

In and about Washington

November 2024
FREE—TAKE ONE



Architects honor work on ‘Victorian jewel’

Stephen Ortego and the SO Studio architecture team have been given an Honor Award by the Louisiana chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for renovations to Hotel Klaus.

According to AIA criteria, the Honor Award is given for “exceptional” work on projects that “establish a standard of excellence against which all architects can measure performance.”

The AIA judges called the boutique hotel on Main Street, a “Victorian jewel,” and were impressed by the research that the design team conducted.

“It’s clear that what appears to outsiders to be a common building in a common Louisiana town is actually vastly more unique,” they noted. “We were very impressed with what was retained and how respectful and refined the additions were.”

“The guest room interiors are impeccable,” the jurors said. “They exude love ... for the ... historic character of this building, but the contemporary gentle touch shows a level of refinement that’s so difficult to achieve. ... Finding this level of sophistication in [the] balance between the old and new ... [demonstrates] how the contemporary can appropriately respect and celebrate the traditional to give the highest value to both.”

According to the judges’ notes, “The project allows guests to experience a time when Washington was a thriving steamboat port. The original building [served] the town for over 100 years as a ‘pillar’ business for its community.”

Washington Elementary closure suggested

The future of Washington Elementary is again up in the air after a recommendation that it should be closed. That was one of the proposals discussed during a school board retreat October 19. Students would go to Plaisance and Palmetto under the plan, if it is adopted. No action was taken, and it was unclear if any will be.

A board study shows that it costs about \$1.3 million to operate the school each year. With an enrollment of fewer than 120 students, that amounts to about \$11,000 per student. The systemwide average is \$7,900.

Closure of the school was recommended in 2017 as part of a districtwide reorganization plan, but it remained open after a tax proposal to fund the changes was defeated.

Retired

October 3 was proclaimed Brenda Lavergne Day in

Washington to recognize the retiring principal. During her tenure Washington Elementary was



named one of the most improved schools in Louisiana. She became principal in 2017. Kyle Sylvester is now principal.

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Of Note

A VETERAN'S DAY ceremony will begin at 9 a.m. on November 9 at the American Legion home followed by the placing of a wreath at the marker on Veterans Memorial Boulevard (Highway 103).

THE AMERICAN LEGION first Saturday barbecue will be suspended until spring, but donations are needed to repair the legion home. Send checks to American Legion Post 209, P.O. Box 45, 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 WASHINGTON Cemetery Foundation accepts donations via the Venmo payment app. Donations may also be made by check to Washington Cemetery Foundation, P.O. Box 42, Washington 70589.



**Take pride in your town.
Stash your trash.**



New management

Angie and Steven O'Bryan have taken over management of Wolff Weddings & Events in the Wolff building on Main Street. The historic building housed the Wolff & Son store from the middle 1870s to the middle 1950s. It was renovated for use as a reception center about 2000. For information or to book an event contact Angie O'Bryan, managing operator, at (337) 257-8035 or aobryan@bontempsgrill.com.

Fire damages home

A fire heavily damaged the Pitre residence on East Carriere street on October 13. It appeared to have started in the garage area and spread quickly. Nobody was hurt.



THE WEATHER



NOAA forecast: Continued hotter and drier than usual through November.

October 1-27

High: 91, Oct. 14

Avg. High: 84.7

Low: 37, Oct. 17

Avg. Low: 56.6

Avg. Temp: 70.6

5-year Avg. 70.8

Oct. Rainfall: 0.01

Avg. for Oct.: 4.40

Rain for 2024: 52.26

20-year Avg.: 43.91



Turns 105

Mathilda Comeaux, Washington's oldest resident, celebrated her 105th birthday in October.

New location

CrossPoint Church is now located at 217 Highway 745. Worship services begin at 11 a.m. each Sunday. All are welcome to attend.



Filled to capacity

A beautiful fall day brought a crowd to Washington for the Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall antique sale on Saturday, October 12, filling every parking spot at the Immaculate Conception church lot and

The annual holiday concert and the judging of Christmas decorations will be held early in December, and the annual Christmas in Washington celebration will be December 14.

