French Ambassador Visits Cities Along Bayou Teche

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France’s new ambassador to the United States, Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet, walked and talked with Cajun folks in Breaux Bridge and St. Martinville yesterday afternoon on his first visit to Acadiana.

He strolled down the streets of Breaux Bridge and chatted in French with the local folks. And he took a boat ride down the Bayou Teche. In St. Martinville he visited the statue of Evangeline, the historic St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church, the Evangeline Oak and the Acadian House Museum in Evangeline State Park.

Louisiana First Stop

The ambassador is beginning a nationwide tour that will take him to all 50 states and he wanted to visit Louisiana first because of the strong French heritage in the bayou country.

Tuesday at 3 p.m. the ambassador, his wife, a contingent of French government workers and officials of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) arrived in Breaux Bridge. At the fire station there, the ambassador was made an honorary citizen of Breaux Bridge and received an official welcome to the Creole Country.

He then left the fire station for his walk downtown. Across from the fire station is Breaux Bridge High School and the ambassador walked up to a group of students outside. None of them could or would speak French to the ambassador.

Young Ashamed

“Is the trouble with the young,” James Domengeaux, leader of CODOFIL, was heard to say as the ambassador and his party walked away from the school, “they are all ashamed to speak French.”

But the story was different among the elder people the ambassador met downtown. The older folks were thrilled to talk in their native French.

Mayor Fred Mills led the ambassador through the center of town. They stopped to go in stores and visit with merchants and customs. They walked more than four blocks to the banks of the Bayou Teche and then boarded a boat for a ride downstream.

The ambassador arrived in St. Martinville about 5 p.m. and went straight to the statue of Evangeline. He listened intently as St. Martinville residents told him stories out of the town’s historic past.

Toured Church

Then he toured the famous Evangeline Oak and the Acadian House Museum in Evangeline State Park. He was also guest of honor at a reception in the park yesterday at 5:30 p.m. (Advertiser Staff Photo)

AT STATUE OF EVANGELINE — The new French ambassador to the United States, Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet (second from right) and his wife (in white coat) visited with St. Martinville residents yesterday afternoon at the statue of Evangeline next to St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church. While in St. Martinville the ambassador got a look at the famed Evangeline Oak and the Acadian House Museum in Evangeline State Park. He was also guest of honor at a reception in the park yesterday at 5:30 p.m. (Advertiser Staff Photo)

St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church, one of the oldest churches in the state and one that is studied by students of architecture from all over the world.

The ambassador was on a tight schedule, so a planned 15-minute stop at the Evangeline Oak was reduced to a brief look at the window of a moving car.

From the oak, the ambassador was taken to the Acadian House Museum in Evangeline State Park and then to a reception in the park lodge.

After that it was back in the car for a ride to Lafayette, a very brief rest and then a banquet there.