many people think of Southwest Louisiana as Cajun Country, but in reality it is a diverse region with a unique blend of cultures and heritage. Here, where the Sabine River creates the natural boundary between Texas and Louisiana, you find piney woods, prairie soils and coastal wetlands.

During Spanish rule from 1779 to 1803, the area saw explorers, adventurers and missionaries travel along the Old Spanish Trail, stretching south into Mexico. The Spanish established a range livestock industry and left traces of their language — tasso from the Spanish tasajo — and their music — the swing quality in Cajun tunes. They introduced Acadians into the swamplands and allowed Mexicans and Anglos to move into what is now Calcasieu Parish. Calcasieu is an Indian word, and in the language of the Atakapas Indians, it means "crying eagle," the war title of a warrior chief.

In 1805, Gen. James Wilkinson arranged a truce between Spanish Texas and Louisiana. American and Spanish forces were to remove all settlers who might enter after that date. Since neither side could send forces into the area, it became The Neutral Ground, a "safe" area for gamblers, rascals, outlaws and people who just wanted to be left alone by civilization.

Today, the descendants of those rugged individualists remain tough and proud of their independence. They've survived hard times, hurricanes and crafty politicians. They work hard, they play hard, and they welcome visitors to share the wealth of natural beauty found in Southwest Louisiana.