Chapter One: Postwar Cajun Country, What they Came to Shoot

Many books have the word Introduction in the title. This book does not, in fact in a certain sense it makes rather assertive claims for itself as a self contained study of a very defined subject rather than asserting that it is a sound introduction to a larger subject. A lot of introducing goes on however because this is a book which demands multiple introductions. Each image featured as an included plate is introduced explicitly in the text, each story and short film to which images or attached must at least be introduced as a concept it demands of space allow for nothing more and each of the two great projects funded by Standard Oil which were also in a very loose sense one project require introduction. The work the documentarians are doing has to be explained in the contexts in which it developed and was pursued. This chapter is to introduce the Cajuns and Acadiana or the New Acadia or Cajun country as one wishes to describe it. The chapter is perhaps longer than ideal but as an introduction to this subject it is actually very brief.

Within this introduction of the Cajuns, the way the subject of Cajun identity is approached in this text also demands some introduction. Some readers may have been introduced to them before and find this introduction profoundly different than what they have seen. Readers are encouraged to flip to the last chapter length segment of prose in this book and note that it is titled “Conclusion” there is also a solid body or middle to this document but any reader is correct in detecting the heavy emphasis on introductions. It may be that in a sense while every book has an introduction, a body and a conclusion there is also a way in which each book tends toward a certain portion of this basic narrative cycle or expository cycle as the case must be. When I began this thesis I was fairly young and now as I write these words in and edit the earlier text in hope of finishing the book I am not young at all. There is no book however ambitious in scope which I could not be reasonably expected to have finished in the years since I started this book. Compared to a history of World War II or even of American film in the post war era the subject of this text must seem less ambitious than the amount of time it has taken to finish it could ever justify. I wish to discuss a bit of the journey of writing about the Cajuns of this period.

When I started this book almost a quarter of a century ago it was my definite perception that Acadian life and the experience of Acadian interaction with the American mainstream have drawn more attention from popular, non-academic writers than from professional historians. In the years just before I started this project a few important works of scholarship had appeared. But in the intervening and especially in recent years both excellent academic studies and more works of journalism which are informed by the earlier works have appeared detailing Cajun experience and addressing the process of differentiation, assimilation, the struggle for identity and other concerns which this thesis seeks to address. Nonetheless, the history of Acadiana and the culture of the Acadian or "Cajun" people remains relatively obscure and obscured not only by ignorance but by a history of misinformation. It must be assumed that the photographers and others who came to Cajun Country under the auspices of Standard Oil brought their preconceptions with them. Later in life some of the members of that team would leave varied thoughts on the nature of those preconceptions. It is somewhat mysterious even now whether or

not Flaherty had any previous interactions with Acadian people before he began working on the film, Helen Van Dongen states clearly in the diary she edited for later release that he did not. One wonders if he did when working on the film *The Land* or interacting with Pare Lorentz and possibly Stryker in that context. Each of those men had met a Cajun or two. Yet it is clear that while Van DOngen was not writing in the format where every word is carefully weighed for perfect accuracy nonetheless she had reason to think of Flaherty's exposure to any group of people on that Depression era film. As on *Louisiana Story*, she was his editor then as well. Van Dongen's. It seems likely then that those making the film came to the place they were filming with a lot of preconceived ideas and one might say prejudices. This thesis will need to explore what those preconceptions may have been, but the reader and this author must share our own set of parameters and references for what Cajuns and Cajun Country *really* were all about in order for almost anything in this book to make sense. This real view is of course not absolute but simply a more realistic or more historically accurate view. That is what justifies this rather overly long chapter. This is a kind of history of the Cajuns in what chapter, a cultural history and one perhaps more open to the influences of communal perceptions and folklore than the other histories that have been attempted. (ref. FRFLS)

Cajun culture may be seen as a culture which is in part defined by its place in the larger world and its repeated experience of occupying a particular kind of place in that world. The reader should try to experience a bit of what it feels like to be a Cajun in reading this book. The experience underneath the skin is what many readers of history were once drawn to and it is hoped that this book can provide some of that experience. There are two aspects of the Cajun experience that together have to come into a kind of focus for the reader to form an accurate perception of who and what the Cajuns were and what their land and waters were all about at the time various cameras began to capture images. One aspect is the long history of the people which one might call the historical tradition and the other is the history just having been lived before these documentaries were made. We may call the second shorter and more intense history the historical moment.

The moment in history when the documentary makers came to South Louisiana was a very specific moment. Sam Broussard was serving in Europe in the Second World War and at some point was devoted to leading specifically Cajun men as bilingual operatives and translators dealing with the French Resistance and underground or *Maquis* against the Nazi occupation. Broussard did a good job of documenting these adventures and worked with New Orleans based historian Stephen E. Ambrose in preparing materials for an historian to use in understanding that experience. In recent years with the help of several south Louisiana institutions, Pat Mire and those working with him have done a good job of documenting that service in the military as Cajuns precisely and that service was a key part of that moment in historical documentary film *Mon Cher Camarade*. Among those featured in the Mire film is this writer's long time acquaintance and distant relative General Robert Leblanc. The General was then a young man working with the resistance who provided the allies with assistance in securing bridges, guarding prisoners and sabotaging rail transit. The testimony within the Mire film given by sons of Vermilion Parish such as Abbeville's Leblanc, Erath's Lee Bernard and

others in the film such as Sam Broussard shows that, during World War II, the hundreds of French-speaking Cajun men from South Louisiana enlisted in the U.S. military not only did their duty as American soldiers but did many things that only they as the Cajuns they were could have done. Broussard's work does not spend much time discussing the fact that the same thing had happened in World War One and that while it was on a much smaller scale than what occurred in World War Two it had the effect of helping to raise the ethnic consciousness of key figures like Dudley Leblanc and his brothers as well as their wives children and associates. The bad times that followed the First World War had not only included the general woes of the Great Depression in the narrowest sense but the struggles of agricultural and waterfront Americans which were a bit unique and cruelly affected all of Acadian heritage regions. But perhaps more often than is recognized some leaders among the Cajuns sent the generation that went to World War II off to war with a definite expectation that they would make a unique contribution in Europe and other Francophone regions and with a determination that if better times followed this war then their contributions should not be forgotten. From the Cajun point of view there were many layers of disappointment and resentment through which to view the world in which they live, Many Cajuns calculated and deeply felt that the linguistic skills and French heritage of the Cajun people had been denigrated for decades in South Louisiana. Despite whatever consciousness had come from the First World War and may have been articulated by a few Cajun leaders this French heritage was, as the testimony of many in Pat Mire's film points out, ridiculed as well by American officers in the military induction and processing centers at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and Fort Polk, Louisiana. These men would be coming back before our period of interest is over the process had just started in 1943 when we begin to consider the region. But the process would go beyond intelligence units and soon Cajus would be selected for such service across the breadth and depth of the invasion.

Preeminent Cajun and Acadian historian Carl Brasseaux and Acadian and Cajun folklorist Barry Ancelet have noted that the value of the French which resembled the French spoken in the rural areas where the invasion occurred was uniquely valuable to America. That is in addition to the capacity to speak French in general which also had great value. These were men who had been punished for speaking French in school and who had been humiliated by their homeland in various ways for preserving that linguistic and cultural heritage. The film shows as those who are Cajuns are likely to have had their relatives remark that these same somewhat alienated men found that their ability to speak French became of measurably valuable importance to the American war effort in French North Africa and in France and Belgium.

Indeed, Brasseaux points out that the Cajun translators were as important to the American war effort as the now more acclaimed and well known Native American "Code Talkers, " yet, the Cajun translators' contributions in this regard have been largely ignored until now. This is an important part of a new look at the American experience, from a South Louisiana perspective. But it is not the whole story my grandfather whose mother was a Leblanc and who was named Frank W. Summers was commanding a ship in the Pacific and his brother who also a Summers named for the antebellum Vigilante Severin Leblanc their ancestor and mine -- they and other Cajuns did their duty in a theater where French was rarely needed. The Cajun G.I.s of World

War II were American citizens, they served everywhere Americans in large numbers served but their cultural pedigree was relevant to the European theater and their prowess in war there was a tribute to something other than the typical American experience. Their families shared all the experiences that many others had around the country. Those experiences of G.I.s were killed, wounded or came home unscathed to the naked eye as did other troops.

We must remember what was uniquely Cajun and what was generally American about the end of the war. The end of a Second World War that would create the postwar conditions which more generally define our period in this text. Leaving aside many important influences, facts and considerations let us consider the end of the war and the growth of the oil industry as the major defining characteristics of the moment in history at which all of this began. Now we can turn to the historical tradition that defined the Cajun people.

Those who live on the gulf coast today or for other reasons watch a lot of televised or online weather reporting may be familiar with the “cone of uncertainty” that predicts a hurricane’s path from where it is a at any given time to where it may be in ever increasing intervals of time. The end of the cone is wide and it’s scary to be in it but the chances that the worst part of the storm will hit any particular place is not very high in that wide end, On the other hand the end just near the present location of the hurricane is very narrow and there is a lot of certainty about it. Not so many people are likely to be scared but those in that ned are almost sure to be hit by the storm’s fury. In Acadian history this metaphor is more apt than it would be for most places. It is very easy to show the connection of current Cajun culture through history to the coming of Louisiana into the union in with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The nest period is from 1755 to 1803 and it is a complicated period in the extreme. It starts with the exile famously described by the great American Poet William Wadsworth Longfellow in his epic poem *Evangeline.* Then there is the period in Acadie in what is now Canada and had begun to be Camada when the Cajuns were living there before the exile. For many people that is the totality of Acadian history. However in this chapter we will briefly consider the possibility of Acadian anxiety that exists on the other side of the Atlantic. Finally, we come to the very tenuous and somewhat mythological history of the Acadians before they were French. It is a lot to consider and it will not all be proven either. We are concerned with what existed as a possible historical sensibility of the Cajuns of our historic moment and geographical region. We will at least acknowledge the possibility of all the Cajuns in some earlier form may once have been. But in considering the tradition we do not look away from the people they were in that very exact period of time which we are considering. It is not easy to select out a few aspects of this long and rich tradition to include in a chapter such as this. But something must be provided before any more detailed questions can be really answered about what the documentarians did or did not see and how America correctly or incorrectly sees the Cajuns. It is also true that one wishes to appeal to a reasonably broad readership and not much prior knowledge can be presumed of a reasonably broad readership. For all those reasons before any of the questions of perception that form the heart of this study can receive much attention the story of the people and their place (often referred to here as Acadiana) must be briefly repeated and summarized. This is an attempt at a cultural history and the difficulties of tracing the origins and dating the true beginning of a culture

are manifold. With a work of even the most creative history of a nation state if it but meets the duly meticulous standards of Academic political history then it is possible to talk of roots and origins and yet still write with confident authority of a year or perhaps even an instant when the political unit being discussed became fully itself. Such confidence eludes one who attempts the history of a culture. There can never be a single date when the cultural complex which was the civilization of the crumbling Roman Empire's Western Provinces became the culture and civilization of Medieval European Christendom. Between 476 and 800 A.D. a complex variety of forces was weaving a new reality far more complicated than changing the role and legal prerogatives of the Emperor. “Europe” does not really have a birthday and I am inclined to think any scholar who gives it one more than a little bit of a fool.

the unique problems of doing a history of Acadiana may seem paltry compared to a history of all Europe but they are significant enough and for any particularities they may have they also resemble the problems of cultural history as a whole. The study of culture by anthropologists relies for much of its rhetorical and cognitive structure on the ethnographic efforts at what Clifford Geertz has called "thick descriptions" and upon the efforts of ethologists to translate numerous "thick descriptions"a database for comparative analysis, termed ethnology. The cultural historian must perform some of the same descriptive and comparative tasks as the anthropologist but must also attempt to show change over time and create a narrative or expositive structure which remains true to the muse Clio and her particular demands. This sacred muse demands something beyond the anthropologist's "ethnographic present."

