Since 1965, the official Louisiana Acadian Flag has been flown proudly throughout Acadiano—the 22-parish area of south Louisiana populated largely by the descendants of the French-Acadian, or Cajun, people following the exile of their forefathers from Nova Scotia for religious and political reasons in the mid-Eighteenth Century.

The flag was designed by Thomas J. Arceneaux of Lafayette, long-time supporter of English-French bilingual education in Louisiana schools and former Dean of Agriculture at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette (1941-73). He was one of the early leaders of the Louisiana French renaissance movement, which has revived interest and pride in the French-Acadian heritage since 1955, the year of the bicentennial of the Acadian exile. He is a charter member of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana.

His official description of the flag follows:

To symbolize the French origin of the Acadians is a portion of the arms of their mother country—three fleurs de lis, silver on a blue field.

To symbolize Spain, the nation which controlled Louisiana at the time of the Acadian migration to Louisiana and under whom they prospered after years of exile, is the old arms of Castille—a gold tower on a red field.

The gold star on a white field represents "Our Lady of the Assumption," Patroness of the Acadians. The star also symbolizes the active participation of the Acadians in the American Revolution, as soldiers under Galvez.

The gold star is the official symbol of the Virgin Mary, under the title of "Our Lady of the Assumption." This symbol has special religious significance for the Acadians, since they left France for the new world during a period of great devotion to Mary. It was at that time that the King of France, Louis XIII, declared Mary, the "Patroness of the Kingdom," and so on Aug. 15, 1638, France and her colonies were consecrated to Mary under the title of "Our Lady of the Assumption."

Then in 1938, Pope Pius XI solemnly proclaimed "Our Lady of the Assumption" as the patroness of all Acadians—those in Canada as well as those in Louisiana and elsewhere.

Shortly after the arrival of the displaced Acadians in Louisiana, the American colonies started their struggle for independence. At that time Louisiana was a Spanish colony. It is significant to recall the fact that Spain decided to champion the cause of the 13 American colonies in their revolution against the same nation that had so cruelly exiled the Acadians. And so, many Acadians of Louisiana, serving under Galvez, the Governor of Spanish Louisiana, actively participated in the battles of Manchac, Baton Rouge, Mobile and Pensacola—all very important and decisive victories which contributed to the successful conclusion of the American Revolution.

Since the Acadians were citizens of Spain at the time of the American Revolution, their star could not appear on the first American flag. Thus, the gold star on the Louisiana Acadian flag serves as a reminder of Louisiana's participation in the American Revolution and of the significant contributions of Louisiana Acadians during the struggle for the establishment of our nation.

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This publication has been produced by Gary J. Hebert, editor-publisher of The Plaquemine POST/The Iberville SOUTH as a contribution to the Acadian heritage in Louisiana. Hebert's ancestor, Etienne Hebert, was among the first seventy French families that settled in Acadia. His descendants were also among the first of the exiled Acadians who settled in St. Gabriel, Iberville Parish, the historic church of which is pictured on the cover of this publication.