

In and about Washington

March 2022
FREE—TAKE ONE



Volunteers clean the old, plant the new

Volunteers turned out on two chilly weekends to begin planting Ethel Park, across from Town Hall, and to clean the historic Church Landing Cemetery, where victims of an 1853 yellow fever epidemic are buried.

They also helped install benches made for the park by the carpentry class taught by Edward Harris at the Washington Technical and Career center.

The cemetery cleanup was part of an ongoing effort by the town's cemetery foundation to clean and maintain our three historic graveyards.



Washington Community Festival, Main Street, March 19. Details on Page 2

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Of Note

A 5:30 P.M. Mass, followed by the Way of the Cross, will be offered each Friday during Lent at Immaculate Conception Church.

THE WASHINGTON BAPTIST

young people's program held each Wednesday at 6 p.m. offers Bible study and pizza.

JOIN THE FACEBOOK group Friends of Washington, La for the latest on Washington revitalization projects.

IF YOU ARE artistically inclined and would like to donate time to create a sign or other pieces for Ethel Park, contact Hallie Coreil at 225.721.1209. or hallie.coreil@gmail.com

THE HEALTH BUGGY has resumed its free screening for blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol on the Immaculate Conception parking lot from 8 to 11 a.m. each third Friday.

Focus group

Communications students from UL-Lafayette met with the mayor and a group of Washington citizens February 12 in a first step toward creating a marketing plan for the town and its businesses. The plan will include improvements to the town website and its use of social media. The students expect to have a first report in April or May.

March 19 festival promises good fun

The Washington Community Festival returns to Main Street beginning at 10 a.m. on March 19, with music, crafts, good food, and the promise of a good time.



The event is a revival of a Main Street festival that was held in Washington each fall for a number of years. Music will be provided by a disc jockey during the day. Don Fontenot and Les Amis de la Louisiane will play for a street dance from 6 to 9 p.m.

Vendors will line three blocks on Main Street to sell food and crafts. Antique cars

will be on display, cooks will compete in a catfish gravy cookoff.

A Kids Korner will offer face painting, games, and prizes, and the Easter Bunny will come by from 10 a.m. until noon for pictures and to hand out candy.

Vicki Thibodeaux (337-351-2412) heads the planning committee.

Grant will help walking trails

Washington has received a \$3,000 grant from the St. Landry Tourist Commission for a brochure and map of walking trails showing off the town.

THE WEATHER



March 1-25

High: 80, Feb. 21
Average High: 66.2
Low: 24, Feb.5
Average Low: 38.6
Feb. Rainfall: 1.32
Avg. Feb. Rain: 5.10
Rain for 2022: 1.96
Avg. Yearly Rain: 8.65



Business owners meet

The mayor met February 7 with business owners to update them on new processes for collecting property taxes, renewing occupational and beer and liquor permits, and upcoming events. The group decided to meet quarterly.

Auditor: ‘Town is on the upswing’

Washington is still in a fiscal hole, but we are filling it up, not digging it deeper. That was part of what auditor Burton Kolder told the Town Council at its regular February meeting.

He said Washington has seen a “dramatic” improvement in its finances, and the situation is getting “much, much better.” The town had a small surplus at the end of 2021 after operating at a deficit for the five years before.

Five years ago, the town spent \$4,432 per day to operate, he said. Since then, “tremendous strides” in cutting costs have reduced daily expenses to \$2,973. The town’s debt has been cut from \$640,000 to \$329,000.

General fund spending has been cut “almost in half” Kolder said. “You need to be commended,” he told Mayor Dwight Landreneau. “That’s the way we’re going to get back.”

He also commended the town for accounting and procedural improvements, as seen in the number of “findings” reported. Those are things that do not meet standard auditing guidelines, and that sometimes stir negative comment in the media.

There were 49 findings in the 2019 audit. That was down to 10 in the current audit, and “six or seven of those have already been corrected,” Kolder said. “I am hopeful that we can have even fewer next year.”

“There are still a few things that you need to do better,” he said, but “the town is definitely on the upswing, no doubt about it.”

He recommended that one of those things should be an increase in sewer fees. He pointed out that it costs more to treat water in the sewer system than to produce it for consumption, but that the town’s sewer rates “are extremely low and should be adjusted.”

From Town Hall

TOWN ATTORNEY Chris Granger has begun the procedure to annex 105 acres of Soileau property on the east side of the I-49 interchange. An ordinance could be ready for the March Town Council meeting.

FINAL PLANS are being completed for the Town to issue construction permits. Town officials anticipate the service will be offered at Town Hall early this month. Until now, permits have been administered by the parish, requiring a trip to Opelousas.

TWO NEW businesses have opened in Washington. The grand opening of T Matt Photography was held February 5 at 514 Veterans Memorial Boulevard. The other one, Getjunkd, offers junk removal, property clean-outs, junk hauling, furniture assembly, and professional organizing. The phone number is 337-305-8016

THE TOWN COUNCIL approved a resolution giving a therapeutic group home clearance to operate at 305 S. Bridge Street.

POLICE OFFICER Anthony Veal has been moved from part time to full time and Curtis Chavis, who has worked in Melville, will be hired part time.

REGULAR MEETINGS of the Town Council are at 6 p.m. on each third Monday at Town Hall.

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Kenison was jovial, active steamboat captain

Though spelled differently, Kennerson Road, just south of Washington, is probably named for Maximillian Kenison Sr., described in the middle 1800s as “a prominent planter,” but his son, Max Jr., was more prominently connected to Washington during the steamboat era.

Max Jr., born July 18, 1832, was a captain so prominent in the trade between Washington and New Orleans that every steamboat in port in New Orleans lowered its flag to half-mast when he died there at the age of 63 on September 23, 1895.

According to an *Opelousas Clarion* obituary, Kenison began his steamboat career at 17 as second clerk with Captain John H. Gordon, who commanded several Courtableau steamboats, including the *General Morgan*, *Elizabeth*, and *Bois d’Arc*, which was the boat under Gordon’s command when Max was 17.



Looking Back

Max came ashore in 1859 to work as bookkeeper at a store in the Ouachita Parish community of Trenton, and in 1860 moved to New Orleans to work in a hardware store. He returned to the river after the Civil War, when he and Capt. Oramel Hinckley bought the *Annie Wagley*. In 1870 he built the *Lessie Taylor*, which he operated until 1878, when it hit a log in the Atchafalaya River and sank.

After that, he was master of the *J. E. Trudeau* for many years, and was still active when he was stricken by what was described in the press as Bright’s disease, an acute kidney ailment.

The *New Orleans Times-Democrat* in March noted that “Capt. Max Kenison, who had been so very ill and afterward reported recovering, was said to be very ill again.” In April, it reported that he was “able to get about the streets, though ... still very weak.”

The *New Orleans Picayune* wrote in its obituary, “In February last he was attacked with bronchitis and for a time his life was despaired of, but he finally recovered, and it was hoped that he had been spared for further usefulness in this world. Several months ago, however, his general health began to fail”

Captain Kenison was married twice. His first wife was Emily Genin of New Orleans and they had two sons. After her death he married Laura Maguire of Monroe, who survived him. He also left two sisters, Mirza, who married Dr. David L. Todd, and Mathilde, who married John Gabriel Wartelle, both living in Washington, and a brother, Alphonse, an insurance man in Galveston.

The *Picayune* described Max as “a man who had a most jovial disposition, which made him a host of friends wherever he went,” and as “a kind man and considerate at all times, even when dealing with those with whom kindness and consideration does not count.”

He is buried in the St. Landry Church cemetery in Opelousas.

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