



The Laffite Society Chronicles

VOLUME III NUMBER 2
JULY, 1997
[2ND PRINTING 7/02]

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The Laffite Society
Post Office Box 1325
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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

JEFF MODZELEWSKI

Dear fellow Laffitians,

You have before you the sixth issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, and it marks a milestone of sorts. For the first time since our initial issue was produced in early 1995, we are virtually in step with our planned semiannual publication schedule; no backlogged editions remain to be prepared for press.

As likely occurs with many new, not-for-profit organizations staffed entirely by volunteers, the Society early on took upon itself numerous goals before it had assembled a formal administrative infrastructure within which duties could be allocated. The workload quickly mounted before a roster of laborers could be engaged, and the backlog of *Chronicles* was one example of the resulting plight.

This *Chronicles* is the fourth issue generated in the last twelve months, and I, perhaps more than anyone else, look forward to producing the publication henceforth on the more sane timetable of the scheduled two issues per year! I express my gratitude to all of you who have made my job as editor easier during this "catch-up" period by submitting articles for publication.

Readers no doubt noticed the new "look" of the last *Chronicles*. We changed our binding from hot-glued fiber to spiral, increasing durability and allowing the publication to be read "hands free" by those who wish to simultaneously snack, take notes, etc. We also changed from single- to double-sided printing, which significantly decreased both paper volume and thus the related cost of mailing the booklet to the two-thirds of our membership who cannot retrieve their copies in person at the monthly meetings.

Happily, with the last issue we began a relationship with a printer who shows all the signs of being responsive to our needs and willing to aid us to maintain that fine balance between a format that is both professional in appearance and cost-effective to produce.

The "look" of the *Chronicles* is not all that is new with The Laffite Society. Work has begun on several new projects which we hope will spread interest in the Society and attract new members.

One such project of importance is the development of a "Laffite Primer." Only a

minority of our members join The Laffite Society with significant pre-existing knowledge of our privateer. Rather, the large majority of us likely become interested in the group because of the folklore and legend surrounding our protagonist. When we first attend meetings and/or read *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, we may feel adrift at the mention of the multitude of names and dates of importance to the Laffite saga, some of which might be familiar only to the more serious researchers and historians of the group.

The "Laffite Primer" is intended to cure such feelings of ignorance. We expect it to be a compendium, in the form of a summarized timeline, of the facts and most-likely-to-be-true unknowns about Jean Laffite, including names, dates, incidents, and a bibliography of reference sources for further reading. The "Primer" would be produced as a document to be distributed to new and prospective members.

A second project under development is an Internet World Wide Web site for The Laffite Society. On its "home page," The Society can provide links to supporting screens which might present the complete text of a sample of articles from past *Chronicles*, the tables of contents of all past *Chronicles*, information about The Society and becoming a member of same, etc. The Internet is the economical marketing and development tool of the future, and holds unlimited potential for spreading news of our group and sharing information on the subject of our research among members and non-members alike.

A third project under way is the creation of a "Speakers' Bureau," envisioned as a volunteer group of interchangeable Laffite Society members who wish to take turns giving free talks about Jean Laffite to not-for-profit entities such as schools, libraries, and civic groups. An outline to be followed will first be developed, not only to serve as a memory-jogger for the speakers, but also so that the Laffite basics will be presented more or less consistently each time the talk is given locally. The presentations might last some forty-five minutes, with additional time left at the end to allow for a question-and-answer period.

Stay with us, there is excitement ahead!



THE SHIPS' OFFICERS

(PART II)

WIL ZAPALAC

[Editor's Note: the first part of this article appeared in the previous issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.]

Author's Note: I remind the brave and gentle reader that the conjecture about modern-day seafarers with whom I might have worked, and their comparison with Laffite's "boys," is to be taken *langue en joue*. It would be just the brief and occasional similarities that I noted that were, well, "noteworthy." The older Cajuns seemed generally nonchalant about the subject of Laffite; the younger, almost Camelotian in their beliefs.

Many were the days when I would stand on a tug's back deck with a cold, harsh norther whistling by my near-frozen ears, and even colder Gulf of Mexico waters swirling into already half-filled boots. Stand and wait. And watch. Soon, he would appear.

Taciturn, steely-eyed. Jaw grimly set.

The captain.

And in his "hunt" mode.

And many a time I would quickly mentally check over my recent list of duties; hoping I was not the unfortunate gazelle for whom the "deck lion" was angrily searching.

And just where was one to hide on a boat, anyway? On the mast? May as well take a noose up with you. So I would stay out on the cold, windy, wet deck, doing whatever mindless chore it might be. And then, hear the confrontation. No matter where. And wonder with what choice terminology the unfortunate crew member was being blasted.

