



# The Laffite Society Chronicles

VOLUME IV NUMBER 2  
AUGUST, 1998  
[2<sup>ND</sup> PRINTING 7/02]

## CONTENTS

THE EDITOR'S PAGE ..... JEFF MODZELEWSKI

### ARTICLES, ETC.

THE SAGA OF THE SEAL (WITH COLOR PRINT AND LEGEND) ..... PAM KEYES AND DR. REGINALD WILSON

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LAFFITE STUDY GROUP, 1975 - 1990 ..... ROBERT C. VOGEL

THE FINAL RESTING PLACE OF JEAN LAFFITE ..... PAUL GARDINER

THE ADVENTURES OF LAFFITE AND THE PIRATES OF BARATARIA ..... FRANCISCO MOTA  
[TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY JEFF MODZELEWSKI]

SPECIAL EVENT, JANUARY 8, 1998: ADDRESS OF LAFFITE SOCIETY PRESIDENT  
R. DALE OLSON TO THE LOUISIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ..... JEFF MODZELEWSKI

SPECIAL EVENT, MAY 9 - 11, 1997: TRIP TO GRAND ISLE AND GRANDE TERRE,  
LOUISIANA (LAFFITE'S BARATARIA) ..... DOROTHY MCD. KARILANOVIC

SPECIAL EVENT, WEEKEND OF MAY 29 - 31, 1998: SOUTHWEST SOCIETY OF ARCHIVISTS ANNUAL  
MEETING, AND A STAY IN ST. MARTINVILLE, LOUISIANA ..... R. DALE OLSON

### GENERAL MEETING SUMMARIES AND FEATURED PROGRAM ABSTRACTS

GENERAL MEETING SUMMARIES, JANUARY 1998 THROUGH JUNE 1998

### WELCOME, NEW LAFFITIANS

### CALENDAR

### "THE STORY OF LAFFITE" AUDIO TAPE PROJECT

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

### THANK YOU FROM THE SOCIETY

© 1998 by The Laffite Society. All rights reserved. Except for brief citations accompanied by proper attribution, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means - electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise - without the written permission of The Laffite Society.

The Laffite Society  
Post Office Box 1325  
Galveston, Texas 77553  
<http://www.phoenix.net/~tigone/laffite/>

## THE EDITOR'S PAGE

JEFF MODZELEWSKI

Dear fellow Laffitians,

Please accept and enjoy this, your eighth semiannual issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. This edition documents many of the activities of our group during the period January 1 through June 30, 1998, and contains additional articles about Laffite-related topics and events.

As this issue of the *Chronicles* goes to press, The Laffite Society has just passed its fourth anniversary. Our group is flourishing, both in terms of membership count and public awareness of our existence. And while we should celebrate this fact, it is fitting that we also pause to recognize an important predecessor of ours in the pursuit of Jean Laffite, The Laffite Study Group.

People have been intrigued by Jean Laffite since his own day; trite as the expression might have become, our buccaneer truly was "a legend in his own time." Such was his charisma that, regardless of whether one stood upon the same side of an issue – or even the law! – as did the privateer, Laffite seems to have left a lasting impression upon all those with whom he came into contact.

Scarcely had the dirt settled on the site of his Maison Rouge after the buccaneer's departure from Galveston Island – "persuaded" by the orders of Lieutenant Lawrence Kearney and the United States Navy in the springtime of 1820 – when treasure hunters were already undertaking excavations of sites of varying degrees of familiarity to Monsieur Laffite, searching for caches of Spanish doubloons and pieces of eight.

Nor was there any dearth of printed matter regarding the privateer even while he lived: witness the first entries in the extensive bibliography compiled by Laffite Society member Robert C. Vogel and published in two parts in earlier editions of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. In this compilation, titled "Jean Laffite in American Literature: A Check List of Published Works Through 1958," Mr. Vogel lists twenty-seven references dated just through 1820, the year in which Laffite burned the Mason Rouge and abandoned Galveston.

As the years passed but publication of Laffite-related articles continued, it was obvious that interest in the privateer existed in many individuals throughout not just the United States but indeed the world. This interest was perhaps converted most readily into efficient and productive research when individuals banded together into groups, thus

allowing synergy to make the sum of the parts exceed the whole. Our own Laffite Society is one such example, but we owe much to the now-defunct Laffite Study Group.

The Laffite Study Group existed formally for about fifteen years, from 1975 to 1990. It differed somewhat from the current Laffite Society in that it did not hold regular meetings; members exchanged ideas, research questions, and the fruits of their investigative efforts via one of the group's regular publications and through the mail (in the current day, this latter exchange would doubtlessly occur via e-mail, a tool which many of our group have come to find indispensable). Members did meet face to face occasionally, when their common interest found them attending events such as the Louisiana Historical Association's annual meeting.

The Laffite Study Group counted among its members a powerhouse of learned researchers and outright "characters"; sadly, many of them have passed on, a fact which contributed to the decline of the organization. However, the spirit of that group lives on via several of its surviving members who have joined The Laffite Society, and we appreciate their significant contributions, which enable some of us Laffite (relatively speaking) neophytes from reinventing the wheel.

For more on The Laffite Study Group, see the article contributed by the aforementioned Mr. Vogel – one of its founders – in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. The article is titled "A Brief History of The Laffite Study Group, 1975 – 1990."

Other items of special interest in this issue: the write-up on Laffite Society President R. Dale Olson's address to the Louisiana Historical Society at its annual banquet in January, 1998; articles by Paul Gardiner, Pam Keyes, and Dr. Reginald Wilson on the ongoing and fascinating attempt to prove or disprove the authenticity of *The Journal of Jean Laffite*, and the inclusion of photographs which the comparatively recent availability and affordability of document scanners for non-commercial users has allowed.

Until next time –



*In Confite*



## JEAN LAFFITE'S MEXICAN PRIVATEER SEAL

This engraved privateer seal is attached to page 212 in Laffite's journal. It was probably crafted in New Orleans in 1818, then shipped by Pierre Laffite to Jean Laffite in Galveston aboard the vessel *New Enterprise* on February 20, 1818. A box marked "J.L." contained this privateer seal, a hand stamp, blank printed privateer commissions, and other ship papers for Laffite's establishment.

Passengers aboard included Pierre's son, Eugene; General Humbert; and two Irish and five French officers.

This embossed seal is made of heavy paper with the details in silver and gold/bronze foil. The filigree, eagle, and snake are raised. Note the "N<sup>O</sup>" in the lower left and the "Y<sup>DS</sup>" in the lower right.

This privateer seal is believed to be the only one that is now in existence.

## THE SAGA OF THE SEAL

PAM KEYES AND DR. REGINALD WILSON

[Editor's note: Pam Keyes and Dr. Reginald Wilson are both very active members of The Laffite Society. Ms. Keyes was also an integral part of the antecedent Laffite Study Group, having served as its Editor of Publications for a number of years. Dr. Wilson is a foremost researcher in the attempt to authenticate *The Journal of Jean Laffite*.]

Deep within *The Journal of Jean Laffite* at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, Texas, is a mysterious eagle-and-serpent seal which has proven to be as enigmatic as Laffite himself.

Perhaps the strangest thing about this silver-colored, very ornate seal is the fact that several historians and manuscript dealers have looked at it over the years without ever suspecting how important it could be. Indeed, this seal could provide the means to authenticate the controversial Laffite journal and collection at Sam Houston.

The seal's importance as a key puzzle piece was not brought to light until Pam Keyes happened to chance upon a picture of it in a book loaned to her by Dr. Reginald Wilson, *Treasures of Galveston Bay* by Carroll Lewis. The picture shows the *Journal* open to the page featuring the seal. Keyes was immediately quite intrigued, because she recalled seeing something similar to the seal in the file collection of the late historian Dr. Jane de Grummond back in the early 1980's. These files, which covered one whole wall in de Grummond's home, contained voluminous materials relating to Renato Beluche, Simon Bolivar, and the Laffite brothers and their fellow Baratarians.

At first, Keyes was positive that the seal was one issued by Cartagena, New Granada (Colombia) - as were those issued to Beluche - since it must have been in one of Beluche's letters of marque in Dr. de Grummond's collection that Keyes had espied the similar seal.

The first step was to search for Dr. de Grummond's files, which since her death in 1989 had been dispersed. Most of this vast collection is not catalogued but resides at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, where de Grummond was a professor of history. Some of the files were given to researchers. Among those which remain there, the LSU librarian was unable to locate a similar seal, so the mystery

continued.

But there is an important clue in the seal itself: its design is strikingly similar, although not identical, to the present-day Mexican national emblem. A study of early nineteenth century Mexican documents turned up no identical seal, however, and in fact, the early Mexican seals bore much cruder images of the eagle than that depicted on the seal in the Laffite journal. But there must be a connection, thought Keyes, and more detective work turned up some interesting possibilities.

The Laffite brothers' financial backers for their Galveston operation were, initially at least, the equally mysterious New Orleans Association, a group of investors which included Edward Livingston. The NOA also provided backing to some Mexican insurgents.

The search for information continued. Dr. Wilson proceeded to contact persons still living who had in the past examined the *Journal*, to obtain their impressions of the seal. William Simpson and John Howells both recalled noticing the seal, but neither had attached any significance to it.

John A. Laffite at one time had loaned the *Journal* to two Tulane professors for examination, but they apparently left nothing in writing regarding their impressions. Betsy Swanson recalled that several people in New Orleans did see the *Journal*, but neither Ray and Sue Thompson nor Stanley Arthur were among them.

Since Dr. Wilson believed the two people most likely to have knowledge of such stamps and seals would be Sally K. Reeves, in charge of the Notarial Archives in New Orleans, and her husband, William Reeves, president of the Louisiana Historical Society, a picture and description of the seal were forwarded to them for their comments and possible identification.

