Le Grand Derangement
the Arrival
of the Acadians
Bayou Teche, 1768
In the early 1600's, the Acadian people settled in the New Land of Nova Scotia. For 150 years they struggled to live peaceful, independent lives as fishermen and farmers. During this entire time England and France fought continually over ownership of the land. England finally won, and the Acadians were forced to leave, never to return.

The displaced people were jammed into crowded boats and ships with inadequate food, water, or clothing. They were out to sea for months, and sicknesses and sufferings spread quickly. Human dignity disappeared, and many died before they ever set foot on land again.

The first boatloads were sent directly to the English colonies to the south of Nova Scotia — Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, the Carolinas, then even to France, England, and the Caribbean Islands. The captains of these vessels were anxious to be rid of their unhappy cargo, but in port after the port the suffering Acadians were not wanted. In many cases there was not enough shelter or food, and only the generosity of individuals gave them their survival. An exception was the sympathetic greeting the Acadians received from the Catholic populace in Maryland. When an attempt was made to assimilate them into another culture or economy, the Acadians could not bear the conditions in which they were forced to live, often as slaves, or indentured servants under house arrest.

For ten years whole groups of the exiles were moved from colony to colony, country to country. Many families and friends were separated forever. This tragic tale of loss and sorrow came to be known as Le Grande Derangement.

Some of the Acadians had sold their land and moved to South Louisiana ahead of the mass evacuation of 1755, and had begun farming or ranching, settling strategic areas for the French government. Later, after years of wandering, many of the exiles began hearing of the success of these few friends or relatives in the fertile levee lands west of New Orleans. However, most did not know that by this time France had ceded Louisiana to Spain, and that the French would make great efforts to prevent more Acadians from getting to Louisiana and strengthening a Spanish colony. Regardless of this, from every pocket of the world where Acadians had been placed by the wishes of governments, individuals and small groups began finding ways to get passage to the port of New Orleans.

Upon arrival, the hopeful settlers found a warm welcome: a government run largely by Frenchmen, as there had not been enough time for Spanish officials to complete the transition of offices. The remaining French officials realized that as soon as the arrivals were placed on available lands they could begin producing crops, herds, families, homes, and settlements. With livestock, seed, tools and equipment, groups of Acadians were sent to strategic points up the Mississippi.

But many, like the 231 that arrived from the island of Santa Domingo in 1765, really wanted no part of French or Spanish colonization. It is important to note that this group, when asked which of the settlements upriver they would like to be taken to, studied a map and chose an isolated area called the Poste de Attakapas. This desire for isolation was to be seen again and again.