



The Laffite Society Chronicles

Volume VIII Number 2
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CONTENTS

ARTICLES	AUTHOR	PAGE
THE EDITOR'S PAGE.....	DON C. MARLER	1
NEW AVENUE FOR LAFITE STUDY	PAM KEYES	2-7
MYSTERIOUS PAINTING IN THE CABILDO.....	JEAL L. EPPERSON	8-10
LAFITTE: A HISTORY IN DZILAM de BRAVO LILLIAN PAZ AVILA--TRANSLATED BY:	JEFFERY P. MODZELEWSKI	11-16
JEAN LAFFITE HISTORIC MARKER.....		17
IN MEMORIAM: WILLIAM DALLAM SIMPSON, 1926-2002.....	JEFF MODZELEWSKI	18
SUMMARIES OF MINUTES OF LAFITTE SOCIETY MEETINGS	DOROTHY KARILANOVIC	20
CALENDAR		23
BULLETIN BOARD.....		23
NEW MEMBERS.....		23
BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....	INSIDE BACK COVER	
MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION	INSIDE BACK COVER	

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Don C. Marler

I am again pleased and somewhat surprised at the production of articles by society members. With the publication of the spring issue there was virtually nothing left over and no definite promise of anything new to publish; yet, we ended up with more than enough for this issue. And the material continues to be stimulating and interesting.

We also had fun with a field trip the report for which should be ready for the Spring issue, but we lost a friend with the passing of William Simpson as recounted in a tribute by society President, Jeff Modzelewski.

We made new friends through a publication swap with some folks in Riverside, California who publish *No Quarter Given*. *No Quarter Given* is the journal of a group of fun loving pirates and is available for \$12.00 per year. There are six issues per year and it is written in a sprightly style. See it at our archives and send a subscription to *No Quarter Given*, C/O C. M. Lampe, P.O. Box 7456 Riverside, Ca. 92513-7456, if you like what you see.

As the crew at NQG would say they may

sail into our harbor someday. They like field trips and from the tone of their account of the Key West "Pirates in Paradise" festival they must have really enjoyed their last trip. The festival may be worth our attention for a future trip. Is Galveston ready to host a pirate festival?

Persons writing for *The Laffite Society Chronicles* are asked to not use the automated footnote or page numbering system provided by computer programs. More often that not doing so creates problems that I have been able to surmount only with much difficulty and frustration. See previous editions of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* for instructions on submission of articles, but don't let technical difficulties prevent submission of your material. It will be accepted for consideration even if submitted in longhand.

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New Avenue for Laffite Study

Pam Keyes

Editors note: Ms. Keyes, a long time member of the Laffite Society, is a major proponent of the authenticity of the highly controversial *Journal of Jean Laffite*. Earlier this year she presented the following as a speech to society members. The speech has had minor editing for presentation here. She is a tireless researcher and here she reaches some astounding conclusions. It is just such research and conclusions that keep the members of the society on their collective intellectual tiptoes. It is almost certain that a response in the form of rebuttal or agreement will follow.

Studying Jean Laffite is quite different from researching many other famous historical characters of the early 1800s because there is so much fable and fictional romance swathed tightly around the facts of his life. Unlike most famous men of his time, he left very little of a paper trail with which to track his steps. Sleuthing Laffite is like trying to catch a firefly: just when you think you have it, it eludes your grasp. But some of these figurative fireflies have been snared this past year.

Despite the difficulties encountered in trying to track down previously unknown primary source material involving Jean or his brother Pierre, I have discovered a method which has produced some significant successes, a way to uncover Laffite manuscript "gold" in the archives - find the Laffites by examining the business dealings and court cases of their associates and friends and correlating their actions with those of the Laffites.

I cannot claim that the idea of looking at the activities of the Laffites through their associates is mine, as it was first voiced by Sally Reeves in "Cruising Contractual Waters: Searching for Laffite in the Records of the New Orleans Notarial Archives," published in Vol. Sixteen, 1998, of *Provenance* magazine. Ms. Reeves is the archivist of the New Orleans Notarial Archives.

Curious about whether her suggestion to research the associates would prove fruitful, I visited the Notarial Archives in late January 2001. While putting on white gloves so I could handle delicate original documents, I was somewhat skeptical about the possibility of finding anything new connected to the Laffites. After all, lots of very experienced historians had preceded me in such studies.

Sally brought out a heavy volume of the original notarial acts of Notary John Lynd from 1815, a book rich with the flowing, age brown penmanship of many famous early-day New Orleanians. There was a great index at the front of the book, and all the entries were

chronologically bound. Reeves and historian William C. Davis had already book-marked the Pierre and Jean Laffite entries, so I picked Latour's name on a whim from the index, and within 30 minutes I had found a previously unknown important document. The document proved that Arsene Lacarriere Latour's *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana* was backed by the secretive New Orleans Association. Latour, of course, was Jean's best friend, but no one had known before that Latour's book about the Battle of New Orleans had had the backing of the New Orleans Association in which the Laffites were major players.

Was this just beginner's luck? Not so, for subsequent discoveries were yet to be made on two later visits to the archives. Plus I was to learn that Laffite manuscript gold also could be gleaned in other heavily researched musty document files. The sheer volume of information in these archives means there will continue to be good pickings for years to come, depending on the individual studied. And since the Laffites had a large number of contacts, the research possibilities for finding Laffite related materials are almost endless.

One of the intriguing Laffite associate leads that could turn up some surprises in future research is Daniel Patterson, who was Coast Guard commander. I learned through the Notarial Archives that Patterson was seeking a lawyer's protection from claims days before he ever raided Baratavia. And there is a suspicious paper in the British Royal Archives that could indicate Patterson was working as a double agent for the British in the months before the Battle of New Orleans. A best friend of the notorious gossip Vincent Nolte, Patterson got a seat on the New Orleans Association through family connections: his wife was member George Pollock's daughter.

For those of you unfamiliar with the New Orleans Association, this was a clandestine group composed of the Laffites, prominent New Orleans merchants, bankers and sundry

officials, including Richard Relf, the customs agent! The group organized around April of 1814 during a bank crisis, and was an outgrowth of the former Baratarian Association that the Laffites led. Chairman of the New Orleans Association was Edward Livingston, who would use this group to develop a power position that is not noted in his biographies, but nonetheless existed.

In my studies of the web of influence woven by this secret group that met in the New Orleans Masonic Temple, that is today James Cohen's Coin Store on Royal St., I found that Livingston, thought by most of us to just have been an associate and lawyer of the Laffites, actually held a much different status - Livingston was the Laffites' boss from 1814 to around 1818. Indeed, in the months before the Battle of New Orleans, Livingston was the most powerful person in New Orleans, even more so than Gov. Claiborne. The Laffite brothers and the Baratarians were his subordinates, not his employers.

A master manipulator and adept politician, Livingston had been mayor of New York City before moving to New Orleans in 1804. He developed a close friendship with Andrew Jackson that earned him a seat in Jackson's presidential cabinet as Secretary of State from 1831 to 1833.

Speaking of Livingston in his autobiography, *Fifty Years in Both Hemispheres*, Vincent Nolte said he thought Livingston was "the crookedest man in the country" but admitted he was extremely gifted in writing ability and legal matters, and in fact retained him as his personal lawyer!

Proof of Livingston's power in late 1814 New Orleans may be seen in his appointment as chairman of the Citizens for Defense Committee, a group of prominent New Orleans area residents including Macarty and Destrehan who were trying to organize a defense in advance of the British approach. It is clear that Livingston was seen as a leader.

Proof of the control he had over the Laffites may be found in the story of Pierre Laffite's incarceration at the Cabildo during the summer of 1814. Caught by surprise in early June near St. Louis Cathedral, Pierre was held without bail as both he and Jean had skipped bail in the past, and the judge wasn't taking any more chances. Livingston, his lawyer, ostensibly tried to get Pierre out of jail legally

all summer long with no luck, even to the point of having two physicians examine Pierre in his jail cell in early August to see if he was ill enough to be set free. They said he was physically okay, although mentally anxious due to being chained in a stifling cell. Livingston let Pierre sit in the hot, humid cell for almost another whole month before he took action: he slipped Pierre the means to escape, an iron bar, on Sept. 5. In the copybook that accompanies the Laffite Journal collection at Sam Houston Regional Library at Liberty, Texas, Jean tells what happened:

"My brother was arrested at 5 o'clock on Monday afternoon June 6, 1814, and chained in prison. On Sept. 5, 1814, Edward Livingston slipped an iron bar with a hook on the end into the prison cell to my brother so that he could remove the bricks from the wall to escape. My brother and three black slaves escaped at two o'clock in the morning through a hole they had made in the wall. Printed in the papers was a reward of \$1,000 dollars for my brother and \$50 each for the blacks."