Just as "Commandante" Laffite had his dueling fields to settle differences between officers, modern-day boat companies have their own methods. One is a \$500 fine for openly fighting on board vessel. Wheelhouse personnel figure that at \$250 per fist. Seamen would be looking at a week's wages. In either case -- and always at the discretion of the captain -- it was a thought-provoking deterrent.

The following information was gleaned while meandering through the Ben C. Stuart, Mirabeau B. Lamar, and J.O. Dyer papers, respectively.

Luis d'Aury, or Louis Aury, was more of an irritant than an officer, or even a follower, of

Laffite. Although able to lead men effectively -- at least in the business in which he labored -- Aury seems to have been hot-tempered and boisterous even for one of Laffite's "boys."

Aury began use of Snake Island (Galveston) before Laffite. And made ready use of it, at that. The Stuart papers show that he might have been on the island when Laffite's government was forming in April 1817, was left out (or better, did not care to be "brought in"), and sailed off in May 1817, leaving behind Richard Espagnol's *Devorador*. Espagnol was Assistant Treasurer of Laffite's "stock company."

Reasons for leaving the vessel remain a mystery. It might have been just left in Espagnol's care, or it might have been damaged, or it might have formed part of a gambling or business debt. Or all of the above.

Aury did return approximately around late June or early July of that same year, blustering after Laffite, with wine or rum bottle in hand, more than likely. He demanded that Laffite leave the island; to this Laffite calmly refused. Then Aury demanded that he be allowed to rejoin Laffite's corsairs, to which Laffite also refused.

Then, strangely (and almost comically), he demanded money for improvements that he (Aury) had made to the island. Rousselin (Head Treasurer) is then mentioned, and Laffite replies that all back wages to Rousselin have been paid, and that he refuses to pay for anything else. There is no mention of the vessel *Devorador*. In a rage, Aury stumbles back to his unnamed vessel, vows vengeance, and sails off. The vengeance, in the form of two letters, is quick to come but rather lame, noting other acts that were committed against "the Bos'."

These letters, reportedly still in existence in J.O. Dyer's time, are presumed to have gone to Manuel Herrera, and to Beverly Chew in New Orleans. Herrera might have been one of Laffite's old Baratarians that had stayed behind in Louisiana. Chew was the forever-irksome U.S. Customs Collector at New Orleans. The "Mr. Customs Man." The letters accused Laffite of not bothering with letters of marque, but of instead indulging in outright piracy.

Leaving Galveston, Aury is said to have sailed to Florida to assist Sir Gregory McGregor, who is listed as an "officer of my secret police" by Laffite in *The Journal of Jean Laffite*.

JEAN LAFFITE AND CORSAIRS ON GALVESTON BAY

JEAN L. EPPERSON

[Editor's note: this article is the text of a lecture presented by Ms. Epperson to the East Texas Historical Association on Friday, February 21, 1997, at The Tremont House in Galveston, Texas.]

Galveston Island, between Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, is a 27-mile-long, 3-mile-wide, barrier sand bar, just off the Texas coast. Uninhabited for eons except for roving bands of Indians, the island supported salt grass, rattlesnakes, and a few scraggly trees, but no potable water. Its only asset for civilized humans was its excellent deep-water harbor, which was protected by a pass which could be easily defended. The location eventually drew the attention of nineteenth-century maritime marauders.

Three corsair or privateer captains controlled Galveston Bay from 1816 through 1820; they were Luis Aury, Jean Laffite, and Pierre Laffite. There were other captains on the bay during this period but they were of minor importance.

Luis Michael Aury, a French sea captain, was involved in the revolution in New Granada with Simon Bolivar. Aury was commissioned a lieutenant and given command of the insurgent naval squadron at Cartagena in August, 1815. The Spanish blockaded the port but Aury forced his way through, escaping to Aux Cayes, Haiti. Bolivar and other main leaders of the revolt escaped also, and planned another expedition from Aux Cayes. Dissension developed between Aury and another naval commander, and in the spring of 1816, when the expedition sailed, Aury stayed behind¹.

An informal organization, called by the Spanish "The New Orleans Associates," contacted Aury and enlisted his support in an expedition against Mexico. The Associates occasionally cooperated in enterprises, including filibustering, smuggling, and sometimes outright piracy. Edward Livingston, John Grymes, August Davezac, John K. West, Jean and Pierre Laffite, Vincent Nolte, Bartholome Lafon, and other prominent men were in the group. The Associates' plan was to establish a port, capture Veracruz, and invade the interior provinces of Mexico².