Lauren C. Post, professor at San Diego State university, Carl A. Brasseaux and James H. Dorman, a colleague of Brasseaux at U.S.L. and then at the same institution named the university of Louisiana, are three seminal influences on this my own interpretation of Acadian history. Post and Brasseaux's work shall find its way into endnotes from time to time. Dorman's work is a separate case in that it primarily finds its place here in this early part of the first real chapter beyond general introductions. Dorman's *The People Called Cajuns: An Introduction to an Ethnohistory* has made very good use of Frederick Barth's work which defines culture not in terms of changeable content but in terms of boundaries. To carry forth Barth's hypothesis to a clear extreme, among a great many people in the United States and elsewhere Anglo-Saxon cultural identity prevails despite the nearly unbridgeable gap between Graham Greene and Beowulf or between nuclear missiles and woad-smeared warriors the culture persists although over time it has changed a great deal. Such change ought not even to be presumed to weaken the culture. In a great deal of its content the modern life lived in the setting which Princess Catherine visits with nostalgia as Kate Middleton’s hometown may more resemble life in contemporary Japan than in thirteenth century London, yet traditions and customs reinforce loyalties which go back through a people's history -- England really is still England. These analogies are not Dorman's, nor are they entirely appropriate to the the points he is trying to make and which I am agreeing with so emphatically. The point is that cultural content functions to maintain a sense of shared identity -- "we-ness"--and that where such identity exists a culture exists. Culture like all living things can be young or dying or both or neither. Culture must allow for the individual variety among individuals and sub-culture within the whole. The houses one

lives in and the food one eats all have a lot to do with one's cultural identity but the whole is both greater than and distinct from the sum of its parts.

This study deals with perceptions and ideals woven into the stuff of daily life. Much of that stuff of daily life can be captured in a lens or by a microphone, in this case some very special microphones and cameras were turned on the people discussed in this text and they captured some things that distinguished some of the people from the lives of many of their viewers and therefore made interesting viewing. The perceptions of this historian, of the photographers studied in this thesis and of the Cajuns provide the data for locating boundaries and senses of identity. The humanities and a few social sciences provide a chance to take seriously what people feel and believe and understand as one considers what the data one can collect may demonstrate or show. This writer is very proud to be a humanist, even if he is not as good a humanist as he would like to be.

This approach grows partly out of a deep cynicism about the claims of analysis which produces irrefutable findings drawn from objective manipulations of raw data. Each aspect of this study candidly takes the personal and group ideologies which have shaped the evidence into account. The Cajun perceptions and ideologies form the core and source of what is called "culture" in this study. The sense of identity, the perception of community and of outsiders may be the most essential part of that core and source. Identity and perception may *seem* like very fuzzy and unspecified sorts of things to study and they certainly can *be* fuzzy. This is not a particularly fuzzy text and this study is based on a commitment to a very specific journey into that sense of identity and perception.

So while this text starts off with me declaring a profound interest in what people perceived and how they perceived it that is not intended to let the reader off the hook and allow him or her to imagine whatever he or she wishes. The mentality of the subject-observers matters a great deal in this study. Saying that clearly, content has remained central to the method of cultural history and analysis used here. This thesis has documentary art and the cultural promotion of Dudley Leblanc at the heart of a complex of deliberate expressions which includes people like the executives at Standard Oil and the McIlhenny family who are neither Cajuns nor documentarians and also bring a set of skills and a set of agenda driven policies to their cultural expressions. The rest of this thesis seeks in a very compressed and inevitably cursory way to engage in a larger study of Cajun cultural content and its perception. That larger work will attempt to study Acadiana through its traditional crafts and industries, through its folk art and folk tales, and then take as useful sources the documentary art which appeared between 1930 and 1953 and through various works of reportage and fiction. But all of that has to be glimpsed through a simpler and more basic construct Cajun history that can form some authoritative point of reference. In this thesis one is asked to believe that viewing the product of these documentary artists one can evaluate their historical work as producing an understanding which is similar to or discordant with the cultural reality perceived in the larger context only briefly glimpsed in this work not because it is unimportant but because this is a work of limited length that focuses on the documentary endeavors funded by the Standard Oil Corporation in the

1940s. Even more restrictively, the work really emphasizes the contribution of Robert Flaherty far more that others on his crew or of his wife Frances and in terms of the SONJ photographers has a clear bias in favor of the photographic work of the only two photographers involved in both projects during that time. Those photographers and filmmakers are believed to be biased and imperfect observers and yet skilled ones too, Any evaluation of their work requires an understanding of the material culture of the Cajuns as these people took pictures of visible cultural content, being unable to directly photograph thought. In addition it is believed on pretty good evidence that the documentary artists in this study set out to create works in which document what they believed to be a form of history.

The fourth chapter of this thesis deals with what the documentarians amounted to as a kind of community and subculture of their own. But some of this has to be discussed here as well. Much has been written about documentary expression. Not all documentaries nor documentarians are created equal. This study tests the documentary as historical document. Folk tales and folk art have also often been collected by people acting on America's documentary impulse. There are Cajuns and anecdotes about Cajuns in collections like Botkin's collection of Southern materials and there are references to the Cajuns in the folklore collection over which Lyle Saxon presided titled *Gumbo YaYa*. That collection from the Louisiana Writers Project is a kind of New Deal relative of the last project that had brought Robert Flaherty and Helen Van Dongen together. Roy Stryker also came from that great family as did some of his photographers. Some of the biases of that set of effort are evident in the preface to *Gumbo Yaya*. Sason writes, "*The Cajuns have produced many State leaders, from Governor Alexandre Mouton to Jimmy Domengeaux, the present representative of the Bayou Country in Congress. In this book, however, we have attempted to treat only of those humbler dwellers of their part of the State. Harry Huguenot, Velma McElroy Juneau, Mary Jane Sweeney, Margaret Ellis, and Blanche Oliver worked in those outlying district*s." This writer is a Cajun whose name is Summers but it is interesting to note that the most prominent and certain Cajun names are entirely absent from this list of characters in that collection. This is significant in a society where names and genealogies have an extreme importance to cultural identity.

This writer has read and researched thoroughly a great deal about the Acadian people of most of half a century and all of that forms a sort of comprehensive cross reference which is yet subordinated another much smaller body of research either cited or at least catalogued here. This thesis seeks use all of that research to evaluate that evidence appearing in the documentaries funded by Standard Oil of New Jersey in these years.Whatever innocence Robert Flaherty may have been famous for it was not contagious to the SONJ photographers or to Roy Stryker. We will leave most questions of method to Chapter Four but a few things must be said here to show why a scholar should at least presume to take the documentary work of the SONJ photographers seriously.

Throughout the letters of Todd Webb and the Rosskams one finds reference to interviews with local informants and with experts. There are references to discussing local history with journalists and professors associated with Louisiana State University and also with

Southwestern Louisiana Institute (now University of Southwestern Louisiana or USL) . Photographic sets were made from fairly objective samples taken by floating down the Bayous. Bayou Teche and Bayou Piere Part were especially well documented. From the worf of the Stryker photographers a blend of subjective creativity with social science emerges. Their picture of Louisiana folklife can be correlated with other sources of information. The historian can then produce a more complete vision of the past than might be possible without using the largely honest and truthful if not necessarily unbiased photographs. FOr one's biases do not make one dishonest. The overall effort was in may carefully formed opinion an effort to tell the truth. There is another question not so easily be answered. Does a skilled artist produce the kind of information that most interest a cultural historian studying that subject which the artisit is also studying? From that question derives another question, don't the artist and the cultural historian perceive and wish to perceive and present something very different from one another? While in this text I clearly pay more attention to the photographers as subjects themselves than I do to most journalists writing strict reportage the gap is not infinite. I believe that they photographed the Cajuns in Cajun country and that is what the reader is invited to believe as well. Vastly more attention is paid to the photographers as minds than another scholar might pay to census takers and rightly so -- BUT, the photographers are secondary to the attempt to use their work in order to write about the subject both of the photographs and the thesis. That subject is the Cajuns and at the same time how the Cajuns were perceived by the larger society in the United States especially,

The history of the region can not subsist only in a few sources but rather in a large number of diverse sources and in fact the need for perspective has led this writer to discuss remote events which make the photographs and other documentary sources intelligible. The photographs will mean little to anyone who approaches them without knowing that the people of South Louisiana have a history very distinct from the people of central Mississippi, western Virginia, or the hill country of South Carolina. In other words while deeply identified with the Confederate Ordeal of the Civil War and all the periods flowing from it that never became as important an identifiers. Beyond that they had many differences between themselves and others in the region. These differences were deeply in a distinct historical experience. A cursory summary of that experience is necessary to continue to speak of the Cajun people and to mean anything intelligible.

From approximately 1604 until approximately 1640 a widely scattered population of French colonists developed in the first Acadia, which is now known as Nova Scotia in Canada. These colonists suffered all of the handicaps of a scattered and ill organized population in a new place. By about 1640, a relatively large increase in immigration from Centre-Ouest provinces and from Normandy began to settle in Acadia and to build farms and villages. They began to build levees and to construct a hydraulic system which allowed them to manage this area which was very susceptible to floods. A distinctive French colonial community had begun to develop along with a modicum of prosperity and the steady growth of the population. Politically however, this community was soon to become a minority culture in the control of aliens.

