

In and about Washington

March 2024
FREE—TAKE ONE

Community festival promises a good time on March 23

“It’s a Good Time in the Old Town” will again be the theme for the annual Washington Community Festival set in and around the Town Pavilion on March 23.

Three bands are scheduled during the day, including Matthew Ewing & The All Star Band, Gerard Delafosse & The Zydeco Gators, and Don Fontenot et Les Amis De La Louisiane. Deejays will provide music between bands.

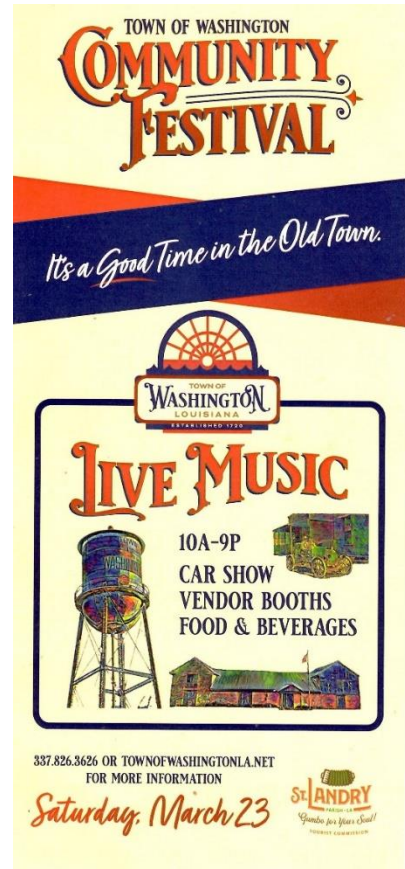


First, second, and third prizes will be awarded in a car show held in conjunction with the festival and vintage cars will be displayed near the pavilion. For information call Greg Doucet, (337) 945-1531, or Ricky Ducote, (337) 945-3426.

Teams will also compete again this year in a Catfish Cookoff. Teams can set up and begin cooking between 8 and 10 a.m. The judging will be at noon. Cookoff applications can be picked up at Town Hall. The deadline for registration is March 15.

The festival itself begins at 10 a.m. with an opening ceremony. Vendors may begin setting up at 7 a.m. The pavilion parking lot and surrounding streets will be blocked off at 8 a.m. March 23 is also the date of the presidential party primary election. The festival traffic flow will be set up to accommodate voting at Town Hall. (See map, Page 3)

The events are put together by volunteers working through the nonprofit Steamboat City Association. A grant from the St. Landry Tourist Commission paid for promotion materials. Washington State Bank volunteers handle the money collected. For information about becoming a vendor or sponsor, or to volunteer to work, call Ann Jones at Town Hall, (337) 826-3626.



Festival Schedule

- 8 a.m. – Pavilion lot closed to vehicles, cookoff teams start cooking
- 10 a.m. – Opening ceremony
- 10:15-11 a.m. – Deejay music
- 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. – Matthew Ewing & The All Star Band
- 1 – 2 p.m. – Deejay music
- 2 p.m. - Cookoff and car show winners announced
- 3 – 3:30 p.m. – Deejay music
- 3:30 – 6:30 p.m. – Gerard Delafosse & The Zydeco Gators
- 7 – 9 p.m. – Don Fontenot et Les Amis De La Louisiane

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Of Note

THE ST. LANDRY Community Action Agency offers public transportation for qualified people weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. throughout St. Landry and Lafayette parishes. Call (337) 948-3651 for details.

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 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

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.

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



Coats donated

Town council member Tanya Doucet donated 17 coats to children at Washington Elementary just in time for the cold weather in January. Principal Brenda Lavergne accepted the donation.

Garden Club High Tea set April 7

“Under the Big Top” will be the theme for the Washington Garden Club High Tea at the Wolff Banquet and Reception Hall on April 7.

Tickets are \$40 each and are available at Leger’s Country Market in Washington, Sebastien Dupre Fine Jewelry in Opelousas, or from garden club members.



Antique Fair next month

The spring Antique Fair and Yard Sale will be April 12-14 at the Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall.



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Festival traffic

Voting in the presidential primary is scheduled at Town Hall on March 23, the same day as the Washington Community Festival. Voters can get to Town Hall from the Main Street stoplight and return to Main Street on Veterans' Memorial.

Roaming dogs are against the law

Recent calls to St. Landry Animal Control have prompted the reminder to dog owners that town law requires that they "shall confine the dog to property owned or controlled by him or her," using "a substantial fence or similar structure of sufficient strength and height to prevent the dog from escaping," or by a leash that will hold the dog but "be long enough to permit the dog to have reasonable exercise."

Dogs must be on leashes when they are off the owner's property. The ordinance sets substantial fines for violators.



Spring spruce-up

The floors at the Recreation Center and at the Community Center have been cleaned and given a fresh coat of wax as part of an effort to spruce up the town's facilities.

From Town Hall

THE TOWN COUNCIL

approved reappointment of administrative staff and consultants for the coming year. Halli Polotzola will continue as town clerk and Jimmy Alfred will remain public works supervisor. Also reappointed were Chris Granger, town attorney; Ben Trant, magistrate of the town court; and Burton Kolder, CPA and auditor.

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. This month's meeting will be on March 18.



Take pride in your town.

Stash your trash.

Washington got first dial phones in 1950

Telephones apparently came late to Washington. The Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Company was established in Opelousas in 1905, and advertised that the company's lines "enable you to talk to almost anywhere in Southern Indiana, Southern Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi and Louisiana," but that seemed not to include Washington.

Our first exchange was apparently established in the late 1920s or early 1930s. The Washington Board of Aldermen adopted an ordinance in March 1928, "authorizing the Louisiana Telephone Company to use the public streets of the Town of Washington ... for the purpose of placing poles and electrical conductors thereon."

The ordinance gave a 25-year franchise to the company "to erect, operate and maintain lines of telephone and telegraph, including the necessary poles, fixtures ... provided that all poles shall be neat and symmetrical." The phone company also had to fix any sidewalk or street that was damaged or had to be moved or enlarged, and had to provide one free cross-arm on each pole for the telegraph wires used by the town's fire and police alarms.

It's not clear how long the company took to do the work, but the phones were in operation at least by early 1931, when Board of Alderman minutes reflect payment of a \$4.50 bill for a month's service.

A 25-year franchise would allow the Louisiana Telephone Company to operate here until 1953, but it seems to have sold out before then. Southern Bell bought the system in July 1950 from the Southern States Telephone Company. Bell said the sale had been "negotiated at the request of some of the Washington businessmen."

There were about 150 phones in Washington when Bell bought the local system. The census for 1950 reported 1,291 people here, so that meant one phone for every eight residents. They were apparently connected to a central switchboard like the one most people know about nowadays through television reruns when Sheriff Andy Taylor asks Sarah the operator to connect him to someone.

Southern Bell said it would immediately run a line from Washington to Opelousas to merge the two systems and allow dial telephones to be installed here for the first time. Bell expected the improvement to bring at least 50 new customers to the system over the next year.

I.A. Gashia, Southern Bell manager in Opelousas, said calls between Washington and Opelousas would not be long-distance, but that calls to Beggs and Grand Prairie would be. Those two communities were linked from Washington by what was called a "rural telephone line."

He said more than 300 new poles would be placed over a distance of 6½ miles to link the towns. A later report by Gulf Coast Line Construction, which did the work, was more specific. It said the link involved 1,715 feet of buried cable and 32,936 feet of aerial cable, strung on 307 poles with 80 anchors, 84 guys, 164 cross-arms, and 165 miles of open wire.



Looking Back

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Washington

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