



The Laffite Society Chronicles

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Editor's Page

On The 10th Anniversary of the Laffite Society

Don C. Marler

[Editor's Note: At the annual Laffite Society Christmas party the editor presented the tribute to our years of studying the activities of the Laffites. The presentation is offered as the regular feature Editor's Page.]

On this, the tenth anniversary of the Laffite Society, it may be instructive to stop and look at our past, present and future. Such an assessment will involve a brief look at how we started, our stated purpose, how faithful we have been to that purpose and what lies ahead for the future.

In 1975 a group of scholars interested in the historical account of the Laffites formed a loose association known as The Laffite Study Group. This group did not meet on a regular basis but did meet occasionally at professional meetings and the members shared information. The Study Group published *Life and Times of Jean Laffite* and the *Laffite Study Group Newsletter*. Laffite Society members Pam Keyes and Robert Vogel were editors of these publications at various times. In addition current Society members, Dale Olsen, Pam Keyes, Robert Vogel, Gary Fretz and perhaps others, were members of the Study Group. The group dissolved in 1990.

In 1994 I republished the *Journal of Jean Laffite*. Later that year Dale Olson called me about the republication. He mentioned that he and others were discussing formation of a new group and wanted to know if I would be interested. I came to Galveston and discussed it with him. Perhaps encouraged by the public interest shown in the republished Journal, Dale, later in 1994, announced the formation of the Laffite Society with Jim Nonus, Jim Pace, Dorothy Karilanovic, Dale and Diane, myself and others as charter members.

The stated purpose of the newly formed Laffite Society was:

To encourage scholarly investigation into the life, historic era, and geographic locales associated with Jean Laffite and his associates.

How faithful have we been to this purpose over the last 10 years? What have we accomplished?

It should be noted at the outset that everything we have accomplished has been without paid staff.

1. We immediately began meeting monthly--a schedule that has been maintained for 10 years, having missed only a couple of meetings due to inclement weather.
2. We developed a healthy membership that has included, from the beginning, scholars and interested people from many walks of life as well as libraries, museums, and historical groups. They represent many states and countries including France, England, Australia and perhaps others.
3. We have attracted interest from researchers, writers, television production and genealogy groups.
4. We immediately created a publication -- *The Laffite Society Chronicles* and have published 20 issues of the same.

5. We have gathered a surprising amount of knowledge and documentation, much of which is recorded in books, *The Laffite Society Chronicles* and our archives.
6. We have made presentations at various meetings, of both professional and avocational groups.
7. We have translated many documents to English primarily through efforts of Dorothy, Jeff Modzelewski and Gene Marshall.
8. We have struggled with difficult questions such as:

- A. When, where and under what circumstances did the Laffites (Jean and Pierre) die?

Did Jean die in the early 1820s after leaving Galveston while engaged in piracy in the Gulf, or did he die on a ranch he owned in Cuba. Did he die, as the *Journal of Jean Laffite* recounts, in Alton, Illinois in the 1850s having raised a family in the intervening years?

Did Pierre die in the Yucatan in the 1820's from wounds suffered in a sea battle or in the 1840s as claimed in the *Journal of Jean Laffite*. Most, but not all members, believe both experienced an early death.

- B. Who and what was the man known as John A. Laffite who published *The Journal of Jean Laffite* in 1958, and who claimed to be a great grandson of the privateer? Jean Epperson has answered this question resoundingly.

He was a man of many aliases. He was the son of John and Mary Matejka, Bohemian emigrants. He was born in Omaha Nebraska. In the opinion of perhaps a majority of Society members, there is no evidence he was related in any way, except in his own mind, to the Laffites or anyone related to them. There are some members who disagree.

- C. Is the *Journal of Jean Laffite* authentic? Since the Journal was brought to light, advocated and published by John A., it comes under crippling criticism because of him. In addition the text of the Journal contains material that Jean Laffite would not have claimed. Again, most but not all, members believe it is not authentic.

9. If Jean Laffite did not write the Journal then who did write it. Those who knew John A. leave an impression that he was morally capable, but educationally unprepared for writing it. Perhaps he secured assistance in the writing. He sold the manuscript to Texas Governor Price Daniel and it resides in the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, Texas along with a host of other Laffite related materials. Some Society members believe that John A. wrote the Journal while others disagree.

10. Avocational historians have done most of the research and writing for the Society over the last ten years. Those who did no research or writing have served the important function of critic and a listening audience to which presentations were made.

11. I have attended meetings of a fairly large number of different professional groups over the years. Of these, the meetings of professional historians are by far the worst in regard to the nature and tone of criticisms of their fellows, and they are the worst in intra-group dynamics aimed at inhibition of free thought. It has been my pleasure to observe the opposite in The Laffite Society. Free expression of beliefs and ideas has been encouraged at every level. *The Laffite Society Chronicles* from the beginning has gleefully published controversial and contrary ideas. And those ideas have been freely encouraged and expressed at our monthly meetings -- they are the lifeblood of the Society.
12. In pursuit of materials on the Laffites and their associates (as well as for Sazeracs) we have made many interesting field trips. New Orleans (where the Sazeracs are) has been our host several times as has Grand Isle and Grand Terre aka Barataria. We have made other field trips to Natchitoches, Laffite, Laffite National Park all in Louisiana; Sabinetown, Nacodgoches and even Hemphill, in Texas and the Yucatan. For those who made the Yucatan trip the highlight was retracing the route over which Pierre's body was reportedly transported for burial.
13. We have retrieved from the University of Houston the raw materials of an earlier archaeological excavation at the Maison Rouge site and have conducted another dig there. Some of the material recovered has been codified under the direction of member, Sheldon Kendall.
14. We have established a web-page which serves to inform members and the public of our services. Persons inquiring about Laffite

materials are referred to the "Laffite Timeline" and the "Q & A" sections of this internet resource.

Where to in the future?

