

In and about Washington

February 2025
FREE—TAKE ONE



The snow was pretty, temperature brutal

Snow from what weather officials described as the biggest south Louisiana storm in 100 years blanketed Washington January 21 and stayed for several cold, cold days. More than 7 inches fell in some parts of town, with deeper drifts. The storm also brought record cold weather.

Snow fell from about 4:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. The thermometer did not rise above freezing during the day January 21 and plummeted to a record 3 degrees at the St. Landry airport just south of town before daybreak January 22. The old record was 8 degrees in 1989.

The powdery snow did not cause ice accumulation on limbs or electric lines and we kept power, but garbage collection was disrupted. Mayor Dwight Landreneau said there were no serious problems here and commended the public works department for “a great job of preparing for the cold weather.”



Some recent snowfalls

- Jan. 1, 2001: About an inch accumulated
- Dec. 11, 2008: Six inches fell overnight
- Feb. 12, 2010: Began about 6 a.m.; melted quickly
- Jan. 24, 2014: Just a dusting in the early morning
- Jan. 28, 2014: Second snow in a week blanketed town for 3 days; overnight temperatures in the teens
- Dec. 8, 2017: Fell overnight, melted by noon

Washington Community Festival March 22

Plans are well under way for the Washington Community Festival set for March 22 at the Town Pavilion.

Headliners will be Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys and Don Fontenot et Les Amis De La Louisiane. There will also be a Cajun/Creole jam session with Mark Ardoin for aspiring musicians.

A plant sale sponsored by the Washington Garden Club will be added this year to the food, drink, and crafts on sale during the day.

Vintage and classic cars and trucks will again be on display. For car show registration contact Greg Doucet, (337) 945-1531, or Ricky Ducote, (337) 945-3426. Food and merchandise vendors should call Town Hall, (337) 826-3626.

The festival is overseen by the Steamboat City Association but is planned and staged by volunteers. Call Town Hall if you want to help.

2-In and about Washington, February 2025

Of Note

SOUTHLAND Industrial Coatings has indicated that it may begin the hiring process late this month or in March for the plant going up near the I-49-Hwy. 103 intersection.

THE AMERICAN LEGION is still asking for donations to help repair the legion home. Send them to American Legion Post 209, P.O. Box 45, Washington 70589.

WASHINGTON BAPTIST hosts a youth program each Wednesday at 6 p.m.

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

WASHINGTON WEATHER



February forecast: Mild temperatures, rain near average.

January 1-27

High: 76, Jan. 5
Avg. High: 56.1
Low: 3, Jan. 22
Avg. Low: 36.4
Avg. Temp: 46.2
5-year Avg. 51.3
Jan. Rainfall: 2.38
Avg. for Jan.: 4.62
Rain for 2024: 62.18
20-year Avg.: 54.38



St. Landry Mardi Gras events

From chicken runs and parades to ornate dances and culinary events, St. Landry Parish has plenty of ways to celebrate the Mardi Gras season. Here are some dates to keep in mind:

February 8 – Lebeau festival and parade, 1 p.m.

February 8 – Opelousas Imperial Mardi Gras Ball, 6 p.m., Yambilee building.

February 16 – Sunset Kidz Wagon Parade, 10 a.m., Napoleon Avenue.

March 1 – Eunice Lil' Mardi Gras, 3 p.m., Sittig Street recreation complex.

March 4 – Opelousas parade, 11 a.m., downtown.

March 4 – Opelousas Zyde Gras, 2 p.m., Courthouse Square.

March 4 – Courir de Mardi Gras, 3 p.m., downtown Eunice.



Expansion completed

The new addition to Norma's Main Street Grocery is now completed and in addition to a greater selection of grocery items, the store is serving plate lunches, hamburgers, fried chicken, chicken tenders, and other fast foods.



Clearing Bayou Carron bridge

Parish President Jessie Bellard took the controls of a scraper himself to help clear ice and snow from roads and bridges, including the Bayou Carron bridge in Washington, after the cold January 21 storm.

