1.

The legislature has changed the Louisiana Historic Rehabilitation program to add buildings that are part of a National Register Historic District, which in Washington includes the whole town.

Historic buildings in one of Louisiana's 120 Cultural Districts are also eligible. That also includes Washington, as the entire town is in the Historic Washington Cultural District.

The law also increases the credit from 25% to 35% for towns in a rural area, which also includes Washington.

Rehabilitation projects must exceed \$10,000 in qualified expenses and must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Further information is available by mail from Tax Incentives Staff, Division of Historic Preservation, P.O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge 70804, by calling (225) 342-8160, or at crt.state.la.us.



This house on the corner of Vine and Gardiner streets is one of a number of long-vacant homes that have been recently purchased for renovation.

Good chance for hottest summer

Reliable records are hard to find until recent years, but Washington appears to be moving toward our hottest summer ever – certainly close to it.

Nearing the end of July we recorded more than 50 consecutive days with the high temperature of 90 degrees or more. Since June 8, when the high was 89, the average high temperature measured at R&D Research, just east of town, was 94.7. The average low was 74.7, for an overall average of 84.7. Heat indices, "feels-like temperatures," were over 100 each day.

For comparison, over the five years 2018-2022, the average high temperature for June-July here was 89.5 and the average low was 72.1, for an overall average of 80.8.

The weather service forecast calls for a scorching August.

THE WEATHER July 1-27

High: 99, July 21
Average High: 94.8
Low: 70, July 17, 24
Average Low: 77.2
July Rainfall: 2.77
Avg. for Month: 4.10
Rain for 2023: 32.77
Avg. Yearly: 29.60

Of Note

REP. DUSTIN MILLER and the Town will host a school supply drive from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. August 2 at the Town Pavilion.

WASHINGTON BAPTIST offers children and youth programs and adult bible study beginning at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays.

SARAH CLOSTIO ARTISTRY has opened a studio in the old church building next to the Community Center on Veterans Memorial Boulevard.

THE AMERICAN LEGION sells barbecue dinners at the Legion home from 10 a.m. to noon each first Saturday for \$11 a plate. Proceeds go to maintenance of the home and Legion activities.

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.

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

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



Scholarship winners

Lenzie Buller and Ariana Stevens were selected winners of \$750 scholarships presented annually by the Steamboat City Association for graduating high school seniors from Washington and nearby. Making the presentations are Charles Landreneau, president of the association, left, and Jim Bradshaw, past president and scholarship chairman. Buller plans to major in kinesiology at UL-Lafayette. Stevens will study nursing at Grambling State University. Over the past decade, the association has distributed nearly \$25,000 in scholarships funded through donations to the nonprofit group.

PBS special will include Washington

A Public Broadcasting System special that features St. Landry Parish is scheduled for broadcast in 2024.

The special includes visits to the Steamboat Warehouse in Washington, artwork from the Creole Center in Opelousas, Tee Don's rubberboard factory in Sunset, The Academy of the Sacred Heart school campus in Grand Coteau, and the Teche Brewery near Arnaudville.

Tourist Commission marketing director Sarah Wise said a PBS film crew selected the places from a list of possible sites.

"We provided them with a list of places. After the directors did extensive research those were the locations that were chosen to highlight," Wise said.



Kid's camp

Face painting was among the activities at a camp for kids held July 17-21 at the Recreational Center here.



Vest donation

Bob Giles and Giles Automotive donated bulletproof vests to the Washington Police Department. Accepting the vests were assistant chief Easton Shelvin, detective Willie Williams, and chief William Worthy. Giles has donated over 120 bulletproof vests to law enforcement departments throughout Acadiana since 2016. “This donation by Mr. Giles and Nissan is going to assist our department in making sure that our officers are safe, and help officers with the way they feel when they go on calls,” Williams said.

Cleco franchise renewal expected

The Town Council is expected to approve a 25-year renewal of the franchise with Cleco for electric service and street lighting at its August meeting.

The council approved a resolution allowing the town to make the agreement and introduced an ordinance renewing the Cleco franchise at its July meeting. That ordinance will likely be voted on at the August 21 meeting. A public hearing will be held before final adoption.

Electricity first came to Washington in 1923, when voters approved the sale of \$32,000 in bonds “for the purpose of constructing an Electric Light and Power Plant and to improve the Water Works ... and to build a Town Hall.” The town sold its electric system in February 1927 to the Gulf Public Service Company, headquartered in New Iberia, for \$35,000. Cleco acquired that company and began providing service to Washington in April 1951.

Tompkins named to parish tourism commission

Stephanie Tompkins has been confirmed by the parish council as a member of the St. Landry Tourist Commission. She has been active in community organizations and civic affairs here for a number of years. The seven-member commission meets monthly to review policy, budget, finances, marketing plans, and programs.

From Town Hall

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 August 21. The agenda is posted on the town website beforehand.

THE TOWN’S Facebook page. Historic Washington, Louisiana, can be accessed at [townofwashington.la](https://www.facebook.com/townofwashington.la).



Take pride in your town.

Keep your trash to yourself.

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Everybody but the duck enjoyed swim contest

Nearly 1,500 people lined the banks of Bayou Courtableau in August 1922 to witness the last swimming competition of the summer held under the auspices of the Washington Chamber of Commerce.

A “swimming hole” near the Bayou Courtableau bridge was a popular place for Washington youngsters on hot summer days, and the Chamber had apparently held a competition there for several years before this one.

Events included races, a fancy diving competition, and a crowd-pleasing chase in which a duck was given a head start on the bayou and swimmers had to catch it.

“The first thing on the program was a review of all bathers and contestants, of which about forty boys and girls paraded on the banks of the Courtableau,” *the Opelousas Clarion-Progress* reported.

Next came the 25-yard dash for boys, won by Fred Wartelle, and the dash for girls, won by Hilda Karr. Wartelle also won the 100-yard dash for boys. There was no 100-yard dash for girls. Dotty Belle Merritt won the girls-only 220-yard swim.

The 440-yard swim for boys, was won by Eddie Reed, “who kept at one pace during the whole race and leading all opponents by at least ten yards.”

There were fancy diving contests for both boys and girls, but it’s not clear where they dived from. It may have been the lower part of the bridge. Henry Freed won the boys’ contest and Dotty Belle Merritt won the girls’ event. Later in the day Freed was the last performer in the swim meet, diving from the very top of the bridge, “which as it stands now is fifty-five feet from the water,” the newspaper said. He hit the water “in a straight dive ... coming to the top almost immediately.”

In the “interesting duck race ... the boys were lined up and the duck was thrown into the water,” the newspaper said. “The boys swam down the bayou for about a hundred and fifty yards before Harry Garland of Opelousas captured it.” Hilda Karr won the girls’ duck race. The account doesn’t say how far she had to swim to do it, but she was “awarded the duck for her hard work.”

In another “interesting event,” Gerald Plonsky won the prize for the boy keeping his head underwater longest. In the girls’ event, the multitasking Dottie Belle Merritt held her breath the longest.

Chamber president Dr. J. N. Brown pronounced the event a big success and said that for the next season the group “will fix up a beautiful place for the swimmers to have a good time.”



Looking Back

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