William Reeves responded, "How exciting, yet still mysterious. I am jumping out of my skin!" Neither of the Reeves had seen any seal or stamp similar to the one in the *Journal*. And one of the most knowledgeable Latinists whom the Reeves knew, Dr. Guillermo Nanez-Falcon, curator of the Latin American Library at Tulane, said he had never seen a similar seal but felt that it was of Mexican origin.

A major break in the case came when Dr. Wilson found several references to a seal in

Stanley Faye's article, "The Great Stroke of Pierre Laffite." In a translation of a letter dated February 17, 1818, which Pierre Laffite wrote from New Orleans, he stated he was sending to Jean Laffite on Galveston Island a box marked "J.L." that would contain printed privateer commissions and other ships' papers in blank, as well as the engraved seal and hand-stamp of a revolutionary establishment. This establishment was identified as Mexico. The letter, the box, Pierre's son Eugene, General Humbert, and two Irish and five French officers were aboard the *New Enterprise*, which left New Orleans on February 19, 1818, for Galveston. Could this engraved seal have been the same one that is now found on page 212 of Jean Laffite's *Journal*?

The seal is circular and 3.25 inches in diameter. It is typically Mexican. An eagle, wings spread, holds a wriggling snake in its mouth. The journal seal is raised, firm, and gives the appearance of silver. However, Robert Schaadt, director of the Sam Houston Regional Library, believes this to be thick, heavy silver or gold foil.

The under parts of the eagle's wings are a bronze/gold color. The feathers on the wings

are easily seen, as are the scales on the snake. The border is silver filigree, much of it now tarnished and worn in spots.

In the lower left is a capital "N" with a superscript "O." In the lower right is a capital "Y" with a superscript "DS." Could the "N<sup>O</sup>" stand for "Notarial" or "New Orleans"? The "Y<sup>DS</sup>" probably stands for "Y Dios" – "and God."

Dr. Wilson believes that Jean Laffite originally placed this seal on page 212 of the *Journal* because he intended to end the document at that point (although, more than a year later, after returning from Europe, Laffite did add more to his journal). He placed his privateer seal here to prove, as he always said, that he was not a pirate but a privateer.

By imprinting his seal in the *Journal* beneath his signature, he apparently believed it would be an unquestionable way to authenticate the document as his creation. But Laffite obviously did not realize that the passage of time sometimes blurs the significance of historical items, so that something which would have been easily recognized in his day could be quite obscure to the modern-day person, even an experienced researcher of history.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LAFFITE STUDY GROUP, 1975 - 1990

ROBERT C. VOGEL

The Laffite Study Group ("LSG") was founded in 1975 "to bring together those people interested in Jean Laffite's role in American history, folklore, and literature" and "to encourage original research and facilitate greater communication among researchers."<sup>1</sup>

The founding members of the LSG were John L. Howells, Jane Lucas DeGrummond, Harris Gaylord Warren, Sue Thompson, and Robert C. Vogel.<sup>2</sup> The present writer, as befitting the junior partner in the enterprise, was assigned the task of compiling a bibliography, while all of the members exchanged letters, drafts of research papers, and research sources by mail.

By the end of 1975 several others had joined the group, and it was soon apparent that networking through the mails was becoming too cumbersome. After conferring with Howells and DeGrummond, I volunteered to assemble and edit a collection of LSG research papers for publication. The first *Life and Times of Jean Laffite*<sup>3</sup> ("LTJL") appeared in January, 1976, and, thanks to a generous gift from Professor DeGrummond, fifty copies were printed for distribution at the Louisiana Historical Association's annual meeting, which was held that March in Lafayette.

The first number of LTJL was well received and sparked considerable interest in the LSG, particularly among Louisiana historians. When LTJL No. 2 came out in July, 1976, we mailed out more than sixty copies. Meanwhile, the group had started to ask for donations from its members to help defray printing and postage costs. Most pitched in five or ten dollars (some considerably more), and in this way we financed publication of three more volumes of occasional papers, as well as a volume of reprints.<sup>4</sup>

Although it had been conceived as a colloquium and network for researchers, the study group soon started to evolve into something much more like a historical society. In October, 1980, the LSG elected its first board of officers. Jack D.L. Holmes<sup>5</sup> became the organization's first and only president, Jane L. DeGrummond vice-president, and John Howells secretary and treasurer. I remained managing editor of the group's publications and served on its Executive Board, along with Pam Keyes.<sup>6</sup>

As part of its new organizational structure, the LSG committed itself to publishing a quarterly newsletter, the first number of which

appeared in the fall of 1980. From 1980 until 1986, the *LSG Newsletter* was edited by Ms. Keyes.

The sixth and final installment of LTJL appeared in June, 1982, but because of rising production costs it was decided to abandon the occasional-papers format and focus the group's resources on publication of the quarterly newsletter. Five years later, responding to a nostalgic impulse, the editorial committee changed the name of the newsletter to *The Life and Times of Jean Laffite*, but publication under this title was suspended after Volume X, the final number, in 1989.<sup>7</sup>

Like the old soldier, the LSG did not die – it simply faded away. The group's founders had never envisioned a permanent organization; therefore, we never devoted much attention to administrative structure, strategic planning, public relations, or finance. The result was a rather amorphous, almost anarchistic, agglomeration of individuals with diverse interests.

Investment in enlisting new members was never a priority, and, despite the fact that the group found itself chronically short of cash, there was little fundraising activity beyond intermittent letters begging members to remit their dues. Paid membership peaked in the late 1980's at between fifty and sixty individuals and institutions, but there were as many lapsed dues-remitting members as there were active, paid-up ones.

We usually printed and mailed between 100 and 125 newsletters, and 75 to 100 copies were distributed *gratis* at historical conferences. LSG members included professional and avocational historians, academics, journalists, treasure hunters, archivists, librarians, lawyers, teachers, students, folklorists, artists, and collectors spread across twelve of the United States and four foreign countries.<sup>8</sup> Despite the fascinating membership profile, there were no meetings of the LSG, although there were several memorable *ad hoc* gatherings over the years, mostly in conjunction with the annual spring meetings of the Louisiana Historical Association.

Much of the momentum behind the original LSG was gone by 1990. Within a few years, Jack Holmes, Jane DeGrummond, Ray and Sue Thompson, Harris Warren, Powell Casey, and Judge Albert Tate, all good friends and core



members of the original LSG, had passed away. Meanwhile, other stalwarts had moved on to different interests.

In 1990, an abrupt change in my personal life and career path forced me to reconsider my commitment to the LSG, and I relinquished the editorship of the *LTJL*. Nevertheless, I am pleased to report that along with my good friend John Howells and other old Laffitians, the study group network lives on through the exchange of letters and e-mails.

#### Notes

1. The mission of the LSG, as formally stated in the by-laws adopted in 1980, was developed out of the correspondence between Robert Vogel, John Howells, and Jane DeGrummond in 1974-1975; the concept of an informal Laffite colloquy originated with Professor DeGrummond.

2. Howells, of Houston, Texas, now retired, was an accountant employed by the Internal Revenue Service. An amateur historian with a keen interest in antique firearms and the Civil War, John was married to the former Miss Jean Lafitte of New Orleans (now deceased). Dr. DeGrummond was a professor of Latin American history at Louisiana State University and author of *The Baratarians and the Battle of New Orleans*. Dr. Warren, then residing in New Mexico, was a retired professor of history and author of *The Sword Was Their Passport* and many articles relating to Laffite. Sue Thompson and her husband Ray, then living in Gulfport, Mississippi, had earlier written *The Land of Lafitte the Pirate* while residing in New Orleans. In 1975, I was a 22-year-old college student

living in St. Paul, Minnesota.

3. The title of the series was borrowed from George A. Pierce's controversial essay published in 1851 in *DeBow's Review*.

4. In 1977, the LSG instituted a \$6 annual subscription fee. This was later raised to \$10.

5. "Sir" Jack Holmes joined the LSG in the bar of the Holiday Inn in Lafayette, Louisiana, in 1976. A specialist in the history of the Spanish Borderlands frontier (for work upon which he received a knighthood from the King of Spain), Jack was the study group's self-appointed ambassador-at-large; if he had not been elected president, there would probably have been a *coup d'état*. See "Dr. Strangebreed, Or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love Laffite" (*LSG Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 1 [Winter, 1981], p. 2).

6. Pamela Grunewald of Miami, Oklahoma, joined the LSG in 1975 when she was a student in junior college. When she left the board, her place was taken by Dr. Thomas D. Watson, professor of history at McNeese State University and a past president of the Louisiana Historical Association.

7. In all, the LSG published six volumes of the occasional-papers series between 1975 and 1982, with a volume of selected reprints from the first five numbers released in 1979. Nine volumes (thirty issues) of the newsletter were published between 1980 and 1990.

8. As an example of the diversity of the LSG, at one time it counted as dues-paying members two judges (one from Louisiana, one from Texas), two convicts (both doing hard time at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola), three attorneys, and two police officers.



Fosterburg Cemetery, with Older Section Atop "That Little Hill"

## THE FINAL RESTING PLACE OF JEAN LAFFITE

PAUL GARDINER

[Editor's note: The Laffite Society expresses its appreciation to Society members and cousins Paul Gardiner and Dr. Reginald Wilson for their work on the Culp/Fosterburg Cemetery, an important factor in the attempt to authenticate *The Journal of Jean Laffite: The Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*.

Mr. Gardiner has volunteered much time on site in Fosterburg, Illinois, reconnoitering the aforementioned cemetery, which is believed by some creditable Laffite researchers to hold the remains of the privateer. Mr. Gardiner has perused the tombstones' inscriptions, photographed the area, and interviewed long-time residents about the locale's past.

Dr. Wilson has integrated the data resulting from Mr. Gardiner's physical research into the context of other information known about Laffite and/or contained in the *Journal*, in an attempt to prove whether this document is indeed the diary of Monsieur Laffite, or merely a clever and laborious forgery.

See the related piece authored by Dr. Wilson which appeared in the February, 1998, issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, titled "A Visit to Laffite's Grave."

