

The Laffite Study Group

Newsletter

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The Laffite Study Group is a non-profit educational organization which aims to promote research in, and the dissemination of knowledge concerning Jean Laffite's role in American history, literature, and folklore. The focus of interest includes the Gulf Coast region and the Western Caribbean in the early 19th century, with emphasis on Louisiana and Texas. The study group publishes this quarterly **Newsletter** and a series of occasional papers entitled the **Life and Times of Jean Laffite**.

The Laffite Study Group invites the participation and support of all who share its interest in Jean Laffite and the lore of Gulf Coast piracy, privateering, and filibustering. Membership is open to all. Annual dues are ten dollars (\$10.00) for individuals and libraries, fifteen dollars (\$15.00) outside of the United States. Applications for membership should be sent to: John L. Howells, Secretary-Treasurer, Laffite Study Group, 2570 Kevin Lane, Houston, Texas 77043.

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LAFFITE'S TOMB IN PAINCOURTVILLE

A brief note concerning the tomb of a Jean Laffite in the Saint Elizabethville Cemetery, Paincourtville, Louisiana, appeared in **Terrebonne Life Lines**, vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 1984), submitted by Alberta Laffitte of Houma. According to the tombstone inscription, this Jean Laffite was born 6 December 1832 and died 23 February 1872, at the age of 39; he was married to Stephanie Trahant (1841-1908), and was the father of John Sumon, Narcisse, Ulyses Pierre, Caliste Joseph, and Marie Helene Laffite.

THE LAFFITE NETWORK

Welcome to new LSG members Dr. Jack C. Ramsay, Jr., of Dallas, Texas; Bobby Laffitte of Shreveport, Louisiana; and John E. Walker of Metairie, Louisiana.

Mailed with this issue of the **LSG Newsletter** is your membership application/dues notice for the 1987 calendar year.

The date for completion of the new Louisiana State Archives building in Baton Rouge is 9 March 1987, with official dedication set for 27 April, to coincide with the centeseptequinary of Louisiana statehood. The ongoing inventory of the state archives is now 75% complete, according to a recent State Archives and Records Service news release.

LSG board member Sylvie Robin has completed her graduate research paper on the Laffite brothers' role in the Mexican revolution at the University of Paris. We look forward to the publication of her work in English.

You always catch the "big ones" with the help of Nat Chighizola, proprietor of the Nez Coupe Gift, Souvenir & Tackle Shop on Grand Isle, LA. Nat is the great-grandson of "Nez Coupe" Chighizola, one of Jean Laffite's Baratarians, and is a great source for the folk history of Grand Isle, Grand Terre, and environs.

JACINTO LOBRANO

The following was submitted by Bernard Eble of Jefferson, LA, who copied it from an old number of the **New Orleans Daily Picayune**.

Yesterday morning there died at No. 122 Fourth Street, the last of Lafitte's celebrated band of buccaneers--Jacinto Lobrano, whose life extended over nearly one hundred years, and embraced events out of which, were fully detailed, a narrative of exciting interest might be woven.

As the writer stood yesterday in the room where lay the body of this ancient of days, he thought: Here lies a man who has looked on the great Napoleon; who sailed with Lafitte in the Gulf of Mexico; who fought the British at Chalmette, and received a sword from the hands of the hero of that battle. The span of this aged veteran's life joined the present with the past--a past that reached back into the last century.

Lobrano was born in the city of Naples, between the years 1783 and 1786. It is said that on account of being concerned in a plot against the government, he and his father left Italy in 1799. He then became a sailor, and made several voyages between Gibraltar and Havana. During 1814, he saw the excited Napoleon at Elba. Lobrano's first visit to New Orleans was made in 1809. He subsequently became connected with Lafitte, over whom he exercised considerable influence, being largely instrumental in persuading the privateer to side with the Americans against the British. The old veteran having been presented by General Andrew Jackson with a handsome sword, which he afterwards retained and cherished as one of his most valuable possessions. Once, in relating this

event, he said Jackson had conferred upon him the title of General, when presenting the sword. Be this as it may, it is certain Lobrano in his old age believed himself to be a general in rank. The writer examined the weapon yesterday. Its blade is of the finest temper, and of such rare steel that it will bend double without breaking.

The subject of this sketch settled down in New Orleans at the age of 45 married a lady of one of the most noted Creole families in the state. It is stated that he participated in the Texas War for Independence, and among the trophies of his exploits is a lance which he captured from one of the followers of Santa Anna.

Mr. Lobrano was at one time engaged in the slave trade and other commercial enterprises. He finally settled down in New Orleans and retired on a moderate fortune from all business pursuits about twenty years ago. Since then, he has led a quiet life.

The above is a mere outline of his eventful life. He was singularly reticent in regard to his life, and although repeated attempts have been made by newspaper reporters and others to extract information concerning his past, the facts obtained have been meagre. A narration of his adventures by sea and land would fill a volume.

The writer well remembers a visit paid to the old veteran about a year ago. When informed that a visitor wished to see him, he came in from the garden where he had been working, bearing a long garden knife in his hand. His form was still erect, his eye bright, and his hair long and thick.

At first he seemed adverse to conversation, but being plied with questions, began to tell of his boyhood. He spoke of being of in some stand which was invaded by the British. When he came to tell of the war, his eyes gleamed, he brandished the knife, and exclaiming he would get his sword, strode out of the room. Further conversation was then prohibited for fear the excitement might affect his health.

It is related of him that during Butler's reign in New Orleans [during the Civil War], Lobrano heard that the dictator would seize his beloved sword, and thereupon he swore if Butler made the attempt, he would cut off his head.

The ponogenarian was taken sick about a week ago. Up to that point in time, he enjoyed excellent health. His sight was excellent, and he preserved his teeth and hair to the last. He was a man of medium height, and in his youth was of a handsome appearance, as shown by a portrait which hangs in the parlor of his residence. He comes of a longlived family, it being said that his sister attained the age of one hundred years.

The funeral, which takes place this morning, will be attended by a large concourse of people, as there were few men more widely known in this city than Jacinto Lobrano. The deceased leaves several sons and daughters and other relations.

[Note: The Memorial Hall museum in New Orleans owns the Lobrano sword.]

The LSG Newsletter is published quarterly by the Laffite Study Group, P. O. Box 44, Cottage Grove, Minnesota 55016. Robert C. Vogel, editor.
