

# In and about Washington

April 2025  
FREE—TAKE ONE



## Spring brings another good time to the old town

The first weekend of Spring brought a beautiful day and a good crowd to Washington for the annual community festival that offered great food and music, a popular car show, and a general good time for our families and visiting friends.



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### Of Note



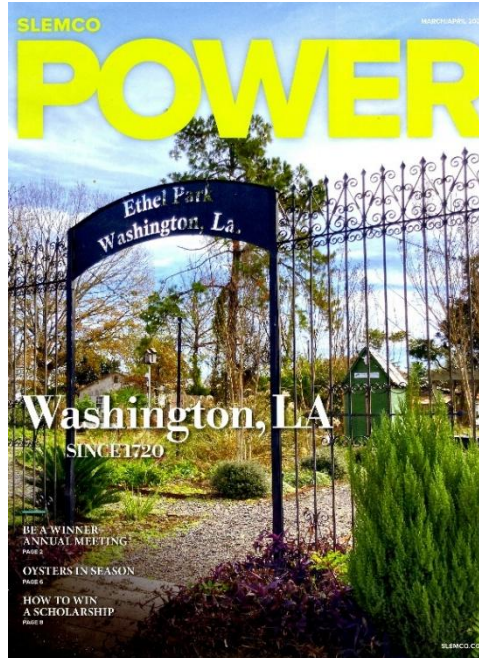
**THE SPRING** Antique Fair and Yard Sale will be held April 11 through 14 at the Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall. A recent study shows that it and the fall fair held each October were among the leading events that brought thousands of visitors to Washington in 2024.

**WAY OF THE CROSS** devotions will be held at Immaculate Conception after the 5:30 p.m. Mass each Friday during Lent.

**THE DEADLINE** for graduating high school seniors to apply for a Steamboat City Association scholarship is June 30. Applications are available at [steamboatcityassociation@gmail.com](mailto:steamboatcityassociation@gmail.com).

**THE AMERICAN LEGION** is still seeking donations to help repair and maintain the legion home. Send checks to American Legion Post 209, P.O. Box 45, Washington LA 70589.

**YOU CAN DONATE** to the Washington Cemetery Foundation via the Venmo payment app or by check to P.O. Box 42, Washington LA 70589.



### WASHINGTON WEATHER

April is forecast to be warmer and wetter than average.

#### March 1-27

High: 84, March 25

Avg. High: 70.2

Low: 32, March 21

Avg. Low: 47.8

Avg. Temp: 59.0

5-Year Avg: 65.5

March Rainfall: 2.02

Avg. for March: 3.97

Rain for 2025: 9.76

20-Year Avg: 12.64

### Magazine spotlights Washington

“Small Town, Big Vision,” is the headline for a feature article about Washington in the March/April edition of SLEMCO Power magazine.

The article focuses on the Hotel Klaus renovations, the soon-to-open Southland plant, and the town’s rich history, and says, there’s “lots more development in store” for Washington.

“Eighty percent of the town’s buildings are on the National Historic Register, and its historic homes, 19th century brick storefronts and registered live oaks are mapped out in a ‘Historic Walking Tours’ brochure,” the article notes.

“The town’s recently restored Old Schoolhouse Antique Mall still draws visitors Friday through Sunday, while the Steamboat Warehouse Restaurant is open for dinner Tuesday through Saturday and for brunch on Sunday,” the article continues. “Hotel Klaus is just one more reason to visit.”

Since opening in August, the hotel has seen guests from New York, California, and Canada as well as from Louisiana towns and, “wedding parties booking across the street at Wolff Hall also keep the rooms full,” the story says.

Stephen Ortego, who redeveloped an old mercantile business into the hotel, envisions more tourism for Washington. “There are 60 something blocks of national historic district, and it’s a great mix of colonial all the way through Victorian,” he said.

“The town has had a rebirth. ... People are seeing the excitement of growth,” Mayor Dwight Landreneau said.

## From Town Hall



### June opening seen for plant here

The Southland Industrial Coatings plant going up near I-49 is expected to officially open at the beginning of June.

The Town of Washington and Southland Industrial Coatings will sponsor a job fair before the opening, but a definite date has not been set.

