Acadian mementos, photographs sought by culture centers

EUNICE — Residents of Acadiana are asked to help preserve Acadian culture by providing items and photographs of items to the Acadian Culture Centers in Eunice, Lafayette and Thibodaux.

The centers are operated by the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park.

M. Ann Belkov, superintendent of the park and administrator of the project, describes this major undertaking as, “a great opportunity and honor of the National Park Service to interpret, preserve, and perpetuate the Acadian history and culture.

A regionwide search is underway to locate objects, photographs, or paintings for display in the Acadian Culture centers.

The six categories of materials sought are:
- History and geography, such as old maps, letters, and drawings.
- Early home and social life, to include furniture and furnishings, clothing, cooking utensils and containers, household or personal items; religious items such as antique rosary beads, prayer cards, and home altars; festival and special event memorabilia (weddings, christenings, birthdays, elections, etc.), and crafts.
- Commerce and livelihood activities, including tools, clothing, and equipment used in fishing, boat building, hunting and trapping, crawfish and oyster harvesting, shrimping, ranching, and the oil, rice and sugar industries.
- Architecture and construction techniques to include photos, sketches, plans, paintings of examples of early homes and other buildings and materials used.
- Books, letters, and recordings illustrating Acadian French language and speech.
- Acadian music featuring records, sheet music, instruments (home-made and storebought), and other memorabilia, such as photos, autographs and concert/event posters.

The Eunice center will interpret the prairie Acadian culture through performances, displays, demonstrations and crafts. The site will consist of the historic Liberty Theater, restored and adapted Seale building, and a landscaped pedestrian way.

The Acadian Culture Centers, part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, are looking for Cajun artifacts.

The Lafayette culture center will present the complete account of the Acadian heritage and culture, including the story of their migration to Louisiana.

The historic Lobdell Warehouse in Thibodaux will complete the three-center complex. The Thibodaux center will present an interpretive account of the Wetland Acadians to include boat building on Bayou Lafourche.

Hamilton and Associates of Opelousas were selected from a national search of 42 architectural firms to design the facilities.

Institutional Services Inc., a world-class museum and specialized exhibit design firm headquartered in Dallas has been selected to develop the interpretive exhibits for the three centers.

A team of area professionals from various educational institutions, were enlisted to provide the historical information.

Two “All Call” weekends are planned for this month in six Louisiana cities and towns, including June 18-19 in Eunice. Park officials will be available at the Eunice City Hall 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. June 18 and noon-5 p.m. June 19.

An “All Call” weekend is an opportunity for area residents to bring in personal items, photographs, letters, paintings, clothing, furniture, tools, utensils, or photographs of those items.

Those unable to attend the Eunice “All Call,” but interested in providing items for display in the centers may write to Linda Burns, P.O. Box 51570, New Orleans, La. 70151-570, or call her at (504) 522-3665.

The park director asks, if possible, that potential contributors enclose a photo and description of the items. Individuals, families and organizations donating materials will have their names listed in the visitor centers.