Aury arrived at Galveston on August 3, 1816, in his flagship *Belonia*, commanded by

Captain Alexander. The harbor lay on the bay side of the island. Entering the pass between Point Bolivar and Galveston Island, the ship struck a shoal and lay there for two days until a high tide floated it free. Taking water through damaged seams, the *Belonia* entered the bay and anchored in the harbor. On August 8, Aury's other vessels appeared off the pass, and a comedy of nautical errors began. Aury, yet to learn caution, ordered the schooner *Netherlander* to be brought in. The ship went on the shoal and remained in the surf. Aury, belatedly, sent Captain Alexander to sound the pass and bring in the ship *Felix*. The *Felix* joined the schooner on the shoal. On August 10, the ship from Malaga tried the south pass and went on the beach, then a brig and another ship were added to the wreckage. The only ships brought into the harbor were the *Belonia*, in a damaged condition, and the *Centinela*³.

Aury put his two hundred black and mulatto Haitian recruits to salvaging the stranded vessels. The disgruntled sailors, who had been promised prize money to spend in New Orleans and who did not relish laboring on a deserted sand bar, mutinied on the night of September 7. They shot Aury, set fire to the *Belonia*, and departed for Haiti with the ships *Criolla*, *San Fernando*, and *Centinela*⁴.

Aury's wounds were not serious, and on September 10 he welcomed Jose Manuel de Herrera to the island. Herrera was the ambassador of the Mexican Republicans. The New Orleans Associates had sent him to take possession of Galveston in the name of the Mexican Republicans and to establish a prize court. He was to remain with Aury as resident commissioner. With Herrera was Henry Perry, an ex-quartermaster of the United States Army, with about 120 men, whites commanded by Colonel Henry D. Peire and blacks by Colonel Joseph Savary. On September 13, the checkerboard Mexican Republican flag was raised and Herrera issued a proclamation that the island belonged to the Mexican Republic. Aury was made governor of Texas and from that day he called himself "general," no longer subordinate in his eyes to a military chief as he had suffered in the past⁵.

The commune on the island consisted of a ninety-foot-square earthwork mounted with some six cannon, a few cabins of plank and sailcloth, and others of reeds, wattles and thatch⁶.

General Francisco Xavier Mina, famed Spanish guerrilla leader, arrived late in November on Galveston Island planning to invade Mexico with a force of 140 men, no rations, and no money⁷. The Associates in New Orleans, disliking Mina's plans for invasion, broke relations with Mina and Aury.

Jean Laffite arrived on Galveston Island on March 23, 1817, in the schooner *Devorador*, captured by his brother-in-law Laurent Mairé⁸. Laffite had just returned from a covert survey trip to Arkansas and the Red River for the Spanish Royalists when he was sent to Galveston to observe the situation there.

Mina decided to sail for Soto de la Marina, New Santander Province, and on April 7, 1817, the expedition departed Galveston under convoy of Aury and his privateers⁹.

Laffite says in his diary that on April 8, seeing that Aury had abandoned the port, he and his men named officers and established an administration under their direction¹⁰. Laffite left Galveston on April 18 for New Orleans¹¹.

Aury arrived back in Galveston on May 3, gathered his men, and sailed on the eighteenth to establish his new base of operations at Matagorda¹². He remained there for about two months, where he again lost many vessels to inclement weather, sandbars, and miscalculations¹³. With the remains of his fleet he returned to Galveston Island. Aury's plans to reclaim his old base were frustrated by Pierre Laffite, who charmed away so many of his crew that he abandoned Galveston for good on July 21, renouncing his commission to govern the island and denouncing the Laffites¹⁴. Aury's career ended four years later in the Caribbean on Old Providence Island, when he was thrown from his horse and fatally injured¹⁵.

The Laffites' occupation of Galveston Island from 1817 through 1820 was much better documented than that of their predecessors. Jean, the "Bos" and self-proclaimed governor of Galveston, built Maison Rouge, his residential fortress, on the remains of Aury's fortifications. There has been much speculation as to why it was named the "Red House." One author said that it was painted red so that it could be seen easily from the sea. This explanation seems unlikely, as the building was on the bay side of the island and could not be seen at sea no matter what color it was. Another writer thought it was built of mahogany or red cedar and appeared red in the sunlight. Mrs. Mary Franks, who operated a boarding house nearby, said that Laffite's house was lined with tin to keep out the rats which were

plentiful on the island¹⁶.

Jean Laffite called the settlement "Campeche." In the summer of 1818, at the peak of its development, a thousand persons were reputed to have inhabited the commune. Sea raiders and their companions converged on the island to take advantage of the Laffites' maritime prize court and distribution of letters of marque, disregarding the fact that the Laffites had no authority from any legitimate government for these activities, although Jean cruised as a legitimate privateer with a letter of marque from Venezuela. His vessels flew the yellow, blue, and red tricolors of Venezuela, and later hoisted the Mexican flag.

