Cajun group plans tour to find roots in France

OPELOUSAS (AP) — A two-week tour of western France has been organized so French-speaking people from Louisiana can find their Cajun roots.

"The tour will offer Louisiana Acadians a chance to become acquainted with the descendants of Acadians who, following le Grand Derangement, chose to remain in France," said Peter Gillespie, a spokesman for a tour group called France Louisiana.

Le Grand Derangement is a term used to describe the forced exodus of some 7,000 Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755.

The tour is being sponsored by l'Association des Amis Acadiens d'Opeiousas, a social club of French-speaking families in the Opelousas area.

The tour, scheduled for April 23 through May 7, will allow the participants to get in touch with the descendants of those Acadians who chose to remain in France and not to return to the new world, Gillespie said.

The tour will be escorted by Herbert and Marjorie Belleau, who live in Church Point and are members of des Amis Acadiens.

"We in Louisiana are fortunate in having preserved so many of the customs and traditions of our French ancestors — many of which no longer exist even in France," said Belleau.

Belleau said speakers of Cajun French participating in the tour should have no trouble communicating with the French people they meet.

"Never worry about your Louisiana French," Belleau said. "French people understand us."