'Cajun Country' Playground May Soon Become Reality

A swampland playground designed to blend the colorful history of the Acadians into contemporary Acadiana has been in the planning stages for the past eight months and soon should become a reality in Lafayette.

The proposed tourist attraction, Cajun Country, will be located four miles southeast of Lafayette on Highway 90. Its key attraction is an authentic replica of an oldtime French Acadian village and genuine bayou country terrain, complete with alligators, muskrats, raccoons, nutria, and other animals of the region.

Plans were revealed for developing the 127 acre tract into the major tourist attraction for the state during a meeting held this morning by the Board of Directors of Cajun Country.

Stock Purchases

Horace Rickey, president of Cajun Country, Inc., said a prospectus has been prepared and public acquisition of stock will be possible through the Lafayette offices of the firm at 1011 E. St. Mary Blvd.

"The enthusiasm at every level for the new tourism venture has given it extra impetus," Rickey said. "We have worked doubly hard to provide a facility which exceeds the expectations of even our most enthusiastic supporters."

Businessmen and civic leaders joined in endorsing the project, which is expected to attract one-half million tourists each season and provide employment for approximately 200 persons, mostly college students, with a payroll of more than $500,000 the first year.

Morris Ford, director of the Louisiana Tourist Commission, pledged his support and that of the commission and said the project can be a significant factor in the building of Louisiana tourism to a billion-dollar industry by 1975.

Guided Tours

Guided tours and boat rides will be available so tourists can see what a Louisiana swamp looks like. The swamp will contain from six inches to three feet of water. The Cypress covered moss trees will be left in their natural states, but obstructive undergrowth will be removed so boats can easily move on the watery areas, according to Robert Gates, project coordinator.

The Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission said it would stock the area with wildlife native to southwest Louisiana. The game will be provided at no cost to the stockholders and no cost to the commission.

The authentic Acadian village is to be located on a bayou connected to a network of other streams and to the swamp area. The village will feature in full operation the crafts and trades of the Acadiana of 1800. A syrup mill, constructed to demonstrate how cane is crushed and how the juice is boiled into the rich syrup, is planned. The syrup will be canned in small containers with a Cajun Country label to be sold as souvenirs.

An old-fashioned bakery will have a water-wheel driven grist mill. Also in this building, bread and pastry will be baked and served to the visitors.

A smithy will be constructed too, and a blacksmith will demonstrate the art of the forge while making iron and steel wares to be sold as souvenirs.

The candle, a necessity in Acadian life, also will be incorporated in the Acadian village with candles of all shapes and colors to be sold as souvenirs.

The Acadian village will have a Praline Candy Kitchen set up in full view of all the tourists so they can watch this art being performed. Also in this candy kitchen will be sweets that are typical to this area. A Louisiana hot sauce kitchen is planned.

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