By this time, Livingston had developed his power role in the city to a relatively secure position, so he felt it was time to help Pierre escape. It is significant that he didn't allow this to occur until he, Livingston, was ready for this to happen. Jean was at Grande Terre when Pierre escaped and didn't know anything about it, as can be seen in a letter he wrote September 4 to Jean Blaque pleading his brother's case, in which he says his British visitors of the day before "represented to me a brother in irons, a brother who is to me very dear! whose deliverer I might become, and I declined the proposal. Well persuaded of his innocence, I am free from apprehension as to the issue of a trial; but he is sick and not in a place where he can receive the assistance his state requires. I recommend him to you, in the name of humanity." Blaque, by the way, was another Laffite associate, part owner of many of the privateers that cruised the Gulf from Grande Terre. This was a secret at the time, because when Blaque delivered the British offers and Laffite's letter to Gov. Claiborne, Blaque claimed he did not know why Laffite had entrusted such to him, as he had no acquaintance with the man. The Creoles liked to pull the wool over their American governor's eyes.

Returning to the story of Pierre's escape, he

used the bayou short cut to be back at Grande Terre by September 10, when he wrote his own letter to Blanque. Through a previously unpublished confession in the copybook, I learned Pierre sent someone else to New Orleans that day along with the courier who bore his letter: an assassin named Vincent Gambie, the most feared of all the Laffites' captains. Pierre wanted revenge for his lengthy and squalid imprisonment, and he got it.

In the big copybook of the Laffite Journal collection, Jean tells the background of Pierre's arrest and what led to the murder:

"Pierre always came to New Orleans in a horse drawn carriage for his work. He did not appear too much in public and in the street only to see his agents. A Spaniard named Luis de La Lande Ferrieres asked my brother Pierre to come to New Orleans to sell some merchandise. My brother Pierre ignored the fact this Spaniard was paid to conduct him to the Cabildo prison at the corner of St. Peter and Chartres Streets where he was to have him arrested by soldiers. My brother was arrested at five o'clock on Monday afternoon June 6, 1814, and chained in prison."

Below this, in a shaky handwriting signed Pierre Laffite and dated March 2, 1815, is the following statement:

"Luis de la Lande de Ferriere was assassinated in his home by Captain Vincent Gambai on Monday Sept. 12, 1814."

Later on, in the same copybook, Pierre's second son, Eugene, tells more about what happened:

"Lande de Ferrieres was responsible that caused the arrest of my father Pierre. He lured my father's agents in New Orleans to leave home at Vermilionville and hold a safe open sale on Chartres street. Lande de Ferrieres, a Spaniard, already had soldiers standing at Chartres and Saint Ann Street to arrest my father..." wrote Eugene, who went on to describe the revenge, "Lande de Ferrieres was killed at his front door at 11 o'clock at night by my father's captain Vincent Gambai...at 620 Ursulines Street in New Orleans."

Nicholas Louis de la Lande de Ferriere was the descendant of a famous French family but was

referred to as a Spaniard as he had been raised by a Spanish step-father, Don Manuel Perez. As the Lande de Ferriere family was prominent in New Orleans, I thought it would be simple to confirm the facts of Louis' death in the archives during my New Orleans trip in November of this past year (2001). I was wrong, but in a perverse way, this was good news for the copybook story of Louis' murder, as the facts of the case were not easily found, so the story could not have been fabricated in the 20th century by a forger.

First I checked for the murder story in the New Orleans Gazette for the month of September 1814. A wealthy person getting stabbed to death on his own doorstep should have merited a lurid story in the newspaper, but there was nothing. Next I checked for an obit. Again, nothing, just a reference in the card catalog to Stanley Arthur's *Old Families of Louisiana* in which the Ferriere family said Nicholas Louis was murdered at his home by a pirate, but failed to give even a year for the event. So I decided to track Louis in the Notarial Archives. The last time he signed any document was in August 1814. In February 1815, his wife was saying in a document that she was his widow. I could not find his probate record, but knew from the facts available that Louis died between August 1814, and February 1815. Next I tried to locate his tomb in the hope that an inscription there would tell more.

I had to return home before finishing a search for the tomb. A few weeks later, Betty Fretz of New Orleans kindly checked the cemetery survey records in the Historic New Orleans Collection to see if she could locate Louis in St. Louis No. 1, the only cemetery open in the city in 1814. She found no listing for a Ferriere tomb there, but did find a tomb for that family in Saint Louis No. 2, but no Louis was found. This was extremely puzzling. Later I recalled that he had had a Spanish step-father, and that speculate that maybe Louis was placed in the Perez tomb in St. Louis No. 1. So the hunt for the murder victim's body still continues.

The house where Louis was slain is still standing today in the French Quarter, a very old attractive Spanish stucco building with a large courtyard protected from the public by a high wall. The infamous door to the home has the typical fan-shaped window above. I passed that door every night during my last visit to New Orleans as it was a block down the street from my hotel, and it never failed to give me a chill. I couldn't get the image of that murder

out of my head. The black-caped Haunted History Tour givers always walk quite near there on their way to the Madame Lalaurie haunted house, and I wondered if they would add the Ferriere casa to their retinue, as it sure is a great story.

Before I left home for my trip to New Orleans, I had thoroughly searched the website list of early 1800 court case archives for anything connected with the Laffites, their associates, and, in particular, Vincent Gambie. I found two promising lawsuits involving Gambie. One looked especially tempting, as Pierre Laffite was the plaintiff against Gambi. I had the archivist pull a group of cases, and started with the Laffite/Gambie folder. It was a disappointment, as Pierre was suing Gambie over a \$200 assumed debt in February, 1817. Gambie said he didn't owe it, but he had to pay up.

Then I opened up the next folder, and got the surprise of my life. On the table before me there was a previously unknown authentic signature of Jean Laffite at the bottom of a statement attached to a Gambie case. There was no indication on the file folder that this Laffite statement was enclosed! I could translate the French well enough to tell Laffite was attesting to something in a runaway slave case. Jean Gourjon, a board member of the Orleans Navigation Company, was suing Gambie over the use of a slave named John Froutin. Froutin had apparently decided being an apprentice privateer was a more rewarding life than being a slave, so he had run away and hid out on Gambie's *Philanthrope* privateer for a while, learning how to be a navigator. The slave had stayed away for 209 days, hiding out on two other privateers, before being discovered by Laffite, who arrested him and returned him to his master. Gourjon wanted Gambie to pay \$418 for the use of his slave. In Laffite's statement (which Gene Marshall thankfully later fully translated for me), Laffite said the slave had hid out on three privateers before being discovered, so that Gambie was not solely at fault.

Accompanying statements from Gambie's lawyer, Edward Livingston, are interesting in that in one he says it was good they had gotten in touch with Laffite for his version of what happened, as he was about to leave the area. This apparently happened the day before Jean intended to leave for Washington, D.C., in mid July to try to get restitution for the ships and goods taken by Patterson during the September 1814 raid at Grande Terre.

The plaintiff, Gourjon, was anxious about Gambie's continued availability to pay the bill for the slave, as he had heard rumors Gambie planned to leave the country. Gambie had probably gotten pretty soured with the court system by then, considering that a month earlier a federal grand jury had indicted him for piracy only five months after he had served on Battery No. 3 during the Battle of New Orleans. He was found not guilty at the trial, no doubt due to his rather intimidating effect upon New Orleanians. However, in this trial Judge Lewis found in Gourjon's favor and Gambie was forced to pay the \$418 a few months later. He never did leave the United States for good, as two years later, Pierre was suing him, and in November, 1819, about a week before the start of the *Le Brave* trial, Gambie's own men killed him near Barataria in a dispute over disbursement of prize goods. In his case, the old adage "those who live by the sword die by the sword" came true.