By the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 the 2,000 or more Acadians along the Bay of Fundee became officially British subjects. While this was the first of many terrible political disappointments which would shape the history of these people it does not seem to have quashed the optimism of these people for their young colony. Tension with the British, and continued immigration from La Chausec, Poitous, France indicate the relative confidence of the people and their desire to control their own destiny. This ambiguous state of affairs continued until the sporadic violence of the past developed into the war known to American schoolchildren as the French and Indian War. The undeclared agreement of most Cajuns, maritime Acadians and scholars is that during the violence between 1753 and 1755 the Acadian culture became something truly distinct from French or even French Canadian culture. By 1755, the population of Acadia had approached 15,000. The British authorities coerced as many Acadians as possible into ships and scattered 6,000 of these people among the British colonies of the New World. Many of those scattered were refused entry into the colonies and died attempting to reach France and Santo Domingo. Numerous others did in fact arrive at both their ancestral homeland and at the West Indian colony. A number of others settled amongst the colonies which would become the United States. In Acadia, Joseph Broussard "dit Beausoleil" commanded and organized a sizable resistance which, in league with some Indians and with the sympathy of all Acadians who had been able to remain on their own or other farms, maintained intermittent military pressure on the British until his surrender in 1759, after the fall of Quebec. Today, anyone can go to Nova Scotia and visit the Grand Pre historic Site. The development of this as a place of tourism and pilgrimage especially for Cajuns without excluding other people from what it has to offer. Eighteenth Century Grand Pre was an economically and otherwise significant small town in the colony of Acadie through several changes in the politics and Imperial organization of the region.. Today there is a statue of Evangline the Acadian heroine of Longfellow's epic poem. There is also chapel reproducing the one where Acadians were imprisoned prior to expulsion. There are murals, engraved names and other aspects of the memorial preserve some of the events of Le Grand Derangement. I have made a pilgrimage there with some family members and friends as many Louisiana Acadians do and the spot was visited by Dudley Leblanc during the years after this study and others although the changes in the presentation and form of the place is a question beyond that of this thesis In recent years a decent number of scholars have turned their attention to the Acadian experience before and during the expulsion but for a good treatment of the colonial era I think that there is no substitute for the brief and highly readable book by Naomi Griffiths. One fact which needs to emerge and that is that clearly the Acadians who held to this Acadian identity were people who had clung to a heritage in which small towns and the farms, countryside and surrounding wilderness could be important places. The documentarians who worked for Standard Oil had a definite center of their community and it was New York City. The countryside of Nova Scotia was a place few of them had visited but was a part of the consciousness of all Cajuns.

The troubles of the Acadian people and their enormous productivity and the horror of their loss has been well documented by John Mack Faragher in his book, ***A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from Their American Homeland.*** It is important for the reader to understand that just as moral outrage is at the heart

of many historical texts about the institution of slavery, women's civil status and the Third Reich this writer also believes that British behavior towards the Acadians in this period was a moral outrage. But it is not enough to say that it was a moral outrage. British behavior was perhaps mostly motivated by greed but the complexities of the time were greater than that single set of motivations that derive from greed for the beautifully developed dykelands and associated territories of the Acadians.

The resentments of the British towards the Acadians had been marked by many instances of bloodshed. The Acadians had developed many aspects of the martial reputation which would most often typify them over those centuries which are most clearly traceable in their history, The British would use the claim or pretext of treaty violations at the Battle of Beausejour in justifying their expulsion of the Acadians. The Acadians had become known as the French Neutrals through the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Really this was a process of several minor agreements subsequent to this larger treaty. The Acadians diligently provided large agricultural surplus to the British, as a community they promoted peace between the Empires and as an asset to the British Empire they cultivated a peaceful prosperity in a secure and stable set of relationships with the MiqMaqs. But they remained Roman Catholics, insisted on their rights to trade with the French and were never in doubt that they had long fought against the British Empire. As required they greatly reduced their arms but they continued to drill their local militia units to a substantial degree without any flag they could fight for in a major war. The British had agreed that they not be compelled to fight against their fellow French. Finally the time came when one more British victory would end the French presence in their region. That Battle of Beausejour would certainly end their chance to survive as a buffer between empires if the British won. This battle was a British victory during a time of many triumphs over France and the French. The British had a major objective in a small conflict seeking to secure the Isthmus of Chignecto under British control. Control of the isthmus was crucial to the French and its fall would be disastrous because it was the only gateway between Quebec and Louisbourg during the winter months. Acadians were already neutrals although less than before but believed securing the Isthmus in peace was vital to their future and a token force were in the area and were caught up in the conflict. The fighting began on June 3, 1755, when a British army under Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Monckton acted on long discussed plans made across the British Empire but staged out of nearby Fort Lawrence, and attacked French, MiqMaq, Acadian and other interests by attacking a fort of emerging significance when he besieged the small French regular garrison and a handful of other forces at Fort Beauséjour. After a fortnight under siege, Louis Du Pont Duchambon de Vergor, the fort's French commander, capitulated on June 16. It was this disastrous defeat at Beausejour that sealed the fate of the Acadians This fighting became an infamous treaty breach in some circles and the Battle of Beausejour was a *causis bellum* and provided a workable legal issue for the expulsion planners among the British. One of the combatants in that battle accompanied by a few picked men was a man known as Joseph Broussard "dit Beausoleil*. "Beausoleil*" means "beautiful sunlight" it is also the name of a village in Acadie where several families including the Broussards from which Joseph lived. Those are the accepted explanations of the identifying handle of Joseph Broussard *dit Beausoleil* or "called Beausoleil". However at the level of the mermaids and werewolves at the start of

Louisiana Story there is a somewhat whispered and denied tradition that *Beausolei*l is also a code name for *Basileus* which means king in Greek. The currency of the name remains might in Cajun culture at the time of this writing. That is true both of the Broussard family's name and the handle *Beausoleil* is also the name of a band led by Michael Doucet which has been a successful part of the ethnic music scene for decades.

Shortly after the battle of Beausejour the horrors of the expulsion and exile began. Joseph Broussard and a number of men with the Broussard and a few other clans escaped deportation and organized disgruntled bands of MiqMaqs and attacked British forces for quite a while. Some argue that there is a tradition of twelve raids by bands led by Broussard. His son Amand who would fight in the Battle of Baton Rouge was said to have led a small squad when he was very young indeed. But in the end the Broussard led force would surrender. That first great scattering by the British forces in which so many died and so many others separated has become the central event of Cajun history and literary tradition and is known as *Le Grand Derangement*. These troubles also led in many ways and to a controverted extent to the creation of the forces which brought about the American Revolution. This has been written as well by Douglas Edward Leach as by anybody else in his book, *Roots of Conflict: British Armed Forces and Colonial Americans, 1677-1763.*

The period between 1754 and 1765 saw a great deal of suffering and a struggle for security among the scattered Acadians. During that period it is likely that at least a few of those driven from their homes made their way in small groups on an inland route into Louisiana down the Mississippi River and into the French colony of Louisiana. Many died in the Chesapeake area and others were subjected to near slavery. During the 1760's nearly 3,000 went to Santo Domingo and among them *Beausoleil* Broussard, at the lowest point in his career. Troubled politics still plagued the Acadians, rebellions and revolutions successful and otherwise would strike New Orleans, the Thirteen British colonies, Santo Domingo, and France itself before the end of the century and either the revolutions of the preparations for them would affect the lives of most of these Acadian refugees and immigrants, perhaps heightening their desire to carve out a place for themselves to reunite their people and to live in peace.

In 1763, early in the scattering, the Treaty of Paris gave possession of Louisiana to Spain. It was into Spanish Louisiana that the first large and well organized Acadian immigrants came. Beausoleil brought approximately 4,000 Acadians into the territory once occupied by the Attakapas Indians. Attakapas country consists of the present Louisiana parishes of St. Martin, St. Mary, Lafayette, Iberia, and Vermilion. This region combing marsh and prairie was the first area developed into a new Acadia. The population of Attakapas spread into the prairies to the West. Those western prairies were known as the Oppelousas country and extended to the present border of Texas. The successful establishment of the *Acadianos* in these two regions attracted the attention of their remaining relatives and allies. In 1785, Olivier Theriot brought another large group of approximately 3,000 Acadian refugees and others associated with them from France. These Acadians settled along the Bayou LaFourche then known as "*La Fourche des Chitimaches"* after the aboriginal inhabitants of the area. La Fourche and its environs,

nearer New Orleans and composed almost entirely of elongated riverine villages, developed a somewhat different way of life than the "prairie Cajuns." The inhabitants of Bayou La Fourche are sometimes referred to as "bayou Cajuns." The Attakapas and Oppelousas area make up the heel of the boot which is the foot of Louisiana and the *La Fourche* region forms the ball of the boot. The instep or arch, to sustain the visual metaphor, consisted of a vast swamp only lightly used by Chitmacha Indians known as the Atchafalaya Swamp. This region was settled partly by a few adventurous families from the Attakapas region during the late eighteenth century and more significantly by Acadians from *La Fourche* who sold their earlier farms to American slaveholders during the early decades of the nineteenth century after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The swamp, the ecosystem where Louisiana Story is set has always existed on the edge of Cajun residency, development and identity. Kathleen Duval in her book *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* describes the life of one of Joseph Broussard's sons Amand during the American revolution. One fact which this book brings out is the importance of cattle for the Acadians in Spanish Louisiana. *Le Grand Derangement* has had an impact so powerful that despite the acculturation of later immigrants to the Acadiana areas of settlement during the nineteenth century this tends to define Cajun identity. Trent Angers' book as well as countless periodicals attest to the popular perception in the area of how the people were formed in crisis and the exiled migrations that began in Acadie and ended in Acadiana. Furthermore, while Longfellow's Evangeline may not hold sway in the literary canon of the late twentieth century it did influence other Americans' understanding of the Cajuns for a long time. In reality the migrations were enormous within the context of North American colonial migrations of time and they did have a deep impact upon the descendants of the migrants. the upheaval also affected the world over the next many years.

