

## THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

Meridian Retirement Center, 2228 Seawall Blvd., Galveston, TX 77550

### Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Board Members Present: President Ed Jamison, FVP Jack Watson, SVP Kathy Modzelewski, TVP Ginny Roberts, Secretary Carolyn Peterson, Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski, Technology Director Rob Peterson, Archivist Larry Porter, Publicity Director Dave Roberts

Board Members Absent: Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes, Editor Dan Cote, Parliamentarian Diane Olson

Advisory Board Present: Jean Epperson, Jeff Modzelewski, Kathy Modzelewski

Advisory Board Absent: Pam Keyes, Robert Vogel, Dr. Reginald Wilson, Dale Olson

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Ed Jamison called the meeting to order at 6:33PM. First of all, Ed expressed his pleasure at the return of Don and Sybil Marler, long time members. He welcomed visitors Elizabeth Hoyle, daughter of Sheldon Kendall, visiting from France. He also welcomed Marla Drost (Jean Epperson's daughter), John Kemp, and Charles Kelly. TVP Ginny Roberts was thanked for providing a delicious meal and Ed Connor for pouring libations.

On a sad note, Ed announced the passing of John Buck, a Society member.

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### Program Speaker – Don Marler

### Topic – Aaron Burr-The Most Unfairly Maligned Politician in American History



Jack Watson introduced Don saying that he was born in Louisiana and was a Frogman during the Korean War. Don has a Masters degree in Psychiatric Social Work and he has worked for government agencies and then for himself in this field. He was the former editor and publisher of the Laffite Chronicles and officer of the Laffite Society.

Aaron Burr had some association with the Laffites in the early 1800's and Don believes it broadens our knowledge when we study some of the peripheral people with whom the Laffites had contact. Burr was born in 1776 in New Jersey. His mother was the daughter of the evangelist, Jonathan Edwards, and his father was Aaron Burr Sr, first president of a university that would become Princeton. He had a tragic life before age four; he lost his parents, grandparents, and a cousin. His first wife, was Theodosia Prevost, who had several miscarriages before giving birth to a daughter, who died at three years of age. The next daughter was Theodosia who later was lost on the ship Le Brave along with most of Burr's papers. The mother died when Theo was

eight years old. Burr had a very passive or laidback nature never defending himself from taunts and insults.

Alexander Hamilton was a life-long bachelor and was illegitimate. His mother was married to John M. Levine, a wealthy Jew from the Netherlands. She was pressured into this marriage, later leaving Levine and taking up with James Hamilton (father of Alexander), having several children with him, but no marriage. Some say Alexander was a genius, but he had a personality problem being that he was always on the attack. Whereas Burr was the complete opposite being very passive and later regretting it. To a fault, he displayed the "stiff upper lip". Hamilton followed in Burr's footsteps in almost everything, even working for Washington after Burr quit the position. Hamilton projected his own weaknesses upon Burr. After the war Hamilton and Burr were both lawyers who worked together often and peacefully, but Hamilton would publish anonymously unflattering articles about Burr that Burr would just let pass with no rebuttal.

Hamilton and Burr both opposed slavery while Jefferson did not. Burr was a big advocate for women's rights similar to where we are today education, right to vote, etc. He was a horrible money manager, but was very generous to those who would continue their education. Late in his life he supported ten elderly women--no strings attached. He also supported (not financially) the only woman impresario in Texas, Jane McManus, illustrating his dedication to the pursuit of women's rights.

In 1800 Burr and Jefferson were running for president and Burr became VP because Jefferson received the most votes. Jefferson kept him under his thumb so Burr couldn't do much; he couldn't even use the library. In 1801 it became known that Hamilton was a British agent, number 007. Don supposed this might be a reason why he treated Burr so badly, being afraid that Burr would learn his secret and reveal it. In 1804 Burr ran for governor of New York and lost due to Hamilton's behind the scenes doings. During the campaign for governor Hamilton made some especially questionable comments about Burr. Burr asked Hamilton to retract or explain the many negative things he said but he refused, leading to the duel. Hamilton had participated in twelve duels and Burr in one, but neither had killed anyone. Hamilton had access to trick pistols that did not meet the dueling code, but this did not give him an edge in the duel as we know. In 1940 the pistols were X-rayed and the triggers were discovered. Burr was never tried for murder.

Burr was a bad judge of character, especially regarding James Wilkinson who was the head of the US army. Wilkinson was also a double agent to the Spanish (Number 13) under four presidents, but was never discovered and all these presidents knew of his duplicity but never took action. He was a double agent so perhaps his association with the Spaniards provided the American government some useful information. He was for sale to either side. He urged the Spanish to kill Lewis and Clarke Clark among other despicable deeds. Due to his association with Wilkinson, Burr was tried for treason 3 times but not convicted. Eventually Jefferson and Wilkinson attempted to have Burr killed without success. Burr remarried at 77 years of age and lived to see Sam Houston take Texas.

In the Journal of Jean Laffite (which Don considers highly unreliable) Jean writes that he and Pierre went to Washington to meet with Jefferson, his cabinet and Burr. In their meeting with Burr they talk about Spain and Texas. Another entry says that Pierre was contracted by Burr to report malfeasance in the use of funds in New Orleans and Jean was to sweep the Gulf clean of pirates--the fox guarding the henhouse so to speak. Don thinks Burr had no power to contract anything with these two.

Two of Laffite's men, Robert Johnson and Jean Desfarges, admitted in the Le Brave trial that they sunk the ship that Theodosia was on sending her to her death.

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### **Miscellaneous**

Ed thanked several members for bringing salads and desserts. He then asked Jack to tell the audience about the upcoming programs.

Jack Watson gave a preview of the following months' programs:

July:	Jack Watson on "Lord Byron and Jean Laffite, More Links than You Think"
August:	Jim Saye and Bill Cox on the SS Selma at Bolivar Roads
September:	Betty Connor on the Women in Laffite's life
October:	Cindy Vallar speaks on the Pirate Dominique Youx
November:	Dale Olson on the Location of the Maison Rouge

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36PM.

Submitted by Carolyn Peterson  
Corresponding/Recording Secretary