"The culture of the Cheniers lining the Louisiana Coast from the Sabine River to Vermilion Bay, teems with tales of schooners and steamers—romance and intrigue," according to Gerard Sellers, Roger Miller and Ron Foreman, all of Lake Charles, who recently received a grant of $10,000 from the Louisiana Committee for the Humanities, to pursue their study of the Cheniers. The project—"to be known as 'Islands of the Marsh.'" The grant will be met with an additional $14,000 in-kind contributions, with the Jennings Zigler Museum acting as sponsor for this fascinating excursion into the early history of Louisiana.

"The grantees," according to their application, "plan to follow a closely interwoven plan with Sellers and Miller sharing the research, the interviewing, via tape recordings, and documenting same. Miller is doing much of the writing for the end result—a multimedia traveling exhibit based on actual photographs, interviews and artifacts. The exhibit will be designed by Sellers, assisted by Foreman who is in charge of the photographic work for the project.

"History buffs are welcome to participate in the massive amount of research," the grantees said, "as old maps and photographs are needed, along with the names of descendants of cheniere inhabitants for possible interviews. The Texas Historical Society has already indicated an interest. And trips to the Galveston Archives as well as those in Morgan City have been productive. Chenier AuTigre played a large part in the development of Galveston as did Morgan City's Lumber Mill which provided lumber for the Schooner, '5 Brothers' captained by the White family of AuTigre, who sailed to Galveston when it was chartered in 1836."

"The Cheniers first inhabitants, the Attakapas (meaning 'man-eaters') were primitive even for Indian cultures. First maps; Spanish in 1795 and French in 1808 marked the points where LaFitte's raiders were forced to flee after their Barataria expulsion in 1815. The Bowie Brothers, Reason and Jim, the latter of Alamo fame, used the Cheniers as a supply base and slave holding pen until the slaves could moved via Niblett's Bluff to Opelousas."

"The Acadiana influx began after 1755 and continued until the Civil War, after which came the Yankees, many of whom were given government land. Outlaws and drifters also found their way into the Cheniers. Explorers came inland for fresh water and wood to repair their boats. Others came to locate cattle-grazing land."

"Sellers, a native of Abbeville raised in the marshes as a trapper's son, is well-known as an artist and a hunting guide. His expertise, when linked with Roger Miller, who grew up in Jennings, and in addition to being newly elected as President of the Calcasieu Police Jury, has been a freelance writer for newspapers and magazines; a trapper, rice farmer and deck hand; and Ron Foreman, head of the McNeese Photography Center, whose work has been used nationally, add up to an impressive team," according to Judge Walter C. Peters, President of the Zigler Museum Board of Trustees.

The actual areas to be included in the study are: Chenier AuTigre, Pecan Island, Grand Chenier, Mulberry, Creole, Cameron, Little Pecan and Johnson Bayou. Names of the earliest recorded chenier settlers show the cultural and linguistic diversity that still exists today: Murphy Peveto of Johnson Bayou; Lee of Cameron; Premaux of Oak Grove and Little Chenier; Richard of Creole; Bassigalopi of Chenier Perdue; Vileor of Little Pecan, Cole of Mulberry, and Broussard and Segera of Cheniere AuTigre.