Joseph Broussard was not to survive his arrival in Louisiana by very long. But there is an online article by Donald J. Arceneaux of the Attakapas Historical Association which does a good job of summarizing the less controversial aspects of his life and role in Louisiana. I will quote this article at great length once and save space over most alternatives. But first it is useful to spend a few lines on the term Attakapas which applies to the region where the *Louisiana Story* was filmed. The Terre des Atakapas is named for the Attakapas an aboriginal American tribe known for small numbers, ferocity and cannibalism who were very diminished in wars with other aboriginal American nations, the Spanish and the French before the Acadians under Joseph Broussard came to this region. The Prairie where Abbeville and Lafayette sit is the Attakapas country in Acadian and Louisiana parlance and folklore and also in the realm of folklore and semi historical rumor it is believed that a good number of Atakapas (or Attakapas or Atakkapas) were killed in skirmishes and their wives and children taken as mistresses and second families by the Acadians. Some of their descendants joined the Houma who also interbred and intermarried heavily with the Acadians. The Attakapas name was so hated by neighbors that only people who are almost pure European White have ever dared to use it since first contact. There are remnants but no tribe. The remnants are spread over a large area.

Before the region was settled there was an experience and set of events in New Orleans that are significant. As Arceneaux points out, the Acadians arrived in New Orleans and engaged in

the fulfillment of many religious duties and transactions at the Catholic Church there. they also tended to financial transactions involving problems with currency exchange. Later in this introduction in conjunction with the events of the 1880s the importance and the names of some of the women in these events will be revisited. This is considered by most Cajuns to be the start of the large sclae cattle industry in the United States. Then Arceneaux describes as well as anyone what happened next.

> *The Acadians had the experience raising crops and cattle in their old, north-temperate-climate homeland. A contingent of the Beausoleil group consisted of former residents of the Isthmus of Chignecto region, where profitable Acadian cattle ranching had been well established for decades. After only about a week in New Orleans, the new immigrants were apparently offered land in the far western Attakapas frontier. Frenchmen Antoine-Bernard Dauterive and André Masse were Attakapas land partners. On 2 March 1765 in the City, the partners relinquished title to their frontier land, presumed to have been along Bayou Teche in the vicinity of present-day St. Martinville. In exchange for this ceded tract, the partners were given a large expanse of land named La Prairie du Vermillion located well west of St. Martinville. It is written that the Acadians were to settle specifically on the partners' ceded east-bank land opposite St. Martinville. It is also reported that the partners' relinquished land extended from the east-bank all the way to the mouth of Bayou Portage. Dauterive had cattle in the Attakapas. On 4 April in New Orleans, he made a compact with eight Acadian "chiefs" including: Joseph dit Beausoleil Broussard, Alexandre Broussard, Joseph Guilbeau, Jean Dugas, Olivier Thibodeau, Jean-Baptiste Broussard, Pierre Arseneau and Victor Broussard. These eight leaders were possibly also acting for their comrades not present at the formal meeting attended by the governor. Dauterive agreed to furnish five cows and one bull to each willing Acadian, once the newcomers were on the western frontier. After six years, Dauterive would get half their herd's increases. From their shares, the Acadians would also return to Dauterive his initial investments.*
>
> *On 8 April in New Orleans, the governor gave Joseph Broussard a title and a responsibility. Beausoleil was named "Captain of Militia and Commandant of the Acadians going to settle on the land of the Acutapas [sic]." The governor reported on 24 April 1765 that the Beausoleil group had "departed New Orleans." They traveled in boats with supplies bound for their new sub-tropical homeland. On that same date, possibly somewhere along the Mississippi River near present-day Plaquemine, the pastor at St. Francis Church of Pointe Coupée baptized one-day old Marguerite Broussard, daughter of Joseph [Petit Joseph] and his second wife, Marguerite Savoie. These parents were recorded as "Acadians going to establish a new settlement at Attakapas."*

Cajuns in the prairies are separated from the City of New Orleans and the Acadian settlements of the Eastern part of the state by one of the largest riverine estuaries in North America. This is probably still the largest riverine estuary and it is where swamp life occurs most. Marshes are

more common in the trapping culture of the prairies although swamps occur. Louisiana story depicts a swamp which is a forested wetlands the marshes are prairie like wetlands. Both environments have fur-bearing animals and alligators. The Atchafalaya was the traditional Aboriginal American territory of the Chitimacha or Chetimache people. In the decades since the 1953 end of the years this text discusses this swamp produces a great deal of the crawfish, fur, alligator meat, fresh water fish, retting moss, sunken cured cypress, ecotourism revenues and freshwater sports fishing revenues for the State of Louisiana. It is the place where many of the most important Aboriginal American archaeological sites have been found. The area is sacred to the Chetimache traditional religion and retains a sacral character among Chitimacha, Acadian and Creoles of Color who within the context of an orthodox Catholic Christianity inculturate the Gospel into folk religious sensibilities. But in day to day life one reality is that swamp life is also very much a cash driven existence. It has long been a mix of subsistence and cash funding which is suited to the region. But there is also a sense of how much the place is beyond normal modern life. that sense of separation is not available in the same way in any of the wilderness of Vermilion and Iberia Parish.

The generation born to Joseph Broussard and others is largely a generation not born either in their Canadian homeland nor in Louisiana. Men like Amand broussard and his wife, some of his brothers and others fought in the Battle of Baton Rouge was a brief siege and attack by the Spanish Colonial forces and regulars against the British.during the American Revolutionary War and War of Independence in which the Acadians made up part of the St. Martinville militia and were busy forging ties with Creoles and Spaniards against the British Empire. that was decided on September 21, 1779. The Acadians were still arriving over a period of time and a large group would not arrive until 1785 but they were committed to Galvez's war. Baton Rouge was the second British outpost in which they saw action which fell to Spanish arms during Governor and General Bernardo de Gálvez's march into British West Florida. Spain and its empire officially entered the American Revolutionary War on May 8, 1779, as Su Majestad Catolico Carlos III issued a formal declaration of war and another on July 8 that authorized Bernardo de Gálvez, the colonial Governor of Spanish Louisiana and other in the Empire to open lines in this war on Britain. West Florida which would become part of the State of Louisiana later on was thus conquered in small part by the Acadians along with others who were in the Spanish Empire's Louisiana. With the coming together of the Attakapas region and the West Florida region there is a foreshadowing of the polity that will one day be the State of Louisiana..

> ***Figure one*** *in this chapter illustrates the four regions which compose what is now Acadiana, or the New Acadia. While each region differs it remains quite sensible to write of a single Acadian or Cajun culture. The most distinct and interesting region in terms of cultural adaption to the environment is the Atchafalaya region. Swamp Cajuns, bayou Cajuns and prairie Cajuns always enjoyed ties of commerce, language and history which contributed to the development of Cajun culture. Acadiana, which will henceforth serve as our term for the Acadian region of Louisiana, became a battleground, a center for*

trade and the focus of a variety of racial, political, social and other conflicts which shaped the region and the state. The prairies and the bayous were much less isolated from outside influences than the Atchafalaya.In a real sense the film While it does not condemn the film as nonsense to say so it bears repeating that in documenting a culture which is really Louisiana Story which is about and is filmed in the swampy parts of the western swamps is more like life in the Atchafalaya than in any other Cajun region. As the materials and comments left by everyone involved in the filming clearly indicate the environment is made up of real plants, real alligators a real trappers cabin, real Cajuns and so forth but it is not a real single location that is typical of the particular small region it represents. But that is for a later chapter. The point here is that the Cajuns had helped to bring the essential regions that became the state together and they still retained a regional consciousness about the State in 1943.

When one considers that generation of Cajuns born in transitory exile and finally settling in Louisiana it is important to remember that one of them, Henry Schuyler Thibodaux was the Fourth Governor of the State of Louisiana before he died. It was only for a month but it came to him as the powerful holder of the office of President of the Senate, he was also a successful planter. This was all long after that early period of settling the Acadian lands. But it is one of many indicators including the evidence which can be found in the first Louisiana State Constitution that the first Cajuns were people of remarkable status and influence when one considers all the reasons that they could have been in the most abject circumstances.

One of the changes that immediately occurred in the lives of the Acadians of Louisiana is that some of them began to own African imported or racially Negro slaves from the Americas almost upon arrival. Extremely few if any had ever owned slaves of African descent in their northern homeland or in the years of exile. Slavery in Louisiana was governed in large part even under the Spanish by French Imperial Law. It had been weakened and was evolving because of Spanish rule but it was not entirely abrogated. The exact nature of the legal regime is a very complex question beyond the scope of this text. However, the one law which needs to be discussed here is the *Code Noir* promulgated in Versaille in 1685. Louis XIV, the great Sun King who had arguably been the most powerful man in Europe was also a monarch with a vision for his colonies. The Code Noir defined the conditions of slavery in the French colonial empire, restricted the activities of free Negroes, forbade the exercise of any religion other than Roman Catholicism and so was the cause of some Huguenot migration to Spain, what became the United States and even a few families to the most autonomous people in the Empire, the tiny Acadian enclave in the North and this same order also commanded all Jews out of France's colonies, some if very few would come to accept Catholicism in Spain's *Conversos* communities where Hebraic cultural roots were more respected than almost anywhere else. Some of these mixed families would end up in the early State of Louisiana for various reasons.

The *Code Noir* gave unapproached rights to slaves compared to the rights accorded them in the colonies of the other European empires. The rights of the slaves under the *Code* included the right to be fed and clothed. This was a stark contrast not so much to slavery practices which

were common in the South but many of the other forms of slavery which have existed before and after slavery as the Acadians knew it. A further legal recognition of the right to marry, to gather publicly, and to take Sundays off was part of the status of human beings assured of a place however disadvantaged within rather than outside the body politic. The *Code Noir* did not come from any sense of egalitarianism except that derived from the spiritual standing of humanity before Almighty God. While the people of the Court of Versailles and the people of a liberal Protestant Church in New York or Atlanta today both worship God as Christians and both seek to emulate in some way the teachings and example of Jesus Christ it is also true that Versaille particularly had a very lofty view of how God *actually* was and how many layers of types of people could *actually* fit in underneath him before one got below people to animals. In that sense it is not all that shocking that the same Code Noir that authorized and codified severe and brutal corporal punishment against slaves under certain conditions could also forbid slave owners to inflict mayhem, torture or death to them, and to separate families. It also forced the owners to instruct them in the Catholic faith, this did not allow for any real doubt from a French point of view that Africans of the darker races were human beings endowed with a soul which required nurture. The studies show deviation over time but clearly the Code resulted in a far higher percentage of Louisiana of all or partly black African descent being free people of color in the early State of Louisiana than in territorial Mississippi. The difference shown in percentage differences is at least thousands of percent different. They were on average exceptionally literate, with a significant number of them owning businesses, properties and even slaves.

