On September 4, 1949, the first Louisiana Dairy Festival was held in Abbeville. Founded in honor of the dairy farmers of Vermilion Parish, it has succeeded in becoming one of the largest festivals in Louisiana. Though the festival has undergone many changes, the old Cajun spirit has remained in the heart of the Louisiana Dairy Festival.

In 1949, two men, Roy Theriot and Charles Caldwell, were credited with the forming of the festival. The first festival, a one-day affair, was mainly a way of thanking the farmers for keeping the dairy industry alive in Vermilion Parish. However, change came easily for the festival. Only one year after the founding, it became a two-day event. Two years later, the first king was selected; three years later, the festival was moved to October and is, today, still held in October.

When it first began, there were eight dairies in Vermilion Parish. The needs of the parish and state increased and so did the number of dairies. The number of dairies continued to increase, and in 1951 an unprecedented figure of 151 dairies was reached. Since then, a slow decline has resulted mainly from the spoilage of milk in the late sixties and the development of machines and feeding procedures, which have provided the production of a greater quantity of milk form a fewer number of cows. Today, there are only three dairies in Vermilion Parish.

In spite of the decrease in the number of dairies, it seems that the festivities have increased. The festival now encompasses a three-day period and has many more activities than the initial festival in 1949. A Pais-Do-Do, a street fair, an outstanding parade, a number of pageants, and many contests have become common during the festival.

Besides the fun and laughter, many dignitaries have appeared at the Louisiana Dairy Festival. The famous cowboy actor Tex Ritter visited the festival. Bob Hope, one of the greatest comedians of all times, also entertained our home crowd. The most exciting guest, however, was Harry S. Truman, a former President of the United States.

There are many traditions and memories involved with this famous festival, and yet there is no longer a reason to call it the Louisiana Dairy Festival. Vermilion Parish is no longer the 'dairy capital'; it is the 'beef capital.' In an effort to keep the memories and traditions alive and introduce the new major industry as well, the festival has been renamed. It is now called the Louisiana Cattle Festival.

This new name has not changed the feeling toward the festival for the people of Vermilion. It will take more than a name change to kill our festival, for the festival is the only way of expressing the true Cajun spirit nowadays. It seems as though this spirit is just put on a shelf and preserved for the festival each year, because, when festival time does roll around, Cajuns all over Vermilion Parish take out their t-shirts and old blue jeans, put the gumbo cooking and the boudin heating, then two-step down to the courthouse square and 'laissez les bons temps rouler!'