

POWER

Evangeline Romance on the bayou

ANNUAL MEETING
APPROACHING


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EVANGELINE OAK

Longfellow's poem "Evangeline" immortalized the tragedy of the Acadian exile from Nova Scotia in 1755. This oak marks the legendary meeting place of Emmeline Labiche and Louis Arceneaux, the counterparts of Evangeline and Gabriel.

The Official Publication of the Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation

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TAKE NOTE



Photos by Kimberly Ann Photography

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR **SLEMCO'S 87TH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** to be held on Saturday, June 8, at Lafayette's Cajundome. Attendees have a chance to win valuable prizes. Drawings will also determine who will receive \$40,000 in college scholarships. *Lucky Number: 4518917401.*

Doors open at 6 a.m., with plenty of hot Community Coffee as you visit with your friends and neighbors. Coffee is free and the Cajundome will have other refreshments available for purchase. No outside food or drink is allowed, per Cajundome policy.

Music will start at 6:30 a.m., so wear your dancing shoes and help keep the dance floor hopping. Vitalant will hold its annual blood drive at our meeting. Your continued generosity in this annual drive is always appreciated because of the continuing demand for blood in our communities.

Prize drawings begin at 8 a.m., and winning names will be drawn until our business meeting begins at 10 a.m. Brief reports from the company's officers and legal counsel will inform members on SLEMCO operations.

When the business portion of the meeting concludes, our scholarship drawing will award college funds of \$2,000 each to 20 lucky students. Then, to end our meeting on a high note, we'll draw for our grand prizes. 🍀



2023's Grand Prize Winner

Commercial Customers Can Enter Prize and Scholarship Drawings

SLEMCO COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS wishing to participate in the prize

drawings must drop off a letter to SLEMCO's main office by June 7 naming their company's authorized representative. After presenting ID on the day of the

meeting, that representative will receive a card for the prize drawing. Owners of commercial establishments who are SLEMCO customers may also sponsor their children, themselves or a spouse for the scholarship drawing, but only if they own more than 50 percent of the company, corporation or partnership.

Proof of ownership is required when a business sponsors a scholarship applicant. *Lucky Number: 3037390003.* 🍀



Dedicated to Serving Our Communities

Charles Sonnier

A friend of SLEMCO's since his college days, Vermilion Parish Board Member Charles Sonnier feels strongly about the organization, its employees and his fellow Board Members. "We do what's right," says Sonnier. "From a board perspective, we are an active, professional, hard-working board. This is not an honorary position – we actively participate in guiding the future of the company." *Lucky Number: 4501219400.*

Sonnier feels an active, fully participating Board, along with a top-notch executive staff, and dedicated employees are the triple crown of what makes SLEMCO so successful.

"By shifting our work schedules to allow time to devote to the company, learning about electric distribution, and being responsive to member calls, questions and concerns, we are able to support SLEMCO's executive staff and employees to keep the organization going strong," said Sonnier.

"I can't say enough about what the employees do for the company," he continued. "We have superior leadership and work ethic from top to bottom. You don't get that sort of dedication just anywhere. But you'll get it here."

Sonnier first learned about SLEMCO in his college days while in law school. "I learned a lot about SLEMCO from our founding attorney," he said. "His son was my classmate."

Later, in his law practice, Sonnier worked on right-of-way cases, where he was actually the opposing counsel acting on behalf of his clients to move this line or that.

He recalled one case where he and his client were trying to get electric lines relocated on the Abbeville Country Club Golf Course.

"I was opposing SLEMCO, which is definitely ironic looking back," said Sonnier. We always found a way to work through these cases and figure a way to work things out." *Lucky Number: 2041673000.*

His calm, sensible and logical demeanor, combined with a sharp-minded wit, no doubt brought many a legal case to a successful conclusion throughout his career.

