The beautiful moss covered trees in the area around Lafayette, in spite of urban and business atmosphere, still gives it a touch of the "forest primeval," as depicted in Longfellow's _Evangeline_.

The Acadians who celebrated the 200th anniversary of their expulsion from Acadia in 1955 have multiplied and prospered in the Southwest Louisiana Bayou Country which has become famous the world over as the "Cajun Country."

With time, many of the descendants of these acadians became wealthy planters and leaders in many professions. Many have won their way to high positions in the state. Three of them, Alexandre Mouton, Robert Broussard and Edwin Broussard have been U. S. Senators. Three have held the office of Lieutenant Governor; one a representative of a Louisiana district in the Confederate Congress. One has been a Judge of the State Supreme Court, one a Judge of the Court of Appeals and Several have held district judgeships. (This estimation was made in 1952 by Harry Lewis Griffin, Dean Emeritus of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette.)

The story of the expulsion of the Acadian forefathers is an important date in the history book. With the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, in which Acadia was deeded to England, conditions became intolerable. Under English law, all her subjects had to swear allegiance to the Crown. Since the Catholic Church was then banned by England, the Acadians were forbidden to follow it. And in 1756 England demanded unconditional obedience and some 6,000 French who refused began an exodus called "Le Grand Derangement." Their towns were burned, livestock and crops destroyed and as a final punishment for "disloyalty," families were separated. The men and boys were herded aboard transports and sent to unknown destinations; women and children were loaded on other ships. Some reached England, the British Colonies in America, France and even the West Indies. Many died on the way. Others, unable to find haven among people hostile in their nationality and religion, returned to Nova Scotia, only to be exiled again in 1762.

It was these latter exiles who reached New Orleans about 1769. Received with generous hospitality by the French of the region, they were given grants of land along the river north of the German Coast, near today's Donaldsonville. As more of the refugees arrived they settled along Bayou Lafourche, Bayou Plaquemine, the Atchafalaya and gradually moved up Bayou Teche, to the False River section.

Little had been done toward settling the Teche region because of the fierceness of the Attakapas, only man-eating Indian tribe in the territory. Poste des Attakapas, now St. Martinville, was the only settlement along the banks of the Teche. But the hardy Bretons rapidly acclimated themselves and began to cultivate the wilderness.

From 1765 to 1780 and especially from 1788, there was a steady influx of these Acadians coming from San Domingo, Guiana, the ports of New England and from France where many of them had found temporary refuge. By 1780, they numbered 2,500; by 1790, 4,000; and by 1900, between 40,000 and 50,000. Here in their new homes they engaged in farming and cattle raising on a large scale as they had done in Acadia; and diligently preserved their customs, traditions and language with the greatest fidelity.
The Acadians of today (called Cajuns by everyone in the state, including themselves) are a thrifty, hardworking, fun-loving, but devoutly religious folk. They work, play and make love with equal enthusiasm, marry young, and cheerfully demonstrate extreme fecundity. Families are large and the aunts, uncles and cousins are legion. One aged lady in a Cajun parish counted 800 lineal descendents, blood relatives all! The Cajuns also have a tremendous passion for nicknames such as Titi, Mannie, Lala, Noonoo, Tootsie, Bootsie, Goon, Coon and Bos. In fact, there was a colored family on a Cajun farm who called their offspring (all boys) Goon, Monoon, Pierre and Doudouce, Te-Twan, Ti Pierre and Ti Couce.

Love of race and family is a fetish with the Cajun. No other people can so accurately relate just who is their cousin, perhaps practically everyone is Tantes, Nainaines and Parraines (aunts, godmothers, godfathers).

The Cajun pleasure-loving nature expresses itself in the community gathering, dances and peculiar sports that are integral parts of bayou life. Particularly popular are the bi-Saturday night dances, the fais-dodos -- literally "go to sleep;" possibly because the dancers stay up all night and sometimes fall asleep while still dancing.

Swing bands, radios and automatic phonographs have penetrated the Cajun country, but at the genuine fais-dodos the music of the fiddle, the accordion and triangle, sometimes called the "ting-a-ling" is always a feature; for the Acadian retains his love for these instruments and often possesses rare skill in playing them. A full orchestra includes also the guitar and harmonica.

The whole sum and substance of the Cajun might be summed up in the character of Walter Coquille, self-styled Mayor of Bayou Pom-Pom, a purely imaginary municipality, who evoked much amusement with his combination of Cajun dialect and native wit and had become something of a public personality. Typical of his anecdotes is the one about the two Cajuns fishing for crabs in a Pirogue:

"What fo' you scratchin' under your shirt, ma fren, you get une puce (a flea)?"

"Non, non! I got un pou (a louse)! You tink I'm a dog, ma?"

Until the First World War most Cajun families displayed little interest in English. In fact, there are negroes in the Teche Country who can speak no English having been brought up by French-speaking Acadians. In the more remote districts a French-English patois is spoken and is all but impossible for a stranger to understand. Altogether, their use of language is amusing and picturesque. Sometimes it is intentionally exaggerated, as in the time worn but often used request: "You see ma cow down by de bayou, you push heem home, yes. He been gone t'ree day now -- yesterday, today and tomorrow!" Not as well known, but as amusing is the lament of a youth'ful married: "It ain't much fun being married twice as old as yourself to a man, no."

(Much of this history is taken from an article on Cajun Country by R.C. Winningham)