

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JEAN LAFFITE

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THREE TREES SITE ON GALVESTON ISLAND FOCUS OF PRESERVATION FIGHT

Dr. Margaret Henson, vice president of the Houston-based Tejano Association for Historical Preservation, reports that a federal court decision is expected later this spring in the case of Fritiofson, et al, vs. Alexander, et al., regarding the proposed Pirate's Cove marina on western Galveston Island. The Pirate's Cove project will impact the area known historically as the "Three Trees," where a large archaeological site has been found which many believe is associated with the Karankawa Indians. Some scholars believe that Galveston Island is the "Isla Malhado" where Cabeza de Vaca was shipwrecked in 1528. The Three Trees site (also known as Mitchell Ridge) is closely linked with Jean Laffite's occupation of Galveston Island during 1817-1821 and is almost certainly the location of the battle between the pirates and the Karankawa Indians in circa 1818 (see "Indian Troubles," LTJL, Summer 1989).

The plaintiffs in the case are a group of west Galveston landowners who contend that the Pirate's Cove developer, Mitchell Development Corporation of the Southwest, should be responsible for preserving and protecting the archaeological resources at the Three Trees locality. Eleven years ago, represented by their attorney, Robert M. Moore of Galveston, they were able to obtain an injunction preventing the Army Corps of Engineers from issuing Mitchell a permit for dredging a network of canals through the site. They are now asking the court to order an environmental impact statement under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to determine the historical significance of the Three Trees site before allowing the Corps of Engineers to issue the federal permits Mitchell will need to begin construction.

NEWS & NOTES

Welcome new members. Welcome to new LSG members Philip Brieden, Andy Galliano, Karin and Roger Kwiatkowski, and Anna Sheppard.

Geography trivia. In Miguel de Cervantes' novel Don Quixote de la Mancha, Barataria is the name of the imaginary island in 16th century La Mancha, Castile, where Sancho Panza, Don Quixote's page, was governor for ten days.

Tell them Jean Laffite sent you. LSG member Frederick F. Hollister deals in books, pamphlets, maps, and charts on lost mines and buried treasures, ships, the sea and sunken treasure, bandits, outlaws and gunfighters, and other Americana. If you would like to get his wide-ranging book catalogue (a good read in and of itself), contact him at Books of Adventure, 120 Howard Street, Suite B-754, San Francisco, California 94105. His Autumn/Winter 1989 catalogue is a "special sunken treasure issue" featuring books on piracy, Spanish treasure galleons, nautical archaeology, and more.

Did you know? While many of the members of the LSG hail from Louisiana or Texas, other hotbeds of Laffite interest include North Carolina, California, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, the United Kingdom, France -- and, of course, Minnesota. At one time or another, we have mailed LTJL to subscribers in twenty different states and four foreign countries. The membership profile has always been extremely diverse and presently includes both avocational and professional historians, journalists, freelance and professional writers, genealogists, lawyers, teachers, business people, librarians, farmers, artists, retirees, and students. Once upon a time, at least two of our members were convicts serving time at a state penitentiary.

Gulf Coast Conference. The 13th Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference will be held in Pensacola, Florida, on 3-5 October 1991. The conference is sponsored by the University of West Florida and Pensacola Junior College. In keeping with the Columbus Quincentenary, the conference theme will be "Discovery and Exploration on the Gulf Coast."

Jean Laffite in Arkansas. W. D. Williams, professor of chemistry at Harding University, has published an article in the Arkansas Historical Quarterly (Vol. XLVIII, No. 2, Summer 1989) in which he sheds some new light on Jean Laffite's activities in Arkansas in 1816. The subject of "Louis Bringier and His Description of Arkansas in 1812" was a Louisiana-born adventurer who accompanied Laffite and Major A. L. Latour on their espionage mission to the Arkansas Post, where they had been dispatched by the Spanish secret service to gather intelligence on Anglo-American encroachment on New Spain. Williams cites a number of nineteenth century sources (including court records) to prove that Laffite and Latour were in fact traveling incognito on the Arkansas frontier a year after the Battle of New Orleans and describes

their legendary connection with the fake silver mine at Crystal Hill, near present-day Little Rock.

Membership Renewals. It is time to ask that you renew your membership in the Laffite Study Group, so that you can continue to receive The Life and Times of Jean Laffite. Remember, your membership begins on the first of the calendar year. Some of you, therefore, are being asked to renew your membership now, even though you may not have been a member for a full year. A subscription renewal letter is being sent to everyone on our mailing list.

BOOK REVIEW

Razored Saddles. Edited by Joe R. Lansdale and Pat LaBrutto. c. 1989. Dark Harvest. P. O. Box 941. Arlington Heights, Illinois 60006. \$19.95. (Reviewed by Robert C. Vogel.)

This collection of eccentric Western tales includes "Gold," a remarkable story by Austin, Texas, science fiction writer Lew Shiner (pp. 37-68). This is a pirate story (kind of) about Jean Laffite and a treasure trove on Gangs Bayou, near Galveston. The central character is Malone, a Galveston businessman, who encounters John Lafflin, alias Jean Laffite, in Austin in the 1840's, where the retired pirate is dabbling in Buddhism, smoking opium, and eating blowfish (which is why he hasn't aged physically since the 1820's). With the help of a grizzled old Nez Coupe Chighizola, Malone brings Laffite back to Galveston to recover the treasure he left behind in 1821. The treasure is found, but there is a fight among the finders: Malone ends up with the loot, which he tries to parlay into a political career, but loses his fortune in the financial panic of 1857 and ends up a broken man.

The Life and Times of Jean Laffite is published quarterly by the Laffite Study Group. Membership in the LSG is open to all. Annual dues are \$10 for individuals and institutions. Address applications for membership to:

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