Now retired from practicing law, Sonnier served in the US Army Reserves during the Vietnam War, where he practiced law as a 1st Lieutenant in the Jag Corp – the military justice branch of the Army that represents



Mary Ellen and Charles Sonnier

Photo by Mary Laurent

the interests of soldiers and the US Army. After his military service he practiced law in Abbeville and served as Assistant District Attorney for the 15th Judicial District (Lafayette, Acadia and Vermilion Parishes).

An avid hunter and Vermilion Parish native, Sonnier lived in Abbeville growing up, but spent as much time as he could at the family camp in Pecan Island. He is well known down in those parts and proudly represents the needs of Vermilion Parish members on SLEMCO's Board as their representative voice.

He and his wife Mary Ellen have three grown children and seven grandchildren. Together, they focus on spending quality time with their clan – whether traveling or hunting together as a family. 🇺🇸

SLEMCO 2024 NOMINATING COMMITTEE

ACADIA PARISH—Dan Bouillion
P.O. Box 225
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LAFAYETTE PARISH—Dale Denais
1215 Bourque Road
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ST. LANDRY PARISH— Al Boudreaux
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Washington, LA 70589

ST. MARTIN PARISH—Patricia Broussard
3667-B Catahoula Highway
St. Martinville, LA 70582

VERMILION PARISH—John T. Landry
211 S. Hollingsworth Drive
Abbeville, LA 70510

The committee will meet April 3, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. at the SLEMCO office, 2727 SE Evangeline Thruway, Lafayette, LA 70508.

(s) John B. Meaux, *Board Secretary*



Do-It-Yourself Savings Project: Attic Stairs Cover Box

In many homes, poorly insulated and leaky attic access stairs provide an opportunity to improve comfort and save energy and money. You can air seal and insulate the attic stairs opening by building your own insulated cover box or purchasing a kit or pre-built box. Treat the attic stairs access as you would an opening to the outdoors. Regardless of the type of insulation you use for your attic access, it is important to thoroughly air seal the opening.

To optimize savings and comfort, the attic stairs cover box must be durable enough to withstand repeated openings and closings, have an R-value similar to the rest of the attic insulation and provide an air seal.

BEFORE YOU START

- Decide whether you're comfortable taking on the job of designing and building your own attic stairs cover box
- Measure the opening to determine the materials you need to do the job yourself or the required size of a kit or pre-built cover box
- Research commercially available options with the above requirements in mind if you decide to purchase a pre-built box or a kit

If you decide to move forward with your DIY home project, you can find a complete shopping list and step-by-step instructions at www.energy.gov/energysaver/do-it-yourself-savings-project-attic-stairs-cover-box





Evangeline Oak,
Bayou Teche,
St. Martinville

A Romantic & Tragic Tale

How the legend of Evangeline
lives on in St. Martinville and beyond

story by ERIN BASS

“Evangeline, a sweet lady who never really was—at least in the way that the world knows her—is the strongest force alive for miles along the upper Teche of today,” wrote Harnett T. Kane in his book *The Bayous of Louisiana*. The legend of Kane’s “sweet lady” persists in South Louisiana today as Evangeline is still very much alive at historic sites in St. Martinville, in popular culture and new projects that aim to offer a fresh look at her story.

The legend of Evangeline was made famous by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his 1847 epic poem of the same name. Longfellow first heard the story of Evangeline and her lover Gabriel at a dinner party with his friend and fellow writer Nathaniel Hawthorne. Longfellow spent time researching the expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia and their relocation to Louisiana in what is known as Le Grand Derangement, but he didn’t intend his poem to be an accurate historical account.

In Longfellow’s “Evangeline,” the two lovers are separated on their wedding day amid the Acadians’ rush to leave their homeland rather than swear allegiance to the British crown. When she arrives in Louisiana, Evangeline hears that Gabriel is on the banks of the Teche in the town of “St. Martin.” She and his father set out to track him up and down the bayou and all the way into the Ozark Mountains and as far as Michigan.