Campeche consisted of a mixture of log, plank, canvas, and thatched structures. Storage buildings, saloons, a commissary, boarding houses, and even a billiard hall were said to exist¹⁷.

The Laffites were in the pay of the Spanish government as spies while preying on Spanish and English shipping. Duplicity, charm, and self-enrichment characterized many of their actions.

French exiles led by old Napoleonic soldiers arrived on Galveston in early 1818, to claim Jean's assistance in reaching a place to establish a colony on the mainland¹⁸. He helped them to ascend the Trinity River to settle at the Orcoquisa Bluffs¹⁹. The Frenchmen began an encampment which they called "Champ d'Asile." This illegal establishment lasted only a few months. Being forewarned, the French returned to Galveston just ahead of Spanish troops sent to expel them²⁰.

Colonel George Mason Graham, a troubleshooter for the acting Secretary of War, James Monroe, arrived at Galveston in August with the message that the United States claimed all the land from the Sabine to the Rio Grande, and that Laffite must abandon the island. Laffite was described by Graham as living in a large brig of about 353 tons firmly fixed in the sand of the bay about four hundred yards north of the fort. Laffite agreed to leave, but apparently Graham was acting without supreme authority. Graham left the island accompanied by General Lallemant²¹.

Everything went well on Galveston Island until the great hurricane in September of 1818. The storm destroyed the commune and inundated the island. Many lives were lost and Maison Rouge collapsed. Famine threatened. Laffite not only had to provide for his own people but for many of the French colonists who were still there.

One of his solutions was to take all of the blacks on the island and sell them at the slave market in New Orleans. Jean lamented later that his settlement was never the same after the storm.

The year 1819 did not go well for Jean Laffite. Several of his captains were apprehended for slave stealing and piracy.

During the summer, George Brown and a small band of his men made a raid up Bayou Queue de Tortue ("Tail of the Turtle") in Louisiana to a plantation where they ransacked the house and made off with ten slaves. The United States schooner *Lynx*, patrolling in the Gulf waters, was notified of the raid and sailed immediately for Galveston. Lieutenant James M. McIntosh went ashore and demanded Brown and his men for punishment. Laffite hung Brown and turned over the four men who had accompanied Brown²².

On August 29, 1819, Laffite's captain, Jean Desforges, of the armed vessel *El Bravo*, captured the Spanish schooner *Filomena*. Desforges in turn was captured, while under sail for Galveston with his prize, by two United States revenue cutters. Desforges and his men were tried and convicted as pirates and sentenced to be hung. In their possession had been found prize allotment instructions from Jean Laffite. Laffite summoned his attorneys and went to New Orleans to defend his men but to no avail²³.

Negative public opinion and desertions at Galveston left the Laffites ready to abandon the commune and move on to other quarters²⁴. Lieutenant Lawrence Kearny in the United States brig-of-war *Enterprise* was sent to inform Jean Laffite that he must vacate the island. Granted two months in which to prepare his leave, Jean burned Campeche in early 1820 and sailed away into oblivion and legend. Lieutenant Kearny wrote to Commodore Daniel Patterson from the *Enterprise* off Tortuga on March 7, 1820, that he had witnessed the destruction by fire of the commune on Galveston Island²⁵.

The Laffites were gone from Galveston Bay but a few of the inhabitants of Campeche remained or returned to cruise the bay later, including Captain James Campbell in the schooner *Hotspur*, Andrew Roach in the felucca *Texas*, Burrell Franks in the sloop *Reindeer*, John

McHenry, and probably others.

Endnotes

1. Harris Gaylord Warren, *The Sword Was Their Passport* (Kennikat Press, Port Washington, NY, 1972), 140-141.
2. *Ibid*, 119, 141.
3. Stanley Faye, "Commodore Aury," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (July 1941), 632-633.
4. *Ibid*, 634.
5. *Ibid*, 635-636.
6. *Ibid*, 638; Lyle Saxon, *Lafitte the Pirate* (Pelican Publishing Co., Gretna, LA, 1989), 226.
7. Harris Gaylord Warren, "Documents Relating to the Establishment of Privateers at Galveston, 1816-18," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (October 1938), 20.
8. *Ibid*, 20.
9. *Ibid*, 22.
10. *Ibid*, 22.
11. *Ibid*, 23.
12. Warren, *op. cit.*, *The Sword Was Their Passport*, 178-179.
13. Robert Bruce Blake, Bexar Archives Transcriptions, Green Cover Set, Volume 8, Felipe Roque de la Portilla report on May 15, 1818, of his interrogation of prisoners. Clayton Genealogical Library, Houston, TX.
14. Warren, *op. cit.*, *The Sword Was Their Passport*, 183.
15. Faye, *op. cit.*, 697.
16. *The Galveston Daily News*, December 11, 1883.
17. Blake, *op. cit.*
18. Warren, *op. cit.*, *The Sword Was Their Passport*, 210-212.
19. *The Galveston Daily News*, August 8, 1886. George Graham to General E.W. Ripley.
20. Warren, *op. cit.*, *The Sword Was Their Passport*, 222.
21. *The Galveston Daily News*, August 8, 1886.
22. Stanley Clisby Arthur, *Jean Laffite Gentleman Rover* (Harmanson, New Orleans, LA, 1952), 189-190.
23. *Ibid*, 191-203.
24. Saxon, *op. cit.*, 242-244; letter dated January 3, 1820, from Pierre Lafitte to Commodore D.F. Patterson.
25. U.S. Federal Archives, Record Group 45, #108, Office of Naval Records and Library, Naval Records Collection, Captains Letters to Secretary of the Navy 1807-1885, M-125, Roll 66, Vol. I, for 1820, report of Lieutenant Lawrence Kearny to Commodore Daniel Patterson.