One has to wonder what would have happened in the *Le Brave* trial had Gambie not been killed. As mentioned earlier, he was feared in New Orleans, and the captain of the *Le Brave*, Jean Desfarges, had been a friend. Perhaps they would have been found not guilty like Gambie if he had still been around. Instead, most of the crew was hanged for piracy.

The biggest and best surprise of my research I have saved for last, the story about something highly unusual found pasted inside the original *Journal of Jean Laffite*. I returned to Sam Houston Regional Library in January of this year accompanied by Dr. Reginald Wilson to confirm the placement of some of the entries regarding the Lande de Ferriere murder in the big copybook and examine closer the ink on those entries with a magnifying glass. Additionally, I intended to compare the copybook side by side with a color photograph of the *Le Brave* ship's articles, which is generally accepted as an authentic Jean Laffite manuscript. As soon as I stepped in the door, I knew it was going to be a great day as Dr. Wilson noticed that the *Journal of Jean Laffite*, normally encased in glass, was apparently still in its file-box where it had been placed for protection during renovation work at the library.

Very few people have been able to physically handle and examine the Journal through the years due its extreme fragility. It was a very rare honor to be allowed to look through that whole manuscript, thanks to Robert Schaadt,

archivist there. The first thing I did was to compare the handwriting side by side between the big copybook, *Journal of Jean Laffite* and Le Brave photograph. The handwriting was identical for all three.

Then I found three types of watermarks on the pages and saw the strange gilt eagle seal earlier noted. I was quite amazed to find a new mystery, three pages bearing "pasted on" newspaper clippings from 1817. Now you would think these clippings would have been articles about Laffite and his actions. None of the clippings had a single story about Laffite, and the subject of the clippings is not mentioned in the Journal manuscript itself. The clippings were all about Amelia Island, Fla., and the actions of Louis Aury. This was decidedly weird. The Laffites always tried to undermine Aury, so why on earth would Jean have saved newspaper clippings about Amelia Island for some 30 years to paste in his autobiography? What made them so important?

As soon as I returned home, I immediately started researching Amelia Island, which merits only a footnote if that in modern US history books. An adventurer named Gregory MacGregor, an associate of Simon Bolivar, had taken over Amelia Island and turned it into a temporary mini-republic for a few months during the summer of 1817, to the great consternation of the United States.

Located on the northeastern tip of East Florida, Amelia was in a prime spot for smuggling and for harboring privateers, and that is exactly what MacGregor proceeded to do until his funding went dry and he decided to abandon the cause. Aury stepped in and assumed leadership duties within a few weeks, and privateer prizes with slaves often slipped by the US authorities at nearby St. Mary's, Ga. Finally, the US had had enough, President Monroe delivered an impassioned speech in December 1817 against Amelia before Congress, and within two weeks, Aury was kicked out of the place.

In all the histories about Amelia, however, the Laffites were never mentioned. No researcher I contacted had any knowledge of such a connection. The mystery deepened about those clippings. But I had a strong feeling there had to be something there. In a bizarre way, it was almost like Laffite had left those clippings in the Journal as a clue. I then checked the *Niles Weekly Register* issues for 1817 to see what

they would reveal. Amelia Island was a hot topic for the press that year, for such a little place there was definitely a lot of interest in what happened there. And then, at last, I found the connection between Jean Laffite and Amelia Island. Among the myriad entries about Amelia Island in the 1817-1818 volume was the following:

"The Venezuelan privateer schooner *Jupiter* had arrived on the 9th instant, with a French hermaphrodite brig, a prize, loaded with sugar and coffee."

The *Jupiter* was Jean Laffite's new steamship, which had been built in early 1817 in Charleston, S.C. I know this *Jupiter* was Jean's as the other Venezuelan ship by that name, captained by Charles Lomine, had been renamed *Feliz* in mid 1816.

Apparently Laffite's *Jupiter* arrived at Amelia just in time to take part in a little uprising during MacGregor's departure. And two days later, a Spanish schooner arrived with a load of slaves that MacGregor's ship *Morgiana* captured. It is still unknown exactly why Laffite's new ship was at Amelia, but it seems likely that the New Orleans Association was financially backing MacGregor, considering they had been involved in a unsuccessful scheme to take Pensacola from the Spaniards just a few months earlier. The New Orleans Association wanted to conquer the Floridas and Cuba, sell the lot to the United States for around \$5 million, and use the funds to finance a massive expedition to overthrow Texas. This grand plan, of course, never happened.

Although Laffite's dealings with Amelia Island are not mentioned in the *Journal of Jean Laffite*. Amelia is mentioned in one of Pierre Laffite's letters to Jean from Galveston. It is notable as in this letter, dated July 23, 1817, Pierre says Aury has definitely decided to go to the aid of Amelia Island. However, MacGregor was still in full force at that time, and Aury didn't arrive and assume control until late September. So it appears both Aury and the Laffites knew MacGregor was getting his funding taken away before he did.

The Laffite-Amelia Island connection is significant in more ways than one. I think the presence of those newspaper clippings in the *Journal of Jean Laffite* is strong testimony lending weighty credence to the much-debated authenticity of this controversial, badly burned manuscript. From a layman's viewpoint, the

handwriting is the same between the *Journal of Jean Laffite* and the *Le Brave* document; the signatures are the same. All that really needs to be done to cinch this authenticity issue in my estimation is to have an independent expert in handwriting examine the Journal in detail. I am positive if this happens, the *Journal of Jean Laffite* will be declared authentic. Studying the Laffites is a fascinating journey into the early 19th century, especially when one examines the lives of those connected with the Baratarian privateers. I hope I have encouraged all of you to conduct your own research projects in this vein, as it is a rich one that has just been lightly mined.

Sources: Sources in addition to those noted in the presentation itself included:

1. Amelia Island -- August 30,

1817 and February 14, 1818
Niles Weekly Register bound volume, contains many articles about Amelia Island.

2. Pierre Laffite's letter,
3. Stanley Faye "The Great Stroke of Pierre Laffite" *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (1941), p. 774.
4. Jupiter -- September 27, 1817
Niles Weekly Register, 5.
5. Jane De Grummond, *Renato Beluche, Smuggler, Privateer and Patriot*, Louisiana State University Press, 1983, p. 147.

Continued from page 22

Houston. The ship is believed by some to have belonged to Jean Laffite. The article includes commentaries by Laffite Society members Jean L. Epperson and Robert C. Vogel. An investigation to confirm the existence of the wreck is due to begin this summer according to Steve Hoyt, Texas marine archeologist of Chambers County in Austin. The article was donated to the Society's archives by Member-at-large Richard Prather.

Prior to adjournment, a list was circulated inviting members to sign up for provision of refreshments at the monthly meetings.

MYSTERIOUS PAINTING IN THE CABILDO

Jean L. Epperson

A very dark, unsigned, oil painting on a mahogany board hangs in the Louisiana Historical Museum in the Cabildo on Jackson Square in New Orleans. The picture contains the figures of four men, which legend says are the only authentic likeness of Jean and Pierre Laffite, Dominique Youx (You) and perhaps Renato Beluche.¹

An early brochure published by the Louisiana Historical Museum attributed the painting to artist John Wesley Jarvis. Jean Laffite was in Galveston at the beginning of 1820 and never left until the early spring when he vacated the island for the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. He was not seen thereafter in New Orleans. Contemporary sources record Jarvis in New Orleans only during five winters; 1820-21, 1821-22, 1828-29, 1829-30, and 1833-34.²

Gary Fretz, a member of the defunct Laffite Study Group and a member of the Laffite Society, visited the Museum last year. He and his wife took some good colored pictures of the painting. Tamra Carboni, museum curator, told them that the painting had been examined under ultraviolet light in the 1960s and the name "Ezra Ames" was discovered under layers of overpaint. It was unlikely also that the artist was Jarvis since he did not arrive in New Orleans until the 1820s. She continued saying that it is believed that the picture was simply a genre scene and did not depict the brothers Laffite. Fretz added that the painting was reputed to have hung in a bar called Café des Refugies, a rendezvous of French refugees during the 1800-1820 era, and that it was given to the museum after the bar closed.³

Stanley Clisby Arthur wrote in *Jean Laffite Gentleman Rover* that the painting hung in a water front doggery owned by Dominique Youx in New Orleans. Further research has not confirmed that Youx ever owned or operated a bar in the city.