She becomes like a “phantom” searching the land for her lost lover. Evangeline joins the Sisters of Mercy and, one day, finds a dying Gabriel in the church hospital. The lovers are reunited briefly in old age before Gabriel dies in her arms.

There are other versions of the story, like the late Judge Felix Voorhies’ account, which says the legend is based on Emmeline Labiche and Louis Arceneaux. In his version, the pair meet again beneath the oak tree on Bayou Teche in St. Martinville. Louis is married to someone else by then, and this causes Emmeline to lose her sanity and eventually die.

The Rev. Fr. Jason Vidrine, pastor at St. Martin de Tours Catholic Church in St. Martinville, is a native of Ville Platte in Evangeline Parish. He first heard about the legend of Evangeline there but says it took on a new life in St. Martinville.

“It is really representing many of the

families who were deported in the Grand Derangement,” he says. “Many families were separated and those who arrived here in Louisiana always talked about the tragedy of deportation. There is more than one couple that experienced that, and Evangeline really does point to the historical reality of many separations. It’s a romantic and tragic tale, a tale of persevering in life and the ability to keep hoping.”

Fr. Vidrine says visitors from mostly Canada and France still flock to St. Martinville weekly to see Evangeline’s statue (atop the supposed tomb of Emmeline Labiche) on the church grounds, the Evangeline Oak and Acadian Memorial. Visitors can also take a new “Walk With Evangeline” self-guided tour that tells the story of the Acadians through 10 stations. The tour starts at Maison Duchamp on the corner of Main Street and Evangeline Boulevard and ends at the statue.

He is also serving as spiritual advisor for “The Modern Retelling of Evangeline,” a project that aims to reintroduce Evangeline to the state and the world through a musical album, stage production and educational component in local classrooms. More than 30 local musicians, like Cedric Watson, Laura Huval, Lucy Simon, Joe Bryson and Sarah Russo, have contributed to the album, which is available at evangelinecd.hearnow.com.

Fr. Vidrine explains how the project came about. “During Covid, Fr. John Joseph Bourque composed some music, which we’ve recorded into an album and our hope is to bring it to the stage. It’s part of the legend of Evangeline that keeps on going and going.”

No matter how her legend changes and evolves over time, Evangeline remains a relevant and integral part of Cajun culture. “Evangeline’s hope and strength and perseverance and search for Gabriel — and, in the end, being able to be at his side — is a beautiful tale of the strength of a woman in our culture,” says Fr. Vidrine. “Suffering has actually strengthened the people of Louisiana. The tragedy of deportation made the people, once they moved here, forge a way of life that was even stronger. We’ve seen that through hurricanes, floods and other difficult tragedies.” *Lucky Number: 1119558000.*

Taking a fresh look at Evangeline and Longfellow’s now 176-year-old poem is important to the people of St. Martinville. “Evangeline is part of the story and history of St. Martinville itself,” adds Fr. Vidrine. “It’s very much an enduring legacy.” 📍

EVANGELINE ATTRACTIONS

Follow in the footsteps of Evangeline and Gabriel at these local sites.

Evangeline Oak Park
Corner of Evangeline Blvd. & New Market St., St. Martinville
Admission: Free

Evangeline Monument & Tomb
133 S Main St., St. Martinville (in St. Martin de Tours Church Square)
Admission: Free

Evangeline Statue
200 Court St., Ville Platte (in front of the courthouse)
Admission: Free

Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site
1200 N. Main St., St. Martinville
Hours: Daily 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Admission: \$4

Museum of the Acadian Memorial
125 S. New Market St., St. Martinville
Hours: Tues.-Sat., 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sun., noon-4:30 p.m.
Admission: \$5

Walk With Evangeline Tour
Starting at the corner of Main St. & Evangeline Blvd., St. Martinville
Admission: Free



Photo by Travis Gauthier

St. Martin de Tours Catholic Church



Photo by Travis Gauthier



The statue of Evangeline is located behind the Catholic Church, St. Martin de Tours. It was placed there by the cast and crew of a silent film, *Evangeline*, made in 1929 that starred Dolores del Rio. Del Rio was the model for the statue.