"UNCLE CHARLIE" CRONEA: THE LAST OF LAFITTE'S PIRATES

W. T. BLOCK

[Editor's note: The Laffite Society thanks Mr. Block for his permission to print this article. Mr. Block was the featured speaker at the June, 1996, meeting of The Laffite Society, and his article "Legend of John McGaffey's Gold" was published in the July, 1996 issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.]

On a hot summer day in 1892, a bewhiskered old sodbuster from High Island, Texas, and a few of his cronies gathered around under the shade trees in front of the United States Barge Office at Galveston, Texas. Among the last of a fast-vanishing breed of Texas Revolutionary veterans, they whiled away the sweltering hours with tales of the Battle of San Jacinto, the Mier Expedition, and the Mexican War. As each oldster reeled off his reminiscences with clock-like dexterity, a newspaper correspondent recorded their experiences.

"Uncle Charlie, ain't you about the last of Jean Lafitte's old buccaneer band that was stationed here on the island?" the old sodbuster was asked.

"At's right!" old Charlie Cronea responded. "Fer as I kin recollect, the lasta them old cutthroats, 'cept me, is long under the grass."

It would prove to be Cronea's last trip to the Island City. At eighty-seven, he knew that life was fast ebbing from his aged frame, a fact attested to by his thinning crop of white hair. But his black eyes still beamed brightly, hemmed in as they were by scraggly brows and silvery whiskers. Small of stature, he was wiry and thin, his walk marred only by a slight limp. He worked as hard as his advanced age would permit, and only two days earlier he had helped load the sailing sloop that had brought him and several hundreds of his watermelons to Galveston.

Up and down the lengthy Bolivar Peninsula, the children all knew and adored "Uncle Charlie" and rated him as tops among the tale-spinners. He returned their affection, too, and his face always mirrored an elfish delight as he spun his long yarns of buccaneers, Indians, frontier wars, and buried treasure. As he related his life story to the newspaperman that afternoon, his mind was exceptionally clear, and his bass voice fairly boomed like a tuba. He spiced every detail with exciting embellishment, pausing now and then to release a squirt of tobacco juice or punctuate his stories at intervals with some of the

choicest profanity at his command.

"He warn't nuthin' but a pirut, Lafitte wuz!" Uncle Charlie bellowed. "Oh, he tried hard enough to ack respeckable - him, with his law courts, and juries, and sich, but he still never war nuttin' but a goddam pirut!"

Charles Cronea was born in Marseilles, France, on January 14, 1805 - at the height of the Napoleonic Wars. As was then the custom, his father apprenticed him as a seaman in the French Navy, and in 1818 the youth shipped as a cabin boy on a frigate bound for New York. Young Cronea performed his shipboard duties adequately but, as is typical of thirteen-year-olds, he was also amply imbued with a yen for mischief and devilment. When one of his pranks turned sour, resulting in injury to a fellow cabin boy, the captain had Cronea spread-eagled and tied to a grating, while the boatswain administered thirty lashes with a cat-o'-nine tails. Then he splashed sea water on the lad's back, causing excruciating pain which penetrated every nerve, but Cronea always boasted that he bit his lips and bore the pain without squealing. When the frigate docked in New York, the boy took "French leave" (i.e. deserted) one night and signed aboard a merchant ship bound for South Carolina.

Upon arrival at Charleston, the young Frenchman shipped aboard a bark bound for Liverpool. Cronea soon noticed that the bark carried more than forty sailors, more than double the number needed for a crew, but in his own words, he was "green to American ways" and did not question that fact. When his ship reached a point twenty miles offshore, the captain mustered the crewmen on deck and told them that a large Baltimore schooner would soon heave to alongside, in search of about fifteen hands to go on a cruise in the Gulf of Mexico. Always restless for adventure, Cronea volunteered and within an hour, he and fourteen others transferred to the waiting vessel.