The code has been described by Tyler Stovall in his article Tyler Stovall, "Race and the Making of the Nation: Blacks in Modern France." which appears In the Michael A. Gomez, edited. *Diasporic Africa: A Reader* makes it clear. "one of the most extensive official documents on race, slavery, and freedom ever drawn up in Europe" it is unlikely that one can compare anything to it in the period and the class of powerful courts in which it was developed. The part of the law in colonial Louisiana which was widely unobserved was the provision which forbade male masters from having sex with their female slaves. However, even this was partly effective and even as intended slaves who bore mixed children had a bargaining chip. other provisions were more enforced and effective. The idea that the law assured that slaves could not be sold apart from spouses at all nor could children from their parents until they were old enough for some independence when coupled with more specifically religious provisions that they were free to refuse or accept a spouse and were to be instructed and baptized correctly in the Catholic faith -- those things created a profoundly different sensibility about race relations than has been treated as typical in the history of the antebellum South. This would not be entirely erased when the United States as a whole federal union assumed the role of the French Empire as the ultimate sovereign and Louisiana had many migrants into its lands from the United States and assimilated West Florida. It would not be terribly long before Louisiana in all its constituent parts would become part of the United States of America. That state of affairs would also be tried severely early on, but the late antebellum years would see a very prosperous Acadian ethnic community with some very wealthy and prominent members.The impact of the revolutionary era atmosphere on the Cajun life and culture has not been studied in depth and not much at all before Duval and constitutes a promising area for future investigation. This study does place a

disproportionate emphasis on the wetlands within the prairies and there are issues of prairie and bayou life which may be unduly minimized. Brasseaux's recent book *Acadiana: Louisiana's Historic Cajun Country* with photographs by Philip Gould does a wonderful job of showing the complex peopling of Cajun Country. But in folkloric terms in Vermilion Parish it had become a truism to say The Attakapas and the Point Coupee-Lafourche regions are the original New Acadias, the Cajun culture of the wetlands is their child.

Despite certain signs of Acadian political power the Cajuns did not dominate Louisiana. They were one of several groups of constituents within the fabric of the State as a whole. They participated as Acadians but also as citizens of the new Territory in the great Battle of New Orleans which made Andrew Jackson one of the greatest American figures and heroes past or present. This was the first major military engagement in a significant military campaign in which the United States beat the British Empire on its own. Much is made of the fact that a treaty had already been signed but not delivered to the theater but one could build a large hill with treaties that have been radically reinterpreted and it is clear enough Britain would at least have kept the area around New Orleans and probably the lower Mississippi Valley. The battle was won by Andrew Jackson and his Kentucky Rifles, Jean Lafiite and especially the superb artillerists among his corsairs, Acadians and Germans from outside the neighborhood, Aboriginal American Nations special troops and both white and colored Creoles of both the mostly Spanish and mostly French type who provided superior logistics. The American Revolution could not be won without the French Empire. The capital in DC had been recently destroyed and the British saw the Battle at Baltimore as a draw. It was only after the blood spilled at Chalmette, Grand Terre and other surroundings of New Orleans that the British believed they could lose to Americans alone in pitched battle. Having settled into an American identity there was already a growing sectional tension within that identity. It would happen that some who had seen the Battle of New Orleans were alive for the start of the War Between the United States. But until the Civil War Louisiana would not be a tag along part of the United States but a location equal to any other in achieving American Independence.

The interest in Acadians is evident in success of the publication of Longfellow's Poem *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*. This was a poem widely read in the 1840s and 1850s. Many learned people have read the poem and this writer is probably one of the published members of the Acadian ethnic community who is most in critical of the poem, most willing to attribute less than laudable motivations to Longfellow and most willing to note the possible contribution to bad events and trends in Cajun experience which the poem may have had. However, it is also true that I find the poem beautiful and that I think it captures and portrays well some very authentic Acadian values. A very interesting book might be written contrasting Longfellow's view of the Acadian character to Flaherty's view. But that is not this book. One of the reasons this text is associated with Louisiana State University is because of the work done by Gaines M. Foster in showing the role of Protestant Christianity in defining Southern cultural identity and renewing the perspective of the national agenda. Racial identity and the religious identity and the American identity of Southerners is very relevant to the Cajun experience. While there is no room for an absolute accord with the pattern that Foster finds in the South as a whole the model of culture proposed here and his model for the South have something to say to one another and this text

attempts to do just that.Two documents then, *Code Noir* and *Evangeline* -- neither created by Cajuns -- had a lot to do with Acadian sense of moral identity. These factors in writing from 1685 and the early 1840s may seem to have little to do with the little world which Standard Oil came to film but throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, endogamy, distinct economic functions and the French Catholic heritage and way of life of all South Louisiana preserved the region's cultural distinctiveness. In many ways the 1840s and 1850s came closer to the ideals of Acadian rural life than has been achieved in the United States before or since. Values not so much discussed in American public life include a well maintained environment, potential for agricultural and navigation expansion, linguistic and ethnic autonomy, and a sense of being a well represented and effective minority in politics and the military. Cajuns were happy with the law passed in this period that enshrined the right to English Only, French Only (Francaise seulement) and bilingual education as entitlements. They also preserved an attachment to the two texts from Versailles and Harvard written by outsiders in two different languages. However, much would happen before the first film was exposed in the Standard Oil projects that would shape the Acadian land and identity. This period of the 1840s and 1850s saw the brief Presidency of Zachary Taylor who was the President most associated with Louisiana from the founding of the republic to time of this writing. Cajuns felt generally very attached to Louisiana and that they were a full and completely secure constituent part to the degree that any group of citizens is ever secure in their rights, liberties and prerogatives.

One cultural occurrence that has great significance in understanding the Cajun culture is the relationship between the Cajuns and the *Gens Libres de Couleu*r or free people of color in the State. In Vermilion Parish there was always a substantial white majority in the antebellum period. This town where Flaherty would set up a base of special importance which would be of importance to all those involved in the SONJ projects was a region within the region where it is relatively evident and is a matter of folkloric acceptance that a somewhat secretive ethnic authority maintained restrictions on unaffiliated outsiders, the free people of color and also slaves. Slaveholding the stories insist and available evidence had to be close to most of the provisions of the Code Noir, had to be secure and very large groups of slaves were discouraged. The Cattle industry and navigation had a system of coexistence with white majorities, a set number or percentage of positions for creoles of color and a set role to be played by slaves.

But Cajuns participated in the communities across South Louisiana where rich WHite men kept mixed race mistresses and supported separate families in what can be honestly regarded as a kind of racially unequal polygamy. But it was not polygamy as the white wives had a separate and legally superior establishment. Thus even where out of state white Southerners joined in this process and institution they could still oppose Mormon polygamy as Foster shows that a disproportionately large minority of Southerners did in Congress.

The Cajun world in microcosm to which the Standard Oil documentarians had come held in its memories a sense of how the War Between the States began which differs from any point of view which has ever been the orthodoxy among scholars of the War since it ended. This text will

provide here a brief introduction to that same point of view which still prevailed in Cajun Country in the 1940s. The stories so well remembered in Vermilion Parish and also in the rest of the Attakapas prairies were the stories of the *Comités de Vigilance des Attakapas.* There was also a book about the same institution in French and English.The Vigilants existed before the outbreak of the war and were fully engaged in a struggle to preserve civil society. Given the stature of the people involved in this movement and demands made of them there was never a doubt that the War Between the States had come to be because violence, disorder and potential civil collapse were the alternatives to War.The sense of inevitability reached its peak in 1859 near my hometown of Abbeville in Vermilion Parish as well as in the larger regional center of Lafayette or Vermilionville.. In the decades since Flaherty's film appeared in 1948 this period has been rather famously portrayed in the Glen Pitre 1986 film *Belizaire the Cajun*. Pitre is a Harvard man as well as a Cajun and chooses to emphasize the anti-vigilantes among the Cajuns. Such a faction did exist but the *Comites* were led and captained primarily by Cajuns. Despite some considerable outside evidence such as the pages of various newspapers there is one principal source for these accounts and the history of this organization and that source is the work of their official chronicler and historian Alexandre Barde who wrote in French for a Francophone organization . The vigilantes did persecute some Acadian outlaw folk heros close to the character of the hybrid of fiction and history which emerges as Belizaire Breaux in the Pitre film. There also were Anglos in the group and some were from the Perry family as depicted in the film. However, they hanged and rounded up people of many types and ethnicities who refused to leave and lead by the Acadian Moutons and Leblancs who were prosperous Acadian families and some criminals persecuted were Anglos. Innocent and guilty victims are hard to discern with certainty but rather than being another instance of Acadian poverty and futility in the endless litany presented to the American British readership or audience the vigilantes were a violent wing of a highly organized and somewhat secretive ethnic Community. The tensions in the region and between factions of the community reached their peak in the Battle of Bayou Queue de Tortue This was not only the greatest single conflict of the *Comites de Vigilance des Attakapas* in their original form before the War between the States but was an evident manifestation of the powerful tensions that had cut into the very heart of the Acadian ethnic community. This battle was fought shortly before Louisiana's secession from the Union. The Queue de Tortue Bayou (Turtle Tail Bayou) for which the battle is named begins near Lafayette without reaching great size outside of floods it is stable and forms the natural boundary separating Lafayette Parish and Acadia Parish to the west and Acadia Parish and Vermilion Parish to the south. This vision of the War between the States adds another component that distinguishes Cajun identity from that of many other Americans. Gaines Foster has written about the Protestant Christian reforms that took hold in the South after the Civil War. The moral ascendancy of the Union is in many ways sort of conceded early on in a way that makes his argument from evidence in *Moral Reconstruction* easier to understand. Despite all the arguments about morality that can be made by other Confederates for the Confederacy and by Cajuns against the Confederacy there remains a single fact for most Cajuns of influence at the time of the War and afterwards the Confederacy was less a struggle for freedom and states rights than for many Confederates. Of course in addition to that Cajuns were tied to Roman Catholicism almost exclusively until about 1945 and the reforms Foster discussed appealed less

to them than to Protestants. For Cajuns it tended to be seen relatively more widely as a struggle for public order and in a real sense survival. During the War between the States it is arguable how important the role of the Acadians may have been to the totality of the Confederate struggle. It is not really debatable that the Acadians were deeply affected and even transformed by the struggle.

