

In and about Washington

August 2024
FREE—TAKE ONE



Hotel Klaus opening Aug. 7

Hotel Klaus, the nine-room boutique hotel created from the 1870s-era Max Klaus store on Main Street, will hold its grand opening August 7, according to owner and renovator Stephen Ortego.

A ribbon cutting is planned for that morning, and an open house for the community will begin at 5 p.m.

Ortego is principal architect of SO Studio Architecture in Lafayette and has rehabilitated several historic buildings. The hotel manager is Jonathan Sebastian. Bookings are available at www.hotelklaus.com.

The hotel includes a courtyard and “plunge pool,” and there are plans to offer food and beverages in the coming year.

“Each room is designed to reflect the building’s heritage while offering modern amenities,” according to the announcement. “Throughout the hotel, guests will notice reminders of the building’s history such as an original 1870s mural discovered on the second floor, which is being restored.”

The hotel is in the center of the Historic District of Louisiana’s third oldest settlement. It was operated as a



general store until the early 1950s, and for many years housed Plantation Antiques.

\$13.1 million plant to bring jobs for locals

Southland Industrial Coatings will begin construction this month on a 100,000-square-foot, \$13.1 million plant here.

The Louisiana-based family business expects the expansion to create 120 new jobs with an average pay of more than \$50,000 a year, according to the state economic development agency. Local officials expect that at least half of those jobs will be available here in the first phase of operation, with more added later.

“This will have a major economic impact on Washington,” Mayor Dwight Landreneau said. “The creation of jobs for our young people will encourage them to stay here and will entice other families to relocate here.”

The plant will be on a site east of I-49 that was annexed into the town in 2022.

Construction will include the plant itself, an entrance road, and a 10-acre “laydown yard” to store equipment and supplies.

The company is a subsidiary of Southland Steel Fabricators, which has been in business in Louisiana for more than 30 years. Southland Coating treats poles used in the utility, transportation, and renewable energy industries, according to the announcement.

Southland CEO Joey Lombardo said that he is “grateful for working with local government” and that his company is looking forward to becoming part of Washington.

There was no immediate word on how and when job listings and applications would be available.

Company info at southlandic.com

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Of Note

CLASSES BEGIN August 8 for Washington Elementary. There will be holidays Sept. 2 and Nov. 5 for Labor Day and Election Day. The fall break will be Oct. 14-16; Thanksgiving break. Nov. 25-29; and Christmas break, Dec. 23 to Jan. 3.

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.

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

THE AMERICAN LEGION post here has set up a GoFundMe account to help repair the Legion home. The link is <https://gofund.me/027782b8>. Send checks to American Legion Post 209, P.O. Box 45, Washington, LA 70589

*Send items for In and About Washington to
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Main Street Grocery back in full operation

Norma and Andy Mahout have announced that the newly renovated and expanded Norma's Main Street Grocery, 517 Main Street, is back into full operation with a butcher, deli and fast-food service, a full line of groceries, money orders, and Powerball and Lottery tickets.

Five seeking new congressional seat

In addition to voting for U.S. president, Washington voters will select a new member of Congress on November 5.

Five candidates qualified for the seat in the newly created majority-Black 6th Congressional District. They are Quentin Anderson, Democrat, Baton Rouge; Cleo Fields, Democrat, Baton Rouge; Elbert Guillory, Republican, Opelousas; Wilken Jones Jr., Democrat, Opelousas; and Peter Williams, Democrat, Baton Rouge. There are no local races on the November ballot.



Final summer program August 2

The August 2 youth program offered by the Prairie Acadian Cultural Center will include a centennial junior ranger program, Read with a Ranger, and national park bingo. The free program for second through sixth graders will be held at the Washington recreation center on Martin Luther King from 10 a.m. to noon. Preregistration is not required.

THE WEATHER



NOAA forecast:
Hotter and wetter
than normal
through October.

July 1-27

High: 98, July 2
Avg. High: 91.5
Low: 70, July 19
Avg. Low: 73.5
Avg. Temp: 83.8
5-year Avg. 82.5
July Rainfall: 6.26
Avg. for July: 4.22
Rain for 2024: 47.00
20-year Avg.: 31.37



Grants at work

During July, public works employees set up new tables and chairs at the recreation center, top, and workers began construction of a barbeque pavilion at Joubert Park, left. Both projects were funded through a donation by Lightsource Renewable Energy Operations.