Captain Jones of the schooner charted a southerly course to the Straits of Florida, passed through the Keys, and a week later cast anchor opposite Padre Island, near present-day Corpus Christi, Texas.

Captain Jones soon notified Cronea and his shipmates that they would be put ashore with their baggage and a supply of food and fresh water to await the arrival within a day or two of a fast privateer bound for the Spanish Main. The

men expressed their displeasure at being cast ashore on a barren island, but having volunteered for the mission, they left the schooner to await the rendezvous.

The following afternoon, the privateer *Hotspur*, its hull almost invisible beneath a massive spread of billowing canvas, hove in sight and dropped anchor, and the fifteen new crewmen were brought aboard. The master, who introduced himself as "Mr. Carroll," informed Cronea and the others that they were entering the service of Jean Lafitte of Galveston Island and would be engaged in privateering cruises off the coast of Spanish Mexico.

The French lad could not help but admire the graceful vessel that was to become his home for the next ten months. She was a "morphidite schooner," or schooner brigantine, a type of windjammer that enjoyed great popularity as a privateer during the War of 1812. With exceptionally graceful lines and with cargo space largely sacrificed for speed, she was square-rigged on the fore mast as well as schooner-rigged on the fore and main masts, and flew five jibs and topsails. Designed either for warfare, smuggling, or slave-trading, the brigantine could out-sail anything afloat, tack to within two degrees of the wind, and in the salty jargon of that age, bore the appearance of having "all wings and no feet." Flying the colors of New Cartagena (Colombia), the warship fairly bristled with six guns, "a long Tom aft, two cannonades on each side, and a bow chaser on the forecastle."

Shorn of his alias, "Mr. Carroll" proved to be Captain James Campbell who, in a cutthroat camp otherwise filled with conspirators, carried the unsavory distinction of being Lafitte's topmost lieutenant. He was entrusted with the corsair chieftain's innermost secrets and special missions to New Orleans, and often sat as judge of Lafitte's admiralty court. Likewise, he was one of only a few of the pirate's fifty ship captains who willingly abided by the international rules for privateering.

At the opposite pole stood Captain George Brown, a notorious renegade who attacked American merchantmen and Spanish galleons with equal gusto. Following one such affray offshore from Sabine Pass, Texas, the American cutter "Lynx" drove Brown's warship ashore, and in October 1819, after he and his crew traveled overland to return to Galveston, Lafitte, fearing reprisal, watched as the condemned Brown swung from a yardarm in Galveston Bay.

For most of the next eight months, Campbell's swift vessel cruised along the Mexican

coast, taking one Spanish prize after another. If a potential victim were not identifiable, the privateer fired a bow shot, which was a signal to heave to for boarding, and then sent a boat and armed crew aboard. If the captured ship were Spanish, the pirates carefully searched for bullion, coins, stores, gunpowder, and especially tobacco, which was always a rare luxury. The Spaniards were taken aboard the privateer and later freed somewhere along the Mexican coast. The prize ship was then usually either scuttled or burned, but occasionally a prize crew sailed the victim to Galveston.

"Sometimes a Spaniard showed fight," Uncle Charlie remarked, "and our gunners soon poured round shot arter round shot aboard till a white flag went up. Man, you shoulda heered thim divils squeal for us to halt the firing. Lotsa folks figgered we used to cut throats and make the captive Spaniards walk the plank, but that's a lie! I never seed a single man murdered while I was with Campbell!"

When the decks were cleared for action, Cronea's assignment was to bring fresh water topside and fill barrels with sea water in case of fire. One day he was racing across the deck, when he tripped and spilled a bucket of water on Campbell's feet. The pirate captain boxed the cabin boy's ears and sent him below decks. His ego scarred by the reprimand, Cronea decided to desert, and when the privateer sailed into Mermentau River, Louisiana, for fresh water late in November, 1819, the youth ran away. Upon visiting Galveston Island a year later, he found the corsair camp abandoned and burned, and only the wreckage or ashes of a dozen wooden shanties still dotted the beaches.

Charlie Cronea spent two short periods of residence in southwestern Louisiana (where he also married during the 1820's); otherwise he lived in either Chambers or Jefferson County, Texas for the remainder of his life. In the frontier tradition of his day, he and his wife simply notified their sparse neighbors of their intent to marry and began living together as man and wife until the arrival of some missionary priest or circuit rider. Often a minister came only once every one or two years, at which time bond marriage contractors dutifully pledged their vows to one another. In that era, the only alternative to common-law marriage was a 100-mile or more round trip by horseback to Opelousas, the seat of St. Landry Parish, or District of Opelousas, Louisiana, or to a Spanish priest in Nacogdoches, Texas.