Recent information from Douglas Haller, Director of Collections of the Louisiana State Museum, has shed considerable light on the background of the painting. He states that the painting was originally attributed to John Wesley Jarvis but the only signature on the painting was that of Ames. There is no picture underneath the surface one. (Artists sometimes reused old canvas or boards, painting over pictures by other artists.) The painting appears to have been originally loaned by, then purchased from Dr. I. M. Cline who possibly traded another painting with Rev. Marshall Manel (or Manal) in order to obtain this particular painting. The Museum accepted the painting in 1917.

Mr. Haller continues writing that the title of the painting is given in five different ways:

Laffite and His Lieutenants in an article from *The New Orleanian* (Sept. 6, 1930) vol. 1, #1.

Genre Lafitte Brothers on a conservator's report.

Jean and Pierre Lafitte and Dominique You from a cutout in an unidentified magazine.

The Gamblers in correspondence about the painting.

Dominique You and the Lafitte Brothers (The Baratarians Pirates and possibly Rene Beluche) on a curatorial worksheet, but not accepted as official for our database.

Mr. Haller closes with, "Which ever title is definitive I'll leave to your discretion. So, as you can see, there is much speculation about this painting and not much which is absolute."⁴

Ezra Ames was self taught as a portrait, miniature, landscape, sign and carriage painter. Born in 1768 in Framingham,

Massachusetts, he died in 1836 in Albany, New York. He was a prolific artist, undertaking all types of subjects, but the vast majority of his paintings were portraits. Ames' biographers wrote that his contemporaries did not consider him to be a first class artist. He lived most of his life in New York and was never known to have visited New Orleans. Some of the Ames paintings have been attributed to Jarvis as Ames copied some of Jarvis's techniques. 5

It is believed that Ames painted the picture of the four unknown men and someone painted over his signature at a later date for their own purposes, perhaps to sell the painting suggesting that it was a portrait of the renowned Laffites. A connoisseur of American artists and paintings would have known that Ames was never in New Orleans.

Readers may draw their own conclusions,



An oil painting attributed to John Wesley Jarvis. It portrays Jean Laffite lifting a noggin of rum as he sings a bawdy sea chanty. Pierre Laffite, standing and filling a clay pipe, while Dominique You holds the little brown jug. The figure on the left may be René Beluché. The original, painted on a mahogany board, hangs in the Cabildo, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans.

or not, as the case warrants. Legends can be fun and fanciful but not always factual. Facts can be dull but thought provoking.

ENDNOTES

1. Stanley Clisby Arthur, *Jean Laffite Gentleman Rover* (New Orleans: Harmanson, 1952), 226.
2. Encyclopedia of New Orleans Artists, 1718-1918. New Orleans: The Historic New Orleans Collection, 1987.
3. E-mail Gary Fretz to Jean L. Epperson, Oct. 2 and Nov. 13, 2001, and Jan.17, 2002.
4. E-mail Douglas Haller to Jean L. Epperson, April 2, 2002.
5. Peter Hastings Falk, Editor-in-Chief, *Who Was Who in American Art 1564-1975* (New York: Sound Review Press, 1999), 99; Theodore Bolton and Irwin F. Cortelyou, *Ezra Ames of Albany Portrait Painter* (New York: The New York Historical Society, 1955), 356-358; Matthew Baigell, *Dictionary of American Art* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1979, 12 & 13.



Color photo of the Jarvis painting provided by Gary Fretz and his wife who enhanced the photo, using computer enabling processes.

Lafitte: A History in Dzilam de Bravo Lillian Paz Ávila

Published in "Unicorn" (a scientific and cultural supplement to the Yucatan newspaper *That's Why!*), Year 11, No. 564, on Sunday, February 24, 2002

Translated by Jeffrey P. Modzelewski in June, 2002

[Translator's note: I thank Dr. Reginald Wilson for providing me a photocopy of this article for translation. I believe the piece will be of interest to our readership, as it presents a present-day view of the presence of the Laffites in the Yucatan Peninsula from a Yucatan perspective.

I cannot, however, vouch for the overall accuracy of the article's contents. It contains at least one glaring error: the inaccurate citation of Rubio Mañé in footnote 3. The author here quotes Rubio Mañé as stating (I paraphrase) that the Laffites flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century, which rings false immediately to those with a decent grasp of the privateer's chronology. Rubio Mañé in fact says that they flourished in the second decade of the nineteenth century. This sloppiness in a matter so basic, as is the citation of a short excerpt from another's work, cannot but diminish a reader's confidence in the accuracy of the rest of the article. At best we can say that the author did not proofread well her article prior to publication; at worst, that her knowledge of her topic was insufficient to enable her to recognize an error of roughly one-half century in situating her subjects in their historical epoch.

Nonetheless, to the extent that the article's data is accurate, I hope that the translation will hold significant value for those who do not read and speak Spanish, because of the information provided that is not readily accessible via other tongues – for example, the interviews conducted within the Dzilam de Bravo community, the brief history of the three cemeteries which have existed in the latter, and the reference to the term of office of a local municipal official to help pinpoint chronologically the creation of the historical markers commemorating Laffite.

With regard to the spelling of the surname Laffite, which has appeared in multiple variations throughout history,

although The Laffite Society uses two "f"s and one "t," the author of the following article uses one "f" and two "t"s. I have left this spelling unchanged in the translation. Likewise, in her references in the "Bibliography" and "Footnotes" sections at the end of the article, I left the surname spellings as she cited them.

Some areas of the text posed difficulty for the translator due to the use of incomplete sentences, demonstrative pronouns such as "these" and "those" whose antecedents were not clear, and so forth. The discussion of the various monuments and plaques commemorating Laffite in the section *The Monument of the Three Crosses; The Death of the Pirate* is a case in point. A personal visit to the site would doubtless have helped to resolve ambiguities in the Spanish text and thus eased the translation, but this was not possible.]

This work attempts to present information about the presence of the pirate Lafitte in Dzilam. Its central objective is to frame and analyze the place which the presence of Lafitte in Dzilam de Bravo occupies within the community, both from the perspective of the alleged descendants and from that of the rest of the community.

Dzilam de Bravo finds itself situated almost at the midpoint of the Yucatan coast, in the north of the state. It is a fishing village where we can still hear "tales" of pirates and many others in relation to the main figure of the port, Jean Lafitte. One of the families of this area, the Estradas, affirms its descent from Lafitte. Other persons of the community, and even some of the Estradas, although they do not deny the foregoing, do not give much importance to this part of the "tale." But the pirate presence in this port cannot be doubted, as is demonstrated by the awareness of the story of the pirate ghost that guards a treasure on Bird Island.

During my field work, I obtained accounts of the lives of the alleged descendants of Lafitte; this is a sub-genre of the story of life, although less full and complete. With other persons of the community I conducted free-form interviews.

Piracy in Colonial America

Piracy in America began and grew because Spain controlled the commercial and maritime system of the Indies, which rested on the principle of monopoly established in favor of the port of Cádiz, and subsequently that of Seville.¹ It was the contract house in Seville only that was authorized to regulate trade with the colonies, such that no ship could depart without its permission. Add to this reason, among other restrictions, the need for products in the colonies, the prohibition against inter-colony commerce, and the high prices of the products that the Spaniards brought to American territory in contrast to those of the regional products which could have been purchased at very low prices.

This monopoly, with all its prohibitions, was what caused piracy and contraband to appear in the Spanish colonies in the Americas, carried on by the English, French and Dutch, and later to increase because of the religious wars of Spain at the onset of the Counterreformation.

Contraband with respect to other nations began with the interception of Spanish ships in European waters, but as a consequence of the wars sustained by Spain and the high cost entailed in same, it could no longer supply its colonies, nor maintain in them a strong system of defense, and the pirates thus gained a privateering foothold in the waters of the Americas.

The Brothers Lafitte. The Years in New Orleans.

Jean and Pierre Lafitte are known for the piratical activity that they carried on from New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico.