Obviously we have done some things right over the past 10 years, the stress and strain on the local (Galveston) members notwithstanding. Planning and hosting a monthly meeting with few members to do the work is an issue that concerns us all. Can we sustain the pace we have set? Our past president, Jeff Modzelewski, mentioned several times the graying of our membership and pointed as evidence to the several members we have lost through death. Though this sustainability is of concern, we have been fortunate to have younger local people become active members at our most vulnerable times.

Nevertheless, our viability as an organization is an open question. As mature rational adults what should we do to prepare for the future of the organization. Unlike individuals, an organization can live forever, but it would do well to adopt the strategy of an individual -- prepare for the worst and take increased care with a view toward maximum longevity.

What are the immediate steps needed to put this philosophical concept into operation? Among the many options are these three:

- A. Continue to entice vigorous new members to provide active leadership.
- B. Continue a vigorous program of research, writing, speaking and publishing.
- C. Last, but certainly not least, find a

permanent institutional home for our archives. We are limited in our ability to assist researchers in getting access to our material. Asking local members to search through our archives and make copies for researchers located at distances that prohibit their personal visits is an added burden, and one we have understandably not undertaken with much enthusiasm. An organization such as the Sam Houston Regional Library with its large Laffite related holdings, has paid staff and the permanency to undertake this task. And in the event of our unexpected demise this would serve as our will and

testament.

In closing I would like to return for a moment to what we have accomplished. We have enjoyed the association with each other. Sometime ago someone asked if we would ever solve all the mysteries and questions about the Laffites. One of the members replied that he hoped not as we would then have no purpose for meeting. Obviously he placed the personal association with members above the material products of the Society. To him the joy of the hunt was not the chase or the kill, but running with the pack. One can hardly disagree.



STEPHEN AND RONALD BROADSTONE
WITH DALE OLSON ON THE LEFT
MEMBERS



RON AND CYNTHIA GILROY
GUESTS

THE THREE PIRATES LAFON

Jean L. Epperson

Bartholome Lafon, Bernardo Lafon and Ramon Lafon were contemporaries from New Orleans. Each, at one time, followed the corsair trade and made his unique contribution to history. An interest in the three Frenchmen initiated research to determine if they were related or if their activities coalesced.

Bartholome Lafon, was born in 1769, in Villepinte, France the son of Pierre Lafon and his spouse Jeanne Roumieux.¹ He was the oldest of the corsair Lafon trio and the most prominent. He was a successful architect, engineer, cartographer and businessman in New Orleans before debt and commercial reverses plunged him into bankruptcy and piratical endeavors. He became a friend and partner with Pierre and Jean Laffite, and in 1817 the Laffites put him in charge of the Galveston Island commune for a short time.² Physically Bartholome has been described as a stocky little man.³

Among Bartholome's outstanding accomplishments, was the survey in 1803 of Galveztown on the west bank of the Amite River, near its confluence with the Iberville River for the Spanish Commandant, and his design and plat of Donaldsonville, Louisiana for William Donaldson in 1806. His maps included, "*Carte Generale du Territoire d'Orleans et une Portion du Territoire du Mississippi*" in 1806 and "*Entrada de la Bahia de Galveston*" for the Spanish in 1816. He didn't sign the 1816 map but the Spanish Governor of Texas, Martinez acknowledged receiving a map from Lafon in August 1817, and historian Stanley Faye assumed that Lafon had made the 1816 map of the entrance to Galveston Bay. Bartholome also designed public buildings, bridges, drainage systems, a lighthouse and many private homes in and near New Orleans.⁴

His liaison with Modest Foucher, a free woman of color from Haiti, produced two children; a son, Pierre Barthelemy called Thomy, and a daughter, Carmelite. Thomy became the most important philanthropist in nineteenth century New Orleans. His wealth obtained through shrewd land speculation, money lending and perhaps his fathers hidden assets. He never married and his sister became a Carmelite nun.⁵

Ships owned by Bartholome were the *Little Napoleon*, a 13 ton felucca registered in New Orleans July 27, 1816, master Germain Le Grand, and the schooner *Carmelita*.⁶ The *Carmelita* was obviously named for his daughter. The ship's registry has never been found and it was written that Jean Laffite borrowed \$2,800 and purchased the ship from Bartholome.⁷

Bartholome Lafon died of yellow fever, in New Orleans on September 29, 1820.⁸

Bernardo Lafon was born in Canada about 1773.⁹ Nothing is known of his early years until he surfaced in New Orleans. On May 14, 1803 he advertised in the *New Orleans Moniteur* that he was the captain of a vessel that would take cargo to France. A description in later years stated, "Captain Bernard was moderately tall and lean, a son of the sea who liked a fight."¹⁰

He fitted out an American schooner in 1811, in New Orleans, and armed it unlawfully as a French privateer. He named it the *Diligent*. A 40 ton ship she had one 4-pounder swivel gun and carried about 20 men. At this time Bernardo held a privateering license from no one.

In his new cruiser Capt. Bernardo captured a Spanish schooner off Cuba on March 11, 1811. In November he injudiciously visited Havana and was jailed for piracy. His cagy lawyer demonstrated successfully to Havana that Bernardo was an honest American merchant sea captain and that there had been a case of mistaken identity; thereby securing his release.¹¹

In June 1812 the United States declared war on Great Britain and Bernardo applied for a privateering commission. He sailed out of Norfolk, Virginia August 7th in his ship *Comet*, probably the rechristened *Diligent*. Cruising southward toward Cuba, he stopped at Havana then on to Baracoa. Robbing several British vessels on the way, he headed for Pensacola before returning to New Orleans. The Spanish governor of Pensacola arrested him again as a French pirate and the same sequence was replayed. Confusing him with the well known Bartholome Lafon, and unable to prove who Bernardo really was, the Spanish released him again.¹²

In the spring of 1814 Bernardo prepared the brig *Flor Americana* to sail for the south with a small crew and a full passenger list. Sailing about the end of May, at sea Captain Lafon turned the brig into a republican privateers man for Cartagena. The kidnapped passengers seized the Captain, put him in irons and late in August they returned to New Orleans. Bernardo went into the old Calabozo (jail).¹³ The Spanish had the proof of his misdeeds at last and he was found guilty of piracy on October 24, 1814.¹⁴

Bernardo Lafon died at the age of forty-two in 1815 and was buried in St. Louis Cemetery #1 in New Orleans.¹⁵

Ramon Lafon was born about 1791 of French ancestry, the son of Antonio Lafon and his wife Catarina Barbarron.¹⁶ His important, but little known contribution to history, due to his contraband maritime activities, was the founding of the Texas town of Port (Point) Isabel at the southern tip of the state.