Cronea related the incident of his first

voting experience in 1828, the year that Andrew Jackson was first elected President. The election judge at Bayou Plaquemine Brule asked if he were a taxpayer, and Charlie replied affirmatively and tossed a 25-cent coin on the table for a poll tax fee. When interrogated further as to where his property was, he in turn queried the election judge, "And how be it that you pay taxes? Your property's all in your wife's name, ain't it?" Faced with an embarrassing question, the man relented and allowed Cronea to vote.

Cronea was living at Old Jefferson (present-day Bridge City, Texas), seat of the Mexican Municipality of Jefferson, when the Texas Revolution erupted during the fall of 1835. On October 5, he joined Captain David Garner's company of frontier farmers and, armed with old Kentucky flintlocks, musket shotguns and Bowie knives, the small band set out for San Antonio. On December 4, Garner and his men were re-mustered into the companies of Captains James Chessher and Willis Landrum, and led by Colonel Ben Milam, were soon participating in the storming of old San Antonio de Bexar as well as the "Grass Fight," as reported by *The San Felipe Telegraph and Texas Register* on December 26, 1835.

Three months later he re-enlisted and was nearby, guarding the baggage train, when the Battle of San Jacinto was fought. The following day he was present in the Texas camp when a member of his company captured and marched General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana into camp.

Uncle Charlie was especially noted for his hatred of Mexico, and when war broke out again in 1846, he joined the United States Army and served under General Zachary Taylor. Many years later, he was awarded a pension for his U. S. Army service. He was also given bounty land by the Republic of Texas, and in January 1885, during his old age, was awarded Bexar Donation Warrant No. 1,153 for 1,280 acres of public land as a "surviving soldier of the Texas Revolution."

Charlie Cronea once recounted a gruesome story of the 640 Mexicans who fell at San Jacinto and whose bodies were left to putrefy on the field. He added that a neighbor lady, who owned the battlefield site, petitioned Gen. Sam Houston for the burial of the dead Mexicans, but the general did not respond to her request. Their bones were left to bleach on the prairie.

Except for the Mexican War, frontier derring-do was absent from the Frenchman's life

after 1836. In 1837 his name appeared on the first roster of qualified jurors for Jefferson County. In the decennial censuses of 1850, 1860, and 1870, he was enumerated as a farmer at Sabine Pass, Texas. During those years he married twice and reared a large family. As parent and provider, he experienced dawn to dusk labor in his effort to establish himself on the harsh and unfriendly frontier. As one by one his children married and settled in the High Island and Bolivar Peninsula areas, the old veteran followed them and spent his last years growing watermelons and other produce for the Galveston market. During the 1880's, his wife died, and Uncle Charlie then divided up his more than 2,000 acres of property among his children, stipulating that he would spend short periods of each year living with each of them. He drove a horse and gig about the countryside as he traveled during his visits.

In July 1892, following his last visit to Galveston, Cronea returned to Rollover, Bolivar Peninsula, to live with his daughter, Mrs. John Stowe. The old veteran was active until the following January, when he contracted pneumonia. During his month-long bout with death, Uncle Charlie wavered, sometimes better, sometimes worse, but sapped of his limited strength he called a son to his bedside on March 4 and said, "Jim, it's all up with me this time." Then he quietly rolled over on his side and died.

Two days later, ninety-four of his descendants and hundreds of friends followed the funeral procession as the young pirate who had become an old soldier arrived at his last resting place in the High Island cemetery. In his long obituary of March 6, the *Galveston News* noted that:

"In the death of Charles Cronea, the last of Lafitte's band, so far as is known, has passed away. Few besides him, who took part in the Battle of San Jacinto, are alive today. Comparatively few of the Mexican War veterans are now alive. As a character, Charles Cronea was unique, childlike, and lovable. With his death Lafitte becomes a thing of the past."

{Reprinted from *Frontier Times*, July, 1977, pp. 17ff; and *The Beaumont Enterprise*, March 13, 1977, and February 5, 1984. Based on a long obituary, "A Veteran Gone," *The Galveston Daily News*, March 8, 1893. See also "Sailed with the Sea Rover," *The Galveston Daily News*, February 7, 1909, p. 17.}

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 established documentation. The material contained in this section does not, therefore, necessarily reflect the 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 the 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, even when a monthly meeting includes no featured presentation, the topics there discussed are presented in summarized fashion in this section, to impart some feeling of that meeting's content.

Tuesday, January 14, 1997

This month's featured speaker, Jeff Modzelewski, Editor of Publications for The Laffite Society, presented an in-depth review of a new telling of the privateer's saga published in 1996 by Eakin Press in Austin, Texas. See the article entitled "A Chapter-by-Chapter Synopsis of Jack C. Ramsay, Jr.'s *Jean Laffite, Prince of Pirates*, with Some Introductory Comments" in this issue.