Meet to study development opportunities

The public is invited to a community meeting on August 8 to help identify development opportunities in Washington and discuss how to take advantage of them.

The Brownsfield Community Assessment meeting is planned for 5 to 7 p.m. at the community center on Veterans Memorial.

The Brownsfield initiative is a program of the federal Environmental Protection Agency and administered locally through the Acadiana Planning Commission. It is designed to “identify and evaluate areas in need of revitalization to stimulate economic growth and enhance the overall quality of life.”

Its focus is principally on “properties that are vacant or underutilized where environmental concerns are inhibiting the reuse or expanded use of the site,” according to EPA guidelines.

In some instances, grants may be available for development.

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From Town Hall

A LEGALLY required public hearing will be held before the August 19 Town Council meeting to consider the town’s property tax millage. No change is expected. The tax will remain at 6.55 mills, where it has been for the for years.

THE TOWN is buying a vacant lot adjacent to the public works facility on Dupre Street, to allow for its expansion. The \$21,000 purchase will be funded through a state appropriation.

THE TOWN may begin installing electronic water meters this month. The grant money is in hand, the engineering is complete, and the advertisement for bids has been published. Workers will also use the installation as part of a required inventory of lead pipes.

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

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

'Solid' founders built Washington's oldest business

When Washington State Bank was organized on April 11, 1893, the *St. Landry Clarion* called its founders "some of the solid men of Washington, whose reputation for enterprise, sagacity and integrity [guarantees] the success of the new bank." The prediction was right.

The bank is Washington's oldest business, the oldest bank in St. Landry Parish, and the second oldest state bank in Louisiana. It opened in a rented building on Main Street that was, according to the *Clarion*, "as near fire proof as ... possible." Unfortunately, "near" wasn't good enough. It burned in 1902 in a fire that destroyed the business district. The bank was rebuilt on the corner of Main and Carriere streets and has since weathered wars, depressions, storms, and more. In March 1950 it moved "one block south ... on the opposite side of the street."

Joseph P. Russell, the first president, was a partner in the Trainor and Russell Sash, Door, and Blind Factory on Bayou Courtableau and was called "a pioneer in the lumber industry." He was born in England in 1849, and reportedly came to America as a stowaway hiding in the hold of a ship. He was a partner in a shingle company in New Iberia before coming to Washington and returned there shortly after the bank opened, possibly because of a fire at his lumber business here.

Leon Wolff was the bank's first vice president. His store was in the Main Street building that still bears his name. He came here in 1871 from France. According to an obituary, "It was through his efforts that the Washington State Bank, always one of the stronger financial institutions of the parish, was formed." He became president of the bank after J. P. Russell returned to New Iberia.

George Washington Curtis, the first cashier, was "a pioneer teacher of scientific agriculture" at Texas A&M before moving here. He was born in Iowa and earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Iowa State College. He served as bank cashier here until 1896, leaving to become an officer of an Oklahoma railroad. Historical documents identify the home at 506 Carriere, built in 1895 and later owned by Dr. Thomas Toler, as the George Curtis House. J. G. Carriere followed Curtis as cashier.

Seaman A. Knapp, one of the first directors of the bank, was president of Iowa State when Curtis studied there and may have steered him to Washington. Knapp came to Louisiana to help build the rice industry in 1891, and is recognized as the man who established 4-H Clubs nationwide. He was a part owner of a sugar plantation on Bayou Teche, which may have been his connection with Washington.

The other two board members were Phillip Jacobs, "one of Washington's leading merchants," and Julien Claude, who owned a brick-making plant. Lewis S. Clarke, H. L. Bidstrup, T. Scott Adams Jr., Charles Antonio, and F. E. Giesecke, "all good and reliable business men," were on an advisory committee.

Sound business practices made the bank, and good marketing helped. The *Clarion* asked in March 1894, "Have you seen the pretty calendars sent out by the Washington State Bank? They are the uniquest of the kin[d] we have ever seen."



Looking Back

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Washington

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