His first documented appearance was

on October 10, 1820 when he arrived, as a mariner, in New Orleans, aboard the schooner *James Lawrence* from Baumba, Cuba.

Don Martin de Leon, Texas rancher and later impresario, drove a large herd of horses and mules to market in New Orleans from his ranch at the mouth of the Aransas River, in 1822. Having sold his animals for a good price he was probably celebrating his good fortune when he met Ramon Lafon, a reputed smuggler and pirate, and Carlos Lazo. Carlos was an ex-Spanish soldier who had deserted the post of Refugio Mission in Texas in 1814, and apparently went to sea.¹⁷ Lafon suggested to de Leon, that he was in command of a schooner and knew a secluded harbor near the mouth of the Rio Grande River, where de Leon could make a good profit by loading the vessel with luxury goods from New Orleans and selling it in Texas.

The good harbor for deep draft vessels was El Paso de Los Brazos Santiago at the tip of Texas, known to mariners as an excellent place to smuggle contraband into the country. Jean Laffite, the gentleman pirate, was said to have used it. Goods could be off loaded there and transported overland by mule train to Congregation del Refugio (Matamoros), bypassing tax duties.

De Leon chartered the vessel, loaded it with goods and sailed to Texas with his new friends. They arrived at Brazos Santiago on January 18, 1823 on the 40 ton schooner *Isabel*.¹⁸ Lafon and Lazo had previously been accused of piracy and de Leon promised them that he would get them acquitted of the charge. When they arrived at the port, Lazo required de Leon to leave his son, Felix on board as security for his return to the vessel and the payment of all costs. The merchandise was sold for a good profit and de Leon made good on his promise to have Lafon and Lazo exonerated of the piracy charges.¹⁹

Lafon was 32 years old in 1823 and he met and fell in love with Angela the daughter of Rafael Garcia of Matamoros. They were married April

1, 1824 in the church of Nuestra Senora del Refugio in Matamoros.²⁰ Lafon apparently encouraged his new family to move to the land side of the anchorage of Brazos Santiago as he intended to continue with his lucrative maritime trade.

Garcia heirs claimed that the Santa Isabel, later Point or Port Isabel, area was settled in 1826 by two separate ranches or farms of their family, and in 1828 Rafael Garcia was granted 32,355 acres of Potrero (pasture) de Santa Isabel by the state of Tamaulipas.²¹ The area had previously only been used as a summer resort by Mexican families.

Ramon Lafon remained in trouble with the Mexican authorities for importing

contraband material through 1828.²² He and Angela had two daughters, Maria Austina and Maria Menata who died in 1825 and 1828, and there were probably other children as well.²³

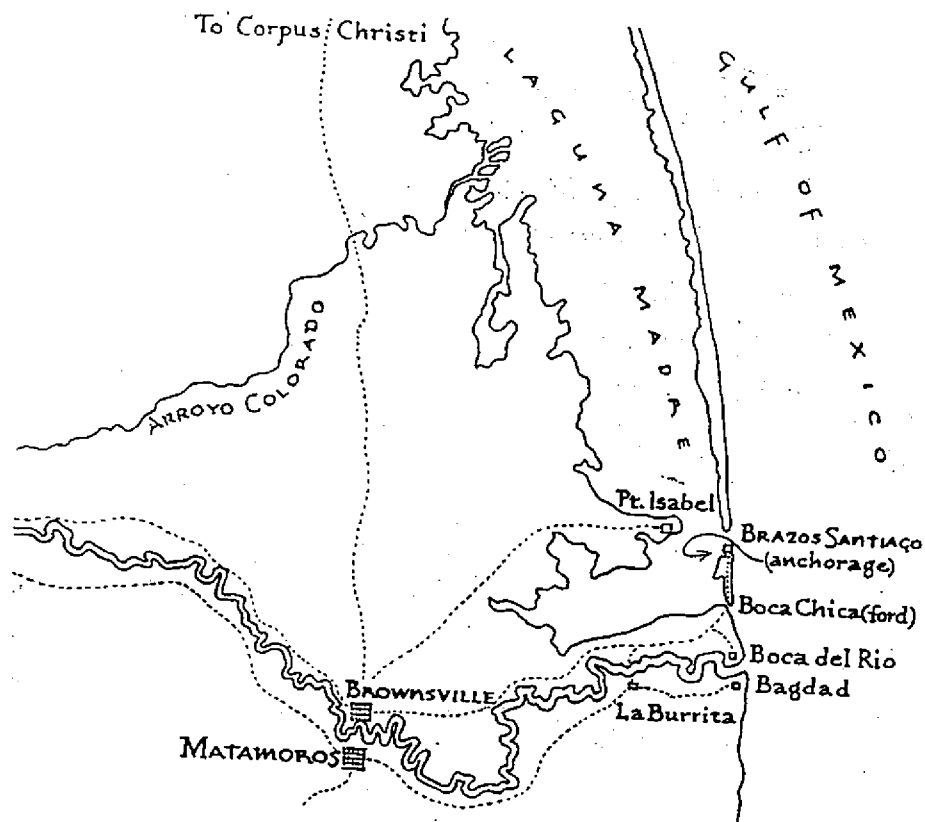
It is not known what eventually became of Ramon but it is assumed he was deceased when his wife Angela remarried on December 12, 1842 to Anastacio Parrodiroy.²⁴ Five years later she was using the name Garcia de Tarnova when proving her claim to the Santa Isabel land.²⁵

The three pirates Lafon were not related nor did their activities intermesh. As individuals they left an indelible imprint on the history of their era and should not be forgotten.

