

# In and about Washington

December 2023  
FREE—TAKE ONE



Volunteers put more than 2,000 lights on the town's new 20-foot Christmas tree. Funded through the Steamboat City Association, it was lit November 21 at the Town Pavilion to open the holiday season.

## Festivities open the holidays here

The Christmas in Washington celebration December 9 will highlight the opening of a holiday season that includes a community concert, decorations throughout the town, and more.

The free community concert featuring the Opelousas Queen of Angels Choir is sponsored annually by the Washington Garden Club. It will be held at 6 p.m. on December 2 at the old St. John's Episcopal Church.

Applications are available at Town Hall for the Christmas decorating contest for both businesses and residences. Judging will be held during the first week of the month.

## Washington among most improved schools

Washington Elementary has been listed as one of Louisiana's most improved schools in rankings released by the Louisiana Department of Education on November 13.

The state has issued school performance scores based on student achievement data since 1999, assigning letter grades from A to F.

Washington Elementary improved its score by 13.9 points, moving it from an overall "D" grade last year to a "C" this year. The St. Landry Parish school system raised its grade by about 3 points to retain a "C" ranking.



**Saturday, December 9**  
**Town Pavilion**  
**10 a.m. to 7 p.m.**

### Live Music

Angelic Choir 10 a.m. to noon

Southwinz 1 to 3 p.m.

Don Fontenot 5 to 7 p.m.

### Kid's Corner

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Games, face painting, balloon art

### Pictures with Santa

1 to 3 p.m.

Featuring Mrs. Claus and Buddy the Elf

### Train Rides

2 to 4 p.m.

### Holiday Cheer

Local arts and crafts, home cooking, holiday T shirts hot cocoa, espresso, adult beverages

**Merry Christmas  
To All**

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### Of Note

**THE THIRD** annual Maestro Foundation holiday toy giveaway will be from noon to 2 p.m. on December 23 at the Washington Recreation Center on Martin Luther King Dr. Donations are welcome.

### IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Church will hold a three-night mission December 12-14, beginning at 6 p.m. each evening. It will be led by Karlo Broussard of Catholic Answers.

### THE WASHINGTON BAPTIST

Christmas backpacks ministry will begin at 10 a.m. on Saturday, December 2.

### THE WASHINGTON

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

### THE AMERICAN LEGION

post here has set up a GoFundMe account to help repair the Legion Home. The link is <https://gofund.me/027782b8>.

### 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.



### Mural, whistle reminders of steamboat days

Washington's new steamboat mural was formally introduced with the first official toot of the town's new steamboat whistle at a gathering at the Town Pavilion November 21.

The mural on the Main Street side of the pavilion was done by artist Jerome Ford and funded by the St. Landry Parish Tourist Commission. The custom-made whistle atop the pavilion was funded by Washington State Bank. It will be blown at 6 p.m. daily.

Both commemorate Washington's history as a steamboat port. The town was once one of the most important ports between New Orleans and St. Louis between 1830, when the steamboat *Opelousas* blew the first whistle heard here, and 1900, when the *Warren* was the last steamer to visit.

The syrup, molasses, lumber, and cotton industries along the banks of Bayou Boeuf and Bayou Courtableau formed the basis for export trade, and steamboats from New Orleans brought everything from fresh fruit to fine linens.



### Squirrel cookoff

Nineteen contestants participated in the annual squirrel cookoff October 21 at Willie's Campground on Bayou Courtableau. Proceeds will benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

### Still too dry

We got a bit of rain in November, but not enough. We remain in a significant drought.

### THE WEATHER

#### November 1-27

High: 86. Nov. 7, 9  
Average High: 67.6  
Low: 28. Nov. 2  
Average Low: 46.7  
Average Temp: 57.1  
Nov. Rainfall: 1.24  
Avg. for Nov.: 3.52  
Rain for 2023: 38.84  
20-year Avg.: 50.56



**Landreneau named to 4-H Hall of Fame**

Mayor Dwight Landreneau has been named to the Louisiana 4-H Hall of Fame. He was St. Landry Parish 4-H agent and county agent from 1975 to 1980. He was cited particularly for his leadership in building awareness and support for the program and for his continued financial support.

**Audit shows improving finances**

Washington’s finances are continuing to get better, auditor Burton Kolder said at the November Town Council meeting. “You are continuing to make progress here in Washington,” he said.