The location of the final resting place of Jean Laffite, the privateer, may be the Fosterburg Cemetery in Fosterburg, Illinois, a small town in Madison County, just northeast of the city of Alton.

This conclusion was reached after research into the statements made by John A. Laflin (Laffite), a man who claimed to be the great-grandson of Jean Laffite, during his visit in

1966 with Audrey Lloyd, the author of *Jean Laffite: The True Story*. Mr. Laflin told Ms. Lloyd of his visit to the alleged Laffite gravesite in 1922 with his grandfather, Jules J. Laffite, purported son of the privateer, who had recounted attending Jean Laffite's burial in May, 1854.

A review of Mr. Laflin's visit with Ms. Lloyd and of his statements regarding same are contained in an article in *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, Vol. IV, No.1 (February, 1998), titled "A Visit to Laffite's Grave," by Society member Reginald Wilson.

The following is a summary of the search to determine, at this late date, if any of Mr. Laflin's statements has any basis in fact.

Mr. Laflin stated, "We left St. Louis on the train for Alton, Illinois .... Reaching Alton, we walked six miles to the farm." He also stated that the grave site was "... on the 180-acre farm of Frank Culp, six miles north of Alton and 4 miles southeast of Bethalto, Illinois," and that "The cemetery was ... about half a mile east of the Culp farm[house]."

First, it should be noted that Mr. Laflin's sense of direction was not always correct. Bethalto, Illinois, is east of Alton, and therefore a farm six miles north of Alton could only be northwest of Bethalto.

A study of the Culp family history reveals that a Frank Culp (1869-1955) owned a farm at Fosterburg, Illinois, on Fosterburg Road. The Alton train station is located in north Alton off of Illinois State Highway 140, about three-quarters

of a mile west of Fosterburg Road. The distance from the train station to Fosterburg is approximately six miles, in a northerly direction.

The Culp home still stands today and is known as "the Ashlock home." Early maps show that the Ashlock farm comprised 200 acres, which included a cemetery in the southwest corner of the property. The two-story brick home was built in 1865 by Richard Ashlock (1816-1900). It was restored in the early 1980's. Frank Culp's wife, Mae, was the granddaughter of Richard Ashlock.

Mr. Laflin stated, "The cemetery was an old one, about one hundred yards long and eighty yards wide, about half a mile east of the Culp Farm." The cemetery on this farm is located about one-half mile west of the home. It was originally a private burial ground but today is known as "Fosterburg Cemetery."

The burials in the cemetery date from at least as far back as the early 1840's, according to the inscriptions on several tombstones. The earliest graves are located in the southeast corner of the cemetery on a small hill. The size of the cemetery in 1922 would approximate that stated by Mr. Laflin, who also noted that Laffite's burial took place in the northwest corner of the cemetery, an ornamental railing encircling the grave.

Given Mr. Laflin's error with regard to the relative locations of Alton and Bethalto, might we infer that the location of Laffite's grave was in the southeast (rather than the northwest) corner of the cemetery?

No iron railing is now visible at any of the gravesites, nor could a local resident, who

can remember the cemetery as far back as the 1930's, recall seeing an iron railing around any of them.

Mr. Laflin noted that Mr. Culp and his wife invited them for lunch and that they met the Culp's twenty-one-year-old daughter, Edith. That Frank Culp had a daughter named Edith is confirmed on page 675 of the 1912 edition of *The Centennial History of Madison County*, where it states that Frank Culp had one child, a daughter named Edith Florence Culp, who was born in 1899.

During the visit, Mr. Culp spoke of a barn built in the spring of 1852. Mr. Eugene Grillo of Fosterburg remembers an old barn which was situated about one hundred feet north of the Ashlock home and which he said could have dated from that period. That barn is no longer standing.

The final item to be checked in Mr. Laflin's statement concerns the gravestone of a soldier killed in the Spanish-American War in 1898. A search of the gravestone inscriptions did not reveal any evidence of such a soldier's grave, nor was any record of such a burial found in the Madison County Genealogical Society's published records for Fosterburg Cemetery.

In conclusion, while there appears to be some credibility to Mr. Laflin's account of his 1922 visit to the purported gravesite of Jean Laffite, several of his statements could not be verified. Perhaps Mr. Laflin himself, at the time of his 1966 meeting with Audrey Lloyd, was no longer certain of all the facts of that cemetery sojourn which had taken place some forty-four years earlier.

View Toward the Ashlock Home



# THE ADVENTURES OF LAFITTE AND THE PIRATES OF BARATARIA

FRANCISCO MOTA

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY JEFF MODZELEWSKI

[Editor's note: the following article is the translation of Chapter XXVII of the book *Pirates in the Caribbean* by the Cuban author Francisco Mota (House of the Americas, 1984; "Our Countries" Collection, "Directions" Series). The book title and publishing credits are presented in the original Spanish at the end of the article. The Laffite Society expresses its gratitude to member Robert C. Vogel for submitting this piece.]

1. The name which attains the greatest resonance among the corsairs and pirates of the nineteenth century is that of Lafitte. The brothers Jean and Pierre Lafitte - corsairs some of the time, pirates the rest; slavers when it was convenient, traffickers always, and, if it were worth the trouble, spies in the pay of he who paid them the best - constitute two of the most adventurous and colorful men of the beginning of the past century.

A great part of the activity of these French adventurers had to do with Cuba and its waters. It is possible that among the numerous Cuban "Lafittes" and "Lafitas" are perhaps found the only living branches of their genealogical tree ... All this, and many other reasons which will be presented in the following, intimately join the history and legend of the Lafittes with Cuban maritime adventure.

2. Jean and Pierre Lafitte, descendants of Spanish Basques who emigrated to France, were born in Gaul's Vascony in the first years of the ninth decade of the eighteenth century. Sons of a sailor, upon the sea they served a precocious apprenticeship. Of Jean, the elder, we have news that already in 1794 - when he was thirteen or fourteen years of age - he was sailing as a cabin-boy on French boats that sailed to Africa - that is to say, on slaver boats, to dispense with euphemisms. It is not known when he made his debut in the Caribbean, but surely this event would have occurred during his first time at sea, since we know that every slaver adventure concluded in the slave markets of the Antilles and of the United States. In those years, his brother Pierre, also involved in maritime adventure, attacked - sometimes as a pirate and other times as a corsair - in the twists and bends of the Antilles. Their center of operations and refuge was the island of Guadaloupe. In order to increase "business," Jean fortified and manned in

Saint-Malo a brigantine carrying nearly one hundred men and a half-dozen cannon, and sailed with it to the Antilles.

The avatars of the Napoleonic Wars caused the island of Guadaloupe to fall into the hands of the English, and the situation became uncomfortable for the brothers Lafitte. This event coincided with the need of the emerging nations, rebelling against Hispanic power, for sea-borne corsairs to insert themselves as buffers between their ports and the reinforcements which the empire would send against them. The Lafittes were welcomed in Cartagena of the Indies, and their ships were among the first to hoist the corsair flag of that new nation. The adventuresome blood of the Lafittes was not tamed in the service of this flag, and only for the profits from depredation (which they always undertook for their own account) did they fly it. Since Cartagena of the Indies was not an ideal, but rather a difficult, market for the product of their adventures, they quickly discover young New Orleans.

Here the Lafittes do not find any fools, and although the majority of their neighbors know that they are pirates, in the new city they are found registered as blacksmiths. They have a very famous blacksmith shop in one of the most central places of the populated area, and to it flock all those who wish to enter into dealings with the Lafittes. These dealings come down to the purchase of objects obtained as booty in their attacks, above all the acquisition of "pieces of ebony" - that is to say, black slaves - which the Lafittes introduce clandestinely, whether after their direct capture in Africa, or (more frequently) through attacks on other slavers which had previously done the capturing.

They are the most competitive merchants of African slaves of the hour, and instead of selling by the piece - that is, per man - the Lafittes had the idea, peculiar to neo-capitalist competition, to offer slaves at one dollar per pound. They weigh them, and if they weigh one hundred fifty pounds, then they receive one hundred fifty dollars ...

In the blacksmith shop in New Orleans the Lafittes stored neither the pirated booty nor, much less, slaves for sale. To warehouse both, and to provide a place for their men to rest and repair their boats, the capable Basque pirates had

engineered for themselves a series of hidden enclaves in the Mississippi delta. The place which became most famous was that designated with the Quixotic name of Barataria. This was a coastal island baptized who-knows-when with the name that Cervantes had given to the comical government of Sancho Panza.

It is said that Lafitte waited on his clientele as a king would wait on foreign ambassadors. He served them delicate dishes and exquisite drinks, seating at his table the most beautiful women of New Orleans (famous at *all* times for its beautiful women). Lafitte came to be an antecedent of those gangsters of our time who, from a well-appointed, air-conditioned office, direct an entire efficient corporation in the service of crime. Actually, Barataria was one of the bays that opened up toward the southwest of the delta island of Grande Terre, at the mouth of the Mississippi, between Fourchon Pass and Southwest Pass.

For a decade, pirates and adventurers brought to Barataria prize vessels and their cargoes. There, auctions were frequent. Many boats had their former structures disguised with fixtures or repairs, so the booty did not turn out to be difficult to place with the numerous businessmen of the North and the South who, under the protection of piracy and corsairs, managed to enrich themselves.

Of the business spirit of the Lafittes speaks the fact that Pierre, the younger brother, came to open a "boutique" of luxury articles on the Rue Royale in New Orleans, where things which came to be exquisitries for the businessmen of Barataria were the pleasure and awe of the beautiful women and fops of the hedonistic city.

3. The piratical activities of Jean and Pierre Lafitte have a duration of approximately one and one-half decades, counting just the Caribbean phase. During these fifteen years the majority of the minor attacks, occurring between the Gulf of Mexico and Terra Firma, have something to do with the Lafittes: either one of the boats of their - on occasion - numerous little squadrons commits the act, or it is carried out by some independent pirate or corsair who, eventually, will end up negotiating the fruit of his crimes with the famous brothers of New Orleans.