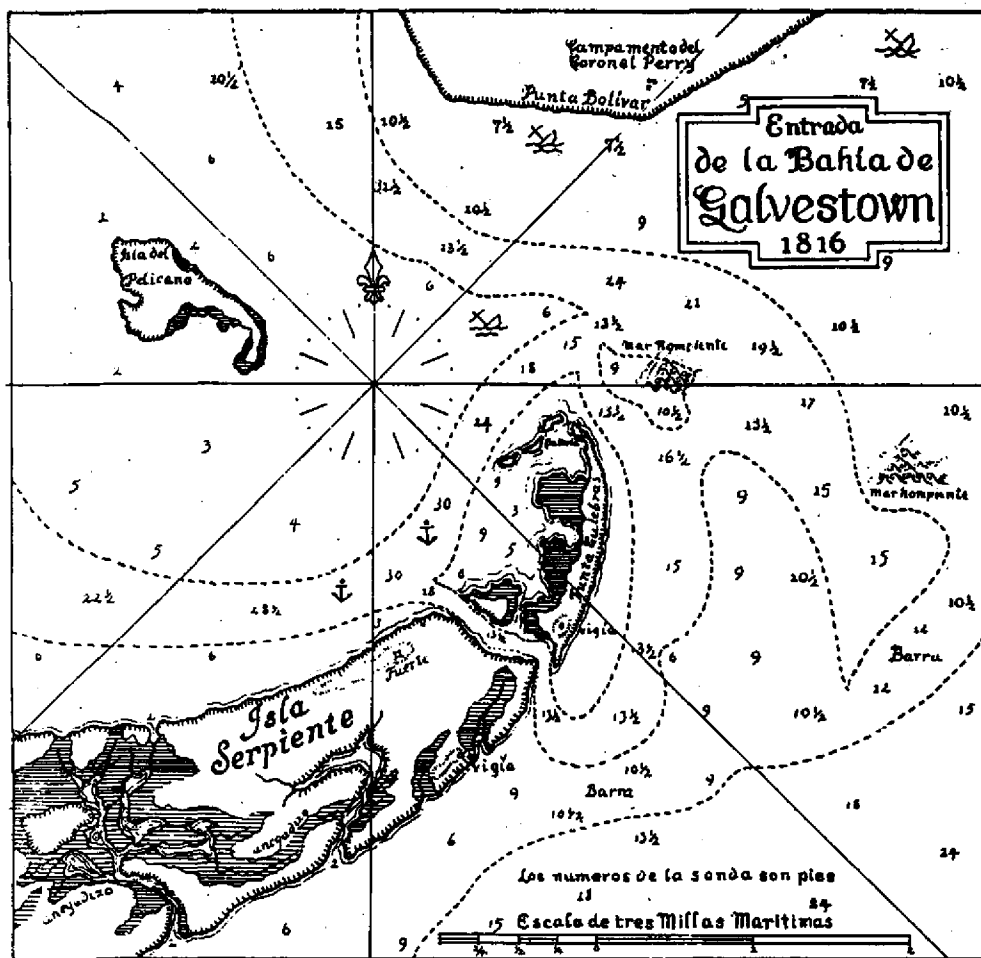
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- (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 556. The Lazo family was among the first families to settle Victoria, Texas with impresario de Leon.
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Map of Port Isabel
Adapted from
King Ranch
Tom Lea, Vol. 1 p., 27



Entrada de la Bahía de Galvestown, 1816

By Bartholome Lafon

Ships of Commodore Luis Aury sunk--upper right down:
Infatigable, *Favorito* and *La Campechana*.

Courtesy of Rosengerg Library, Galveston, Texas

Jane deGrummond Remembered

By Pam Keyes

Even now, years after my friend Dr. Jane de Grummond's death, I continue to be reminded of her, often in surprising ways. On a December 2003 trip to New Orleans, for instance, I opened the door of my room at the Hotel Monteleone to find a large print of Audubon's Great Blue Heron hanging on the wall, instantly transporting me in memory 25 years back, to the Louisiana State University Library's special collections area, where Jane was pointing out a huge framed original Great Blue Heron print she had donated to the library in memory of her late husband, Ernest. It was my first visit to Baton Rouge, to meet the Latin American history teacher who wrote *The Baratarians and the Battle of New Orleans* (1961).

My friendship with Dr. de Grummond began in the vibrant twilight of her life, in June of 1978, a couple of years after she had retired as a history teacher at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. I had earlier joined the Laffite Study Group and greatly admired her book about the Baratarians, so I felt a bit intimidated when I wrote to ask her if she had known about the black slaves who served in the Battle of New Orleans, information I had discovered on a microfilmed slave narrative at my university while looking for peripheral data concerning Jean Laffite. The warmth and sincerity of her reply sparked a close friendship and correspondence that lasted throughout her creation and problematic publication of *Renato Beluche. Smuggler, Privateer, and Patriot, 1780-1860*, and subsequent arduous work on a biography of Simon Bolivar. It ended in 1988, when I regretfully lost touch with her, failing even to find her on a trip through Baton Rouge that year. There had been increasingly sporadic letters as her health and eyesight progressively declined. I didn't learn until years later, from the *Baton Rouge Advocate* newspaper files, that she had died in January 1991.

Born in central Pennsylvania on Dec. 30, 1905, Jane never totally lost her softly rounded Yankee accent despite having lived in Louisiana since 1942, when she first arrived at LSU for graduate school. Her mentors at Baton Rouge included instructor Harris Gaylord Warren, author of *The Sword Was Their Passport*. When she started teaching fulltime in 1946 at LSU, she was the first female history professor there. She also happened to be the first woman to receive a doctorate in history at LSU. Both of those accomplishments are even more impressive when one realizes she was approaching middle age at the time and already had had a career for several years as a high school teacher in Pennsylvania in an era when most women her age were homemakers.

