

Hometown Acadiana

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Acadian Museum
hosts anniversary
events, celebrates
Longfellow

250 years after exile

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ST. MARTINVILLE ---It's been 250 years since the Acadians, the ancestors of today's Cajuns, were driven from their homes in Canada, and the Acadian Memorial is commemorating *Le Grand Derangement* this month with four days of events, some just for fun, and some for education about the history of our Acadian ancestors.

The commemoration will begin Wednesday with a reception for couples who have a romantic connection to the Evangeline Oak, followed by a reading from Longfellow's works on the Acadians and his views against slavery by Layne Longfellow, interpreter of the famous author's works.

Both African-Americans and Acadians were displaced against their will, said Acadian Memorial and Museum director Brenda Comeaux Trahan, and it's fitting that the African-American Museum adjoins the Acadian Museum.

"We had two refugee groups that were suppressed and taken from their homes," Trahan said. "Here in St. Martinville, we pulled these two together, and it's a healing thing like no other place in the world."

"Layne said he would like to read some anti-slavery works by Longfellow, as well as on the Acadians," Trahan said.

Also featured will be talks by Dr. Francoise Paradis of Maine, Editor of a new edition of "*Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*" and an exhibition of the spirit of Evangeline, Trahan said.



Jeff Nemetz/Special to The Advertiser

Layne Longfellow, from the Longfellow National Historic Site, greets Helen James Bourda during the dedication of the Longfellow bust under the Evangeline Oak. Bourda, a retired Iberia Parish teacher, was talking to Longfellow, a distant relative of the historic Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, about the impact of the story on Acadian culture.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow brought the plight of the Acadians to public awareness when he published his epic poem, "Evangeline," in 1847. It told the story of the travails of the fictional lovers Evangeline Bellefontain and Gabriel Lajeunesse.

A newly-sculpted bust of Longfellow by Freddie LaCour of New Iberia, commissioned by the St. Martinville Rotary Club, will be unveiled under Evangeline Oak at 4:30 p.m. today.

The commemoration will become a celebration of romance for the final event of the weekend, on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, when the public is invited to a cocktail party and dinner at Maison Duchamp on Main Street that will also feature musical performances. Reservations are required and the \$100 ticket price will benefit the Acadian Memorial. Call 394-2258 for reservations.