

# The Laffite Study Group Newsletter

*good for  
overall history  
of Laffite  
pre-Lafayette*

Volume VII No. 1 Spring 1987

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The Laffite Study Group is a non-profit educational organization which aims to promote research in, and the dissemination of knowledge concerning Jean Laffite's role in American history, literature, and folklore.

Membership in the LSG is open to all. Annual dues are \$10.00 for individuals and institutions. Applications for membership should be sent to: Secretary-Treasurer, Laffite Study Group, 2570 Kevin Lane, Houston, Texas 77043.

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## THE LAFFITE NETWORK

The joint meeting of the Louisiana Historical Association and the Mississippi Historical Society will be March 12-14 1987 at the Holiday Inn/Crowne Plaza, New Orleans. An informal gathering of Laffite Study Group members is planned for Saturday afternoon -- for details, contact Sir Jack Holmes or Robert Vogel.

The 91st annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Association will be March 5-7 1987 at the San Luis Hotel in Galveston.

Formal dedication of the Barataria Unit Visitor Center, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, located south of Marrero in Jefferson Parish, occurred on 4 December 1986. Guest of honor and principal speaker was U.S. Senator J. Bennett Johnston.

Nearly 2000 contributions to the forthcoming **Dictionary of Louisiana Biography** have been received, according to Glenn R. Conrad, general editor. The DLB is a project of the Louisiana Historical Association, in cooperation with the Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana.

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THE BARATARIANS vs THE UNITED STATES:  
A CHRONOLOGY, 1812-1815

The following is a chronological outline of the Baratarians' documented brushes with United States authorities between 1812 and 1815. Since the outline is intended merely for reference, bibliographic citations are not given.

January 1812. Customs officers under Captain George Gibson seize contraband valued at \$7-8000 from a party of smugglers on Bayou Lafourche.

30 January 1812. United States Gun Vessel No. 156, commanded by Lt. Jones, chases two French privateer schooners off Grand Isle.

15 March 1812. Collector of the Port of New Orleans requests assistance of naval and military authorities in suppressing the Baratarian smugglers.

16 June 1812. Gun Vessel No. 156 unsuccessfully engages two French privateers and Spanish prize off mouth of Barataria Bay.

15-16 November 1812. Revenue officers under Captain Andrew Hunter Holmes capture several smugglers' pirogues in a bayou a few miles south of New Orleans; included among prisoners are Pierre and Jean Laffite, who jump bail.

7 April 1813. In District Court, United States Attorney John R. Grymes formally charges Jean and Pierre Laffite with smuggling a cargo of \$4,400 worth of textiles, spices, and other merchandise into Louisiana (see above).

6 May 1813. Privateers in an armed boat hijack a Spanish schooner in the Mississippi River below English Turn and sail her to Grand Terre, where federal forces re-capture the prize and cargo.

20 July 1813. Collector of the Port of New Orleans reports the presence of a large body of smugglers at Barataria, introducing contraband slaves and other merchandise at will and fitting out privateers under French colors.

14 October 1813. Party of revenue officers under Walker Gilbert engage in a firefight with "a number of armed men under the orders of a certain John Lafite" near the Temple in present day Jefferson Parish. A federal agent is wounded and the Baratarians recapture their goods. This action prompts Gov. W. C. C. Claiborne's proclamation of 24 November 1813, offering \$500 reward for Jean Laffite. Three days later, Laffite circulates a proclamation of his own, offering a \$5000 bounty for the governor.

24 January 1814. Baratarian smugglers attack a party of revenue officers below New Orleans, one and seriously wounding two others.

27 July 1814. Federal grand jury indicts Pierre Laffite for piracy. Pierre Laffite is arrested in New Orleans a few days later and held without bail in the Cabildo. Charge is later modified to smuggling.

3-4 September 1814. British naval mission dispatched to Grand Terre to parlay with "Monsier Lafite, or the commandant at Barataria." Captain Lockyer presents the English offer: amnesty and lands if the Baratarians surrender to British; commissions in the Colonial Marines for privateer officers. Jean Laffite transmits British documents to U.S. authorities.

6 September 1814. Pierre Laffite escapes from his cell in the Cabildo, joins brother Jean at hideout below New Orleans.

16 September 1814. United States naval and military expedition under the command of Master Commandant Daniel T. Patterson and Colonel George T. Ross raid Barataria Bay, dispersing privateers and smugglers and taking several corsairs as prizes.

17 December 1814. Governor Claiborne issues proclamation of invitation for Baratarians to join Jackson's army. Federal judge releases all Baratarians from jail. Jean Laffite interviewed by General Jackson on 18 December. Between 300 and 400 Baratarians respond to the call to defend Louisiana.

6 February 1815. The Baratarians are pardoned by presidential proclamation.

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#### NAPOLEON JUNIOR

The following item appeared in the *Louisiana Gazette* (New Orleans) on Thursday 18 August 1814:

It is the duty of every good man to present monopoly, as far as in his power; therefore please to inform the public that several rich prizes have lately been brought to Grand Isle (regularly called Barataria) by the remains of my uncle's faithful band of loyal subjects. The arrival of these rich prizes has been kept pretty much a secret by a certain class [of] monopolizing gentry in and near this city, many of whom have departed to Grand Isle to secure good bargains...

The notice was signed "Napoleon Junior," with the editorial quere: "Would it not be pro bono publico to establish a press in the Empire of Barataria?"

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## PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

Smith, James Burkholder. **The Plot to Steal Florida: James Madison's Phony War.** New York: Arbor House, 1983. 314 pp., bibliography, index.

James Burkholder Smith's revisionist treatment of "Madison's Phony War" looks at the seamy underside of U.S. foreign policy toward Spanish America. The book is well researched and contains a number of provocative observations. For example, the author believes that the War of 1812 and the Vietnam War are broadly analogous: "The first war in our history which featured articulate, strident, determined and able protesters, and the first war we clearly didn't win, was the first war we fought after winning independence." Smith draws the obvious parallels between covert operations in Florida in the early nineteenth century and the exploits of the CIA in Cuba and Chile 150 years later; Ronald Reagan's support of the Nicaragua contras is simply another filibustering operation. Some readers will no doubt cringe at Smith's characterization of Madison, "the father of covert-action operations," as a wimp. Smith, who lives in Jacksonville, Florida, is ex-CIA, and author of **Portrait of a Cold Warrior.** R.C.V.

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Neustadt, Richard E. and Ernest R. May. **Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers.** New York: The Free Press, 1986. xxii, 329 pp., Preface, acknowledgements, appendixes, bibliographic notes, index.

Neustadt and May are scholars at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where they teach an unusual and influential course for high-level government officials on how to make practical use of history in day-to-day decision making. **Thinking in Time** is about "time-streams" and the concept of viewing the present as part of an unbroken continuum between the past and the future. Thirty detailed case studies are presented, mostly drawn from the past forty years of U.S. history. This thought-provoking primer on the uses of history stresses the development of sound historical analogies (and ways to spot false ones) that isolate core problems and place people and events in historic context. R.C.V.

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

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