

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

Meridian (formerly Edgewater) Retirement Center, 2228 Seawall Blvd., Galveston, Texas 77550

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

BOARD PRESENT: President Ed Jamison; 1st Vice President Jim Nonus; 2nd Vice President Kathy Modzelewski; 3rd Vice President Lynette Haaga; Treasurer Nancy Beaman; Secretary pro tem and Archivist Jeff Modzelewski; Editor of Publications pro tem Dan Cote; Historian Ginny Roberts; Parliamentarian Diane Olson; Press Director Dave Roberts; Privateer-At-Arms (nominal) Wil Zapalac.

BOARD ABSENT: Coordinator of Research Gary Fretz; Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes.

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

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

Ed Jamison called the meeting to order at 6:46 p.m., welcomed all attendees, and then extended a specific greeting to new members, visitors, and Lou Olsen, a charter Society member now spending a good deal of time in east Texas and thus unable to attend meetings often.

Ed alerted the group that the sign-up sheet for refreshments for future meetings was circulating. He noted that the biennial board-member elections scheduled for that evening would be deferred to allow additional time in which to develop the slate of candidates, and he invited all who wished to serve to so advise him in the near future.

Lastly, Ed remarked on an issue broached at a presentation at the November 2009 meeting by Tom Linton, brought to mind by a resultant article in the latest Laffite Society Chronicles. Mr. Linton had talked of the History Trail at Galveston Island State Park and of a monument to Laffite now situated on the western portion of the Island. He had proposed that funds be raised to relocate said monument to the History Trail. Ed noted that individuals were, of course, at liberty to contribute to the endeavor but that, since the information about the Laffites on the monument was blatantly inaccurate, the Society would not formally do so as an organization.

PROGRAM: The evening's program comprised three speakers.

First, Lou Olsen spoke about a Laffite legend of which she had learned, centered in the environs of the east Texas towns of Beckville and Tatum, some twenty-five miles southeast of Longview and sixty southwest of Shreveport, LA. A local body of water, Hendricks Lake, is reputed to be the repository of Laffite loot. Legend holds that booty from a Spanish ship plundered by the Laffites was being transported in wagons to St. Louis when the travelers were intercepted by Spanish militia. Rather than surrender their load of gold and silver, the drivers drove the wagons into Hendricks Lake. Treasure searches have been conducted at various times and via various methods over the ensuing years; a man surnamed Miller allegedly found three bars of silver there in 1913. Lou commented with humor that when she left the Gulf Coast to spend more time in east Texas she thought she would leave Laffite legends behind, but she was mistaken.

Next came the principal program, presented by R. Dale Olson, the topic of which was the Laffite Society field trip to the Yucatán in 2001 in search of the grave of Pierre Laffite.

Dale first spoke about Laffite field trips in general, noting that they always offered both educational and fellowship components, the latter including easily available alcoholic beverages in quantities sufficient to satisfy all participants. On a serious note, Dale mentioned that these field trips often furthered research as much as, or more so than, do formal monthly meetings, as it is no uncommon that participants spend many wine-fueled hours engaging in informal, round-table discussions of varied Laffite-related threads well into the late nights or early mornings.

Dale next asked Jeff Modzelewski to provide the background for the educational component of the January 2001 Yucatán trip. The core of Jeff's remarks was a document referred to within the Society as the "Schumpf deposition." In late 1821, a Canadian named George Donald Schumpf disembarked at the port town of Dzilam de Bravo, on the north-central coast of the Yucatán, along with the cadaver of Pierre Laffite. Schumpf was detained for investigation for possible complicity in piratical activities and seemingly disappeared from historical records thereafter, but his testimony is important to Laffite researchers because it confirms that: (1) it was Pierre, and not Jean, Laffite who died on or about 10 November 1821 as a result of injuries suffered in a corsair skirmish with authorities near Isla Mujeres; and (2) Pierre was then buried in that locale (probably in Dzilam de Bravo, although at least one

Laffite authority believes this occurred instead in the nearby town of Dzinzant n).

Dale then spoke of the trip of a group of seven Society members Don Marler, Mike and Jerry Eubank, Robert Vogel and Kathleen Taylor, Diane Olson and him to the Yucat n in January 2001. The primary educational goal of the trip was to learn more of the supposed burial site of Pierre Laffite in Dzilam de Bravo, but the group visited other areas in, or just off of, the peninsula, at least one of which was well known to the Laffites: the Island of Isla Mujeres. The Schumpf deposition related that this small island off the northeast coast of the Yucat n Peninsula was another Barataria for the Laffites, on which they warehoused a large quantity of plundered goods that they then fenced, through a paid agent, on the mainland.

On Isla Mujeres the group learned the tale of the self-styled "pirate" and romantic character Ferm n Antonio Mundaca, born in Spain in 1825, who fell in love with a native girl thirty-seven years his junior. His efforts at courtship with her having failed, he is said to have pined away and died from a broken heart. A skull and crossbones adorn his own intended tombstone, along with these words for the girl of whom his love went unrequited: "As you are, I was. As I am, you will be."

In Dzilam de Bravo, the group found a monument dedicated to Jean Laffite, but learned that the cemetery in use during the Laffites' era was now off the coast and under Gulf waters due to the shifting of the shoreline over the decades. The group also learned of the local Alcocer family, a very prominent one in town for many years, and that said family believed themselves to be descendants of Jean Laffite.

Dale accompanied his remarks with a beautiful slideshow of photographs taken during the sojourn, and in concluding mentioned that he had discussed with members Rob and Carolyn Peterson a proposed project to scan photographs of past Laffite Society field trips into computer images, as the Petersons had done with past publications of the Laffite Society and its predecessor organization, the Laffite Study Group.

After the program, Jim Nonus noted that approximately six boxes of material from the Laffite Society archives had been saved after Hurricane Ike as potentially worth retaining permanently. He invited members to volunteer to take home some of that material and to make that determination, so that anything salvaged could be segregated for a new, nascent archives, and the remainder disposed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:35 p.m.

Submitted by

Jeff Modzelewski
Secretary pro tem
The Laffite Society