On more than one occasion the Cuban coast saw itself invaded by adventurers who, without a flag, sacked here and there, generally

attacking places of slave labor, not with the motive of liberating the Africans, but rather with that of speculating anew with their skin and bones.

The United States, and above all the most southerly states of that Union, needed more and more slave labor. Starting from the beginnings of the nineteenth century, a series of legal obstacles began to oppose their free trade and, although it might seem a paradox or joke, the man who created the black market for the black man in the South of the United States was Lafitte. He came to have at his disposal about one thousand delinquents of every art and style, eventually even having legal representation in New Orleans in case things were not shaping up as favorably as he would have liked. The best lawyers in the South, of course, were entirely at his service.

To the valiant nature of Jean Lafitte the following anecdote speaks clearly: When the government of New Orleans passed into the hands of the United States, the governor, William Claiborne, annoyed with the importance which Lafitte had acquired in the city, put a price on his head and hung posters with this or a similar inscription: "500 dollars reward will be paid to whomever hands over the said Jean Laffite, wanted by justice. Given in my hand, in New Orleans, on the 24th day of the month of November of 1813." It is probable that more than one neighbor recognized the handsome pirate contemplating with a smile the poster advertising a price for his delivery. A few days later, next to each one of the "Wanted" posters, there appeared others on which was offered one thousand five hundred dollars for the capture and delivery in Barataria "of the said William Claiborne, governor of the city."

4. There is one ugly facet in the life of Jean Lafitte: his excessive inclination to sell and betray those who became close friends of his. We have portrayed him as an antecedent of those of Murder, Inc., but he was not even faithful to his friends as at least the latter were. As soon as he stood to gain something from a betrayal, that was that.

The most documented case of this treasonous attitude is found in his behavior with the Mexicans who trusted him. On the 12th of April of 1814, in New Orleans and under the presidency of Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara, a junta government of the Mexican Republic had been formed. The collaboration offered in terms of

men and boats by the Lafittes was of such importance that these future liberators of Mexico did not hesitate in offering the pirate a position with a voice in the aforementioned junta. A French émigré general, Humbert, would command the expedition, and the corsair boats would transfer almost two thousand men from Matagorda to Tampico to rekindle there a new impulse for freedom in the Mexican people. This plan, in writing and with a wealth of detail, was sold by Lafitte to the government of Havana through a clergyman intermediary - Father Sedella - who at that time was the nucleus of Spanish espionage in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, more heroic and less ruinous attitudes salvage his prestige in history ... Some months after this adventure, in September of that very year 1814, the captain of the British navy, Lockyer, visited him in Barataria to offer him 30,000 dollars and the rank of frigate captain in the English navy if he would join the British forces which, at war with the United States, were attempting to re-conquer Louisiana. Far from accepting the offer, Lafitte sent the British documents to Governor Claiborne and at the same time offered his services and those of his men to defend New Orleans from the anticipated attack of the English. The American governor did not understand the pirate's good will, and not only bombarded his dry dock and encampments, but also made prisoners of Pierre, the brother of Lafitte, and of his two most outstanding lieutenants, Rene Beluche and Dominique You.

Meanwhile, the English general Pakenham had laid siege to the city of New Orleans. Not even the fortunate assistance of General Jackson was sufficient for the defense of the square. When the surrender of the latter was imminent, Lafitte, forgetting recent quarrels, made his appearance on the battlefield with his boats and men, swaying the result of the contest toward the northern side.

Claiborne had no choice but to free Pierre Lafitte, as well as Beluche and You. It is told of this defense of New Orleans that on one occasion when the riflemen of Kentucky had been overwhelmed by the English infantry, Lafitte and his men, brandishing sabers and machetes, launched themselves, as if in the act of boarding a prize at sea, upon the well-disciplined British soldiers who, faced with this unexpected form of fighting, retreated full of fright. The square was held. Jackson, victorious chief, in his report to the President and speaking of the pirates of Barataria, put it in these terms: "I can

do no less than praise warmly the manner in which the gentlemen carried themselves and the heroism with which they defended the fatherland ..." At the great ball with which the high society of New Orleans celebrated the victory, the Lafittes and their men found themselves elbow-to-elbow with the most aristocratic of the North American officials. And according to the testimony of the time, the dashing men of Barataria had more success among the ladies than the gallant soldiers of the North...

Moved by the attitude and heroism of the pirates, President Madison in March of 1815 decreed an amnesty which included within its terms all those who lived the adventure alongside the Lafitte brothers. And, for a few months, they enjoyed the tranquility and peace which this settlement of accounts with the law provided them. At the end of that time it began to dawn on them that such a lifestyle did not suit them. For some, this was so because they were wasteful and extravagant by nature, and had little to spend in those days, as unproductive as they were peaceful; for others, like Lafitte himself - more than wealthy - because they carried adventure in their blood. The early times were bad for the pirates, because a team of boats from the United States, Spain, and England attacked one morning the refuge of Barataria, destroyed many of their vessels, and burned the new shelters of the pirates. This attack, occurring almost by surprise, disbanded Lafitte's men for a time. But Lafitte, with quickness and foresight, had already searched out refuge on Galveston Island at a place called Campeche. This period was a bit confused. There was piracy, but there were also betrayals ... Another time in conjunction with the aforementioned clergyman, Sedella, Lafitte brought to the attention of the Viceroy of Mexico the revolutionary correspondence that Guadalupe Victoria had exchanged with other Mexican independence leaders. A harder case, however, is that which he carried out against the planned expedition being prepared in Philadelphia to liberate Cuba. The French engineer Lacarriere Latour had entered into a contract with a North American anti-slavery society ready to finance an expedition to liberate Cuba. This report, which he placed into the hands of the ambassador Luis de Onís so that he in turn would bring it to the attention of the Spanish authorities, was worth to him the pardon of all the crimes for which he was being pursued from Cuba and the remaining Hispanic colonies.

5. A new phase is begun for the Lafittes after this betrayal. For some months they live as corsairs, and more than once they act as such against the corsairs of New Granada and Buenos Aires. Thus, the former attackers convert themselves into defenders of the Cuban coast. What the knave Lafitte seeks is to obtain a patent, not as a corsair, but as a slave dealer, and he succeeds. The government of Cuba recognizes in his talents the potential to provide them with African flesh, and Lafitte and the few men who now follow him deliver for some time. Habit makes him fall into certain convenient traffic patterns: instead of searching for his merchandise on the coasts of Guinea, he prefers to wait for it near the Caribbean, when others less shrewd are controlling it. He returns, then, to his days of pirating. A notice from the New Orleans Customs office is clear in this sense: "The violation of the slave law continues to be practiced with impunity, just as the fiscal policy of the Republic is being ignored, by a hodge-podge mixture of filibusters and contrabandists who, under the Mexican flag, have their seat in Galveston. In reality they turn out to be the same men who had seemed to have been eradicated from Baratania ..."

In Galveston, Jean Lafitte proudly wore the title of "governor," which he said had been bestowed upon him by a not-yet-existent Republic of Texas.

Pierre, meanwhile, found himself no less than in Havana, where he was hoping to collect part of the pay for their espionage, payment that had been authorized by a Spanish Royal Order of the 2nd of March of 1820. The Lafittes planned to spend their final years in our capital.

Here, in Havana, they had purchased a ranch situated in what is today the crossroads of Correa and Calzada de Jesus del Monte, a place that for many years has maintained the legend that under its ground is hidden part of the treasure of these pirates ... But this home was only to be enjoyed by their descendants. Pierre died in the Yucatan in November, 1821, and Jean continued smuggling slaves, more than pirating, around the Cuban coast, until in January of 1822 the small fleet that still belonged to him from his yesteryear's powerful squadron was destroyed by cannon fire by a brigantine of the English navy off the southern coast of Cuba.

Surviving the catastrophe, he swam with some of his companions to the Cuban shore, where he ended up taken prisoner by the guards near Santa Cruz del Sur. He was in the jail at Puerto Principe for some weeks, and because he was sick he managed to be transferred to the Hospital of San Juan de Dios, from which he escaped the 13th of February of 1822, to flee toward some inlet of the Camagueyan coast.

The report of the governor of Puerto Principe, dated the 19th of March, said that Jean Lafitte "... is established in a pirate *guairo* [a small, two-masted vessel with leg-of-mutton sails] and several boats crewed by people of every nation and color, up to the number of thirty men, in the anchorage of Rincon Grande, one league distant from Viaro, on the north coast of this jurisdiction and adjacent to Boca Carabela."

But Lafitte still sailed for some years around the Camagueyan coast, especially, and it seems to be that due to a matter of interest he ended his days assassinated by one of his Cuban associates in slaver traffic. Because it must be said that this Lafitte had more than one Cuban associate, especially around 1820, when slaves were still important in the Mississippi delta. For some months, the pirates of the Gulf and some Cuban contrabandists and corsairs were planning an attack that would make them famous worldwide. It had to do with nothing less than organizing an expedition, at whose head would be placed Lafitte, to take by raid the island of St. Helena, in the middle of the Atlantic, liberating the most famous prisoner of that time: Napoleon Bonaparte. For this the Lafittes had already prepared accommodations in New Orleans, where they would lodge the illustrious freedman until such time as circumstances would indicate future activities. But the plan crumbled to earth with the unexpected death of the exiled emperor in 1821.

Still to the end of the nineteenth century, in the most picturesque part of New Orleans, there was being pointed out to the tourist the house where, if the adventure had turned out well, he who would be Emperor of France would have ended his days ...

Mota, Francisco, *Piratas en el Caribe* (Casa de las Américas, 1984: Colección "Nuestros Países," Serie "Rumbos").