Photo by St. Martin Parish Tourism Commission

Mural entitled "The Arrival of the Acadians in Louisiana" by Robert Dafford, located at Museum of the Acadiana Memorial.



Evangeline, written in 1847, is a tragic but fictional account of two lovers, Evangeline and Gabriel.



Daguerreotype by Southworth & Hawes

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was a famed 19th-century scholar, novelist and poet, known for works like ‘Voices of the Night,’ ‘Evangeline’ and ‘The Song of Hiawatha.’

Photo circa 1850

Arctic Blast of 2024



Photo by Mary Laurent

JANUARY BROUGHT BOTH BELOW-FREEZING AND SINGLE-DIGIT FEELS-LIKE TEMPERATURES.

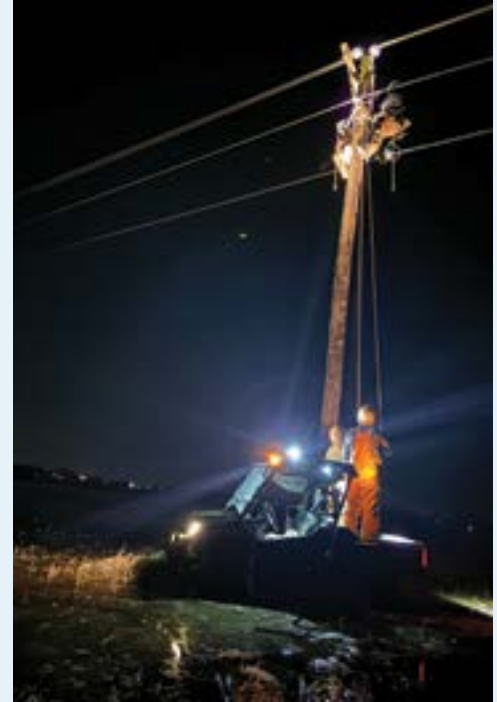


Photo by Torey Quebedeaux

Galloping Power Lines

The recent arctic blast, experienced January 15 and 16, did significant damage and caused extended outages. Customers may have even noticed what is called “galloping” power lines in some of our service areas. This happens when ice accumulates on power lines and winds are strong and sustained. The wires begin to move erratically and look like they are galloping. The extra weight, movement and vibration can cause the bolts holding crossarms to the poles to shear off.

Galloping lines tend to be a fairly long distance phenomenon, meaning it won't be just one or two poles involved. It could be miles of lines that are affected. In the areas where we experienced galloping lines (particularly

Acadia Parish and West Lafayette Parish), crews worked pole by pole, replacing bolts, and stripping as much ice off of wire by hand or scraping ice off lines with pulleys, to help prevent repeat outages. It was a slow and tedious process. *Lucky Number: 4512656600.* 📞

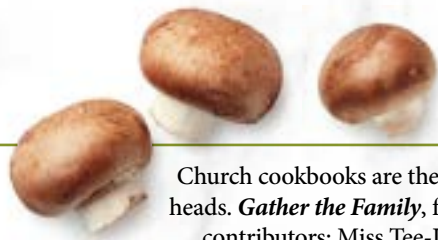


Photo by Mary Laurent

A piece of ice knocked off a wire by hand so crews could work. This piece covered about a quarter of the wire. When the weight of the ice is on the crossarms and material, the continued strong winds can cause the bolts holding the crossarms on the pole to break off.



Photo by Mary Laurent



let's get COOKING

Church cookbooks are the best, with recipes from the real pros, those Cajun women (and men) who hold the recipe cards in their heads. *Gather the Family*, from St. Joseph Catholic Church, is a compilation of recipes as down home as the name of some of their contributors: Miss Tee-Lee, Grandma Wag and Mae Mae. While the cookbook is out of print, we couldn't pass on sharing a few choice recipes that you may not otherwise have discovered, and with some of the shortest cooking instructions you'll ever find.