"About 1803 the brothers Lafitte opened a blacksmith shop in the City of New Orleans. The shop came to be simply a front, which served as a depot where the Lafittes took orders for merchandise recently confiscated from vessels at sea... Jean managed the commercialization in New Orleans and the contacts for transporting merchandise to other places,

while Pierre, a more experienced sailor, served as his first lieutenant, ensuring departures opportune for a healthy product trade with their clients."²

The illicit activity of the latter brought them problems with the North American government, and despite assisting in the defense of North American territory against the English in 1814 [sic], they were expelled, and set out in search of another place in which to engage in their activities.

Lafitte in the Yucatan

The contraband won by Lafitte and his buccaneers in the Caribbean was very important: "These pirates, terror of the shores of New Spain, were in the second half [sic] of the nineteenth century the masters and lords of the Gulf of Mexico."³

In the Yucatan, the expansion of inter-colony commerce was no longer sufficient, and along the coast of the Peninsula there had therefore grown up a large piratical trade with Belize, Jamaica and New Orleans. This commerce grew to be so great that it equaled in importance that which legally entered through the ports of Campeche and Sisal.

Some documents point out that it was Pierre Lafitte who frequented the Yucatan coast. As Rubio Mañé tells us, upon abandoning Galveston, Pierre founded his corsair seat at Islas Mujeres. It is not the object of this work to clarify if it was Pierre or Jean who died at Dzilam, but rather the socio-cultural importance which the presence of the pirate, and all that relates to him, holds for the community.

The Monument of the Three Crosses. The Death of the Pirate.

In Dzilam there exists a monument to the memory of Jean Laffite called that of the "Three Crosses." Of course, there have existed others besides those here mentioned.

To begin, I wish to clarify that which, on first impression, the plaque of 1960 may seem to indicate to us - that the creation of the monument was carried out by the associations mentioned at the beginning of this work [sic]. The other of the plaques, that which says "Ancient Cemetery," was created during the term (1991 - 1993) of Manuel Sierra as municipal president. We know as a result of all those interviewed in Dzilam that this monument was built in 1993, at the same

time that the aforementioned plaque was created.

To this relatively new monument were attached the plaque of 1960 and that which carries the name of the pirate with the years of his birth and death. Farther along we will see from where these two last plaques came.

Meanwhile let us become familiar with the history of the cemeteries of Dzilam in accord with the data of those interviewed.

The current cemetery of Dzilam is found on the outskirts of the populated area; this is the third that has existed. The second cemetery was located where the monument of the Three Crosses is now, but before the latter there was another at almost the same site, except more toward the sea. At present the site that this cemetery occupied is now completely covered by water. It is so old that persons less than sixty years of age do not remember it. It is said that when the sea began to erode the earth and the cemetery deteriorated, the second was ordered built, and it is this second cemetery which the majority know as "The Old Cemetery." When this one began to deteriorate for the same reason as the first, the breakwater was constructed to re-claim terrain from the sea, and later that cemetery which currently exists was built.

In Dzilam it is told that Jean Lafitte came fleeing from one of his enemies, that he was wounded in the battle and took refuge in that place, but due to the severity of his injuries he did not survive; the place where the *bucanero* was buried is unknown, but a man of the Estrada family tells that at the age of 8 - he is currently 82 - he went to the edge of the beach to see what the sea was bringing in, because on some occasions objects that were thrown from ships washed up, and on his return he found a large "bone," but at the time he did not know what it was, picked it up, and went along, playing with it. He came upon Doña Genoveva Pacheco de Estrada who, startled, asked him where he had found that object and made clear to him that it was the bone of a dead person. Immediately Doña Genoveva bought cloth in which to gather up the bones, which were turned over to the municipal president.

Later they were told that they belonged to Lafitte, so the mayor ordered a

place set aside in the first cemetery in Dzilam to commemorate him.

People about 10 and 15 years younger than the man previously mentioned tell that the remains of Lafitte were discovered beginning with the exhumation of the bodies produced by the erosion that the sea had caused in the first cemetery.

The cemetery was relocated, and it was to this location that Bush Romero and other North American investigators were taken to view the remains, or only the femur,⁴ of Lafitte, by Don José M. Estrada, who at the arrival of the investigators introduced himself as a descendant of the pirate.

From this encounter, Bush Romero developed his book Beneath the Waters of Mexico. In this work, I decided to not list as support this Bush Romero book, because he did not adhere to an investigative method, because it is based solely on the narrative of a single person, and because, without further corroboration from the rest of the community, it is presented as fact. Currently the alleged descendants tell us that they are not very knowledgeable about the topic since the only one who knew the story well was Don José M. Estrada - now deceased -, and they made the book available to us to give us details of the history of their family.

A group of men said that in Dzilam stories of Lafitte and other pirates have always been told, that they are transmitted via oral tradition, but that only with the arrival of North American investigators in 1960 did they become aware that the Estrada family traced its ancestry back to Lafitte, and they even mentioned that the investigators gave notice of an inheritance for the descendant family.

With respect to the foregoing, one of those interviewed mentioned: "When the *gringos* came they said that there was a fortune in the United States, then for this reason the Estradas made their descent legitimate; of course, when there is talk of an inheritance, relatives come out of the woodwork."

According to these people, the pirate we are discussing sustained relations with a black slave who came with him. This woman established herself in Dzilam; nevertheless, it was never known that they made a family. These persons consider the knowledge that they have of the topic as "comments, tales, nothing with certainty."

Although some people merely doubt the descent from Lafitte, some others exist who totally deny it, among the latter some of the Estrada family. They are not ignorant of the existence of Lafitte in the environs, but they told us what they learned through the old people, that the families of the port sheltered their daughters from the stalking of the pirates, although the latter were respectful with the community which gave them refuge; and with respect to the black woman with whom Lafitte allegedly sired progeny, they told us that she was only the pirate's slave and they never came to learn of a relationship between them.

On the preceding, a man of the Estrada family said: "...that Chencho Estrada, who died a short time ago, says that they are relatives of them, of that Lafitte, but it is not true, I knew the father of that Chencho, he is my grandfather's brother, they say that they are relatives - of Lafitte - but they are not, I saw them, years I have lived here, almost 80, and I only hear tales."

The part of the Estrada family that considers itself descendants says that all the remains that were found were in a wooden box that the sea brought up, carved with the name of Jean Lafitte. For them, their descent from Lafitte arose from a woman of the name of Lucia, native of Dzilam; from the relations between Lucia and Lafitte was born a little girl called Alicia or Felipa Cedil, who did not come to know her father because the pirate died before her birth, and due to this she received the surname Cedil (which belonged to a companion of Lafitte).

Further on, Alicia or Felipa entered into matrimony with Simeón Estrada; from this matrimony was born José Inés Estrada Cedil.

José M. Estrada received these investigators who arrived in Dzilam in 1960 in search of the trail of the remains of Jean Lafitte, and he led them to the tomb of the pirate in the second cemetery.

The visit of the foreign investigators to the second cemetery yielded as a result the creation of a small monument in recognition of the presence of Jean Lafitte in Dzilam. It had two plaques, one with the name Jean Lafitte with the years already mentioned several times [sic], and the plaque which names the associations that carried out the investigation. The latter is the same plaque which is currently on the

monument of Three Crosses, and therefore the monument to which said plaque refers is that of 1960 and not the present one.

With the passage of time, the plaque was carried to the library by a municipal president, and it was in 1993 when, in his term in that office, Mr. Manuel Sierra ordered the present monument erected, since according to him it was fitting that Lafitte be remembered in the ancient cemetery where his remains were found, and more so because this place is located near the sea, whence the pirate had come.

With respect to this, it is said that this mayor proposed the construction of several monuments at a high cost (those of Three Crosses, the Dead Man's Highway, the Navy, etc.), and the opinion of the people is that he kept for himself a good part of the money destined for these activities.

The people of the community informed us that the creation of so many monuments that have been erected is due to each municipal president considering a different place more appropriate to commemorate Lafitte.

The descendants do not see themselves as identified with this monument, because they do not know where the remains of Lafitte wound up and because they were not consulted for the creation of the monument.

Pirate Presence in Dzilam

The presence of stories about pirates in the region is undeniable, and not only stories involving Jean Lafitte. The story possibly most known by the people of the community is that of the black man of the island.