The Acadian role in the Civil War had many facets but in the popular memory it reached its zenith in the Battle of Mansfield. This is arguably one of the most significant battles in Acadian history it did not have significance in representing the outcome of the war in which it was fought in that it was a Confederate victory in a war the Confederacy would lose. The battle is alternately known as the Battle of Sabine Crossroads, occurred on April 8, 1864, in De Soto Parish, Louisiana. Not to take anything away from the other Confederate forces commanded by Major General Richard Taylor who was responsible and boldly attacked the Union forces in this contest the role of the Martyred Acadian Hero and his units was very large. The Federals troops were commanded by Major General Nathaniel P. Banks and were set up a few miles outside the town of Mansfield, near Sabine Crossroads. The Union forces held their positions for a short time before being overwhelmed by Confederate attacks and driven from the field. The speed of the battle emphasizes the importance of the early actors and when the fighting started Taylor had approximately 9,000 troops consisting of Brigadier General Alfred Mouton's Louisiana/Texas infantry division, Major General John G. Walker's Texas infantry division, Brigadier General Thomas Green's Texas Cavalry Division, and Colonel William G. Vincent's Louisiana cavalry brigade. Of these the most important portion in many ways were under Mouton who was killed and whose command was taken by the French Prince Camille de Polignac. Taylor had reserve troops who did come into the action which were the 5,000 men in the divisions of Brigadier General Thomas J. Churchill and Brigadier General Mosby M. Parsons which moved up from encampments near Keachie, between Mansfield and Shreveport. This battle stood as symbol in the Acadian mind for the next generation beyond its strategic significance. The battle was a decisive Confederate victory although the South went on to fully lose the war and it was mostly lost already it was this battle which stopped the Federal advance often known as the Red River Campaign. After the fall of the Confederate States of America the Cajuns faced a new set of challenges rising from the devastation described in *Yankee Autumn in Acadiana.* The horrors of that war were followed by challenges of poverty and fear that made what before was a consciousness of communal identity within a more decentralized vision of society to a vision of society which did less to assure the autonomy of constituent communities. In many ways the Cajun elite was never to reach as high after the death of Mouton on that battlefield in the eyes of common Cajun people.

After the Civil War the Cajuns had bet a great deal on the Confederate cause and lost. They shared many concerns and values with the broad majority of Americans and with Southerners specifically. However, the struggle for their own identity was a primary struggle which would become more acute in 1915 when French was outlawed in schools. One of the efforts at that identity being enshrined is one my protestant readers will simply have to take on faith is quite a big deal and was a significant effort if less effective in practice than it has been in the official

legalities of the Catholic Church. The creation of an international *Fete National des Acadiens* was a major project of the late 19th Century. This ethnic observance and official interpretation of a Catholic Holiday is observed on August 15 which is for Roman Catholics the Feast of the Assumption. Both jointly and separately it is the National Day of the Acadians. It is one of the marks of someone who really wants to uphold the Acadian heritage that this day usually matters quite a bit to them. Here one comes to the revisiting of Joseph Broussard's arrival in Louisiana. Once again quoting at length the very useful summary by Arceneaux.

> *In late February 1765, French colonial officials, awaiting the appearance of their Spanish replacements, reported the arrival by sea of a large group of about 200 Acadians in New Orleans. These Acadians, former prisoners of the British at Halifax, Nova Scotia, had been set free in accord with provisions of the Treaty of Paris. After a brief stop in Saint- Domingue (present-day Haiti), these new immigrants appeared without prior notice in Louisiana's colonial capitol. Joseph Broussard dit Beausoleil was the chief leader of the group, comprised of about fifty-eight to sixty families, many of whom were related by blood or marriage.*
> *The Beausoleil group remained in New Orleans for about seven weeks. Nine baptisms and three marriages were performed in the city's Catholic Church. An attempt was made to redeem outdated French Canadian card-monies, a type of promissory notes that was held by thirty-two destitute Acadians.[Discussions and agreements concerning a settlement location took place between officials, established colonists, and the newcomers. Supplies were issued to the impoverished recent immigrants.*
> *Preparations were completed for a move to a new, southern Acadian homeland.*

The rest of American society has many records of the Pilgrims of Plymouth, the Massachusetts Bay Colony, wagon trains galore, the Mormons and many others who settled America in families. But the twentieth century Western films showed new territory being opened up by relatively wild male cowboys with perhaps one couple in a large group and a house full of prostitutes usually happily overseeing a watering hole. Cajuns still reverenced the Dauterive Compact at the Flying Jay Ranch in Vermilion Parish (A "J" with wings is a way of describing the *fleur de lis*) and in their own circles considered themselves the first American cowboys. They had stories of legendary and enormous all male cattle drives and not every Cajun cowboy was a paragon of marital fidelity no r every woman that stayed home. However, marriage was a vital consideration and was the great sexaul event in Cajun culture. the true love of Evangeline and Gabriel in Longfellow's poem that seems absurdly unrealistic to many still seems kind of sexy to many Cajuns. Even if one might not live in complete abstinence the attraction of sexual pairing through all adversity remained strong.

The role of Mary, the statues of St.Therese distributed later by Dudley and other such actions of Catholics life went together with what was often seen as resistance to the lower position of women not in roles performed or positions in society but as people. A cajun woman usually aspired to be a wife and mother and a man was valued very significantly by his ability to produce a legitimate line and his descent from a legitimate line. Marian devotion was not

apologized for but was seen as vital resistance to misogyny. Protestants of course often feel similar feelings about an all male celibate priesthood running a church. But the Marian devotions and female saints were seen in part as corrective to American cultural trends. In addition of course it was a sincere spiritual expression for many.

Those of involved in Acadian ethnic consciousness after 1945 are often in the position of encouraging those in the Acadian Nation who are Jewish, Protestant, (even Anglican though today is an awkward day to be both), Freemasons with no other formal religion and adherents of other faith to join what is still the (not so large) Roman Catholic majority and not merely plurality of their countrymen in celebrating the *Le Jour National des Acadiens*. We also wish those Catholics who are not Acadians but live among large numbers of us would remember this is a dual holiday for us. It is a sad kind of National Holiday. We do remember all that we are but we are not principally celebrating the founding of Acadie by our ancestors which has become Nova Scotia. We are not primarily remembering the founding of the *Nouvelle Acadie i*n Louisiana which has become Acadiana. We are primarily remembering the tragedy, time of weakness (relative to an old and established empire in its homeland) , loss and death which is the destruction of the land of Acadie and the start of *Le Grand Derangement.* This holiday has roots in the past since the Acadians were French subjects and as the first came to the new World the King of France had just designated the feast as the special day of France and the French. In 1881 there was the first large public and open convention of the Acadians since the exile itself in which a few thousand gathered for real national policy and it was at that time that they declared the holiday a national feast. The reason cited by some knowledgeable sources is in part to distinguish them from the French Canadians who honored St. John the Baptist as their patron. They also honor it because it is a feminine holiday in a Christianity which has sold out to a largely woman-hating world in much of the modern era. While some parts of the world were more anti-feminist in the past and some are eager to bring that back – the feminine half of things was prized in much of Ancient Greece, Byzantine Christianity, High Medieval France and Acadie. Acadians can remember that we stand with that always developing tradition and against its destruction. In 1938 the Pope officially recognized the Acadian celebration of the Feast of the Assumption as their national holiday. He also entrusted them to the special patronage of Our Lady that this recognizes. Of course the Assumption itself actually celebrates the raising of the body of Mary into Heaven to join her believer's spirit. this is very hard for Protestant, Jewish or Skeptic Acadians to relate to one would think. First let us think about the celebration in Biblical terms of interest to Protestants and Jews. The Bible talks of Enoch and Elijah being taken up into heaven and so it is not without precedent in the Jewish Scriptures. For Protestants remember that in addition to these two Old Testament precedent we have what can be taken as the prophecy of Mary that in her life God lifts up the lowly to lofty thrones in the Canticle Catholics call the Magnificat in the early part of Luke's Gospel.

Flaherty of course was born to one Catholic and one Protestant parent. According to Helen Van Dongen none of those in the movie headquarters went to church. But she believed churches were the center of town life in Abbeville. But religion was one of the key components of Cajun identity.

We will indulge in a bit of a jump ahead here past the ten years covered in this book. It is useful for the casual reader to have some idea of what happened after 1953. At the moment of writing the state is in a serious crisis. That crisis will affect many institutions badly and there have been other crises. However many institutions exist now that support Cajun culture and identity which did not exist at that time. There have been many troubles and disappointments but their has been survival and persistence. Edwin Edwards, elected four times as governor of the state is one of Acadiana's regional politicians to have enjoyed success in the state. In the sense of French Louisiana, besides CODOFIL there were other evidences that the larger Francophone roots of Louisiana had survived, Some equating cultural persistence with political autonomy do not realize that in the 1990s Louisiana's legal system resembles that of Scotland and Puerto Rico in that the English Common Law is grafted onto what remains basically a system descended from the Roman Civil Law. In the case of Louisiana, the Code Napoleon was the immediate ancestor of the Louisiana Civil Code. In recent years political signs of French Louisiana's struggle for survival in Anglo-America include the official declaration by the legislature in 1968 that Louisiana was a bilingual state and the institution of Council of Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) to preserve the French heritage of the area. In 1980, a federal court of Appeals found the Cajuns to be a nationally recognized minority .

Hopefully, a brief introduction such as the above provides some evidence that a distinct culture has existed and may still exist in Acadiana which has both assimilated outsiders into its own way of life and gradually been assimilated by the larger American culture. The question of how that assimilation took place and how it was perceived by those on both sides of the cultural divide is not answered by showing that a unique but not isolated region developed in that part of the state which bears the name Acadiana.

The United States lacks a tradition within which a community of Euro-Americans who occupied their region before the establishment of Anglo-Americans in the area can be understood in a way which would really satisfy the Acadian sensibility. America has prized its self perceptions and Acadians have prized their own. The metaphor of the melting pot is one of the least attractive to most Acadians a gumbo is a similar metaphor in some ways and yet it is much more acceptable. Oftentimes it really does come down to the level of differences of expression that are very small indeed and which this country which is large, known for rapid change and has many other qualities that largely define a society not likely to provide some of the senses of security most prized by the Cajuns. The Standard Oil projects had a number of documentarians largely from New York City and the larger New England region coming into this area to observe and record the people and places that they found here.