Artichoke Stuffing

- 1 cup olive oil
- Chopped onion
- Minced garlic to taste
- 4 cans French green beans
- 2 cans artichoke hearts, chopped
- 2 cups Italian bread crumbs
- 2 cups Parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste



Sauté onions in olive oil; add garlic. Drain green beans, add and cook for 5 minutes. Mix bread crumbs and cheese and put into mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes. Sprinkle with extra bread crumbs and sliced lemon.

Crawfish Cornbread Quiche

- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 box Jiffy cornbread mix
- Small onion, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 1 can cream-style corn
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup with roasted garlic
- 2 lbs. crawfish tails
- 1 (8-oz) pkg. cheddar cheese
- 1 (8-oz) pkg. mozzarella cheese
- 1/3 cup jalapenos, chopped
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil

Mix all ingredients. Pour into greased 12 x 15" baking pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 60 minutes, or until ingredients do not jiggle when you shake the pan.

Mushrooms with Basil Cream

A wonderful dish to serve with chicken cutlets Parmesan, mashed potatoes and steamed broccoli with lemon.

- 3 tbsp. butter
- 1 lb. large mushrooms, trimmed and sliced
- 3 tsp. fresh basil or 1 tsp. dried
- 1/4 cup dry white wine (optional)
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Melt butter in a nonaluminum skillet over moderately high heat. Add mushrooms. Cook, stirring occasionally about 5 minutes. Mushrooms will absorb butter and release

their juices. Remove mushrooms with a slotted spoon and set aside. Add basil, wine (if desired), cream, salt and pepper to skillet. Simmer 5 minutes or until slightly thickened. Add mushrooms to cream sauce. Stir to heat up. Serve in small bowls.

NOTE: Fresh mushrooms need special care. Buy white or cream-colored mushrooms. Make sure the cap curves tightly over the stem. If the gills are visible on the underside, the mushroom is past its peak. Trim stems, if necessary, and wipe the cap with a damp cloth or towel just before cooking. Water discolors mushrooms, so wash them quickly and with minimal water.

Sweet Peas, Lloyd Style

- 1 large can of sweet peas
- 1/2 of the pea juice*
- 1/2 block of butter*
- 1/2 cup sugar*
- 1 tsp. cornstarch*
- 1 tsp. vanilla*

*Per can of peas, if you use more than one can
Bring butter, pea juice and sugar to a boil. Put in cornstarch. After it cools, put in vanilla and peas.

Sweet Potato-Bacon Biscuits

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 stick cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 1 cup mashed baked sweet potatoes, cooled
- 2 tbsp. packed light brown sugar
- 5 slices cooked bacon, drained and crumbled
- 3/4 to 1 cup buttermilk

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Lightly grease a large baking sheet and set aside. In a bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add butter and work in with a pastry blender or your fingers until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. In a bowl, whip the sweet potatoes with the brown sugar until very smooth. Add to the flour mixture and mix in lightly, but thoroughly, with your finger. Add 3/4 cup of the buttermilk and gently work to make a smooth dough, slightly doughy, being careful not to overwork and adding more liquid as needed, 1 teaspoon at a time. Mix

in bacon crumbles. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and pat out into a large rectangle, about 1/2-inch thick. Cut into 10 large biscuits and place on the baking sheet. Bake until golden brown and risen, 15 to 18 minutes. Remove from the oven and serve hot with butter.

Mama's Pecan Cake

A real crowd-pleaser, according to the author

- 1 box yellow cake mix
- 1 qt. bag pecans (about 4 cups) chopped fine
- 1 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 large can evaporated milk
- 1 small can evaporated milk

Prepare yellow cake mix as instructed for two 8" round layers. For frosting, place sugar and both milks in pot, letting them cook on medium heat for about 10 minutes. After, add pecans to the sugar-milk mixture. Cook for an additional 5 to 10 minutes, stirring. Let cool and then frost in between two layers, as well as the rest of the cake.