It is said that a pirate ship was passing along the coast of Dzilam, and faced with the danger of being sunk by the weight of its chests or attacked by other pirates, it was decided to hide the booty on Bird Island. Meanwhile, the crew argued about who would remain to watch the chests of gold. A young black volunteered and his petition was approved by the captain. Upon disembarking to guard the chests, the captain asked the young man if he were sure of the decision that he had made; thinking avariciously, he said yes. Immediately the captain ordered the black to dig the hole where the treasure would be buried. Upon finishing the task ordered, the captain cut off his head and buried it together with the treasure, to keep watch

until the ship returned, marking the place with a sword.

Dzilam: An Advantageous Bay

The presence of Lafitte in Dzilam is explained by the natural shelters - called *bocas* - which the bay provided him and which he accessed via three channels well-marked by him.

The level of the sea in Dzilam is low, so that only through channels of deep water in the shallows can one gain access to the *bocas*. Through those channels only light vessels can pass; those of greater draft run aground.

The condition of this place was apparently the principal advantage that Lafitte had over the Spaniards, since the large vessels of the latter did not approach the bay for fear of being left grounded in the shallows off the Dzilam coast. We suppose that this could have been possible not only for Lafitte, but for any pirate ship that was not Spanish, since the technology of some European countries was much more advanced than that of Spain. An example of the latter are the vessels known in that era as "flyboats." Even now the fishermen know and utilize the entrances to put in with their small crafts.

Also mentioned is the arrival of some boats to commercialize the Palo de Tinte [a regional flora?] that occurs on the coast at 10 kilometers from Dzilam.

Physical Characteristics

In the majority of the interviews with the alleged descendants, not much was spoken about the physical traits of the latter, because they mentioned that there are now few who retain physical characteristics as well defined as those who have died.

With respect to the preceding, one person of the family related: "This that I tell you is ancient, my grandfather and his brother J. Inés were tall and white, they did not look like they were from here, and I believe that that gentleman - Lafitte - came and crossed himself with a woman from here and they came out in that way, my dad came out dark but I think because of my grandmother. That gentleman - J. Inés -, and my grandfather, and my aunt Carmen who died a short time ago, they had a face different in this manner, with blue and green eyes, and so did the family of Manuel, of Chencho [sic]."

In some other interviews, it was affirmed that even now the family retains white skin, very blue eyes, tall stature and lean body. "He who is a half-breed like that over there has green or olive-colored eyes, and there are also some spoken of who have black or coffee-colored eyes."

In addition, some people of the community - or descendants - say that the people who originate in Dzilam have a multi-European origin,⁵ because the contact that was had was from Dzilam to Izamal or toward Progreso, and because these were places of European settlement, they did not "mix" with the population of Mayan traits and surnames until after they had contact with the villages of the interior, like Temax, Cansacab, Tekal de Venegas, etc. Therefore, in Dzilam one finds surnames such as Sierra, Estrada, Nadal, Marrufo, Alcocer and Betancourt.

Owing to the foregoing, one sector of the inhabitants do make a distinction between their multi-European "origin" - some families native to Dzilam - and the other families that have arrived from the interior of the state, Campeche and Tabasco and towns with which there was previously no communication.

Final Considerations

For the sector of the community that does not have much knowledge of the topic and therefore does not give it importance, the monument only means for them the point of reference for where the ancient cemetery was.

The factors that confirm the pirate presence in this port, such as the geographic situation, the physical characteristics of the alleged descendants, and the story of the pirate ghost, together with the data taken from Rubio Mañé, serve to reinforce for us the presence of persons of European origin who came on the pirate vessels, and so, although Lafitte supposedly left descendants, it would be very conservative to think that, of all the crew, he was the only one who had relations with some woman of Dzilam.

As regards the Estradas, I think that they affirm themselves descendants of Lafitte because of the possession of swords, foreign-language books, and some dishes with gold coins which people now deceased said they had found, which was later confirmed by Bush Romero in his investigation.

Because of this, a torrent of doubts assailed me. I concluded that the North American organizations, together with the expedition leader, took the narrative of José M. Estrada and presented it in their book just as the man gave it, in exchange for obtaining the objects that the family possessed and, from the municipal government, the alleged femur of Lafitte.

Notes

"Tales" is the form by which the inhabitants of Dzilam refer to histories, narratives, legends, memoirs, etc.

1. Ibid. P. 15. (Sic)
2. Geringer, Joseph. *Jean Lafitte: Gentleman Pirate of New Orleans*, 1997.
3. Rubio Mañé, Ignacio. *Los piratas Lafitte [The Pirates Lafitte]*, Ed. Tradición [Tradition Press], Mexico, p. 31, 1984.
4. In the narratives, one side maintains that only a femur was found, the other that it was the entire body, but it merits attention that all mention the great size of the supposed "bone" and they do not mention another part that caused such astonishment in the community. (Interview carried out with a group of men with ages between 67 and 75 years.) (The death of the pirate and the acknowledgment of the daughter on the part of a companion of the pirate explain the loss of the surname Lafitte in this family.)
5. We refer to multi-European in the sense that not only French and Spaniards found themselves in Dzilam, since on the pirate vessels were found Dutch, English, etc., men, and it is probable that they also left descendants in Dzilam de Bravo.

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JEAN LAFFITE HISTORIC MARKER

THE MARKER IS UP. In 1999 it was decided to do a state approved historical marker for Jean Laffite to be erected on the lake front in the city of Lake Charles, Louisiana. The Laffite Society of Galveston, Texas and the Buccaneer Society of Lake Charles, Louisiana agreed to sponsor the marker.

The marker was finished and delivered in April 2000 in time for the two week-ends in May, Contraband Days Celebrations. Permission was not granted by the city officials to erect the marker and it languished in a dusty corner of the Louisiana Department of Transportation warehouse. It seemed the Mayor and the Councilmen were afraid that by honoring Jean Laffite, a noted buccaneer and historic personage, some segments of the population would be offended; even though the State of Louisiana has a large National Historic Park named for Laffite, and in spite of the fact that the Contraband Days Celebrations brings in much revenue for the city and is enjoyed by all. The past activities of the Laffites are largely why there is a celebration known as "Contraband

Days." In short, "Contraband Days" is a celebration of the legacy of the Laffites.

Due to heroic efforts by Buccaneer president, Barry Cranford and Laffite Society members Marla Drost and Jean Epperson, earlier this year the marker was erected at the Civic Center on the lake front in Lake Charles. Mayor Randy Roach viewed the marker and had no negative comments. The Buccaneers landed, captured the Mayor, took over the city for two weeks, and made the Mayor "walk the plank". This annual event was enjoyed by a large crowd.

Then, inexplicably, the Mayor had the marker removed. Now it seems it will find a home on Louisiana Highway #385 across from McNeese University Football Stadium.

Hopefully the Lake Charles Mayor, City Officials and Citizens will view their marker with pride as it is the only official historic marker for Jean Laffite in the State of Louisiana. Political correctness sometimes has its blind spots.



IN MEMORIAM: WILLIAM DALLAM SIMPSON, 1926 – 2002

Jeff Modzelewski

[Author's note: On Tuesday, August 12, 1997, The Laffite Society met at Simpson's Galleries in Houston, Texas, to hear Mr. William D. Simpson discuss the provenance of the so-called *Journal of Jean Laffite*. The Society's Dr. Reginald Wilson taped the presentation, and current Laffite Society Editor of Publications Don Marler transcribed, in condensed and paraphrased form, the remarks into an article which appeared in a subsequent issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. The author is grateful to Mr. Marler for allowing him to draw upon that article to prepare the following.]

One of the most intriguing of the questions related to Jean Laffite is whether or not the manuscript we commonly call *The Journal of Jean Laffite* is truly what its title suggests – the autobiographical memoirs of the famed privateer.

Its veracity would mean that Laffite lived until the middle of the nineteenth century, his seafaring ways far in the past, his handwritten recollections in French providing a valuable first-hand account of an important era in the history of the Americas as they saw colonialism draw to a close and the young United States of America begin its ascendance to becoming a major player among the nations of the world.

But even if fiction, the *Journal* must be considered a work of art, and no less an integral thread of the Laffite saga than other items proved factual.