The documentarians had a plan and a predisposition to tell a particularly American story. This sense of what an American story was will be revisited in terms of their unique community and previous New Deal film experience but the larger context of what was an American story was equally significant. The concepts of this post Civil War America has appeared in the writing of many of its best leaders and thinkers as a country that has been designed and can be reformed

as a kind of culturally neutral political union of free men. Foster has also pointed out in Moral Reconstruction that Christians sought to define a common christian culture that shaped policy. That is certainly true of many reformers. The documentarians came from a different largely Leftist community of reformers who believed America could be improved by the actions of the people. The Cajuns would not have disagreed fundamentally with each of these groups in their general desire to improve America, they were neither ireligious nor opposed to moral or socio-economic progress. But Cajun identity is largely a threat to many alliances of political power since the Civil War. That is because they still hold to the ideas that formed much of Medieval European, hellenic and Ancient Greek civilization. They believe in as well live a life that acknowledges the value of gradual change, federalism, jurisdictional and cultural diversity -- the individual is somewhat free to move from group to group but not fee to break down group governance. The documentarians and Standard Oil were very different but neither group were likely to be able to even make a serious attempt to understand the Acadian point of view. Other visions of America had been shared with the executives and the documentarians but all had experience over a lifetime with those basic views. They had experience with those who viewed postwar America as an extension and perfection of the new Promised Land receiving its way of life from Providence. they had experience of the influence of Communist and Nazi visions of the world in America. They had the more mainstream American view of the time however hard that is to briefly define. Most of them were old enough and experienced enough to have known the 1930s to probably have been the first time that a large scale effort was made by artists, thinkers and political leaders to discover the uniquely American culture often called the American Way of Life without much reference to ethnicity, religion or military necessity . Those years of the Depression and of the New Deal were also the years when the American "Documentary" exploded from obscurity to what may have been its zenith. The documentaries made possible a more intense debate and dialogue about the relationship between culture and America. However, these documentaries are not full of the Confederate rituals, Puritan churches, the Amish, the Hopi, the native Hawaiians or any of the other really eager cultural conservative who wanted to be Americans and still remain something else that was large, organized, enduring and very precious to them. When the documentarians came to Acadiana they entered a dialog with a very distinctive American culture. That dialog continues in this text and has been ongoing since they arrived..

Acadians have developed reasons to be wary of what the documentarians were expressing. That seems reasonable, In addition historians when I was coming up in life generally did not take seriously the claim of the creator of a documentary to produce a historic study of a place. So if they are imperfect observers and the process is less than respectable then perhaps the film mostly tells us about those behind the cameras. The interaction between subject and artist does shape a film and all recognize the film as a valid source for the history of its makers. That is the reverse angle which the film Louisiana Story: The Reverse Angle sought to bring forth in a very measured way and that continues here in this work begun before that retrospective film was shot. But despite all their limits these doumentarians were filming Louisiana. Without doubt, documentary filmmakers and photographers of the 1930s and 1940s aimed at work of historical value. Any documentary intends to record a time, a place and a people in an historic

set of relationships. Unless such claims have been tried by a careful but creative comparison with other historical sources both the documentary and the subject of the documentary are not fully understood. When historians use documentaries as valid insights into the events they depict, the study of both the documentary and the subject changes dramatically because the historian must compare it carefully to other views of the subject filmed.

If Flaherty as an artist sought to create a work of his own genius; his relationship with others hold small interest. If he collaborated in a documentary endeavor that functioned as a ferment of projects with shared artistic and technical elements, the meanings and value of his work relates to that community of vision in some way. The few photographs which illustrate this essay may indicate to those familiar with Louisiana Story how still images produced by those surrounding Flaherty influenced him. The sense of collaborating to record life in America typified much important work born out of the national trial of the 1930s and 1940s. Evidence that Flaherty was working within a documentary community exists in the biographies of Helen Van Dongenen and roy Stryker the man who hired him andmany others down to his choice of Virgil Thompson, the composer who had done the score for many New Deal documentary films. Outwardly focused and loosely organized in complicated ways the small army of Americans involved in documentary sought to define America, politics and the art of documentary but not themselves. The totality of the documentary community escapes essay definition but it clearly existed.

The full roster of Stryker's photographers who worked in Louisiana during Standard Oil years included Esther Bubley and Martha McMillan Roberts, who had both begun working for Stryker as darkroom technicians during his F.S.A. years. Others with an F.S.A. past were John Collier, Edward and Louise Rosskam and Russell Lee. Only three of the photographers working under Roy Stryker in Louisiana during the Standard Oil years had no past connection with the F.S.A. Two of the three photographers, Todd Webb and Arnold Eagle became closely associated with Flaherty during his work on Louisiana Story. the fusion of Standard Oil's past experience and developed point of view with the New Deal point of view caused them to see the place they had come to shoot in particular ways. But the documentary community was the dominant interpreter.

The crew filming Louisiana Story was small and the photographers who came over from Stryker's project were well informed about the area before meeting Flaherty. Given the talkative nature of all parties in this crew it strains the belief to think that Flaherty was not influenced by these men. Todd Webb had read about the region and photographed it. Webb's New England background may not have blinded him to Acadiana, but neither did it help him to see it. Perhaps Arnold Eagle's identity as an immigrant who spoke heavily accented English led him to a particular fascination with the real adaptations of the Acadians. As discussed below, Flaherty did not develop Louisiana Story from the kind of interaction with those he filmed which many scholars have hypothesized as his chief method of learning about his subject. The alternative hypothesis of this essay is that Flaherty was significantly influenced by the others working for Standard Oil in a documentary capacity. The photographic vision, the biases and the insights of those in the Stryker photographic project had an important role to play in shaping Flaherty's last

film and his film had an influence on them. His film is much better known but the connections between the two rpojects is by no means slight or casual.

If Flaherty has left no direct confession that he borrowed from others rather than seeking out his own oral sources then the burden of proof lies on this writer to show such borrowing occurred. In Louisiana Story Flaherty's amateur anthropology did not capture as much historical detail as Eagle's workmanlike observations of the cultural and social distinctiveness of a group of long-time American citizens. Arnold Eagle seemed very interested in the human process of creating things. His work generates much of the little knowledge of the degree of impact Falherty's crew had on the environment they filmed. Subtler than the varied host which invades a location to produce a commercial film, the crew nonetheless affected the behavior of those it filmed. Flaherty did not often seek out the maximum exposure to the kind of people he sought to film, but rather selected a swamp for some crucial scenes where no trapper ever went. These things alone do not disprove the hypothesis that he relied on his own research in attempting to document the Cajun culture. Below we will discuss the relationship between Flaherty and those around him -- both the Cajuns and the photographers working in the area.

In arguing that Louisiana Story bears the stamp of a work made by, for and largely about the American film intellectuals of the period and that it has a largely second-hand view of the culture it depicts I am not arguing that Flaherty did not create an original story, nor that the story has nothing to offer those interested in Cajun life. *Louisiana Story* offers us less variety than the photography but does preserve the sounds of Cajun speech and a few techniques of swamping where motion is required. However, the question of the speech of the people deserves several chapters in a longer book. I will briefly say here that what appeared to be Flaherty's intention as regards Cajun speech in the start of all this seems horrifying to many Cajuns and others but I think the final process used was relatively honest, exacting and authentic. The point is that the story was made by a man much more removed from his subject than the man who made *Nanook* in many ways. Robert and Frances living in the Nettles in comfort with their entourage did not extend the kind of effort some of the photographers did to understand Cajun culture. Van Dongen's diary I believe does more to show what did not happen than it does to show all that went into the film. However Leacock, Van Dongen and Flaherty all worked together as a community with Frances Flaherty, Arnold Eagle and the Cajun cast to interpret individual elements of the local reality within a fictional framework. There is a lack of all out effort and risk in engaging in the Cajun experience partly because the dangers of meeting the challenges of the oil companies and the drilling dangers and also because at his age and in his state of life he may largely have felt that he was able to rely on others to forge the ties with his subject which had been so time consuming in his earlier films. At that time I started this project I felt surprised that it was surprising that Robert Flaherty had a close relationship with another documentary project in the region where I lived and yet both had been studied almost exclusively as separate and autonomous for half a century.That has changed to some degree.

The still photography project does get a bit less attention in this thesis than the film if everything is weighed but it does a more complete job of really viewing Cajun country at the time. Standard

Oil's other major project in Louisiana produced many stills of swamps, trappers, oilmen and pirogues such as Flaherty filmed. The few Stryker pictures which appear here as included plates and illustrations merely represent a much larger body of images, some with more striking visual similarities to the film. The still photographs however provide a much more documentary corpus of images than the film. The Stryker images include several kinds of fishing, trapping, moss gathering, and hunting which made up the way of life in the wetlands. The romantic images are balanced with many prosaic ones. Do they also capture a people such as the chronological narrative earlier in this chapter would indicate that the Cajuns were?

The treatment and analysis of *Louisiana Story* in this study advances the claim not so much that Flaherty did not learn a great deal from his Cajun natural actors nor that the film is not a "documentary" at all as has sometimes been believed. This is a bit of modest thesis as texts submitted for dissertation defense go. It asserts that one can study both the filmmaking and the subject the film was made about as one studies and writes cultural history. The film is not irrelevant to the Acadiana of the period but is more distant from local realities than Stryker's still photography project. Perhaps exactly one remove more distant, based largely on the information and influence reaching him from the more historical efforts of the Stryker photographers. Less historiographical-critical print has come forth about the "Latour" family than about the Samoans, Eskimos and folk or Aran in Flaherty's film. An historian's study of any work of art, especially of a documentary film, begins with efforts to recreate the past encounter between artist and subject. That remaking of the past constitutes much of an historian's contribution to understanding art. Such restoration of the creative context becomes more crucial if one wishes to evaluate the film as historical document. The Latours were fictional in every way that Hamlet was fictional and a few others besides.

In the evidence these documentary photographs bring together, assimilation reveals itself as a significant social and cultural force working with other forces to shape the folkways, traditions and technologies of a group of U.S. citizens different from the mainstream. That assimilation has to be seen when in fact the visually distinctive is what was likely to attract the cameras studied here. The value of these photographs as historical documents can be compared to the documentary value of other works. In these pages there is a comparison between Flaherty's Louisiana Story and the Stryker photographs, I argue that there is some greater historical value in the entire Stryker collection than in the film. This argument relates not to the document's artistic value nor its value to the history of film. I merely argue that some documentary works have significant value for studying the cultural and social history they record and other documentaries have little or no value of that kind. The choice of subjects to be addressed in this study grew from three desires: to use an untapped wealth of photographic evidence, to do a cultural history of Acadiana and to offer an experience of Acadian life to the reader. Those sources subsist primarily in the Roy Stryker - Standard Oil of New Jersey photographs--including thousands of images of Louisiana in the 1940s. These photographs serve as the principal primary source for this study. Despite the significant references in the earlier paragraphs of this chapter. In addition though I did not create them and they have no

value in demostrating my skill as a historian from my point of view the photographs appearing in this text have no less importance than the writing itself.

