

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY  
The Nonus Collection, 2214 Postoffice Street, Galveston, Texas 77550

MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday, February 9, 2010

BOARD PRESENT: President Ed Jamison; 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Jim Nonus; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Kathy Modzelewski; 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President Lynette Haaga; Treasurer Nancy Beaman; Secretary *pro tem* and Archivist Jeff Modzelewski; Parliamentarian Diane Olson; Editor of Publications *pro tem* Dan Cote; Historian Ginny Roberts; Press Director Dave Roberts.

BOARD ABSENT: Privateer-At-Arms (nominal) Wil Zapalac; Coordinator of Research Gary Fretz; Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes.

ADVISORY BOARD PRESENT: Jean Epperson; Don Marler; Jeff Modzelewski; Kathy Modzelewski; R. Dale Olson.

ADVISORY BOARD ABSENT: Pam Keyes; Gene Marshall; Robert Vogel; Dr. Reginald Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. Ed Jamison welcomed attendees, and Jim Nonus did an excellent job in introducing the several visitors/new members.

Several announcements followed:

- Dale Olson informed the group of the untimely passing on Sunday 02/07/2010 of Harry Forester IV, eldest son of members Harry Forester III and wife Anne, and of the dates and times of the visitation and funeral.
- Jean Epperson discussed the need to begin a new Laffite Society Archives to replace that washed away by Hurricane Ike. The purchase of a filing cabinet or bookshelf was authorized, and it was agreed that same would be housed at the Nonus Collection at least for the present. Jean contributed two folders of material to the nascent archives, one on member and Pierre Laffite descendant Diane Burkett, the other on the Hicks Brothers.
- Jeff Modzelewski summarized the recent trip of some twelve or fifteen Laffitians to New Orleans for a symposium held at the Williams Research Center on Saturday 01/30/2010, at which member and author of (among other books) *The Pirates Laffite*, William C. "Jack" Davis, presented a module.
- Ed Jamison spoke about a possible field trip back to Grand Isle and Grande Terre, Louisiana, the Laffites' Baratavia, to which the group has traveled before but not since its early years. It was noted that the Society had had no communication with its prior contacts in that area, principally Pat and Jean Landry of Grand Isle, since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, nor did it possess an e-mail address for them.

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PROGRAM: Jim Nonus introduced the evening's speaker, member and past officer Don Marler, who spoke about the "Neutral Zone."

The Neutral Zone is the portion of western Louisiana bounded on the west by the Sabine River, on the north by Bayou Pierre in the vicinity of Natchitoches, on the east by the Calcasieu River, and on the south by the Gulf of Mexico.

The area was first inhabited by as many as thirty native-American tribes, including Caddo, Choctaw, and even Apache (as prisoners of the Spaniards around Zwolle, Louisiana). The Spaniard Cabeza de Vaca passed through the area about 1528, nearly one century before the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. Hernando de Soto followed some fifteen years later, but another one hundred forty years elapsed before the next non-native-American passed that way: La Salle, in 1682.

The French built Natchitoches, the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase, in 1714; in 1721 the Spanish built Los Adaes, the capital of Tejas from 1729 to 1770, on the northeastern frontier of New Spain, about fifteen miles southwest of Natchitoches.

In 1763 the territory containing the future Neutral Zone was ceded by the French to the Spanish in the Treaty of Paris, partly influenced by marriage between the royal families of the two nations. But the Spanish were already finding it difficult to govern their vast expanse of lands in the New World, and in 1803 they returned the territory to the French. The French promptly sold it to the United States; the latter had been negotiating to acquire New Orleans, but Napoleon Bonaparte needed funds and sold the entire Louisiana Purchase for \$15 million.

Three years later, in 1806, Spain and the U.S., to decrease political tension over national boundary disputes, created the Neutral Zone as a buffer between the uncontested territories to either side. The two nations agreed that new settlement would be prohibited therein and that neither side would send peace officers into the region; the result was an immediate influx of outlaws and adventurers, about many of whom Don recounted anecdotes.

Don Marler has authored, among other books, one on the Neutral Zone. It is titled *The Neutral Zone: Back Door to the United States*, and it is available for purchase at the following link:  
[http://dogwoodpressonline.com/product\\_info.php?cPath=17&products\\_id=111&osCsid=5d83a7061f6cb48633dcbcc0b46d216b](http://dogwoodpressonline.com/product_info.php?cPath=17&products_id=111&osCsid=5d83a7061f6cb48633dcbcc0b46d216b).

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.

Submitted by

Jeff Modzelewski  
Secretary *pro tem*  
The Laffite Society