The \$13 million plant will specialize in preparing steel poles used by utility companies and other industries. It will include an 80,000-square-foot main shop, offices, and ancillary buildings. The plant is expected to eventually create 120 permanent jobs, with an estimated 180 indirect jobs in other businesses.

### You can help make Washington a winner

*Louisiana Life* magazine is asking people to vote on the best town on Louisiana, and Washington is in the running. To vote for Washington as your favorite town go to [www.louisianalife.com/vote-for-your-favorite-louisiana-town](http://www.louisianalife.com/vote-for-your-favorite-louisiana-town). The winner will get a big write-up in an upcoming edition. The deadline to vote is June 30.

### Court studies voting district

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments March 24 over the fate of the new majority-Black 6th Congressional District, which includes Washington.

The district was challenged after it was adopted by the legislature last year but was used for last November's election won by Cleo Fields. The court said then that the challenge came too close to the election to change it, but did not rule on the legality of the district itself.

Opponents argue the district is not geographically compact, as required by law. Proponents say it is the best that can be done to meet a requirement that Louisiana must have two majority-Black districts. There was no indication of when the Supreme Court will rule on the case.

### THE POSTPONED

meeting to discuss town participation in the national Main Street program has been reset for 5:30 p.m. on April 16 at Town Hall. The national program encourages economic development in towns with historic downtown areas.

**ONLY ROUTINE** matters were on the Town Council agenda for its March meeting.

**THE COUNCIL** meets at 6 p.m. on the third Monday of each month at Town Hall.



### Tourism meeting

Parish tourism director Herman Fuselier listens as David Allemond discusses opportunities in Washington. The Old Courtableau Café hosted the commission's March tourism networking meeting.

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### Turnaround is vestige of steamboat days

A plaque at the foot of Church Street near the intersection of Veterans Memorial Boulevard and Water Street designates Washington as part of the Atchafalaya Water Heritage Trail that meanders through the 14 parishes touched by the Atchafalaya Basin.

The trail illustrates the historical importance of south Louisiana’s waterways and includes Washington because of our history as a steamboat port. It is at the foot of Church Street because that is where we find the “steamboat turnaround,” one of the last and most distinctive vestiges of the steamboat era here.

The turnaround, still visible today, although overgrown and blocked off from the bayou, was dredged by Captain George W. Haygood, who came to Washington about 1844. It is essentially a chute that was dug because Bayou Courtableau was too narrow for boats visiting Washington to easily turn around for the return trip to New Orleans.

At various times, Haygood was captain of the *Amelia*, *Semaphore*, *Norma*, and *St. Landry*. These were all pretty big boats, and he may have been inspired to build the turnaround because of the effort they needed to get headed back downstream, and because digging it may have been relatively easy. David Jasper McNicoll describes in his Washington memoir “a large gully” that was already there and that was “dredged out to make a sort of turning basin.” Boats backed into it to turn around.

Haygood appeared before Washington’s board of police (the early town council) in 1847 and got permission to dredge the turnaround, finishing it in February 1848. He thought he was going to make money off the project; other captains had to pay to use the chute. But it seems not to have been a roaring success. Anecdotal evidence suggests that he may have been the only one to use it. The other boats continued to turn around using the back-and-forth way they’d always done – similar to maneuvering a car out of a tight parking space.

Some histories say Haygood sold the turnaround to the town, but old records seem to indicate he was turned down when he offered it for sale. Town officials thought it would be too costly to maintain, especially if no boats used it. There is no record showing that the town ever owned it, and the turnaround remains in private hands today.

Haygood, his wife, the former Martha Sara Bettison, and their family moved to New Orleans, probably about 1850, when he was master of the steamer *Osceola* that ran between New Orleans and Shreveport by way of the Red River.

He apparently retired from the steamboat business in New Orleans. Census and other records indicate that he was a “commission merchant” there, probably representing cotton and sugar planters he’d met while hauling their goods on the Courtableau and other streams. The abandoned turnaround may or may not have been used by other steamers once Haygood left town. It fell into neglect after steamboats quit visiting here and was sealed from the bayou as part of a flood control project many years after the steamboat era.



*Looking Back*

In and About  
Washington

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