Some Laffite Society Members Pose for a Group Photograph  
at the New Orleans Country Club, Thursday Evening, January 8, 1998

From Left to Right: Jim Nonus, Dorothy Karilanovic, Wil Zapalac, Kathy Modzelewski, Jeff Modzelewski, Diane Olson, R. Dale Olson, Ginny Roberts, Dave Roberts, Betty Wilson, Dr. Reginald Wilson, Margaret Earthman, Bernadette Foley, Jim Earthman, and Bill Foley

### SPECIAL EVENT, JANUARY 8, 1998: ADDRESS OF LAFFITE SOCIETY PRESIDENT R. DALE OLSON TO THE LOUISIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*JEFF MODZELEWSKI*

The Laffite Society received welcome out-of-state recognition early in 1998 when president R. Dale Olson, at the invitation of the Louisiana Historical Society ("LHS"), gave the principal address at that group's annual banquet on Thursday, January 8.

The LHS boasts a long lineage. It was formed early in 1836, just thirty-two years after the consummation in New Orleans of the Louisiana Purchase, and only twenty-one years after the Battle of New Orleans effectively

ended the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain.

The LHS has, in the past, held its annual banquet at Antoine's, the elegant New Orleans French Quarter restaurant, but this year's black-tie affair took place at the beautiful New Orleans Country Club. The scheduling of the event was planned to coincide with the 183<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the United States victory over the British at the Battle of New Orleans. That victory in January, 1815, resulted in no small



part from the efforts of Jean and Pierre Laffite, Dominique Youx, and their cohorts, names familiar to Laffite *aficionados*.

Banquet attendees partook of a sumptuous repast which included hors d'oeuvres, vichyssoise, shrimp remoulade, filet of trout Meuniere, tenderloin of beef, pommes Brabant, cauliflower au gratin, and baked Alaska, accompanied by white and red wines and followed by the traditional rich, chicory-laced New Orleans coffee.

During the meal, William D. Reeves, current-year LHS president and toastmaster for the banquet, introduced individually all of the approximately one hundred forty attendees, making each feel like an honored dignitary. And, indeed, there was no lack of dignitaries at the banquet, as several diplomats and consulate officials representing the governments of France, Great Britain, Japan, and Spain were in attendance.

The evening's events included short remarks by the President of the Louisiana Society of United States Daughters of 1812 and by the President of the Society of the War of 1812 in the State of Louisiana, and toasts to France and the "gallant adversary" (Great Britain). During other brief but impressive interludes interspersed throughout the evening, the group rose en masse to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and to sing "The Star Spangled Banner," "America the Beautiful," "God Save the Queen," and "La Marseillaise" (these last the British and French national anthems, respectively).

Lest any reader fear that French heritage has dissipated in New Orleans, let it be noted that, although words to all of the

aforementioned songs were included with the printed dinner program, many of the LHS members sang "La Marseillaise" in French without any need of prompts!

The highlight of the activities was The Laffite Society's own R. Dale Olson's address, which lasted forty minutes and discussed many of the threads of Laffite lore. Of course, the majority of those present hailed from the Crescent City and were very knowledgeable about the Battle of New Orleans and Laffite's role in same, but Mr. Olson's mastery of the Galveston phase of the privateer's life, as well as the debates over the place and date of the privateer's demise and the validity of *The Journal of Jean Laffite*, provided fresh information for many in the audience and held them rapt.

In total, fifteen Laffite Society members from Galveston and its environs made the trek to New Orleans to attend the banquet. This group included Jim and Margaret Earthman, Bill and Bernadette Foley, Dorothy Karilanic, Jeff and Kathy Modzelewski, Jim Nonus, Dale and Diane Olson, Dave and Ginny Roberts, Reginald and Betty Wilson, and Wil Zapalac.

The Laffite Society garnered several new members as a result of its exposure at the 1998 LHS banquet. The Society has also entered into an informal agreement with the LHS, through their president Bill Reeves, to assist in and contribute to the mounting of a Laffite exhibit which could be taken on the road to visit different cities throughout the country. A donor has reportedly already been found who is willing to fund a large portion of the cost of the exhibit.

SPECIAL EVENT, MAY 9 - 11, 1997:  
TRIP TO GRAND ISLE AND GRANDE TERRE, LOUISIANA (LAFFITE'S BARATARIA)  
*DOROTHY MCD. KARILANOVIC*

The Laffite Society enjoyed a second visit to Grand Isle and Grande Terre, Louisiana, from Friday through Sunday, May 9 - 11, 1997. This trip was a reprise of that undertaken two years earlier, in the spring of 1995.

Laffite Society members and guests made their ways by car to Grand Isle throughout the course of Friday, May 9th, and settled in at their motels. In late afternoon, the group convened for a wine-and-cheese party hosted by Dave Roberts, Laffite Society Press Director, and his wife and Society member Ginny. Afterwards, participants reunited at Cigar's Restaurant, where they were met by the mayor of Grand Isle and other representatives of the area's local historical association. Pat and Jean Landry, old friends of the Laffite Society and residents of Grand Isle, were also on hand to welcome everyone.

On Saturday, May 10th, participants donned jeans, T-shirts, comfortable shoes, and varying amounts of foul-weather gear in preparation for the trip to the neighboring island of Grande Terre. The group was transported via motor launch across Barataria Pass, a trip of some twenty minutes duration.

Grande Terre, now an island uninhabited except by a few state wildlife employees, was the site of Jean Laffite's original headquarters in Barataria Bay prior to his departure for Galveston in 1817. The island's main attraction is the ruins of impressive, red-brick Fort Livingston, built in a French architectural style and complete with moat. The fort is named for Edward Livingston, Secretary to President James Madison and one-time legal representative for defendants Jean and Pierre Laffite. Camera shutters clicked away as participants climbed high and low over and under the remains of the substantial brick edifice, cemented tightly together with oyster shells and moss and said to have been constructed by slaves.

A highlight of the day was an adventuresome trek through swampy marsh and high grass to the eastern end of the island, the end farthest from the ruins of the old fort, where Laffite's encampment is said to have been located. To the surprise and delight of everyone having the stamina to make the difficult walk through the marsh, a virtual treasure trove awaited their discovery. The tides of that day and season had made available in plain sight numerous artifacts dating from as far back as the nineteenth

century. Ceramic shards of green, white, blue, and other colors lay strewn about in the shell mixture along the shores of the Gulf of Mexico and Barataria Bay, along with the occasional pipe bowl or stem, piece of colored glass, and numerous flints, of the last of which Laffite was thought to have kept a large storehouse in the area.

The walk from the fort to the other end of the island had been arduous and for some was not without discomfort. At one point, those less intrepid adventurers who had paused to view the venture from a safer and drier place spied Ginny Roberts veering over to one side, trying to catch her balance and avoid disappearing into a knee-deep sink-hole in the swampy, overgrown marsh grass ("What if there had been a 'gator or water moccasin lurking there!"). But brave Jim Nonus suffered the only casualty, sacrificing his left shoe to the marsh and thus forced to limp back to civilization with one foot shod and one in soggy sock.

Saturday evening found members and guests back at the hotel pleasantly recalling the events of the day's trip to Grande Terre. The group had gathered for a shrimp and crawfish boil prepared and hosted by local hoteliers Spencer and Beth Smith of Grand Isle. Tim Torrance, a Grand Islander and artifact hunter who had several years before retrieved a bronze cannon from the water offshore from Fort Livingston, brought a collection of objects to display, including several beautiful bronze keys covered with a green patina. One of Tim's previous finds, dug out of a mud bank on Grande Terre, was a full-length wooden coffin enclosing the almost-complete skeleton of a tall man. Tim had brought a piece of smooth, weathered wood from the coffin for attendees to see.

The following morning, Sunday, May 11, many participants met for breakfast and final farewells at "Mama's," a local restaurant. On the road trip back, Jeff and Kathy Modzelewski, Jim Nonus, Dale and Diane Olson, Dick Rasche, and Dorothy Karilanovic stopped at the home of Society member Bob Looper to look at his large collection of Laffite articles and other documents.

Members in attendance for this special event included Bob Looper, Kathy and Jeff Modzelewski, Jim Nonus, Dale and Diane Olson, Richard Rasche, Dave and Ginny Roberts, Kathleen Taylor, Robert Vogel, Wil Zapalac, and Dorothy McD. Karilanovic.



Laffite Society President R. Dale Olson on the Front Steps of the Old Castillo Hotel, St. Martinville, Louisiana, Late May, 1998

## SPECIAL EVENT, WEEKEND OF MAY 29 – 31, 1998: SOUTHWEST SOCIETY OF ARCHIVISTS ANNUAL MEETING, AND A STAY IN ST. MARTINVILLE, LOUISIANA

*R. DALE OLSON*

Approximately eighteen members of The Laffite Society joined members of the Southwest Society of Archivists in traveling to Lafayette, Louisiana, in late May, 1998, for the latter group's annual meeting. Attendees were able there to observe and participate in a panel discussion dealing with archival records of Jean and Pierre Laffite.

Laffite Society members from Dayton, Galveston, Liberty, and Tiki Island, Texas; Golden Meadow, Lake Charles, and New Orleans, Louisiana; and New Brighton, Minnesota, congregated on Friday afternoon, May 29, at the Lafayette Hilton Hotel to hear the following.

Sally K. Reeves of the New Orleans Notarial Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana, spoke on "Privateering in the Gulf of Mexico: True Stories from the Notarial Archives, 1805 – 1815."

Robert L. Schaadt, Director-Archivist with the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, Texas, talked of "The Jean Laffite Journal: Its History and Controversy."

Barbara Rust, Archivist with NARA - Fort Worth Region, Fort Worth, Texas, discussed "Piracy and the Law: New Orleans Federal Court Records, 1806 – 1820."

