

## THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

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

### Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 12, 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, Editor Dan Cote, Parliamentarian Diane Olson, Publicity Director Dave Roberts

Board Members Absent: Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes, Archivist Larry Porter

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

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

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Ed Jamison called the meeting to order at 6:33PM. He then introduced some members who he considers to be instrumental in the success of the Society: Dorothy McDonald Karilanovic (past Secretary) and Lou McBeth Olson accompanied by her husband, David. He welcomed Joyce McLane, Marla Drost and Mia Cummings, (daughters of Jean Epperson), Charles Sanders, Natalie Wiest, Head Librarian of the Jack K. Williams Library at TAMUG. and Judy and Joe Dolfi (members but infrequent attendees), and Tom Perkins.

Joyce McLane who owns "Head to Foolsies" talked about the new attraction she is trying to introduce in downtown Galveston for family entertainment. The name will be the "Pirate Experience—Legends of the Gulf Coast" showcasing such as the Laffite brothers, Aury, and the other well known pirates of that era. This is not only to benefit downtown, but also the Elissa. She is working on a syllabus for students at all grade levels to use when they come to the Experience to encourage their knowledge about the history, lore and legend. The other half of the attraction will be a Victorian haunted house and both will be housed in the former Bass shoe outlet next to Fuddrucker's.

Jeff Modzelewski apologized for sending out an invitation to a Spanish blogging site. He reassured us that it was not spam and done unintentionally. Mea Culpa!!

Ed said that member and old friend, Jesse Dunbar, had been in an accident the past weekend and was hospitalized with a broken arm. He expects Jesse to make a full recovery.

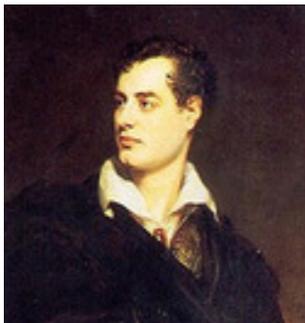
Ed thanked TVP Ginny Roberts for again providing a delicious meal and Ed Connor for doing an excellent job as bartender.

Ed stated that Texas A&M University has agreed to store the Society's archives and volunteer help would be needed to help copy/scan the items since everything will be kept in electronic form. Tom Ortling has said that he plans to use some of his students in the process and also plans for his students to use the archives in their research.

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### Program Speaker – Jack Watson

### Topic – The Relationship between Lord Byron and Jean Laffite



Jack Watson stated that he was not really a poetry person, but this possible link has interested him for a long time. He used an article written by Pam Keyes (2007) as his source material and consulted with Dr. Richard Peake, a fellow bird watcher and English Literature professor, about the possibility of Laffite being the subject for Byron's "The Corsair". Dr. Peake believes that this is the case.

Jack thinks that Joseph Ingram gave root to the myth when he

published his romantic novel in 1837 featuring Jean Laffite. These novels had no historical content, but they glorified a fanciful Laffite. Ingram's book was published in 1938 in London and included the last line from "The Corsair" in the preface. Byron may have supported this later myth (generated by Ingram's book) by including a note regarding an article from an American newspaper talking about Laffite and the Baratarians in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of his poem printed in April 1814. The only problem is that the timing does not lend credence to the myth. "The Corsair" was first published in early 1814 before Laffite's exploits occurred in the War of 1812. Being that communication between continents was quite slow, Byron could not have been aware of Laffite's actions during the war.

Jack went on to describe the Byronic hero with his flaws and virtues. Some think Laffite was a criminal for his privateering, but also he could be the most gentlemanly person. Jack gave several other examples of the Byronic hero -- Sam Spade in the Maltese Falcon, James Dean in Rebel Without a Cause, and even Victor Frankenstein whose crime was making the monster, but he did it for the betterment of mankind. Jack gave some information on Byron himself indicating that he was a troubled person much like the heroes he invented in his poems and that Byron was killed fighting for Greek independence.

Jack concluded by saying that he does not believe that Laffite was the inspiration for Byron's poem, primarily due to the timeline mentioned above. He also said that Laffite biographers such as Ramsey and Davis do not believe there was a link, but that Pam Keyes thinks there may be because of possible communications between Mary Shelley (receiving information from her uncle about Laffite) and Lord Byron.

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### **Miscellaneous**

Ed mentioned that he had received emails from Steve Austin and Cathy Hitchcock who have moved back to Portland, OR. They are doing well.

Dale Olson told the group that at the Winter Banquet the toast is made with the recitation of the last couplet of "The Corsair".

Lou Olsen who lives in east Texas said that Phillip Waldrop is still trying to find the Laffite treasure that supposedly was dropped in Hendricks Lake. Laffite hired Trammel of Trammel's Trace to take silver and gold bars to St. Louis. Supposedly the Mexican Army found out and they rushed to intercept the shipment. To prevent its capture, the booty was said to be dumped in the lake. People are still looking for it today. Jack said tongue in cheek that recently he was told that there is supposed to be Laffite treasure in Chocolate Bayou, too.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34PM.

Submitted by Carolyn Peterson  
Corresponding/Recording Secretary