Laffite aficionados lost a strand in this thread of the *Journal* when Mr. William Dallam Simpson passed away on Saturday, June 22, 2002. Were it not for his lengthy involvement with fine arts and antiquities, the *Journal* might not have come first to Simpson's attention, and thence to its current repository at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, Texas. From this locale the *Journal* has served, and will continue to serve for years to come, as a fascinating source document whose merits will long be discussed and debated.

Simpson was born on March 1, 1926, in Durham, England, grew up in Galveston, and later moved to Houston. He served our country as a Marine in World

War II, and after attaining his university education, became a Baptist minister. He labored long and hard against difficult odds to advance the cause of civil rights in conservative east Texas.

But it was perhaps the founding of Simpson Galleries, one of Houston's largest and most prestigious art and antiques auction houses and now a third-generation family enterprise, which set Mr. Simpson on his interceptive trajectory with the fact and legend of the privateers Laffite.

Aware of Simpson's knowledge about valuable artifacts of the past, some time around 1969 Mr. Richard Santos, of the Bexar Archives in San Antonio, contacted him. An older man called John Lafflin, who also went by various other names, including John Laffite, and who represented himself as the great-grandson of the famous privateer, had approached Santos to try to peddle the manuscript of the *Journal*. Santos was astounded at the document, as he believed that some of its content was proven true by documents of which he had sole custody there at the Bexar Archives, and access to which Santos felt certain this older gentlemen could not have obtained.

Interested in the find, Simpson drove to San Antonio and met with Santos. Later, Simpson met with Mr. John Jenkins of Austin, a collector whom Santos had also contacted, and with Laflin himself. Discussions were held, during which it was noted that Laflin was a coarse, peculiar, and distrustful sort, but also obviously completely incapable of forging the manuscript whose sale and purchase were under consideration, which lent credence to its authenticity.

The negotiations were difficult. Laflin exhibited, in the opinion of at least one observer, feelings of paranoia, stating several times that individuals had attempted to steal his collection in the past. He did not even want to show the potential buyers any originals, but only photocopies. However, Simpson told him that as he could not sell from photocopies, so neither would he buy from them.

Finally, Simpson and Jenkins each put up one-half of the total purchase price agreed upon of \$15,000. Even the cash settlement was problematic. Santos had

referred Laflin to Jenkins, but had not at first alluded to Simpson, and Laflin refused Simpson's check for \$7,500. Jenkins eventually paid the full amount and Simpson reimbursed him \$7,500.

Simpson did not inventory the collection. He and Jenkins agreed that Jenkins would keep custody of, and market, it, and that it would be sold only as a set, not piece-meal. Santos may also have had an agreement to act as agent for Jenkins.

About a year later Jenkins asked Simpson if he wished to buy his interest in the collection, and Simpson did so. He did not look at the documents for a year or so, until Laffite researcher John Howells of Houston asked if he might help determine its authenticity or lack thereof.

The most impressive argument in its favor was the testimony of an FBI handwriting expert, Mr. Ralph Queen, that the handwriting of the *Journal* matched that of a document in the Federal Archives in Fort Worth that is known unequivocally to be in

Laffite's hand because it had been in continuous custody of the federal government since 1819. The handwriting of the *Journal* was also declared to be the same as that of Laffite in letters he wrote to General James Long which now reside in the Lamar papers at the Texas State Archives.

In 1975, Governor and Mrs. Price Daniels expressed an interest in the collection. They and Simpson sat at a table in his galleries that had once been in the English Parliament and agreed upon a sale price of \$20,000. About three years later, in 1978, Daniels donated the collection to the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, where it resides to this day.

The Laffite Society mourns the passing of Mr. Simpson. This author believes that Mr. Simpson has, by now, in the great beyond, learned the truth from Jean Laffite and John Laflin as to whether the *Journal* is, in fact, authentic, and we of the Laffite Society would welcome a sign as to the answer.

In pace requiescat.



William Dallam Simpson

SUMMARIES OF MINUTES OF LAFFITE SOCIETY MEETINGS

January, 2002 through May, 2002
by
Dorothy McDonald Karilanovic

January 8, 2002

President Jeff Modzelewski extended condolences on behalf of the Society to Secretary Dorothy Karilanovic and to Parliamentarian Diane Olson in acknowledgment of the recent deaths of beloved family members, and also mentioned that the wife of former member Charles Kelly, glass jewelry artist Dee Collins of Galveston, had also passed away.

Minutes of the November 2001 meeting were not read to members for approval since, in order to meet a deadline, they had already been submitted for publication in the February, 2002 issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

Treasurer Jerry Eubank submitted her written report of The Laffite Society's finances showing an ending balance as of January 8, 2002, of \$3,122.90.

Mrs. Eubank gave out membership renewal letters to those present and stated that reminder letters, along with up-dated membership lists, would also be sent out to others. An up-dated membership list prepared by Membership Chairman, Mike Eubank, dated January 7, 2002, was also given out to those in attendance this date.

Copies of *The Laffite Society Chronicles, Vol. VIII, No. 1, February, 2002*, were given out to members present, the remainder to be mailed. A suggestion was offered to obtain a new quote of printing costs for the publication.

The President announced that Laffite Society member, author and researcher Robert C. Vogel, is scheduled to speak to members on March 12 on the subject of trips made by the Laffites to Washington, D.C. in 1815 and 1818. President Jeff Modzelewski also mentioned that, according to Robert Vogel, Professor Tom Watson of McNeese University in Louisiana will have published sometime in 2002 a book-length history of Lake Charles, Louisiana.

The President reported that Member-at-Large Neil Tytoni of Meraux, LA had sent to the Society 1) a news clipping from *The New Orleans Times Picayune, June 1, 2002*, describing the celebration by a Laffite society in Louisiana

featuring a battlefield demonstration and enactment of the Battle at Chalmette in 1815; 2) photos showing New Orleans' Jazzland Park; and 3) a photocopy showing Dominique Youx's famous epitaph in a New Orleans cemetery.

Press Director Dave Roberts showed members several coins recovered some years ago by a member of his family along the lower Texas Gulf Coast. The coins dated from the 1600s to the 1800s.

Advisory Board Member and Ex-Officio President R. Dale Olson read to members in attendance this date his chapter *Pirates and Privateers*, to appear in a book entitled *The French in Texas*, published by The University of Texas Press at Austin, TX, in 2003.

February, 2002

No meeting was held as the date fell on February 12, the final night of Mardi Gras.

March 12, 2002

President Jeff Modzelewski called the general meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., followed by his announcement of 1) a change in location for future meetings of The Laffite Society, now to be held at "The Trolley Stop," at 2021 Strand in Galveston; and 2) a reminder to members to send in their dues of renewal for 2002.

Visiting Advisory Board Member and Laffite author and researcher Robert C. Vogel presented a talk on travel undertaken by the Laffite brothers, Pierre and Jean, to Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and New York on December 17, 1814, and again possibly in early July of 1815, at which time Jean Laffite visited Washington, D.C. One of Mr. Vogel's conclusions on the purpose of these trips was that, through their contacts with government officials on these occasions, the Laffites were seeking financial compensation for their activities as "secret agents" against Spain. It is not known whether or not their efforts were successful.

Following the special presentation, the business meeting resumed. Minutes of

the January 8, 2002 meeting were approved as read to members by the Secretary.

As stated in Treasurer Jerry Eubank's report, beginning balance in The Laffite Society account on February 12, 2002 was \$3,652.07. After disbursements and deposits, the balance on March 12, 2002 was \$3,832.79.

The President mentioned that he had written a thank-you note in Spanish to Alejandro Hartmann of the island of Cuba who had sent him a copy of his book in French, published in Barcelona, entitled *The French in Baracoa*. Further, according to E-mail communication with Gary Fretz, Laffite researcher and Member-at-Large in Florida, Mr. Hartmann had indicated his intentions of visiting Mr. Fretz to show him his travel video work on Cuba.

Advisory Board Member Dr. Reginald Wilson announced that Advisory Board Member and long-time Laffite researcher Pam Keyes will visit Galveston April 9 to speak to the Society on her current research.

Robert C. Vogel mentioned for members' interest the upcoming Gulf, Southern History, and Humanities Conference to be held in Galveston at The Hilton Galveston Island Resort October 17-19, 2002. Mr. Vogel indicated that he might present a talk on filibusters and piracy at this meeting, and suggested that other members of the Society might want to participate. History professor Dr. Tom Watson, formerly of McNeese University in Lake Charles, LA, will be a commentator at the conference.