R. Dale Olson, President of The Laffite Society, served as moderator for the session.

After the conclusion of the event, the Laffite group traveled the short distance to St. Martinville, Louisiana, where the majority began a weekend stay at the Old Castillo Hotel, a beautiful and historic edifice dating from the early nineteenth century. The Old Castillo sits on the banks of the Bayou Teche, adjacent to the "Evangeline Oak," immortalized in poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

That evening, under this famous tree, Laffite Society members drank Sazeracs, the traditional New Orleans aperitif, in a toast to Lyle Saxon, Weeks Hall (more on these two later), and Longfellow. Afterward, the group retreated to the Old Castillo's restaurant, La Place d'Evangeline, for dinner. Participants there engaged in a lively discussion of the proposed new translation of the Laffite journal, to be undertaken in the summer of 1998 by a professor of French and authority on nineteenth-century French writings at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

On Saturday, May 30, the Laffitians traveled to and toured Avery Island, home of Tabasco sauce, and later explored the antique shops and sampled the cuisine of the environs, from Abbeville to Breaux Bridge. The group reconvened for dinner once again at La Place d'Evangeline, and afterward held an impromptu group discussion in the cozy second-floor foyer of the Old Castillo, with Sazeracs once more the chosen refreshment.

That weekend in St. Martinville, one

block from the Old Castillo Hotel, a local event called "Ensemble Encore" ("Together Again" in French) was held. The event commemorated the arrival of the original Acadian families in Louisiana in the mid-eighteenth century. Numerous descendants of those three thousand Acadians attended Mass at St. Martin of Tours Church and the subsequent festival on the banks of the Bayou Teche, visible from The Laffite Society's lodging.

On Sunday, May 31, before departing for home, many Laffite Society members drove to nearby New Iberia to tour a restored plantation manor house, "Shadows on the Teche." The mansion was once owned by Weeks Hall, and was visited on numerous occasions by his *compadre* Lyle Saxon – both of which men had been honored by Laffite Society toasts a couple of evenings before. Saxon is quite familiar to Laffite *aficionados* as the author of the seminal, albeit fictionalized, account of the life of our privateer, *Laffite the Pirate*.



The Old Castillo Hotel, St. Martinville, Louisiana

## GENERAL MEETING SUMMARIES AND FEATURED PROGRAM ABSTRACTS

The Laffite Society generally publishes in *The Laffite Society Chronicles* abstracts of featured talks presented at the General Meetings, when the nature and length of these featured presentations lend themselves to such inclusion, and when the speakers facilitate same. These abstracts might contain information which is in conflict with the opinions of others or with established documentation. The material contained in this section does not, therefore, necessarily reflect an official position of The Laffite Society. The Society does, however, encourage discourse regarding conflicting viewpoints, because it believes such discourse often leads to a broader and deeper understanding of those topics of discussion.

The Society recognizes that *The Laffite Society Chronicles* is its primary link with those members who do not attend monthly meetings. Therefore, whether or not monthly meetings include a featured presentation, the topics therein discussed are presented in summarized fashion in this section, to impart some feeling of those meetings' content.

### Tuesday, January 13, 1998

There was no featured presentation at this month's meeting. Instead, attendees discussed various matters of interest to The Laffite Society.

Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski, standing in for Treasurer Jim Earthman, reported a balance of about \$680.00 in The Society's checking account. She then stated that current membership numbered approximately seventy-two.

Ms. Modzelewski also informed attendees that The Society had received from member Robert Vogel an updated flyer on the special event planned for March 13 – 15, 1998, in Lake Charles, Louisiana, to be hosted by Mr. Vogel and his wife, Kathleen Taylor, along with Dr. Tom and Carol Watson of Lake Charles. Copies of these flyers were distributed to meeting attendees.

Laffite Society President R. Dale Olson noted that he had been asked to preside at a portion of the conference of the Southwest Society of Archivists to be held in Lafayette, Louisiana, on Friday, May 29, 1998. Mr. Olson will moderate a panel which will discuss archival collections relating to Jean Laffite. Additional plans are being developed by The Laffite Society to make this entire weekend into a special event and to include a stay in St. Martinville, site of the "Evangeline Oak." [Editor's note: see the article in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* titled "Special Event, Weekend of May 29 – 31, 1998: Southwest Society of Archivists Annual Meeting, and a Stay in St. Martinville, Louisiana."]

Mr. Olson mentioned as well that he had received an invitation to attend an annual meeting of the Isleños ("Islanders" in Spanish) of Louisiana. The membership of this organization consists both of descendants of Spanish Canary Islanders who settled in Louisiana in the eighteenth century, as well as others who simply possess an interest in the history of that people. Members of the Isleños have expressed an interest in visiting Galveston to speak at a Laffite Society meeting.

Lastly, Mr. Olson called for a Laffite Society Board of Directors meeting to be held Friday, January 16, 1998, at 6:00 PM, at The Eiband's Gallery.

Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski acknowledged with gratitude those members who had contributed write-ups of past special events for publication in *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. Mr. Modzelewski stated that he hoped to produce the next issue of this publication by the end of February, 1998.

Society Historian Bernadette Foley urged attendees to contribute pictures of Society gatherings for its photograph album. Society Press Director Dave Roberts added a request for photographs of the January, 1998, special event in New Orleans (the annual meeting of the Louisiana Historical Society, at which Laffite Society President R. Dale Olson gave the principal address) so that he could submit them for publication in *The Galveston County Daily News*. [Editor's note: see the article in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* titled "Special Event, January 8, 1998: Address of Laffite Society President R. Dale Olson to the Louisiana Historical Society."]

Society Secretary Dorothy Karilanovic reported on her extensive correspondence with Richard B. Smith, who represents The Company, a group of researchers in West Yorkshire, England, and their on-going project to decipher the Thomas Beale code. Mr. Smith has assured Ms. Karilanovic that The Laffite Society would be a recipient of any biographical information on Laffite that the ciphers revealed. Further correspondence with The Company was placed "on hold" in mid-December, 1997, pending the receipt of additional information that The Laffite Society has requested of The Company.

Tuesday, February 10, 1998

For this month's featured presentation, First Vice President Jean Epperson read her letter of January 18, 1998, to Mr. Manuel Barrera, author of *Then the Gringos Came*. The purpose of Ms. Epperson's letter was to offer Mr. Barrera correct information gleaned during the course of her extensive research. Particularly, Ms. Epperson explained that Ramón Lafon was not, as stated in Mr. Barrera's book, Jean Laffite. Ms. Epperson's letter also recounted many other details relating to the activities of Martín de León and the aforementioned Lafon, who founded Port Isabel, Texas, and Brazos Santiago.

To begin the business portion of the meeting, President R. Dale Olson welcomed by name three first-time visitors to the meeting. Mr. Olson went on to acknowledge Laffite Society member Don Peak for his leadership in, and dedication to, Galveston's East End Historic District Association, and for his continuing preparation of that group's monthly newsletter. Mr. Olson also recognized Laffite Society Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski for the excellence of the monthly Laffite-related column (titled "The Corsair's Corner") which he pens for the East End newsletter.

Mr. Olson next mentioned the upcoming May 29, 1998, meeting of the Southwest Society of Archivists in Lafayette, Louisiana, at which he has been invited to serve as moderator of a panel discussion of archived Laffite references. He said that plans are in progress to expand that Friday function into a special-event weekend to include trips to St. Martinville; New Iberia (site of the restored manor house "Shadows on the Teche"); and Avery Island, home of Tabasco sauce.

Mr. Olson noted that the annual buffet reception at the home of Society Treasurer Jim and member Margaret Earthman was scheduled for April, 1998, but that the exact date was still to be determined. He then reminded members to be thinking of whom they might like to nominate for Board of Directors positions for the new biennial term to begin in August, 1998; a nominating committee will be appointed in March.

Mr. Olson exhibited to meeting attendees a photocopy of the obituary of Françoise Sel, published in a New Orleans newspaper in November, 1855.

Lastly, Mr. Olson stated that he had received, courtesy of Bill Reeves, President of the Louisiana Historical Society, a copy of an announcement in *The New Orleans Times-Picayune* referring to the address given by Mr. Olson at the annual meeting of the LHS held January 8, 1998, at the New Orleans Country Club.

Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski, standing in for Treasurer Jim Earthman, reported a Society bank balance of \$950.00. Ms. Modzelewski also urged those expecting to attend the special event planned by Society member Robert C. Vogel for mid-March, 1998, in Lake Charles, Louisiana, to remit their registration forms and make their reservations for lodging.

Ms. Modzelewski reported receiving a letter from Mary Tomes Prinz of Kenner, Louisiana, in which Ms. Prinz stated that she believed her husband was a descendant of the son of Pierre Laffite, Charles, and in which she provided a brief sketch of the supposed line of descent.

Society member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that on a recent visit to the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, Texas, he had learned of additional material housed therein which related to the Laffites, of which he had been unaware during his many previous visits to the facility. Dr. Wilson also mentioned that the Library had informed him that it had been receiving an increased number of inquiries about *The Journal of Jean Laffite*.

First-time visitor to a Laffite Society meeting Dorothy Snow Lucas, from the Hitchcock, Texas, area, stated that she is a descendant of a French family which settled in that area in the middle or late nineteenth century, joining others, such as the Tacquard family, who arrived in the 1830's, and of which many descendants still live in the locale. Ms. Lucas suggested that The Society contact Ms. Jo Ann Click Robinson of the Hitchcock Historical Society to inquire about possible documentation of families settling in the area not long after the departure of the Laffites from Galveston in 1820 - 1821.

Tuesday, March 10, 1998

This month's planned presentation on a privateer seal by member Dr. Reginald Wilson was deferred to a later date due to the lateness of the hour at which preceding Society business was concluded.

To begin the business portion of the meeting, Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski reported that paid members of The Laffite Society now numbered approximately eighty.

Third Vice President Jim Nonus stated that the annual buffet reception at the home of Jim and Margaret Earthman had been tentatively scheduled for Sunday, April 26, 1998, pending final approval by the Earthmans. Mr. Nonus also volunteered to gather information on the Old Castillo Hotel in St. Martinville,

Louisiana. This historic hostelry has been chosen as the preferred lodging for Society members and guests for the nights of May 29 – 30, 1998, the special-event weekend during which Society President R. Dale Olson will participate in the annual meeting of the Southwest Society of Archivists in Lafayette.

