Acadian Ancestors
From Belle-Ile-en-Mer

With our distinct Mardi Gras Celebration approaching, I felt it relevant to send you some interesting history concerning our Acadian ancestors from Belle-Ile-en-Mer, off the coast of France. The following historical account is gathered from an article in the January, 1981 edition of Natural History Magazine.

In 1755, “le grand dérangement” occurred in Acadie or Nova Scotia, Canada. More than 10,000 Acadians were deported throughout the New World and Europe by the British government as a security measure. This caused a devastating break in the large extended family ties which had developed in the Acadian culture. They became New World refugees.

In 1763, France persuaded many of these people to set out and begin a new life on Belle Ile. The majority that settled left within a few years, discouraged by natural calamities and the burdens of French rule.

Shortly afterwards, through the efforts of a sympathetic Frenchman, Peyroux de la Coudrenière who had spent seven years in Spanish Louisiana, several hundred Acadian families from Belle Ile were transported and resettled in Louisiana at the expense of the Spanish government who were in desperate need of new settlers. There were about 2,000 of these Acadians. According to this author’s research, it is largely from this group that the distinctive Cajun population found in Acadiana today developed. Although other immigrants also helped to form this people, the name “Cajun” emphasizes this Acadian origin.

Sincerely,
Michael (Chop) Chapman