Acadian bicentennial celebration is sailing along

By Jacques Henry and Robert Davis

On July 28, 1717, the French frigate "La Depe" sailed into the port of New Orleans carrying a group of Acadians expelled from Nova Scotia in 1713, who had resided in France for three decades. In the words of one contemporary account, the Acadians were "the largest group of people to migrate to the New World. It was the end of the "Grande Emigration". The Acadians were finally free.

The celebration is commemorating the bicentennial of the acadian arrival, whose settling in south Louisiana shaped the state culturally and economically. The celebration includes activities such as the Acadian Odyssey Bicentennial Association, headed by Gerald Brown of the Lafayette Convention and Visitors Commission, and performed a statewide commemoration of the event — the 1717 Arrival.

A number of other activities are planned, including the bicentennial commemoration, the Cabrini Festival and "CROWE", "Council for the Development of Acadian Heritage" and "Carriage Rides" with the governments of France, Spain and Canada participating.

Acadians played a major role in the celebration. When the French navy vessel "La Garonne" arrived in New Orleans for the celebration, French Acadians welcomed the sailors with a gala event. The Acadians were welcomed in a ceremony by Mayor John Lantigny, who addressed the crowd.

In New Orleans, the French navy presented art while traditional Acadian music and dancing filled the air. There was a gala event for the Acadians who arrived with their families, enjoying food and drink.

The celebration will continue throughout the summer. As a part of the Acadian Village, the Feast of the Assumption, the traditional Acadian holiday, will be celebrated. The festival will include traditional Acadian food and music, as well as the Acadian Odyssey and the Acadian history Trail.