Society members Robert C. Vogel and Kathleen Taylor presented a preview of the activities to take place during the special event scheduled for March 13 – 15, 1998, in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The event will be hosted by local retired professor Dr. Tom Watson, his wife Carol, and Mr. Vogel and Ms. Taylor.

Mr. Vogel announced that he would soon have available for purchase a work titled *Jean Laffite in American History: A Bibliographic Guide*, the first publication produced by the Vogel/Taylor White Pine Press of Saint Paul, Minnesota. The *Guide* lists two hundred eighteen books, articles, theses, and unpublished duplicated works dealing with Laffite. Mr. Vogel and Ms. Taylor are also working on a companion volume to be titled *Jean Laffite in American Literature, Theater, and Film*, to be published by White Pine Press in 1999.

Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski stated that he hoped to have the next issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* published by the end of April, 1998. Mr. Modzelewski, a 32° Mason, also reported that he had acquired for his Masonic book collection, through the mediation of Society member Pam Keyes, an 1847 work titled *Letters on the Masonic Institution* (Press of T.R. Marvin, No. 24 Congress Street, Boston, MA) comprising correspondence of John Quincy Adams on Freemasonry. The book contains a letter addressed to Edward Livingston, one of the attorneys of Jean and Pierre Laffite.

Lastly, Society Parliamentarian Diane Olson announced the formation by appointment of a nominating committee for the Board of Directors to take office in August, 1998. The committee is to be chaired by Third Vice President Jim Nonus, Historian Bernadette Foley, and Ms. Olson.

#### Tuesday, April 14, 1998

As this month's featured presentation, Dr. Reginald Wilson recounted a discussion of the facts that he had assembled on the possible burial site of Pierre Laffite in Mexico's Yucatan. Dr. Wilson provided for members' benefit the following: 1) a photocopy of a notarized page dated May 13, 1947, from a Laffite family bible showing a line of descent from Jean Laffite to his great-grandson John A. Laffite, and 2) a photocopy of a map focusing on Dzinzantun, Yucatan, the alleged site of the burial of Pierre Laffite in November, 1821.

In the business portion of the meeting, Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski reported that The Society's bank account balance stood at \$1,501.00. Standing in for Third Vice President Jim Nonus, Ms. Modzelewski went on to address the upcoming April 26<sup>th</sup> buffet reception at the home of Laffite Society Treasurer Jim Earthman and his wife and Society member Margaret, and reminded members to RSVP.

Since all the rooms at the Old Castillo Hotel in St. Martinville, Louisiana have already been reserved by Society members for the special-event weekend at the end of May, 1998, Secretary Dorothy Karilanovic provided information on two local bed-and-breakfast inns located just five blocks from the Old Castillo.

Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski announced that the next issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* would be available for distribution at the April 26, 1998, party at the Earthmans' home.

Mr. Modzelewski also read text which he had mailed to the Lake Charles, Louisiana, *Lake Charles American Press*, to be published as a "Letter to the Editor," in which The Society thanked all those who had made the March 13 – 15, 1998, outing so enjoyable. The text of the letter is as follows:

#### THANKS TO LAKE CHARLES LOCALS FOR HOSPITALITY

The Laffite Society is a not-for-profit group based in Galveston, Texas, with members throughout the United States and abroad. The focus of the group is the study of the privateers Jean and Pierre Laffite, their contemporaries, and the geographical locales and time period associated with them.

Approximately 20 members of our group spent a three-day weekend in Lake Charles during March 13 – 15, 1998, on a special outing. We had a wonderful time, and wanted to publicly thank the local folk involved.

We express our gratitude to: The Inn on the Bayou; The Jean Laffite Inne; Kathryn Bergstrom and the Imperial Calcasieu Museum; Jack Mitchell and The Buccaneers; the Cajun Kitchen; Polly Pousson, Jimmy and Will Cox, and Tom

Filo of Cox, Cox & Filo; and Stan Chapman, Charles and Linda Dessommes, and Armin and Jenelle Brahm of the Lake Charles Power Squadron.

Last but not least, we thank Dr. Tom and Carol Watson for coordinating our stay and itinerary, and in general making us feel very welcome.

The Laffite Society  
Galveston, Texas

This special event had been planned and hosted by Dr. Tom and Carol Watson and Society members Robert Vogel and Kathleen Taylor. Ms. Karilanovic added that copies were on file of letters of thanks she had written on behalf of The Laffite Society individually to some of those who contributed to the activities of that weekend, including Dr. Tom and Carol Watson, Robert Vogel and Kathleen Taylor, Charles and Linda Dessommes, Armin and Jenelle Brahm, and Jack Mitchell Associates (the "Buccaneers" or "Contraband Pirates").

First Vice President Jean L. Epperson reported that the Houston Archaeological Society was in the process of inspecting artifacts from the 1996 excavation at the supposed site of Laffite's Maison Rouge in the 1400 block of Water Street in Galveston. Fifteen to twenty pieces of a type of ceramic known as "Wormware" have thus far been identified.

Society member Elaine Johnson donated to The Laffite Society Archives a photocopy of a reprint of *The Story of Champ d'Asile* (a Book Club of Texas publication), as well as a photocopy of *Days of Exile* by Winston Smith.

#### Tuesday, May 12, 1998

As this month's featured presentation, Society member Dr. Reginald Wilson spoke of his research efforts to trace the origin and use of a privateering seal, found on page 212 of *The Journal of Jean Laffite* as well as on page 101 of Jack C. Ramsay, Jr.'s, *Jean Laffite, Prince of Pirates*. [Editor's note: see the article in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* titled "The Saga of the Seal."] The original seal, which is said to have had a border incorporating silver and gold, depicts an eagle grasping a serpent in its beak. The significance and symbolism of other elements in the seal remain to be determined: a possible "armadillo" on which the eagle is perched (some say this might be a crown of five points); lightning bolts in the eagle's talons; and the letters "NO" and "Y DS" (possibly abbreviations in Spanish for "Number" and "and God," respectively), and numeral "13." Dr. Wilson distributed to attendees photocopies of three different representations of the seal, one of which was in color, and called for a close examination of the seal's elements in an effort to identify them.

Laffite Society President R. Dale Olson thanked Dr. Wilson for his presentation. Mr. Olson also acknowledged the early research contribution of the discovery of the seal by Society member Pam Keyes, former editor of the newsletter published by The Laffite Study Group, a predecessor of The Laffite Society.

In the business portion of the meeting, Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski, standing in for Treasurer Jim Earthman, reported a Society bank account balance of \$1,238.60. Ms. Modzelewski also reported that The Society now counted eighty-nine paid members.

Mr. Olson, standing in for Third Vice President Jim Nonus, reported on the upcoming trip to Lafayette, Louisiana, in May, 1998, at which he is scheduled to moderate a panel discussion of the Southwest Society of Archivists titled "In Search of Jean Laffite: Archival Versus Library Holdings Relating to Laffite-Era Privateering - the True Story." Members of the panel, and the talks they will present, are as follows:

- 1) Sally K. Reeves, New Orleans Notarial Archives (New Orleans, LA): "Privateering in the Gulf of Mexico: True Stories from the Notarial Archives, 1805 - 1815"
- 2) Robert L. Schaadt, Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center (Liberty, TX): "The Jean Laffite Journal: Its History and Controversy"
- 3) Barbara Rust, National Archives and Records Administration - Fort Worth Region (Fort Worth, TX): "Piracy and the Law: New Orleans Federal Court Records, 1806 - 1820"

Mr. Olson stated that, following the archivist meeting on Friday, May 29, 1998, in Lafayette, those members who wished to do so would travel on to St. Martinville for a two-day stay at the Old Castillo Hotel on the Bayou Teche (or other close-by bed-and-breakfast inns), to visit surrounding sites of historical interest.

Society Secretary Dorothy Karilanovic reported that she would place a description of each Society officer's job description in the respective binders now housed in The Laffite Society Archives at The Eiband's



Gallery. Following the election of officers for the August, 1998, through July, 2000, biennial term, the materials contained therein could be reviewed and amended as was deemed necessary.

Press Director Dave Roberts played an audio tape he had recorded of a script he wrote about Jean Laffite. Mr. Roberts proposed that some fifty such scripts be generated and recorded for future airing over Galveston radio station KGBC. He called for volunteers to help write the scripts, recommending a format of three typed, double-spaced pages, the text of which, when read aloud, should not exceed three minutes' duration. Member Susan Baker Olsen suggested that topics be assigned to volunteers by Mr. Roberts. President R. Dale Olson then appointed a committee to oversee preparation of the scripts, to consist of Society members Kenneth Deaton and Don Peak, First Vice President Jean L. Epperson, Secretary Dorothy McD. Karilanovic, and Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski. [Editor's note: see "The Story of Laffite" Audio Tape Project" in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.]

Parliamentarian Diane Olson read the slate of nominees for Board of Directors offices for the August 1998 - July 2000 terms, as follows:

President	Kathy Modzelewski
First Vice President (Programs)	Dave Roberts
Second Vice President (Membership)	Judy Dolfi
Third Vice President (Special Events)	Jim Nonus
Treasurer	Jeff Modzelewski
Recording/Corresponding Secretary	Dorothy McD. Karilanovic
Editor of Publications	Jeff Modzelewski
Press Director	George Najarian
Archivist	Don Marler
Historian	Bernadette Foley
Coordinator of Research	Wil Zapalac
Parliamentarian	Diane Olson
Advisory Board	Jim Earthman, Jean L. Epperson, Bill Foley, Pam Keyes, Robert Looper, Randy Pace, Robert Vogel, Reginald Wilson

President R. Dale Olson suggested that soon after the election of the new Board, an ad hoc meeting of outgoing and incoming officers be held, to discuss the transition of duties and new thoughts on same.