The budget for the fiscal year that ended June 30 anticipated \$1,700,438 in regular revenues and expenses of \$1,766,136. Actual revenues were less than \$7,000 short of the budget and actual expenses were about \$35,000 more. Those differences were made up by money not included in the regular budget, giving the town an overall surplus of \$73,901 for the fiscal year.

“Washington is on a positive trend,” Kolder said. “This is the third year in a row with a surplus.”

Old debt that had accrued to some \$700,000 by 2019 has been slowly reduced to \$210,000,

**Veterans remembered**



The Washington Garden Club hosted a Veterans Day ceremony and placed a wreath at the Blue Star Memorial Highway marker on Veterans Memorial Boulevard. The markers pay tribute to the armed forces. The National Council of State Garden Clubs started the program after World War II. The marker was placed here May 28, 1994.

**From Town Hall**

**WATER AND SEWER**

charges may be adjusted when the leak is on your side of the meter under a policy approved by the Town Council. You must promptly notify the town when your bill shows “an exceptional unexplained increase in consumption” that a license plumber or town worker has validated, and you can prove that the leak has been repaired.

Adjustments will cover no more than two consecutive months Details are available at Town Hall.

**THE TOWN** will no longer use Avenue & Insights for occupational license applications. They will be handled at Town Hall.

**ALCOHOL PERMIT**

renewal notices will go out this month and must be returned to Town Hall by December 31.

**RICKY DUCOTE** and

Donald Robinson have been reappointed as Washington representatives on the Fire District 3 board **TOWN HALL** will be closed December 25 and 26 and January 1 and 2 for the Christmas and New Year holidays.

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## It only took 20 years to get a gas line to Washington

Washington has had its own natural gas system since 1947, but it took a few tries to get it here. The town first granted a 25-year franchise to the City State Investment Company in 1927 to “establish, construct, maintain, extend and operate a system ... [for] furnishing gas for power, heat, light, and other purposes.” The Illinois-based company was moving aggressively into Louisiana at the time, getting franchises in several south Louisiana communities.



Its plan was to pipe gas from Texas to Lake Charles, from there to Opelousas, and from there to Washington. Our ordinance called for it to supply gas “through common carrier pipe lines to be extended from ... plants at Opelousas or other ... plants established in this section of the state.”

### *Looking Back*

Unfortunately, the company ran out of money before it got a line to Opelousas, let alone Washington. That left Washington without a supplier until 1930, when the town gave the Moody-Seagrave Gas Company the franchise to build and operate a system. Moody-Seagrave had gas wells in Texas, and it also planned to build a pipeline that they promised to get to Washington by the end of 1931. Once again, the company was overly ambitious.

The *Opelousas Clarion-News* reported on September 18, 1930, that at least 45 towns in southwestern and central Louisiana had contracted with Moody-Seagraves for their gas supplies. This time it appears money ran out before work even got started. The newspaper reported a few months later, in January 1931, that United Gas (which took over from Moody-Seagrave) would build an office in Opelousas in anticipation of lines reaching there in the not-too-distant future. Survey crews would then begin to look at Washington and Church Point, both of which would be served by lines branching from Opelousas.

United did get lines built, but not to Washington. Gas had not reached here by the spring of 1940, when the Louisiana Public Service Commission announced rate reductions for 35 south Louisiana communities served by the company. The list included Opelousas and Church Point, but not Washington.

Finally, in 1946, Washington decided that if the town was going to have a gas system, it would have to build one. Voters approved a \$75,000 bond issue to put down mains in town and connect to Opelousas, but instead of a gas company building a line from there to here, Washington had to pay to build one from here to there.

On January 26, 1946, the Opelousas town council granted a right-of-way for Washington to build “natural gas transmission and distribution lines over, under, along, through and across the streets, bridges and other public places of the city.” By March 30, 1947, all of the mains in Washington were finished and Shreveport contractor Tom Mitchell’s crews were “making rapid progress” in laying a line to connect them with the United Gas supply in Opelousas.

Finally, in a brief ceremony at 8 o’clock on the evening of June 16, 1947, Mayor Julian Wolff turned a valve and, in the words of the *Clarion-News*, “another modern and up-to-date improvement was put into operation” for more than 200 homes and businesses in Washington.

In and About  
Washington

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