Louisiana's Cajuns: Back From The Brink

In the grade school history classes we learned that this was regrettable but necessary because the Acadie refused to become British subjects. But there was another fundamental motivation in the English language. They were French and they were Catholic, so it wasn't like they were doing anything really terrible.

Some were dumped along the New England coast, others sent back to France. Some made their way to Quebec, others were taken as prisoners to England. Some were shipped to the West Indies, others-as far as Guyana and the Falkland Islands. But over a 40-year period most of them made their way to the south of what is now Louisiana. Many left there by choice after brief stays in other places because Louisiana was still French at the time, and they believed that they could live as decently in Acadiana as they did back home in their traditions, their faith, and their allegiance to Versailles.

But then their King couldn't care less. A clause in the 1826 Treaty of Fontainebleau turned Louisiana over to the Spanish and to the principle of the Spanish constitution which was the French language in Acadie.

The Cajuns of Louisiana, like Americans everywhere, are celebrating the bicentennial this year. But the Cajuns, one of the nation's founding people, have something extra to celebrate. They have managed to retain a distinct language and culture through the strength of their nation's founding people who have managed to retain a dialect of the language and culture in the United States over an entire century of orthodoxy of their country held that there wasn't room for anything between Manhattan and L.A., but the Cajuns have continued to assert their identity in the face of pressure to assimilate and to make the English language their own.

And more than half a century of systematic designation in their third homeland in as many different countries as there are Cajun communities, has led to a language that is as distinct as it is beautiful. It is a language that is as much a part of the Cajun identity as their culture and their way of life. It is a language that is as much a part of the Cajun identity as their culture and their way of life.

As we celebrate the bicentennial of Louisiana, let us remember the legacy of the Cajuns and their contribution to the rich tapestry of American life.