Love found her at LSU. In 1947, during Christmas break, she married Ernest Augustus de Grummond, a direct descendant of Battle of New Orleans veteran and San Domingue refugee Jean Jacques Auguste Guibert. She easily gained acceptance by her husband's closely knit family, who gathered each weekend and on holidays at an old family plantation affectionately called Solitude, located along Bayou Sara near St. Francisville, La.

Thin and petite, with gently bobbed luminescent silver hair, Jane maintained an office in the History Department of LSU for years following her retirement, reporting to honorary work as professor emeritus every day at 10:30 a.m., meeting with fellow teachers and students for lunch at the Student Union, and leaving for home in the nearby Highlands subdivision at 4 o'clock each afternoon.

She hosted me and my then-husband three times overnight at her modest one-story ranch-style home set back from the road in a thick cover of lofty pines, immediately identifiable by its pristine white clam shell driveway, the

only one of its kind in the neighborhood.

The first time we entered her kitchen door, we were greeted by the homey, spicy smell of a bubbling pot full of red beans and rice which Jane had been cooking all day for supper in order to make us feel immediately at home. This was the sort of thoughtful gesture that was typical for her.

It was immediately apparent that her home revolved around what once was a paneled dining room, but which she had converted into an efficient study, with a ring of files and stuffed-solid bookshelves surrounding a large proper dining table serving by proxy as a writing desk. Centered on the table and flanked by neat piles of notes, carbons, and chapters in progress of her Beluche biography was her pride and joy (and oft-time vexation), an IBM Selectric typewriter. I remember feeling awed, thinking "this is what a real author's study looks like!"

While the red beans simmered in their gravy on the stove and we were seated around the table engaged in idle conversational pleasantries, Jane walked intently to one section of her books and pulled, in quick succession, a copy of Arsene Latour's *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana* (1964 facsimile edition which she had edited), her books, *Envoy to Caracas* (1951), *A Caracas Diary* (1954), and a special gift, *Solitude: Life on a Plantation in Louisiana 1788-1968* (1970), a genealogy book full of de Grummond and Smith family stories and old photos which she had co-authored with her husband's cousin, Beulah de Veriere Smith Watts. This last book she inscribed to me with her full name "Nancy Jane Lucas De Grummond" and dated Nov. 9, 1978. She would have given me a copy of her Baratarians book, too, but she knew I already had purchased Ray Thompson's notated copy from Sue Thompson some months previous. As it was, I needed a box for the books.

Although Jane had earned her doctoral degree in 1946 from LSU with a dissertation on the journal of John G. A.

Williamson, first diplomatic representative of the United States to Venezuela, she never wanted friends to call her "Dr." Her family and friends knew to call her by Nancy or Jane, but most often, Jane.

That first visit to Baton Rouge, Jane let us sleep in her own bedroom, which featured a wooden cannonball design bed that Ernest had crafted himself sometime in the early 1950s, before his fatal heart attack in 1953. She knew how to make her guests feel special. It was like visiting in the home of a favorite great-aunt.

The next day, she drove us in her Buick Skylark over to the LSU campus, past the cage where the tiger mascot lived, to her parking spot near the history department building. Her high-ceilinged office had a desk and floor buried under so many errant stratas of Latin American history periodicals, history books, and other mementos of several years of travels throughout the Caribbean and South America it was hard to find a place to stand, let alone sit. We didn't stay there long due to lunchtime's approach. Then Jane led us across campus and under the branches of an expansive ancient Spanish moss encrusted live oak to the Student Union cafeteria, where nearly everyone greeted her on sight. She loved nothing better than to be with the students, she said, as it kept her feeling young, and indeed among all that youth, she did look and act many years younger. Her favorite meal at the cafeteria was crawfish etouffé, and she ordered a bowl for me once she discovered I had never eaten crawfish before. So with the red beans and rice the night before and the crawfish dish for lunch, Jane introduced me to my first tastes of Creole cuisine and thereby began my long addiction to the same.

The highlight of the day was a visit to the Special Collections room at the library, where Jane had earlier found an original map by Barthelemy Lafon that showed the area of the Temple. I had earlier asked her where the Temple was located, as I was interested in making a field trip to see it firsthand. Jane had enthusiastically researched the

location with various authorities as even she in her travels around Barataria in years past had never seen the Laffites' auction site, an elevated Indian shell mound above Lake Salvador. We made preparations to all go together on a field trip the following year, but alas, the reality of her problems with arthritis and eyesight hit home sometime in the interim and she could not go on an adventurous field trip. During the next visit to see her some seven months later, the ex and I first drove down to Grand Isle and sauntered around the wetlands of Barataria, but we never made the pirogue excursion to the Temple, as it just wouldn't have been the same without Jane there also.

Jane had campaigned heavily for me to get my masters at either LSU or Tulane, but fate intervened in spring of 1979 and I finally got a newspaper position as a reporter, in my hometown. I kept up the correspondence with Jane as well as others in the Laffite Study Group but never made the effort to get my masters degree.

Knowing my intense passion for studying everything I could find about Jean Laffite and the fact I had received my bachelor of arts degree in English/Journalism, Jane wrote one time that she thought I might be the one best suited for writing a new biography about him, despite my youth and inexperience. In her letters she tried to foster my confidence.

When you write about him (Jean Laffite), do it without grimness. An essential element in the Louisiana scene then and now was and is *joie de vivre*, she commented in one of those letters to me.

Although she liked discussing Laffite, her historical interests focused on Renato Beluche, whom she first encountered in the fall of 1943, in the manuscript diary of John G.A. Williamson, first diplomatic representative of the United States to the Republic of Venezuela. As Jane tells in the introduction to her biography of Beluche, Williamson "told how Beluche had assembled a navy for the rebels" (of

a revolution in Caracas in 1835). Curious about the colorful Beluche, Jane soon learned he was an associate of the Laffites, and had served Gen. Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans. After reading an article about Beluche sent to her by the director of the Biblioteca Nacional in Caracas, Jane flew to Panama in 1947 to meet the author of the article, Isidro Beluche, a direct descendant of Renato. It was to be the first of several visits to the areas where Beluche had operated as a privateer and patriot, and to archives throughout South America and the Caribbean, not to mention reunions with Beluche's numerous descendants. In 1963, she was a guest of honor when Beluche's remains were exhumed from the Rancho Grande Cemetery in Puerto Cabello for an inhumation ceremony at the Panteon Nacional in Caracas where her name, too, was inscribed on the plaque for her research service to Venezuela.

