Cajun Tourist Attraction Could Serve as Catalyst
Acadian Village Future Is Predicted

LAFAYETTE, La. - Cajun Country, a tourist attraction being developed four miles southwest of here, could prove to be a catalyst for the tourist industry throughout South Louisiana.

This prediction was made by Horace Rickey Jr., president of Cajun Country, Inc., in a news conference here. The conference was called to announce that plans for developing the tourist attraction have been firmed up and that stock is now available to the public.

Calling the project "a civic-oriented business enterprise," Rickey revealed that Cajun Country will provide jobs for about 200 persons, mostly college students, and will attract half a million tourists per four-month season.

COLORFUL HISTORY

The swampland playground will blend the colorful history of the Acadians with the natural ecology of south Louisiana. Its key attraction will be an authentic replica of an oldtime French Acadian village and genuine bayou country terrain, complete with alligators, nutria, raccoons and other animals native to south Louisiana.

"We can say with all honesty that this will be one of the most complete and unique tourist attractions in the nation," he said.

The attraction will not only stimulate tourist trade in Acadiana but will also aid South Louisiana's movement to preserve her French heritage, culture and language, Rickey added.

Cajun Country will be a significant drawing card to attract tourists not only to the Lafayette area but also to other tourist spots throughout Acadiana, he noted.

The business which Cajun Country will stimulate will help fill the economic gap being left by a "dwindling" on-shore petroleum industry, Rickey projected.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Rickey said a feasibility study done by Gulf South Research Institute indicates that as many as 13,000 people a day will be attracted to the site during peak periods. Cajun Country would be open to the public beginning in 1973 on spring weekends, every day during the summer months and on weekends during the early fall, he noted.

Plans for developing the 127-acre tract into a major tourist attraction were first revealed at a meeting in January. During this meeting, Morris Ford, director of the Louisiana Tourism Commission, said the project could be a significant factor in building the Louisiana tourism industry into a billion-dollar industry by 1975.

Robert Gates, coordinator of the project, said the Acadian Village will be located on a bayou, which will be connected to a network of other streams and to the swamp area. The streams will be near or connected to a crab pond, a crawfish hole and a catfish lake.

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. Cypress trees and moss will be left in their natural states, but obstructive undergrowth will be cleared so boats can readily move about the wet area, Gates said.

The village will consist, in part, of spinning and weaving shops, a syrup mill, a bakery where oldtime French bread will be baked, a replica of a salt mine and a blacksmith shop.

The village will also feature a candy kitchen, a tanner's and a trapper's shop, Louisiana hot sauce, French music, occasional French dances, a French-story teller, a church with masses on Sundays and a periodic Acadian play.

Workers will be dressed in authentic Acadian costumes and will actually live in the village.