Main Street speaker February 13

A representative of the Louisiana Main Street program will speak at Town Hall at 5:30 p.m. on February 13 about the benefits and requirements of becoming a Main Street community; The national program encourages economic development in towns with historic downtown areas.



“A Washington Main Street program can assist with developing a master plan, help business and property owners with improvements, and oversee any projects we feel would help the town thrive (like development of Bayou Courtableau for eco-tourism),” according to program organizer Hallie Coreil.

Louisiana has several Main Street communities, including Opelousas, Eunice, and St. Francisville.

Electronic meter work moving ahead

Work is advancing on installation of electronic water meters in Washington. The firm of Core & Main was awarded the contract to install them in September. Its low bid of \$324,495 was some \$67,000 less than the second lowest submitted by Construction Pro. Core & Main is based in St. Louis and has a branch in Baton Rouge.

Town and company officials met in January to lay out the replacement process, which should begin in the next several months, according to mayor Dwight Landreneau.

From Town Hall

THE FRIGID WEATHER

caused cancellation of the January Town Council meeting that was scheduled for January 21.

THE AGENDA called for reappointment of public works supervisor Jimmy Alfred, town clerk Haili Polotzola, town attorney Steven (Buzz) Durio, magistrate Ben Trant and Kolder Slaven and Company as CPAs and auditors.

REGULAR MEETINGS of the 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.



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

4-In and about Washington, February 2025

Licenses reflected town's busy businesses

When the town government adopted a schedule of license fees for businesses in Washington in January 1870, it reflected a busy town described in a newspaper account only a few months earlier as “destined to become ... one of the most flourishing inland commercial towns in the state.”

The flourishing town had three steamboat warehouses, two large wholesale grocers, and 26 general merchandise stores, “all of which are doing a heavy and prosperous business,” according to the optimistic account in October 1869.

The list of licenses gives a bigger picture. The most expensive were for coffee houses (which served more than coffee), at \$50.50, with another \$25.50 for each billiard table. Those were pretty hefty fees. An 1870 dollar would be the equivalent of about \$25 today; a \$50 license would now cost \$1,250. Hotels, taverns, and livery stables also paid \$25.50 each. Oyster shops and restaurants paid \$10.50, as did private boarding houses.

Most tradesmen also paid \$10.50. The Washington list included brickmakers, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, silversmiths, watchmakers, painters, glaziers, carpenters, undertakers (who were carpenters who made coffins), wheelwrights, barbers, milliners, and saddle and harness shops. Lawyers, doctors, and dentists also paid \$10.50. Bakers had to pay \$15.50; so did peddlers. General stores paid \$20.50. Most specialty stores paid \$15.50. Those included drug stores, furniture stores, and printing offices, but jewelry stores only paid \$12.50.

Steamboat warehouses were licensed for \$25.50; licenses for the boats that visited them went for eight cents per ton. Most of the steamers that called here were rated between 150 and 200 tons, so licenses ranged generally between \$12 and \$20. Barges paid \$5.50 for each trip to town.

Circuses and menageries had to pay \$25.50 for every visit, plus \$7.50 for “each side show appertaining thereto.” Theaters, concerts, and exhibitions “of any kind” also paid \$7.50. Public balls “given with written permission from the President of the Board of Police” paid a \$5.50 fee. The Board of Police was the equivalent of the Town Council.

Each “carriage, hack, omnibus, wagon, or cart” used for hire was licensed for \$10.50. Drovers of horses, mules, or cattle “stopping in this town for the purposes of selling same” were charged \$15.50. Cattle pens had to pay \$10.50.

Every business needed a license, even if somebody owned more than one establishment, and the permits could not be “transferred or sold ... to any person who has not himself taken a license.”

Nobody seemed to mind the fees, and the license money helped fix up the town. The writer who visited in October 1869 summarized, “The municipal authorities are now taking active steps toward the improvement of the town generally. The streets are being placed in a fine condition, and the sidewalks repaired. The citizens ... are improving their dwelling houses and mercantile establishments. Paint and white wash are being more generally used, and several houses are being enlarged and repaired. Indeed, on visiting Washington one perceives at once the evidences of prosperity.”



Looking Back

In and About
Washington

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