Researchers investigate early Acadian settlers

Project searches for Beausoleil settlement

BY RICHARD BURGESS

LAFAYETTE — Cajun folk hero Joseph "Beausoleil" Broussard, who led one of the earliest groups of Acadians to Louisiana, settled along the Bayou Teche some 250 years ago. Historians are fairly certain of that. Precisely where that settlement was — and where Beausoleil and many of the other settlers are buried — is a mystery that a group of University of Louisiana at Lafayette researchers hope to begin unraveling this summer.

It could take years of searching, and there is no guarantee of success. The long road of discovery began last week with field workers from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette searching for the lost Beausoleil homestead.

"If we can prove that, it would be a great cultural tourism calling card," he said. "There are a lot of people interested in the genealogy and history of the Cajuns."

Funding is a challenge. The New Acadia Project has raised about $90,000, with $50,000 of that pledged by the Iberia Parish Council last month, Broussard said. That's enough to get started but not enough for sustained research, he said.

Rees said the bare-bones budget is apparent in his crew's field vehicle — a 1998 Toyota Corolla.

"You can put a shovel in it, but you have to roll the window down," he said.

For more information on the project and to donate to the work, visit www.acadianmuseum.com/New_Acadia_Project.html.

To follow a blog on the project, visit newacadiaproject.blogspot.com.

The Acadians

P1/secA, col3

June 5, 2014