

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

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

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 10, 2012

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, Publicity Director Dave Roberts, Archivist Larry Porter, Parliamentarian Diane Olson

Board Members Absent: Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:41PM. President Ed Jamison welcomed visitors Nancy and Jimmy McGlathery, Lodie Massie, Maryanne Welford, Ethyl Lou, Daniel Olsen and Michael Woinio. He then called attention to articles that had recently appeared in the Galveston Daily. One covered this year's Banquet activities and the other was concerning travel to Cuba and the lifting of some of the restrictions. A presentation on this subject will be held at a later date. Ed also thanked the Society for the plaque he was presented at the Banquet. Lynette Haaga, Banquet Chair, was called up and she thanked her committee for all their help making it a very successful event. She also had copies the king cake recipe from last year. Ed thanked the Olsons for donating their location and Troy Schott for all the wonderful food he provided. He also mentioned that he had talked with Steve Austin and Kathy Hitchcock and they were finalizing their move to Portland having sold their house here.

Ed said that he had received an email from Natalie Wiest (archive librarian at Texas A&M) who says that the Society archives website is being developed.

Ed spoke about the one day LSU symposium in Baton Rouge entitled "Louisiana Borderlands in The Neutral Zone: Redbones, Rascals, and The Camino Real" and said that it is an honor that three present and former members of the Society will be speakers. The date is Saturday, March 3rd starting at 8:45AM - 3:30PM. Helen Mooty was enlisted to be the organizer of the trip.

Jack McCoy has invited us back to the Panama Hotel for Fat Tuesday. Ed took a poll of the group and a good number were interested.

Program Speaker – Jean Epperson
Program Speaker - Dave Roberts

Topic – The Stewart Mansion
Topic - Coins Found on Mustang Island

FVP Jack Watson briefly told about his first visit to the mansion describing it as a quality building with wonderful tile work on the exterior, but he never saw the interior. Jean started her talk by saying Jack was a good boy for not entering, but she was not a good girl because she entered the mansion and was caught by a grounds keeper. She fibbed saying she was a historian with the Laffite Society and was allowed to stay. In her presentation she describes the murals in the interior of the building and gives a short history of the house itself. The house was built after August, 1926 by George Sealy Jr. who bought forty acres from the Mottexas Ranch making it a summer home for his family and calling it "Isla Ranch". Jean said that the murals were originally painted in the 1930's. Macco Stewart Sr. acquired the house and land on October 19, 1933 to use as a resort home. She showed photographs of the restored murals (by Claudio Solano circa 1999) giving a description of each and some background on the original artists. The identity of the person who originally copied the paintings onto the mansion walls is unknown. In 1939 Macco Stewart Jr. inherited the house. He remodeled and expanded it in the Spanish colonial revival style calling it "Stewart's Mansion". After his death in 1950, the house changed owners many times and the house suffered deterioration during these times. Solano sent Jean the photographs she showed us this evening. Unfortunately the murals have been defaced again. The Sealy Stewart mansion and its murals are slated for demolition. A historical marker was

installed in 1965, but incorrectly identifies it as the Maison Rouge and as the site of the Battle of Three Trees where Laffite (rather than Captain James Long) fought the Karankawa Indians.

Questions:

Who owns it now? No one in the group seemed to have an answer, but some thought Marion Dusek could be the owner.

Can you tell us who originally painted the murals? No, she cannot find out who it was.

When was the Halloween party? 1999

Do you think Stewart had anything to do with the marker placement? Jean said she didn't think so.

Jack Watson then brought Dave Roberts to the podium to show and talk about some interesting coins his mother had found on Mustang and Padre Islands when she was a child. Dave said there have been shipwrecks up and down the Texas coasts providing collectors coins and other prizes to be found while walking the beaches. Due to the fact that there were so many wrecks on these islands, tourist maps show "money hill" sites. He said that his grandfather was the second commander in the Coast Guard at Mustang Island in 1885 and that having not much to do, his mother and her siblings explored the adjacent islands for entertainment. Dave showed us some of her coins that had been mounted in shadow boxes. The coins are Spanish and French mostly from the Laffite era, but they don't have anything to do with him. The oldest coin was a French silver piece dated 1620. As Press Director, Dave said that he sent an article about the Banquet that was printed the weekend before this meeting.

Questions:

How old would your mother be now? She was born in 1884 and the coins were found in the 1890's.

Is there a published list of historical shipwrecks? Jean said that the Texas State Historic commission in Austin has a lot of data on shipwrecks.

Where did you have the coins appraised? Dave said he used a coin shop on Bourbon Street in the French Quarter.

Miscellaneous

Jack Watson thanked Helen Mooty, Larry Porter, Rob Peterson, Betty Connor, Cindy Vallar, Jean Epperson, Dale Olson, and Don Marler for presenting in the past year and said that he needs speakers for this year. He also spoke about the new website that he is hoping will be finished in the next 4-6 weeks and encouraged all to visit the test website and give him suggestions regarding content by email at cheryljwatson@comcast.net or phone 936-760-5279.

Jan Porter thanked all who adopted a Red Kettle this year saying that the program raised \$199,000 for the Red Cross. She thanked Harry Forester for signing a letter to Craig Fertita, III that will hopefully generate a donation for the Center of Hope. She said the new building will be opened toward the end of February and hoped all would come to the dedication.

Tom Linton talked about his book called "Parks in Galveston County" and asked for donations for its printing through a website set up by Texas A & M.

Jeff Modzelewski gave a treasurer's report saying that the Banquet had netted \$75 and about \$115 worth of wine that was served this evening. There is a total of \$1871.98 in the bank and that yearly dues are now due. The two large expenses that must be covered are the Chronicles that are coming out soon and the food and wine served at the meetings. Jeff said that there were 56 people present and that \$139 was donated, averaging near \$2.00/person. To break even, a donation of \$5.00/person is needed. He said he realized that some might not eat, but this was just a reminder.

Ed mentioned the Ball High School Class Reunions for 1954, 1955, and 1956 being held on April 13 & 14. A senior seamanship training class for the Elissa was announced.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38PM.

Submitted by Carolyn Peterson

Corresponding/Recording Secretary