Jane's desire for learning all she could about Beluche naturally led to a keen interest in those with whom he associated, such as the Laffites, and Bolivar. She kept files on all she found when the threads connected to Beluche. It was his service at Battery No. 3 at Chalmette that she honored by writing *The Baratarians and the Battle of New Orleans*. When she finally decided after retirement to write a biography about Beluche himself, Jane at first couldn't limit the book to just him, she wanted to combine his life story with Simon Bolivar's. This led to problems with the publisher, as she wrote me in early 1980.

About 3 wks ago I took 'Renato Beluche and the Liberator' to my editor--about 800 pages with intro, bib, etc. She took one look at it and said: 'This is too intimidating to the reader. Also it would have to sell for at least \$30 and very few people would buy it.' Then she went down my list of 35 chapters and every fifth one asked how old Beluche was; after which she said, 'This has to be cut to 20.' A little less than half of the book is about Bolivar. She said I could not do

two biographies in one book. She is still going over the whole damn thing. We will have a session when she finishes, then have to isolate Beluche and streamline Bolivar's career where Beluche's path crosses his. Meanwhile, I am putting the bib. Together--sheer drudgery. It will take me at least 2 mo. to get Beluche rewritten. I doubt that the book will see the light of day before 1980 ends, but I keep plugging away.

Part of the problem Jane had with her publisher was the fact she was mild-mannered and pleasant, which meant although she complained in her letters, she wasn't as assertive in person as she could have been, given her status as tenured professor.

Her woes with the Beluche manuscript dragged on throughout 1980, and most of 1981, until she finally convinced the LSU Press to send the manuscript to the readers--two outside critics had to approve it for publication. She wrote me in September 1981.

The 1st reader of Beluche said it was good and recommended publication. A second reader has to agree that the ms should be published. I don't know why the LSU Press does not make a copy and send it to 2 readers at the same time. They don't, I just hope the second reader does not keep the darn thing five months like the first one did.

Jane's Beluche book finally hit the bookstores in May 1983--with Bolivar information almost completely surgically excised. The 800-page manuscript had been pared down to 300 pages. To add insult to injury, in her estimation the LSU Press did not properly promote the hardbound book, but it still sold relatively well, and later went into a paperback edition.

Jane did not let the Bolivar portion of the Beluche manuscript fall into neglect, not when a decent biography of the liberator hadn't been written in

some 30 years. In 1982, she started a new biography, to concentrate solely on Bolivar, who had been the subject of her graduate thesis during World War II. In late 1983, she wrote me that she had finished the Bolivar manuscripts and had taken it to the LSU Press for evaluation. Once again, there were problems almost from the start, this time even worse ones. The manuscript was returned to her for revision; she complied, only to be told it wasn't sufficient. Then she tried sending it to Random House in early 1985. Her last written words to me about the Bolivar book were "Say a prayer for it and me. I wonder how long it will be before I know its fate." The manuscript was rejected by Random House.

After Jane's death, a curious and rather miraculous thing happened with her Bolivar manuscript; unbeknownst to me or anyone at LSU, her brother, the late George B. Lucas, then professor emeritus of plant pathology at North Carolina State University, took a copy of the manuscript and asked an associate, historian and fellow NCSU teacher Richard Slatta, to revise and try to re-submit it for publication. Slatta had never met Jane, but took on the project, adding some of his own research to the work. He spent the next 10 years facing the same challenges Jane had faced with publication, getting rejections from six publishers until finally he got a favorable response from Texas A&M University Press. Slatta wrote me that the key to marketing the book successfully was targeting the military history market. The book was published under both their names as *Simon Bolivar's Quest for Glory*, in 2003. According to Slatta's preface, half of the royalties from the book go to scholarship and professorship funds established at LSU in Dr. de Grummond's name. Recently I noticed on the internet that the book is even being distributed by Wal-Mart. It is amazing to me that Jane made such an impression on a fellow teacher she had never met. I think it demonstrates how strong her positive influence was on the many students and friends who did know her well.



JANE DE GRUMMOND

1968

MY THOUGHTS AND THEORIES ON THE JEAN LAFFITE JOURNAL

Jean L. Epperson

Who wrote the Jean Laffite Journal? This question has intrigued many, and numerous theories have been proposed. Herein are some further thoughts and theories on the subject.

The person who said he found the Journal in family papers, was John A. Laffite, who represented himself as the great grandson of the French corsair, Jean Laffite. John A. Laffite was actually born June 4, 1893 in Omaha, Nebraska to a Bohemian emigrant family, John and Mary Pavlik Matejka.¹ In subsequent years John Matejka changed or represented his surname as Nafsinger, Lafitte, Laflin and Laffite. Among researchers he is referred to as John A. A review of some of his private correspondence and impressions recorded by people who knew him personally, reveals a man who had many personality difficulties and mental and emotional problems.²

Apparently dissatisfied with his humble background, over the years he spun a fabulous story about his famous pirate, great grandfather, Jean Laffite. He may have begun to believe the fantasy himself in later years.

