On Feb. 27, 1765, 240 years after the dispersion and 10 years after the arrival of the first large group of Acadians, the Acadians arrived in New Orleans. They were in desperate straits. Nobody expected them and nobody knew what to do with them.

These Acadians, led by Joseph "Boucieul" Broussard, left Nova Scotia for Haiti (then Saint-Domingue) in November 1764, when Louisiana had been ceded by France to Spain but was still in the hands of a French caretaker government.

They found the Caribbean climate brutal and could not stay. They sailed for New Orleans, and eventually were sent to what is now St. Martin Parish to firmly establish the heart of the new Acadian homeland in the valleys of the Teche and Vermilion.

Charles-Philippe Aubrey, who was Louisiana's acting governor, wrote shortly after their arrival, "... 200 Acadians, men, women, and children repelled by the climate of Saint-Domingue, have just disembarked here. They would actually have died of misery had we not provided them some assistance. I thought that the honor and humanity of our country compelled me to do something for these poor families who have been wandering for the past ten years."

Aubrey first thought he would settle these Acadians on the Mississippi River, but the place he'd picked was subject to flooding. Instead, he sent them to the Atakapas District to raise cattle.

"We lack cattle altogether," the governor wrote back to France, "and the spot to which the Acadians are going has fine grazing land where prosperous cattle ranches can be developed to supply New Orleans."

Other Acadians joined the Atakapas expedition before it left New Orleans on April 30.

Aubrey reported then, "Since the arrival of the Acadians (with Bouscieul Broussard) others have come. Notwithstanding seven or eight who have died, they constitute 231 persons. More are expected. These Acadians, who are, for the most part, industrious farmers, will be able to supply the needs of the city in a very short time.

"These unfortunate people presently have no other pecuniary means besides the king's charity. We felt it was our duty to help them... with provisions, ammunition, merchandise, and medicines from the royal warehouses."

More trouble awaited the Acadians in the Atakapas. Epidemic swept through the little settlements, claiming among its first victims Joseph Broussard who had led the tiny band so far..."