During the business portion of the meeting, attendees were briefed on the state of The Society's finances, written reminders of annual dues renewals were distributed where applicable to those present, and a set of recommended amendments to the bylaws was presented and approved.

Society member and craftsman Charles Kelly displayed examples of a Laffite medallion that he had created, containing one ounce each of sterling silver. The medallions will be marketed at a price of \$35.00 through The Eiband's Gallery, and \$3.00 from each sale will be donated to The Laffite Society. Mr. Kelly asked that members consider adopting the medallion as the official commemorative medal of The Society.

First Vice President Jean Epperson informed the group that on Friday, February 21, 1997, at Galveston's Tremont Hotel, she would give a presentation entitled "Jean Laffite and Corsairs on Galveston Bay" at the invitation of the East Texas Historical Society. (Editor's note: the text of this presentation is included in this issue under the same title.)

Society member Andy Hall announced that, due to a contribution from Mobil Oil Corporation, the Texas Historical Commission was able to prolong the excavation begun in the autumn of 1996 of La Salle's ship "La Belle," which was wrecked in Matagorda Bay in 1686.

Regarding upcoming events, attendees discussed plans for the May 1997 trip to Grand Isle and Grande Terre, Louisiana. It was also announced that Sally K. Reeves, Notarial Archivist in New Orleans, would visit Galveston during the last week of May 1997 and present a talk to The Laffite Society.

Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski distributed copies obtained from the Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, of the following historic documents penned by officers of the British navy. The copies were contributed to The Laffite Society by member Robert Looper.

- MSS 196, Folder 2, No. 4 - An address from Lieutenant Colonel Edward Nicholls, commanding His Britannic Majesty's forces in Florida, dated August 1814, calling upon all Americans to yield allegiance to the British Empire
- MSS 196, Folder 3, No. 1 - A letter of instruction from Captain William Henry Percy of His Majesty's ship *Hermes*, senior officer in the Gulf of Mexico, to Captain Lockyer, dated August 30, 1814, directing Captain Lockyer to sail on Barataria and insist that the inhabitants "throw themselves under the protection of Great Britain" and cease hostilities against Spain
- MSS 196, Folder 4, No. 2 - A letter from Captain Percy to Monsieur Lafite [sic] dated September 1, 1814, informing the latter of Captain Lockyer's intended visit to Barataria, and summoning Laffite and the Baratarians to pledge their allegiance to Great Britain and to cease hostilities against British and Spanish vessels
- MSS 196, August 13, 1814, No. 3 - A letter from Colonel Edward Nicholls to Monsieur Lafite [sic] as the "Commandant" at Barataria, calling upon the privateer to "enter into the service of Great Britain," in which he would hold the "rank of Captain"

Tuesday, February 11, 1997

This month's featured speakers, Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski and Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski, presented a talk on the debate as to the year in which Laffite's band departed Galveston. See the article entitled "In Which Year Did Laffite Abandon Galveston: 1820 or 1821?" in this issue.

During the business portion of the meeting, Ms. Modzelewski distributed an updated list of Laffite Society members.

Ms. Modzelewski also distributed copies obtained from Society member Joel Kirkpatrick of the text of a radio news release about a Texas State Historical Commission marker dedication and ceremony in memory of Charles A. Cronea, cabin boy with Laffite's band. The affair was sponsored by the descendants of Mr. Cronea at his gravesite in High Island Community Cemetery, High Island, Texas, on Saturday, March 1, 1997. Mr. Kirkpatrick, along with authors W.T. Block (a Laffite Society member) and Melanie Wiggins, were featured speakers.

Apropos of the Cronea marker dedication, First Vice President Jean Epperson displayed to meeting attendees a number of photos related to Mr. Cronea, both from her collection as well as from that of Mary Faye Barnes, Laffite Society member and retired Chairperson of the Galveston County Historical Commission.

The Society approved the renewal of its annual subscription to the French *Bulletin of Genealogy and History of the Caribbean*. The bulletin is published by a group whose research into the origins of Jean and Pierre Laffite makes it a comrade of The Laffite Society, and translations by Society Secretary Dorothy Karilanovic of articles in the *Bulletin* have appeared in past issues of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. Copies of all issues of the *Bulletin*, and of any translations The Society makes of the articles published therein, will be filed in The Society's archives. Additionally, Ms. Karilanovic stated that Mr. Michel Rateau, an historical researcher and genealogist and a member of the group which publishes the *Bulletin*, has offered to those interested his academic services, which include the exchange of copies of historical articles and searches for rare books. For further information, contact Ms. Karilanovic in care of The Society.

Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski distributed the fourth edition of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, which covered the semiannual period January 1996 through June 1996. