Ploermel, Cajun Tourists Unite

ST. MARTINVILLE — Hometown folks returned from Ploermel, France, last night, but revelry that colored the week-long cultural exchange between St. Martinville and the French city continued.

St. Martinville residents stepped off their chartered bus at St. Martin de Tours Catholic Church singing “Le Marseillaise,” the French national anthem. A crowd of nearly 1,000 St. Martinville and Ploermel natives welcomed them home with cheers and hugs.

Ploermel residents who have been in St. Martinville since last Thursday will be returning to France Saturday. About 150 persons from Ploermel and about 60 from St. Martinville and the area participated in the exchange.

Taking a makeshift platform, St. Martinville Mayor Earl “Mac” Willis said he and the entourage had the “time of their lives” in Ploermel and its surrounding cities. “But we are glad to be home,” he added.

Mayor Paul Anselin of Ploermel presented Willis with a medal making him the honorary mayor of the French city.

Willis said La Grand Derangement accomplished the “beginning of the exchange of the people of Southwest Louisiana with the people of France and new friendships for young and old.”

He added that he is anticipating many visitors to St. Martinville from France, especially young students, as a result of the exchange.