

# In and about Washington

June 2023  
FREE—TAKE ONE

## Size, character bringing notice to Washington

Washington is catching the eye of home buyers and investors who have noticed a spate of renovations of old homes, quick turnaround when homes go on the market, and business expansion.

Mayor Dwight Landreneau and several local business leaders report that people from elsewhere are asking: “What’s going on in Washington?”

What’s going on, according to knowledgeable people, is a small town is taking advantage of being a small town.

Liz Regard, who has invested in two homes on Carriere Street and another on Kavanaugh, said that she researched property here for several years and continues to see potential in Washington. She likes the historic homes and the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere of a small town and thinks others are finding that attractive. “More people in big cities are becoming attracted to Washington, where life is easier and simpler,” she said. “It shows that people who live here take pride in their town.”

That mirrors comments made during a talk here several years ago by architect Steve Oubre, developer of River Ranch in Lafayette. He said he found in Washington things he’s tried to create in other places – an environment that is “friendlier to people than automobiles, a community where one still finds a sense of place, and a town that was formed when common sense was still in vogue.”

Regard said she continues to keep an eye on real estate in Washington, noting that two homes were on the market at the end of the month, predicting “they won’t be on the market for long.”



### On the grow

Top, Main Street Grocery has begun an expansion that will nearly double the size of the store. Center, Precision Construction Group is doing extensive renovations to the home at the corner of Carriere and Washington Streets. Bottom, this home at 316 Carriere is one of several renovations by investor Liz Regard.

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### Of Note

**THE AMERICAN LEGION** will sell barbecue dinners at the Legion home from 10 a.m. to noon on the first Saturday of each month beginning June 3. An \$11 plate will include chicken or pork steak, rice dressing, a vegetable, and dessert. Drinks will be available for sale. Proceeds will be used for repair and maintenance of the home and Legion activities.

**SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH**, 419 Buhot Street, will hold Vacation Bible School from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. June 12-14. Classes are for elementary school through adults. Refreshments will be served. Contact Donald Robinson Sr., 337 308-1692.

**EVANGELIST** Lyndon Longoria will preach at Washington Baptist at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 25.

**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, Bridge St. at Martin Luther King.

Send items for *In and About Washington* to  
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### Scholarship donation

Cleco representative Sabrina Salling presented a \$750 check to Mayor Dwight Landreneau to help fund scholarships offered by the Steamboat City Association for graduating high school seniors from Washington and nearby. Looking on are Anne Jones, treasurer, Hailie Polotzola, secretary, and Jim Bradshaw, scholarship chairman. Application deadline is June 30. For information and applications, contact Bradshaw at P.O. Box 1121, Washington 70589, or jimbradshaw4321@gmail.com.



### Butterfly effort

Stephanie Tompkins released monarch butterflies as part of a local project to sustain their dwindling population. Mayor Dwight Landreneau has joined with mayors across the nation in a pledge initiated by the National Wildlife Federation to maintain the butterfly's habitat at parks and other public places, and urges citizens to do so at their residences and businesses.



### Honored

Sara Soileau has been recognized with the Washington Garden Club's Lifetime Achievement Award. She has been a member for some 30 years, during which she "unselfishly shared her time, talent, and treasure," the club said.



### More grant money at work

Gas tanks were removed from the old Meche’s Mobil station on Main Street using funds from the federal Brownfields program that gives grants and technical assistance to communities to safely mitigate environmental hazards and from the state Department of Environmental Quality.

Over the past three years, the town has received or facilitated grants totaling nearly \$2 million for needed improvements, and others are currently pending for upgrades of water meters and other projects.



### Propane available

A propane distribution system has been installed at the Ponderosa Camp Grounds on Veterans Memorial near the I-49 intersection. An operator on the premises will respond promptly when the number posted on the site is called.

### From Town Hall

#### THE TOWN COUNCIL

meeting for June has been moved to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, June 20 due to the Juneteenth holiday. The council usually meets each third Monday.

**A PUBLIC HEARING** will be held at 5:45 p.m. on June 20 on the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1 and on ordinances making changes to laws on public records requests, slow-moving traffic, and the traffic fine schedule.

**THE TOWN** property tax will be kept at 6.55 mills for the coming fiscal year.

**THE COUNCIL** authorized the sale of three surplus vehicles by auction through LaMats, Louisiana Municipal Advisory and Technical Services Bureau. Details are at [lamats.net/bidding](http://lamats.net/bidding).

#### THE WEATHER May 1-27



High: 92, May 15  
Average High: 84.9  
Low: 51, May 2  
Average Low: 65.7  
May Rainfall: 5.48  
Avg. for Month: 4.52  
Rain for 2023: 28.10  
Avg. Yearly: 26.80

## Lawsuit over monopoly brought boats to Washington

The legislation that gave the Opelousas Steam Boat Company the right to operate the first steamboat on Bayou Courtableau also gave it a 10-year monopoly on trade on the bayou, but that didn't last long.

The *Opelousas*, the first boat, ended its maiden voyage to New Orleans on April 9, 1826, carrying 13 passengers and 159 bales of cotton. After that, the New Orleans newspapers list the boat's arrival at approximately two-week intervals. Old ledgers show that the boat turned out to be a good investment. After just nine months of operation, it generated \$22,314 in income with only \$1,850 in expenses. That was enough to recoup all but \$300.90 of what the company spent to build and outfit the boat.

Those numbers caught the eye of Levi Wilson, commander of the steamer *Dolphin*, who thought, monopoly or no monopoly, he would horn in on the *Opelousas's* business.

Between July 10, 1826, and April 4, 1827, Wilson made several trips to Washington, where he reportedly had the audacity not only to thumb his nose at the other boat's exclusive rights, but to tie up the *Dolphin* at the *Opelousas's* landing. That did not sit well with the *Opelousas's* owners.

The inevitable lawsuit was filed in the St. Landry court on May 1, 1827, and District Attorney Luke Lesassier represented the Opelousas Steam Boat Company. Attorney Rice Garland represented Wilson, arguing that the monopoly law violated not only the U.S. Constitution but federal customs regulations.

The judge agreed with Wilson. The Opelousas company appealed to the state supreme court, which upheld Wilson's argument on October 11, 1827, breaking the monopoly and radically changing the steamboat industry west of the Mississippi. Anybody could jump into the business on Bayou Courtableau, and at least a half-dozen boats did.

Other boats calling on Washington in the 1820s and 1830s included *Integrity* (1829), *Planet* (1832), *Woodman* (1832), *Black Hawk* (1833), *Niagara* (1833), *St. Landry* (1834), and *Nashville* (1839). The sidewheeler *Semaphore* was built at Washington in 1835 to operate between Washington and New Orleans.

By 1836, when the Church Landing settlement was incorporated as the town of Washington it was well on its way to becoming the busiest port in south Louisiana. Big warehouses lined the bayou and were filled with enough incoming or outgoing cargo to make good money for the fleet of steamboats.

On February 12, 1839, the *New Orleans Daily Picayune* reported that the steamer *Manchester*, which was involved in the Bayou Courtableau trade, generated income totaling \$30,000 in just the five-months that the Courtableau had enough water to allow navigation that year. That would be nearly \$1 million in today's money.



### Looking Back

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