I have attempted a careful and purposeful study details in the photographs, paying the same meticulous attention that historians have paid to countless other forms of documentation. That analyses occurs throughout but it is centered in the next all too brief chapter titles “Inside the lenses” With photographs, the reader has an instantaneous access to many of the same sources from which the historian's writing has grown. This immediacy of sharing an unaltered primary source directly with the reaer mandates that the historian move through his work as clearly and deliberately as possible. This applies to the use of documentary photography as source for the study of the folk or society they record, that attempt is quite distinct from a study of the photographs only as a subject of historical study.

Yet the photographers did not fabricate the world they photographed. Their vision expressed some of the same perceptions which Harnett T. Kane wrote about only a few years earlier.
"Changes have come with the advance of the train
and bus and schoolhouse; and each passing year
and each war...bring nearer the eventual
amalgamation into the American mass. Yet
today, to an extent that may seem incredible,
there still flourishes the tradition of a
France-in-America. A man may be a fifth-
generation citizen but unable to speak English.
On the streets of many villages, in the
bayou front yards, at the stores, the
national tongue is the exotic one."

The photographic project has many treatments of towns and villages. In that collection of photos the national nature of American commerce is evident on walls, in windows and elsewhere. To the degree that advertised products were most often Anglo-American or advertised in English, these picture, unable to capture spoken French, actually Anglicize the realities of their subjects' lives by showing English words. Language alone makes up a very complex area of inquiry. During the World Wars many Cajuns served as French Interpreters for U.S. forces. I am going to defy all conventions here and quote my earlier version of this text which was written by someone living a different life than I live today. The quote shows how language is or is not perceived by even the careful observer. I cannot write these things in the present tense and cannot dismiss their value to this chapter and thesis.
:

> *Jane Vidrine, a long time researcher of Acadian culture insists that a resurgence of French occurred in the 1940s. French persists at this writing, in 1993. French disc jockeys and music on Saturdays and Sundays appeal to various radio formats, the French Rosary is prayed on commercial television. Near and in the bars, offices and fields of the larger towns profanities, endearments and adages in the older speech can*

be heard often by the careful ear. Complete ignorance of French remains a handicap in buying and selling crabs, crawfish, furs and alligators from the hundreds of bilingual producers who constitute the plurality of suppliers in that vast fishing, trapping and aquaculture industrial complex.

The photographers struggled to comprehend persistence and change in Acadiana just as scholars struggle today. Todd Webb, one of the two Stryker photographers whose work most often appears in these pages, wrote to Roy Stryker the following contrast between Harnett Kane's book and the realities surveyed. "I was disappointed in La Fourche, where I went last Saturday and Sunday." Webb wrote from his hotel room in Baton Rouge, "I had read Harnett Kane's "The Bayous of Louisiana" (sic) and he neglected to say that a highway ran along the Bayou and that houses were really quite some distance away. The people have turned almost completely away from the Bayou and the highway has taken its place." Webb would later discover that La Fourche had became famous as "the world's longest street" and that in other communities the waterway still held ascendancy over graded right of way. Kane, eager to see distinctiveness survive, had made La Fourche appear as riverine and unique in structure as it had been years ago.

Acadiana during the 1940s offered much appeal to the photographers working there. "Some day this week we are going to Abbeville to see Flaherty." Wrote Webb of the man producing Louisiana Story. Robert Flaherty, recognized as the father of the documentary film, had received critical attention and some financial wealth for previous portrayals of remote cultures and places. The man who had directed Nanook of the North, Man of Aran and Moana now brought his gifts to a Cajun subject. His vision of a pristine culture would influence many. The excitement of working with Flaherty in later days and Webb's declaration that "Gross Tete and the Teche are both much better...(because they showed more cultural persistence than Bayou La Fourche)" all show that Webb and his boss never saw themselves as dispassionate scientists. Yet, all parties to this project had ambivalent feelings about the ways this region differed from others in America.

The last and best introduction to set of imperatives that directed the collectors of these images comes from Stryker's advice to all photographers in and out of Acadiana. "Look for the significant detail, the kinds of things a scholar a hundred years from now is going to wonder about," He wrote, "You're not just photographing for Standard Oil. You're photographing America. You're recording history. Everything is in flux. You will see things that won't be around again." Stryker's audience included Todd Webb, Russell Lee, Arnold Eagle and others whose work appears here. The historian may or may not choose to take the claims of a documentary seriously. The creator of documentary seldom worked without a thought for the historian.

Scholars who, in this writer's view, have pride of place in understanding this subject are Carl A. Brasseaux, (T*he Founding of the New Acadia* and *Acadian to Cajun* especially) and James H. Dorman (best essays in Holtman and Conrad see Bibliography). For a casual reader in English

Lauren C. Post's Cajun Sketches are an introduction of some merit. Scholars to watch in the future and whose extant work does not appear in these covers are Brad Pollack, Patricia Rickels and Vaughn Baker--all at the University of Southwestern Louisiana . The bibliography included here includes much of the best work published. While this thesis does not attempt to create a narrative chronology as fully as Brasseaux's *Founding of the New Acadia* it is not merely an ethnography seeking to capture the experience of a thin slice of time within the culture. In places it may be ethnographic writing in a historical context. (See "Origins of Ethnicity" in Holtman and Conrad.)

The Cajun sense of identity is treated very differently by two books written by non-historians. Comeaux's *Atchafalaya* and Anger's *Truth* perhaps show some of the ways in which a certain perspective may have developed. This study seeks to capture that ideology in its own way. Efforts by outsiders such as Robert Flaherty to capture that spirit have enjoyed varying levels of success and various perspectives are addressed later in these covers.
Among the best treatments of the documentary collections, and especially of the Stryker photography of the Farm Security Administration and the Standard Oil of New Jersey collections is Frank de Caro's *Folklife in Louisiana Photography: Images of Tradition,* Louisiana State University Press 1990, Baton Rouge and London. De Caro's stance is critical and his interests differ with mine. However, the title of his third chapter, which is devoted to documentary photographs, indicates the conviction to which his research led him: "*A Pretty Good picture of Louisiana: The Great Documentary Projects.*" For a succinct political history of the Cajuns there is no substitute for reading Brasseaux's *Founding*.

Notes (currently not numbered or attached)

Roach v. Dresser Federal Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.
Pare Lorentz's recent book *F.D.R.'s Moviemaker* posthumously displays firsthand some of what the people involved in discovering America were looking for and what they were likely to find. I believe that the documentary movement has not yet been tested on the claims it made despite the numerous solid political and artistic studies of their work. Work is beginning to come forth which places new demands on the material. The scholarly bibliography collected in connection with Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* includes a few essential volumes Richard Barsam and William T. Murphy have done as much to collect the sources as is necessary. The best introduction may still be Calder-Marshall's *Innocent Eye*. There are some good books which include the Standard Oil of New Jersey (S.O.N.J.) books in the study of something else, few of quality that give the photographs great attention.

The staff of the Ekstrom Photographic Archives opened early and did a marvelous job in meeting all my needs and granting troublesome requests. For researchers interested in further study of these issues and subject folios L 66, 661, 6611, 662, 663, 6636, 6637, 6638, 665, 6656, 6658, 666, 5553, 6665 and 667 as well as folios P 48 and 482 deal mainly with Acadiana. However, pagination does not exist and errors in filing occur.
August 1945 letter, the Rosskam files, unprocessed correspondence attached to the SONJ photographic collection at the University of Louisville Photographic Archives.
Letter dated May 20 1947, entered into SONJ files May 22, 1947, Webb File, unprocessed correspondence associated with SONJ Collection, University of Louisville Photographic Archives.

My own interviews on record with J.C. Boudreaux, who played the central character in Louisiana Story, affirm that Flaherty did not have the kind of rapport with the Cajuns in the film which he was reported to have shared with the Eskimos and others. Furthermore, Cajun life is fairly documented in the S.O.N.J. photographs of the same period and the letters in Stryker papers show that photographers worked for both men.

Letter dated June 18, 1947, entered into SONJ files June 20, 1947, Webb File, unprocessed papers associated with the SONJ Collection at the University of Louisville Photographic Archives.

University of Louisville Photographic Archives, Standard Oil (New Jersey) Collection Subject Vertical File: Folder F49 "Flaherty Pictures"

The concepts we have of Flaherty's method were promoted by Flaherty and believed by his best known biographer Arthur Calder-Marshall. The Innocent Eye even argues that far from using stills and the like, Flaherty combined the instincts of an anthropologist, the gifts of the artist and the techniques of a traditional Eskimo carver.

For a record of this comper's involvement in New Deal documentary see Pare Lorentz's posthumous biography *F.D.R.'s Moviemaker*.

Some resumes exist in E.P.A.'s Stryker Collection under Stryker's S.O.N.J. Correspondence. Other data available from curators and International Center of Photography in New York.

The diverse mix of photographers and the variety of images from the prairies and bayous compliment the interest in recording the way people earned their living. Good photography reflects life as much as journalism, art and history reflect life. They are accurate within their canons.

This writer can uncover little firsthand evidence which suggest that Flaherty tried to closely observe the Cajun lifestyle he sought to portray on the screen. Interviews with Boudreaux positively deny it and letters in the Stryker file seldom allude to anything resembling that type of research.

Page 76 of De Caro's Folklife in Louisiana Photography: Images of Tradition

Discussing the way they function serves as a focus of this introduction. It is essential to remember the approach taken here if the thesis is to be tested against its own claims.

Collected in Corinne L. Saucier's Folk Tales from French Louisiana, 82.

Kane, The Bayous of Louisiana, 13.

T. Webb to Roy Stryker, May 9, 1947; Box 1: S.C.S.O.N.J. at E.P.A..

Ibid.

Roy Stryker to Todd Webb, May 3, 1947; Box 1 : S.C.S.O.N.J. at E.P.A.

This quote appeared in a "letter" without any date or address in the S.C.S.O.N.J., Box 1. at E.P.A. The same quote apeared in a press release for the International Center for Photography (ICP) about their exhibit of Stryker's S.O.N.J. images. I.C.P. materials found at Lafayette Natural History Museum.

comfortable expressing physical affection for their children than did some other ethnic groups