Given the fact that John A. Laffite was not who he said he was, where did he get the so-called Laffite Journal? From 1923 through 1958 John A. was an employee of the Southern Pacific Railroad, and in and out of St. Louis Missouri. During this time the influential Laflin family had business interest in the town.³

I theorize that John A. found a book or manuscript about the pirate Laffite, owned by the Laflin family at one time, and acquired it. Thus began his preoccupation with Jean Laffite and his odyssey toward becoming the great-grandson of Jean Laffite. The existing

Laffite Journal, written in longhand French, now resides in the Sam Houston Regional Library in Liberty, Texas. It is the Journal of John A.s that was sold to Texas Gov. Price Daniel. The flyleaf of the Journal contains this inscription, "To John Laffitte Esq. Charleston in the State of South Carolina, this is Humbly Enscribed (sic) by your Most Obedient Servant Mathew Laflin August 23, 1837." The last digit of the date is not readable. Mathew Laflin was a businessman living in Chicago at the time and was anything but "humble". I believe that what Laflin sent to John Laffite in Charleston was a fictional story about Jean Laffite, probably a copy of *The Memoirs of Lafitte or The Barritarian (sic) Pirate. A Narrative Founded on Fact* by William G. Spear. It was published in 1826 in Providence, Rhode Island and republished many times under slightly different titles. A pseudo Victorian romance novel, it contained very little historical fact. The main character of the story was Mortimer Wilson who spent some time in Charleston, South Carolina. The Journal of Jean Laffite uses the surname Mortimore for the second wife of Jean Laffite and places her family in Charleston, an interesting parallel to the Spear novel. Attempts by genealogists to find wives of Jean Laffite, the corsair, have failed.

The 1830 U. S. Census of Charleston confirmed the fact that a John and a David Laffite were residents. It is conceivable that Mathew Laflin had business transactions with these Laffittes and sent them a copy of the Spear book because of the similarity of the last names.

It is of interest that John A. had a book translated in July 1957 by French teacher and translator, Bess M. Bozell, of Omaha, Nebraska.⁴ We do not know

for sure what was translated into book form. John A. neither spoke nor read French. The French version of the Laffite Journal (Diary) is written from beginning to end with no corrections, revisions, additions or changes of any kind. It obviously was not written over a five year period as a memoir. French analysts in France say the French version of the Laffite Journal was not written by a Frenchman.

During her divorce from John A., Lacie Surrat Laffite wrote to her friend and confidant, Audry Lloyd, "(John has) forged all he has sold. I know, not a hearsay, I saw him do it."⁵

Many have speculated on the handwriting of the Sam Houston Library collection -- Journal, Copy Books, Bibles, etc. No expert in handwriting, I can only say I believe that anyone could have penned the various parts of the collection.

My conclusions are that, after years of research, John A. wrote the *Laffite Journal* in English. Then had it translated into French and copied in longhand, by a clever forger (perhaps himself) to resemble known Jean Laffite handwriting.

Historians and educators have voiced the opinion that, public school educated, John A. was not capable of writing the Journal, although his private correspondence attests to the fact that he was facile with the English language and the Journal is certainly not great prose. Maybe John A. wasn't so crazy after all. Through his efforts he made a little money, gained a lot of

notoriety and amused himself in the process.

END NOTES

1. Jean L. Epperson,, "Who Was John Andrechyne Laffite." *The Laffite Society Chronicles* (September 2000), p. 2; U. S. Census Records for 1900, 1910 and 1920 of Omaha Nebraska.
2. Don C. Marler, "Psychological Profile of John A. Laffite" *The Laffite Society Chronicles* (February 2001), p. 8-9.
3. City Dictories of Saint Louis, Mo. *Louis Laflin, Laflin Genealogy*. (Chicago: Privately Printed, 1930), p. 56-58.
4. Bess M. Bozell, Letter written to John A. Laffite July 15, 1957 says to him that the translation of his book was almost ready and that the bill was \$225.00. The letter is in the Laffite Collection at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Archives in Liberty, Texas. The letter does not say if the translation was from English to French or visa versa.
5. Lacie Surrat Laffite to Audry Lloyd, september 5, 1969, Laffite Collection, Sam Houston Regional Library and Archives, Liberty, Texas.

[Editor's note: This is an opinion piece and you are invited to present a contrary opinion.]

DAVID S. PETTUS

August 3, 1939- August 10, 2004

Michael J. Bailey

David died August 10, 2004, after a fall in the family home in Houston which he grew up. He was not only a gentleman but an unassuming gentle man who left kind memories with all who knew him. David's hearty laugh and pleasant, easy-going personality won him many friends everywhere he visited and volunteered. He was born and raised in Houston the eldest son of a working class family. After a stint in the United States Navy, where he was deployed for the Cuban Missile Crises in the early sixties, he returned to Houston and completed his college education eventually earning a master's degree in geology.

One of his first jobs, as a geologist, was with NASA in Houston. There he worked in the lab processing materials. He was one of the first people to work with materials brought back from the moon landings of the Apollo missions. Later he worked for Phillips Petroleum doing various jobs in the oil industry.



David Pettus

It was in his later years that his love of history brought him into contact with people involved in the pursuit of knowledge of the past. Although he lived in Houston, Dave made trips all over Texas collecting information and researching records for the various projects he had taken upon himself. Dave assisted with many projects such as creating an index for the Perry Papers, helping to teach in summer archaeology programs, and visiting other libraries to make copies of materials related not only to his work but to that of friends and the various organizations that were lucky enough to have his involvement. At the Brazoria County Historical Museum he was very active in the Museum's oral history program, having conducted about 60 interviews since his first one in June of 2003.

His dedication to historical research and to the projects he was involved in won him respect among those who knew and worked with him. The many organizations he was involved with were lucky to have a member who took an active part in activities that enhanced their missions. Upon his death his family made sure that many of those organizations received materials that David collected during his research. Nine truck loads of books were doled out to various museums and libraries. A large amount of his research notes and computer generated items are now housed at the Brazoria County Historical Museum in Angleton, Texas. These materials will be available to other researchers for their benefit and as a fitting memorial to David.

Organizations David belonged to:

Librarian; Houston Archeological Society
Archivist; The Jean Lafitte Society, Galveston, TX
Researcher and Volunteer; Brazoria County Historical Museum, Angleton, TX
Researcher; San Jacinto Battlefield Monument
Researcher; Texas Room Houston Public Library
Member; Archivist of the Houston Area
Member; Museum of Fine Arts Houston
Member; Houston Gem and Mineral Society
Member; Texas Association of Museums
Member; Brazosport Archaeology Society

Member; Texas Archaeology Society
Researcher; Rosenberg Library Galveston, TX

David's Books

Horizontal, High-Angle, and Extended-Reach Drilling: Engineering, Geology, Technology, and Operations: An Annotated and Indexed Bibliography by David Pettus.

Index of Ballinger & Assoc. Collection: Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library / compiled by David S. Pettus. Houston, Tex.: The, Compiler 2000.

Johnny Reb: Confederate Spy -- Memories of Thrilling Events of the Civil War.
Ward McDonald, Editor with contributions from Mary M. Willis and David Pettus.
New York: Larksdale via American History Book Publishing Co., 1992.

One of the last articles David wrote.

Brazoria County's Greatest Generation(s)

DAVID PETTUS

Tom Brokaw published a book in 1998 entitled *The Greatest Generation* in which he identified the generation that grew up in the Great Depression and came of age in World War II as "the greatest generation." I have been privileged through the Brazoria County Historical Museum's Oral History Program to meet many members of that generation as well as their predecessor generation. The oral history interviews with these individuals have been among the most interesting experiences of my life. It is one thing to read of those now long-past events and times or to see them on the History Channel, but it has much more impact hearing it from the people who live through them.

Through the oral history interviews I have conducted, you can hear about life in Brazoria County before paved roads were common, when many children were in one-room schools, and the Democrat Party ran everything in the county. The Great Depression of the 1930s was as difficult in Brazoria County as elsewhere, and through oral history you can begin to see how people coped with the hard times. If you needed some money to add a few amenities to life, you could trap skunks, raccoons, squirrels, or other fur bearing animals and then sell the fur to Sears, Roebuck & Co. Skunks brought the best price, but had their own problems for the trapper. Women could get employment in the fig and pear canneries in Angleton, Alvin and Pearland. Freeport Sulphur Co. provided jobs for county residents as well as supported home gardens and home canning kitchens for employees and their families. Rice farming was a major agricultural business. Cattle were grazed on open range and gathered in annual roundups at Rosharon. The Agricultural Experiment Station at Angleton was a world-class facility for research on figs and cattle diseases.

World War II was the second major influence on Brokaw's *Greatest Generation* and interviews from veterans are fascinating to hear and read. County residents were at the Normandy invasion, The Battle of the Bulge, Anzio, the invasion of Southern France, aircrews on B-17s bombing Germany, stationed in the Aleutian Islands, in northern Italy, and aboard ships in the Pacific. Civilian contributions to the war effort are also to be found in the interviews. Learn how the Dow Freeport operations provided the raw materials for synthetic rubber used to make tires for the military.

One civilian worker now living in Angleton was present at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. His account of the Japanese attack and subsequent salvage of ships sunk in the attack is unique. Have you heard of German prisoners of war in Angleton? Some of them worked on farms in the Angleton area. One farmer's son later met one of these prisoners in England after the war. After interviewing about fifty of the World War II generation, I have concluded that they are a distinct group: less self-absorbed than later generations, more focused on getting the job done, and with a better idea of what life is about.

They were the foot soldiers of World War II and people who created the world we have lived in for the past 50 or so years. Those of us who are younger could learn a lot from them if we would only take the time. They, themselves, do not seem to subscribe to the "greatest generation" idea. They were just doing what needed to be done to survive and get ahead.

Those of us in the subsequent generations have not had our say yet, although we think we are pretty great, too. The members of the "in-between generation," those who were too young for World War II, had our own challenges. We were the foot soldiers in the Korean War and the Cold War. The members of the Baby Boom generation were the foot soldiers in Vietnam, and their children were in Desert Storm and the Iraq War. If these veterans do not talk about their experiences, their children and grandchildren are unlikely to understand exactly what they face in their future.

The Brazoria County Historical Museum can be contacted by anyone interested in giving an oral history interview or helping by being an interviewer. The Museum is interested in hearing from all residents, whether or not you were in the military. Accounts of life in the county are very useful for students of local history. We want to know your experiences. How did you come to live in Brazoria? County? Where have you worked? Did you see the Surfside whale(s)? Have you endured a major storm? Let us know about your life...we care. (*The Window Pane, September, 2004*)

CALENDAR

General meetings of The Laffite Society are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Trolley stop Building (on the south side of the 2000 block of The Strand, Galveston, TX., 77550. Many of the meetings feature interesting and informative presentations by members or guest speakers. The exception is the December meeting, the annual "Holiday Social," which is an evening of food, drink, and entertaining conversation in a relaxed and festive setting.

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for the first month of each calendar quarter (January, April, July, and October) on the same day as that month's general meeting and normally either precede or follow same. Additional Board of Directors meetings may be scheduled at the Board's discretion.

In addition to the general meetings, one or more special events are normally scheduled during the year. Examples of such special events that have taken place in the past include: an excursion to Grande Terre, Louisiana (Laffite's "Barataria"), the address of the Society's then-President, R. Dale Olson, to the Louisiana Historical Society at the New Orleans Country Club, and a summer archaeological excavation at the supposed site of Laffite's Maison Rouge.

Inquiries about upcoming special events may be directed to The Laffite Society, P.O. Box 1325, Galveston, Tx., 77553, or consult the webpage at: thelaffitesociety.com and the newsgroup at, laffite@yahoogroups.com.

The Laffite Society attempts to mail information (snail mail or email) to members and interested parties on the Society's mailing list as special event details are determined.

The Laffite Society Chronicles are published two times per year—in the spring and fall.

Bulletin Board

With the untimely death of David Pettus, archivist, that position is now open for volunteers.

Membership

There are 76 members currently in the Society.

New members--Welcome:

Bill Leopold, Galveston, Texas
Diane Burket, Knoxville, Tennessee
Michele Olinger, Alta Loma, Ca
Ed Jamison, La Marque, Tx

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY
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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Laffite Society is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the study of the privateers Jean and Pierre Laffite and their contemporaries, and to the geographical locales and chronological era associated with them.

Annual dues are as follows:

Student.....	\$ 15.00
Senior (Over 65).....	15.00
Institution.....	15.00
Individual.....	30.00
Family.....	35.00
Sustaining Member.....	100.00
Life Membership (One Payment)	350.00