

In and about Washington

May 2024
FREE—TAKE ONE

Washington spared storm's worst damage

Much of Washington suffered about ten hours without power, but the town was otherwise spared significant damage from a tornado-laden storm that battered St. Landry Parish on April 10.

Parish government officials reported shortly after the storm abated that 68 percent of the parish was without power, and that at least 20 power poles were downed north of Washington by an EF-1 tornado (wind velocity of

65-85 mph). Another EF-1 tornado was reported at Port Barre. Falling limbs knocked down a long stretch of line on Highway 182 between Washington and Nuba.

In Washington, the roof was blown from a storage building at the Olde Wood Accents mill, fallen limbs blocked several streets, and light objects were blown from yards, but there was no major damage.

The scary storm blew hard here from about 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. A wind gust of 63 mph was recorded at the St. Landry airport just south of Washington, and one of 49.5 mph at the R&D Research facility just east of town. More than two inches of rain fell at each location.

Washington was included in tornado warnings at the peak of the storm. There are indications that a small one may have tracked between Main and Washington streets, but that it did not touch down or was not fully formed. Residents heard a whistling sound about the time the roof flew off at the sawmill.



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After the storm
Once the April 10 storm blew through, the town put on its April finery, such as these roses growing at Cedar Hill cemetery.

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Of Note

WASHINGTON BAPTIST will hold a Mother's Day service at 10 a.m. on Sunday, May 12. The church hosts a program for young people each Wednesday at 6 p.m. Pizza is served.

THE WASHINGTON Cemetery Foundation is accepting donations via the Venmo payment app. Donations may also be made by check to Washington Cemetery Foundation, P.O. Box 42, Washington 70589.

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.

THE ST. LANDRY Community Action Agency offers public transportation for qualified people weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. throughout St. Landry and Lafayette parishes. Call (337) 948-3651 for details.

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

Send items for In and About Washington to
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Garden club tea

More than 170 guests attended the Washington Garden Club high tea on April 7. Under the Big Top was the theme for the event held at the Wolff Banquet Hall. Club president Anne Jones pronounced it "a huge success."



April Antique Fair

The Antique Fair and Yard Sale at the Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall April 12-14 brought visitors to town and provided an opportunity for parishioners at Immaculate Conception church to raise money for its maintenance fund by providing parking and selling hamburgers and sweets.



AT&T changes affect Washington

AT&T is no longer accepting orders for AT&T Phone Service in Washington, but will still provide the service to those who already have it. Wireless and other services are not affected.

In a letter to customers, the company said, "Due to low ... demand for our home phone service in your area, we're no longer offering the service to new customers. New and existing customers can still take advantage of other options ... such as AT&T Wireless, AT&T Phone – Advanced, and AT&T Residential Local Service." The letter said no action is required from current customers "at this time," and that "you can continue using your home phone service as you do today."



Top, public works employees clearing storm debris; below, workers adjusting chlorine levels to maintain safe drinking water after the storm.

Workers praised for storm work

The mayor and town officials commended Washington public works employees for their work after the April 10 storm left the town’s streets strewn with limbs and its water pumps working on emergency power.

“All of us take for granted that the roads will be cleared and we will have water to cook with, bathe and drink, but this doesn’t just happen,” Mayor Dwight Landreneau said. “Our public works employees were out working to clear the streets and ditches from debris just minutes after the storm ended.”

He said town workers remained on duty until late in the night monitoring the water pumps, water wells, and the sewer lift stations.

“We had minor problems with them but these issues were handled without any interruptions to services. Also, CLECO did an outstanding job restoring services in a very professional and timely manner,” he said.

Washington’s streets were cleared by 1:30 on the afternoon of the storm, and most of the debris was hauled away the next day. Power was interrupted about 7:30 a.m. and restored before 6 p.m.

The mayor also noted that the cleanup was helped greatly by recent state and federal grants that were used to buy the needed heavy equipment.

“These are the times when the quiet work done by our legislators and other government partners shows its importance,” he said.

From Town Hall

THE TOWN COUNCIL

took up only routine matters at the April meeting. The town budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1 will likely be introduced at the next meeting.

REGULAR MEETINGS

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

THE TOWN’S Facebook

page. Historic Washington, Louisiana, can be accessed at townofwashington.la.

THE WEATHER

Forecast: Slightly warmer and wetter than average through June.

April 1-27

High: 86, April 19

Avg. High: 80.4

Low: 41, April 4

Avg. Low: 59.8

Avg. Temp: 70.1

5-year Avg. 67.2

April; Rainfall: 2.72

Avg. for April: 4.56

Rain for 2024: 21.42

20-year Avg.: 17.99



Take pride in your town.

Stash your trash.

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Most Washington French speakers weren't Acadian

There is a widespread perception that people of Acadian descent are practically the only families in south Louisiana of French descent. But most of Washington's French-speaking settlers had other roots.

Family names like Fontenot, LaFleur, Doucet, LaGrange, Bonin, Deshotel, and Brignac are of French origin and do share a tale of displacement under British rule, but they have a history quite different than that of the Cajuns. They were among the early soldier-settlers at Mobile when the Sieur d'Iberville established his first French settlement near Mobile in 1699.

These families were well established when the Treaty of Paris of 1763 gave Great Britain all of the territory east of the Mississippi River (except New Orleans) that once belonged to France. French families in the region were given the right to stay or to move to "some French colony of their choice." Most decided to leave.

A good number of them sailed to New Orleans aboard the ship Salomon in early January 1764. They were taken from there to the Pointe Coupee area, but apparently didn't like the land they were offered. Within a year, most of them had moved south into what is now St. Landry and Evangeline parishes.

A smaller coterie of former French military officers came to St. Landry some years later. One of the first of them was Joseph Paul Antoine Garrigues de Flaueac, who became an influential planter and was one of the incorporators of the company that brought the first steamboats to Washington.

He was an aristocrat from southern France, born in 1780, who had been a French officer since the age of 20. He was sent to Haiti during an uprising that pitted the British against the French there, was wounded, captured, and jailed in British-held Cuba. He was released in 1801 and sailed for France, only to be shipwrecked and rescued by a merchant ship bound for New Orleans, where he heard about opportunities in St. Landry Parish. When Louisiana became a state in 1812, he became one of its first senators, and two years later became one of the heroes of the Battle of New Orleans.

De Flaueac was among a group of French speakers who helped convince a small group of soldiers exiled after Napoleon's downfall to join him in St. Landry Parish.

One of these was Captain Pierre Gabriel Wartelle. He also first landed in New Orleans, then moved to St. Landry Parish and opened general stores in Opelousas, Ville Platte, and Lake Charles.

In 1827, he married Louisa King, daughter Judge George King, who was of one of the first American settlers in Louisiana, and they built a home near Washington at Moundville. By 1829, Wartelle, King, and de Flaueac were all sugar planters in the Moundville area, and doing well.

Niles' Weekly Register, the Baltimore news journal, reported in January that Judge King was developing a plantation and de Flaueac was "enhancing very extensively" one he'd already begun. Wartelle, meanwhile, was buying land, much of it from his father-in-law, on which to cultivate cotton and cane.



Looking Back

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