The free community concert sponsored annually by the Washington Garden Club will be held on December 7 at the old St. John’s Episcopal Church on Church Street.



There will be a Christmas decorating contest for both businesses and residences again this year. Applications will be available at Town Hall beginning on November 12. The garden club will

coordinate the competition and judging.

The annual Christmas festival that has helped open the holiday season each year since 2020 will be held this year from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on December 14.

Blighted properties cited

Seven Washington properties have been signified as blighted and the owners have been told to fix or demolish them.

The properties involved are at 416 East Gordon St., 337 Martin Luther King Dr., 337 West Hill St., 114 Carron St., 314 Buhot St., 402 East Gordon St., and the corner of Carron and West Vine streets.

If the owners do not act, the town can have the buildings removed and add the cost to the owners’ tax bills.

Voting is November 5

Town offices will be closed November 5, election day, when the poll at Town Hall will be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Races for president and congress and a constitutional amendment are on the ballot. A sample ballot is available online from the Secretary of State, sos.la.gov. Click on Elections and Voting, then Get Election Information, then Review Sample Ballots.

The Washington Town Hall is precinct 00/06 in St. Landry Parish.

From Town Hall

A BURN BAN has been in effect in St. Landry Parish since October 16 and will continue until further notice. The ban applies to all activities involving an open flame that produces embers. The ban was recommended by the state climatologist because of extremely dry



Certified

Town Clerk Halli Polotzola, right, was recognized by state clerk’s association president Veronica Arceneaux as a Louisiana Certified Municipal Clerk. She completed a three-year course focused on all aspects of town operations.

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Connecting to civilization was neither quick nor cheap

A network of telegraph lines crisscrossed the nation in the 1840s, but it took another decade for a serious push to get the wires to Washington and decades more for it to happen. Newspaper editors thought in 1852 that it would be just a few months before we were connected, but that was a bit optimistic. It took 25 years.

The agent for the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Telegraph Company visited Washington just before Christmas 1852 to promote a link to connect New Orleans, Alexandria, and Shreveport. All that was needed was for St. Landry citizens to come up with \$5,000 – more than \$200,000 in today's money – to finance the deal.

That didn't happen, but in May 1853 the *Opelousas Courier* said another company, the New Orleans, Red River, and Texas Telegraph planned to link New Orleans and Shreveport, and that there was "a good chance" that its lines would run through Washington.

The new company's agent visited in August, and promised that the line would run through Washington and on to Alexandria – if there was enough community support. The *Courier* correctly predicted that "the spirited citizens of [Washington] will make up the [\$4,000] to secure an office there." Washington pledged its \$4,000 by mid-December, but Opelousas pledged only \$2,000, which was "not sufficient."

An office was opened in Grand Coteau in September 1854, but it was only to promote the project. Poles were put up from New Iberia to Grand Coteau, but no wire was strung on them. An office was also opened in Opelousas and some wire delivered to the area, but that office was closed in 1855, when "Mr. Pefferkorn, Boot and Shoe Maker" moved his business into the "late telegraph office."

About the same time, the *Opelousas Patriot* complained that wires in St. Landry were "down in many places ... stretched across the road, or in loose rolls in the road," and "horses are in constant danger of becoming entangled."

Those lines were picked up, and none were again seen here until 20 years later, when the *Courier* was cautiously optimistic that the new Louisiana Telegraph Company presented "a fair prospect of our having a telegraph here at last." The company planned a line through Opelousas and Washington, to link to those stretching north and west from Alexandria.

This time it actually happened. Low water kept boats from reaching Washington in early 1877, but on May 21 the *Lessie Taylor* finally steamed up to our landing carrying "the wire to complete the line of the Washington and Opelousas Telegraph." The *St. Landry Democrat* proclaimed, "we will [soon] be connected with the civilized world."

Connecting with civilization wasn't cheap. It cost 35 cents for the first 10 words sent from Washington to Opelousas, plus 2 cents per word after that. The price was 50 cents plus 4 cents for a message to Grand Coteau or Vermilionville, and a dollar for the first 10 words plus 9 cents for each one after that for a wire to New Orleans.



Looking Back

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