Layered Strawberry Tiramisu

Easter and strawberries go together. This is the perfect, easy dessert to serve for gatherings on special occasions.

- 1 (8-oz) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 3 1/2 cups cold milk
- 2 pkgs. (4 servings size each) Jell-O vanilla flavor instant pudding and pie filling
- 2 pkgs. (3 oz. each) ladyfingers, split
- 1 (8 oz) tub Cool Whip strawberry-whipped topping, thawed
- 2 1/2 cups sliced strawberries
- 2 squares Baker's semi-sweet baking chocolate, grated (optional)

Beat cream cheese in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until creamy. Gradually add milk, beating until well blended. Add pudding mix. Beat on low speed 1 minute or until well blended. Line bottom of a 13 x 9" pan with half of the ladyfingers; top with layers of half each of the pudding mixture, whipped topping and strawberries. Repeat all layers, arranging strawberries on top. Refrigerate 3 hours, or until ready to serve. Sprinkle with grated chocolate, if desired. Makes 24 servings.

SLEMCO SCHOLARSHIP YOU COULD WIN \$2,000

ENTRY
DEADLINE
MAY 9
2024



A TOTAL OF \$40,000 IN COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS WILL BE GIVEN AWAY AT OUR 87TH ANNUAL MEETING ON SATURDAY, JUNE 8. Twenty students will each win \$2,000 to help pay for college or trade school. The process is easy, but you must apply before the May 9 deadline. Members connected to SLEMCO for one contiguous year prior to the deadline of May 9 can sponsor themselves, a spouse, dependent children or legal wards. Grandchildren are eligible only if they are the legal dependents or wards of members.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications for the 2024 SLEMCO scholarship program were included with all February SLEMCO bills. And you can also apply online at our website www.slemco.com. Submit your application online and receive a confirmation notice by email. It's quick and easy. *Lucky Number: 1120227001.*

Read the application carefully and follow all instructions. Applications for the scholarships will be accepted until Thursday, May 9. Delivered entries and electronically submitted entries must be received by 4:30 p.m., May 9, and mailed entries must

be postmarked by that day. Entries can be mailed to the SLEMCO Scholarship Program, 2727 SE Evangeline Thruway, Lafayette, LA 70508.

WHERE TO USE

The scholarship monies can be used by undergraduate students to attend, on a full-time basis, any public or private Louisiana university or trade school as accredited by the University of Louisiana System; Louisiana State University System; Southern University System; Louisiana Community and Technical College System; Louisiana Board of Regents

Proprietary School System; Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities; or the US Department of Education. *Lucky Number: 3108253000.*

QUALIFICATIONS

Winners must have at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average and plan to attend on a full-time basis (at least 12 hours) this fall. Students must be at least high school seniors to enter. *Lucky Number: 4504442800.*

IRS guidelines allow a parent to claim their college student child until the year he or she turns 24. We follow the same guidelines in awarding these scholarships. In order to sponsor a child, parents must still claim the applicant on their income tax return and the applicant must be under 24 years of age. Proof will be required.

Any eligible family member can enter each year. Past winners aren't eligible to receive a scholarship.

START TODAY

We've already received several hundred entries. Even though the entry deadline is not until May, get your application in early so you don't forget. If you have any questions about applying or qualifications, call SLEMCO at (337) 896-5384. ☎



AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU'RE

A SLEMCO MEMBER!



LUCKY NUMBER
WINNERS!

FIND YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER AND WIN \$100 CREDITS!

WE'VE HIDDEN 10 SLEMCO ACCOUNT NUMBERS IN THIS ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE. Look to see if you find your SLEMCO account number. If you do, call Michelle Courvelle at (337) 896-2504. Once she verifies you as a winner, she'll credit \$100 to your SLEMCO account. *Lucky Number: 4515767801.* ☎