Mr. Olson also suggested that the new Board might wish to assign the duty of administering the refreshments at the monthly meetings to a different volunteer, in advance, so that this chore be more equally shared.

Mr. Olson next noted that retired professor Dr. Tom Watson of Lake Charles, Louisiana, has arranged for French linguist and scholar Professor Gene Marshall of McNeese State University to begin a new translation of *The Journal of Jean Laffite*. This new rendering will provide an alternative professional opinion upon, and point of comparison with, the accuracy of the current lone known extant translation. The project will also attempt to verify the authenticity of other linguistic elements expressed by the alleged native French speaker who authored the controversial *Journal*.

Descriptive information was provided on the following upcoming events to focus on Jean Laffite:

- At the International Oleander Society meeting scheduled for May 16, 1998, at Galveston's Moody Gardens, Dr. Stephen Curley of Texas A.&M. University at Galveston will speak on "The Popular Images of Jean Laffite" and "The Galveston Sea Chantey in Oleander Time."
- A new eighteen-minute film on Laffite by producer Grant Mitchell and Associates has been completed. The film depicts "The Last Dinner on Galveston Island," a title which refers to a gathering of Laffite and company prior to the dissolution of the privateer's commune and his departure from the Island in 1820. Historical figures Jane Long and Lieutenant Lawrence Kearney appear in the film as ghostly characters in retrospect. Society Third Vice President Jim Nonus will have a supporting role in the film, which will focus on three Galveston locations: the nineteenth-century sailing ship *Elissa*; an outdoors night scene in the sand dunes of east Galveston; and an interior dining-room scene filmed in Galveston's nineteenth-century Letitia Rosenberg Home. The film is slated to be shown beginning in late summer, 1998, alternating with "The Great Storm" at Galveston's Seaport Museum.

In correspondence, Society member Robert Vogel informed President R. Dale Olson that he had located, in a volume of documents from the Cuban Archives housed at the University of Minnesota, a reference to Jean Laffite's escape from a Cuban prison in 1822.

Tuesday, June 9, 1998

As the featured event of this month's meeting, members of the cast of a new dramatic/historical stage production, *Jean Laffite of the Maison Rouge*, presented a reading of two scenes from the play, soon to have its world premier on July 9, 1998, at Galveston's The Strand Theatre. The performance was well received, and thanks and *Bravo!*'s were extended to play author and Executive Director of The Strand Theatre, William Burford, and to the talented cast of players. Plans are under consideration for a special opening night reception at the theater which members of The Laffite Society may attend.

To begin the business portion of the meeting, The Society's Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski, standing in for Treasurer Jim Earthman, reported a balance of approximately \$1,300.00 in The Society's bank account as of May 31, 1998.

Society Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski informed attendees that three members have joined The Society in recent weeks, one as a result of an Internet search. A suggestion was made that the address of The Society's World Wide Web page, designed and maintained by member Andy Hall, be included in future issues of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* [editor's note: see the bottom of the inside front cover of this issue] and that a table of contents be included at said Web site.

Ms. Modzelewski also reported that Society member Penny Clark, former curator at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center at Liberty, Texas, notified The Society via a greeting card that she had resigned her position at said facility and relocated to her home town in the Midwest.

Lastly, Ms. Modzelewski reminded members that the voting for the 1998 - 2000 Laffite Society Board of Directors would take place at the regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, July 14, 1998. Members will receive a list of nominees via the mail.

Society Press Director Dave Roberts distributed to attendees a list he had drafted of twenty-eight topics relating to Laffite history, around which vignettes might be composed and later aired on regional radio stations. Mr. Roberts asked that Society members willing to write one or more vignettes choose a topic(s) and communicate their choices to him at a future meeting to insure that efforts not be duplicated.

Society Secretary Dorothy Karilanic reported that on June 3, 1998, she had received a carefully prepared and presented file, some twenty pages in length, from the West Yorkshire, England, group called The Company, which is in the process of decoding the Thomas J. Beale ciphers. The Company sent this information in response to Ms. Karilanic's request for verification of the English group's claims that the deaths of Jean and Pierre Laffite occurred in 1823 - 1824 in the Yucatan, and that Thomas J. Beale and Jean Laffite were one and the same person. The information supplied by The Company will be reviewed and discussed by the Laffite Society's Board of Directors, and the latter will prepare a response in due course.

Society member Dr. Reginald Wilson discussed on-going activities relating to investigation into the alleged burial site of Jean Laffite near Alton, Illinois. According to a statement from John A. Laflin describing a trip he made with his grandfather Jules Laffite in 1922, the latter led Mr. Laflin to a place on a small hill encircled by a small iron fence, and indicated that it marked the place of burial of Jean Laffite, which Jules Laffite said he had last visited in 1854. [Editor's note: see the article in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* titled "The Final Resting Place of Jean Laffite," as well as the article in the previous issue titled "A Visit to Laffite's Grave."]

Dr. Wilson also showed attendees a letter he had received from member Pam Keyes. In the letter, Ms. Keyes stated that she had found in the 1997 book by Dale Walker titled *Legends & Lies: Great Mysteries of the American West* an interesting claim made by autograph specialist Charles Hamilton. Hamilton asserted that the José Enrique de la Peña diary written in 1836 and published in the 1950's was forged by John A. Laflin (as was, Hamilton claimed, *The Journal of Jean Laffite*). Hamilton's claim was based on the fact that "... the two works had certain phrases that were similar, but one was in Spanish and the other in French." Ms. Keyes plans to contest this claim at a future Laffite Society meeting, at which time she will display the Peña book and some samples of phraseology in which attendees might be interested.

## WELCOME, NEW LAFFITIANS

JANUARY 1, 1998 – JUNE 30, 1998

Sylvie Feuillie, Paris, France

Gary Fretz, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Elaine Johnson, Galveston, Texas

Robert and Nancy Kovaly, Phoenix, Arizona

Dorothy Lucas, Galveston, Texas

Alexandra Ross, Fairbanks, Alaska

Norman and Marguerite Sachnik, Galveston, Texas

Charles Shannon, Rockport, Texas

Gerald and Glenna Simpson, Liberty, Texas

Joann Stiles, Beaumont, Texas



### CALENDAR

General meetings of The Laffite Society are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at The Eiband's Gallery, 2201 Postoffice Street, Galveston, TX, 77550, (409) 763-5495. Many of the meetings feature interesting and informative presentations by member 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 include the May, 1997, excursion to Grande Terre, Louisiana (Laffite's "Barataria"), and the January, 1998, address of Society President R. Dale Olson to the Louisiana Historical Society at the New Orleans Country Club, both of which are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

Inquiries about upcoming special events may be directed to The Laffite Society, P.O. Box 1325, Galveston, TX, 77553, or to Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski c/o The Eiband's Gallery at (409) 763-5495. The Laffite Society attempts to mail information to members and interested parties on the Society's mailing list as special event details are determined.

### "THE STORY OF LAFFITE" AUDIO TAPE PROJECT

By a vote of The Laffite Society's Board of Directors in early 1998, it was decided to pursue a project proposed by Press Director Dave Roberts regarding the creation of a series of audio tapes related to the story of Jean and Pierre Laffite. Over the ensuing months, Mr. Roberts recorded several prototype tapes and played them at two of The Society's regular monthly meetings. Although currently still in a preparatory stage, it is expected that a committee of Society members will assist in the writing, editing, and critical review of each script. Topics will include some of the most basic elements of the Laffite story; initial scripts have dealt with "Descendants of Jean Laffite," "[Galveston Island's] The Storm of 1818," and "Dominique You."

Each tape will be approximately five minutes in length, and will be prepared for airing on a local Galveston, Texas, radio station. Background music will be dubbed to provide an introduction and closing to the narration. It is envisioned that a group of perhaps as many as fifty tapes will be recorded in a professional recording studio by Mr. Roberts, who has a long affiliation with the radio industry. Upon completion of the project, The Society will discuss various possible uses for the set of tapes, including making them available to members.

Interested parties are encouraged to submit finished scripts; ideas for script topics; or requests for information, length guidelines, etc., to Mr. Roberts in care of the post office box listed inside the front cover of this publication.

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
AUGUST 1996 ~ JULY 1998

PRESIDENT .....	R. DALE OLSON
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT .....	JEAN L. EPPERSON
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT .....	KATHY MODZELEWSKI
THIRD VICE PRESIDENT .....	JIM NONUS
SECRETARY .....	DOROTHY McDONALD KARILANOVIC
TREASURER .....	JAMES B. EARTHMAN, III
ARCHIVIST .....	RICHARD R. RASCHE
PARLIAMENTARIAN .....	DIANE OLSON
COORDINATOR OF RESEARCH .....	BILL FOLEY
HISTORIAN .....	BERNADETTE FOLEY
EDITOR OF PUBLICATIONS .....	JEFF MODZELEWSKI
PRESS DIRECTOR .....	DAVE ROBERTS
EX-OFFICIO ADVISOR, HISTORICAL PRESERVATION .....	RANDY PACE

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

THANK YOU FROM THE SOCIETY

To Society President R. Dale Olson, for so capably representing The Laffite Society at his January, 1998, address to the Louisiana Historical Society at the elegant New Orleans Country Club.

To Wil Zapalac - a man who would surely have been one of Laffite's top lieutenants had he lived one and three-quarters centuries earlier - for the many reflective and entertaining articles which he has penned and submitted for publication to *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

To Oklahoma member Pam Keyes, who does so much work "behind the scenes" to support the research and publication efforts of The Laffite Society.

To Robert Vogel, Kathleen Taylor, and Dr. Tom and Carol Watson, for their outstanding job in organizing the March, 1998, special-event trip to Lake Charles, Louisiana.

To Betty Wilson, for so graciously assisting with refreshments (including preparing home-made goodies!), month after month, at The Society's meetings.