An announcement was made of a new play on the Laffites by authors in St. Augustine, TX, possibly to debut April 15. No other information available at this time.

The President extended thanks from himself and the Society to Advisory Board Member, Ex-Officio President and Charter Member of The Laffite Society R. Dale Olson, and to Laffite Society Parliamentarian and Charter Member Diane Olson for their generous offering to provide new meeting space at their building on 2021 Strand for future meetings and activities of The Laffite Society.

Thanks were extended to Kathy Modzelewski and Joe and Judy Dolfi for refreshments provided for the evening. The President also called for others to volunteer for this courtesy.

April 9, 2002

The President called the meeting to order with a welcome to visiting Laffite Advisory Board Member and long-time researcher Robert Looper from Golden Meadow, LA.

Advisory Board Member Pam Keyes from Miami, OK presented a talk entitled "Sleuthing Laffite." One focus of Ms. Keyes' report was on her recent research of documents in the New Orleans Collection of that city, relative to Jean Laffite's association with map-maker Arsène LaTour, lawyer, Edward Livingston, and privateer captain Vincent Gambi who in 1814 was said to have carried out the execution of a man named Louis Ferrière on the latter's doorstep at 620 Ursuline in New Orleans, purportedly commissioned by the Laffites.

Ms. Keyes also reported on her study of three samples of Jean Laffite's signature recently viewed at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, TX, appearing all to have been made by the same hand. During this time she also observed that certain other documents before 1807 appeared to have been written with a crow quill and others following this year, with a steel nib, suggesting, in her opinion, that these documents are genuine writings of Jean Laffite.

Perhaps most curiously, Ms. Keyes says, while at The Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center, she had noted attached to one of the pages in the original Laffite journal, two newspaper clippings referring to Amelia Island, FL. Ms. Keyes further stated that at first this finding seemed an enigma to her, since to her knowledge no one had ever connected Amelia Island with Laffite previously. Subsequently, following further search, she was able, in her words, to ". . . place Laffite's ship, the *Jupiter*, there . . . at least two different times, unloading cargo" - a finding, in her opinion, which seemed to lend further credence to the authenticity of the Laffite journal because of the unexpected inclusion of the two newspaper clippings in the journal.

Ms. Keyes, a Laffite researcher for over 27 years, was a member of the original Laffite research organization known as The Laffite Study Group formed in 1975, of which she served for two years as Editor of the group's newsletter. She is a former newspaper reporter and portrait

photographer, and is currently the owner operator of Pam Keyes Imaging, Digital Photographic Restoration Service.

The Society's business meeting resumed following the special presentation. Minutes of the March 12 meeting were approved as read to members by the Secretary.

Treasurer Jerry Eubank's written report of disbursements and deposits showed a balance in The Laffite Society account of \$3,801.79.

Editor-of-Publication for *The Laffite Society Chronicles* Don Marler, long-time Laffite researcher, author, editor, publisher, and proprietor of Dogwood Press, Hemphill, TX, and his wife and editorial associate Sybil Marler, extended an invitation to members to visit their woodland home in Hemphill, TX, with a possible side trip to several historical sites in the area, such as Sabine Town, St. Augustin, TX, Nacogdoches, and Nachitoches. After discussion, members agreed on dates for the trip as Thursday, May 16 through Saturday, May 18. Third Vice-President and Special Events Chairman Kathy Modzelewski offered to research hotel and travel information to send out to members via the Internet.

President Jeff Modzelewski called for volunteers to help move the Society's archives from The Eiband Gallery at 2201 Post Office to the new meeting site in The Trolley Stop building at 2021 Strand. Member Joe Dolfi offered to use his truck for the removal to take place on Sunday, April 14. Discussion followed on future plans for storage of the Society's archives and on a future, permanent meeting space in The Trolley Stop building, to be decided in due course at the discretion of owners of the building, Laffite Society members Dale and Diane Olson.

Following discussion, a motion was passed to have an historically appropriate sign crafted with the name of The Laffite Society and a logo, eventually to be placed on The Trolley Stop building at a site to be determined.

Members were asked to consider nominees for office to be voted on in July of this year.

Discussion followed on a change of the Society's meeting date from the second Tuesday of the month to the second Thursday, and a change of meeting time from 6:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. A final

decision for this change is deferred until after the May 14th meeting.

The President extended thanks to Joe and Judy Dolfi, Beth and Ron Austin, and Norman and Margie Sachnik for the evening's refreshments.

May 14, 2002

The President called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., expressing words of concern on behalf of The Laffite Society for the health and speedy recovery of friend of the Society Sheldon Kindall. A welcome was also extended to members Ann and Harry Forester.

Minutes of April 9 were approved as read to members by the Secretary. No treasury report was available at meeting time.

Laffite Society Historian and Advisory Board Member Jean L. Epperson reported that after many months of delay and uncertainty as to outcome a Jean Laffite historical marker had been placed on the lake front at Lake Charles May 3, 2002 during the annual celebration of the Lake Charles Buccaneer Society. Information for the marker, the only one of its kind dedicated to Jean Laffite in the state of Louisiana, was researched, written and presented gratis by Ms. Epperson. Funding for forging, placement and erection of the marker was shared by both the Buccaneer Society of Lake Charles and The Laffite Society of Galveston, the former contributing toward the project \$1,000.00, and the latter, \$300.00.

Advisory Board Member Dr. Reginald Wilson made available for members' interest the following items: 1) a photo of the house of Louis Ferrière in New Orleans showing the steps where he was assassinated by Vincent Gambi, an associate of the Laffite brothers; 2) Vincent Gambi's discharge papers dated March 16, 1815; 3) a copy of the legal procedure for the emancipation of slaves and information on where emancipated slave lists can be found.

The Secretary passed around to members a news clipping from *The Houston Chronicle, Sun., November 4, 2001*, an account by a Trinity River guide for the Chambers-Liberty Navigation District reporting on a possible sunken ship believed to have been wrecked in the 1800s. Location of the wreck is thought to be at the edge of little known Lake Miller, off the Trinity River, about 35 miles east of

Continued on page 7

CALENDAR

General meetings of The Laffite Society are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the first floor of the Trolley Stop Building (on the south side of the 2000 block of The strand, Galveston, Texas, 77550. Many of the meetings feature interesting and informative presentations by members or guest speakers. The exception is the December meeting, the annual "Holiday Social," which is an evening of food, drink, and entertaining conversation in a relaxed and festive setting.

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for the first month of each calendar quarter (January, April, July, and October) on the same day as that month's general meeting and normally either precede or follow same. Additional Board of Directors meetings may be scheduled at the Board's discretion.

In addition to the general meetings, one or more special events are normally scheduled during the year. Examples of such special events which have taken place in the past include: an excursion to Grande Terre, Louisiana (Laffite's "Barataria"), the address of the Society's then-President, R. Dale Olson, to the Louisiana Historical Society at the New Orleans Country Club, and a summer archaeological excavation at the supposed site of Laffite's Maison Rouge.

Inquiries about upcoming special events may be directed to The Laffite Society, P.O. Box 1325, Galveston, Tx., 77553, or consult the webpage at: thelaffitesociety.com and the newsgroup at, laffite@yahooogroups.com. The Laffite Society attempts to mail information (snail mail or email) to members and interested parties on the Society's mailing list as special event details are determined.

The Laffite Society Chronicles are published two times per year—in the spring and fall. The publication schedule is not always kept precisely.

Bulletin Board

The Laffite Society meetings have now moved to the third Tuesday.

New Members

Lelia Wasom - 8/28/2002
7704 Hanover Pkwy Apt. 203
Greenbelt, MD 20770

Marla Drost - 4/18/2002
1129 Baker
Westlake, La. 70669

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AUGUST 2002-JULY 2004

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Laffite Society is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the study of the privateers Jean and Pierre Laffite and their contemporaries, and to the geographical locales and chronological era associated with them.

Annual dues are as follows:

Student.....\$15.00
Senior (Over 65).....15.00
Institution.....15.00
Individual.....30.00
Family.....35.00
Sustaining Member.....100.00
Life Membership (One Payment)350.00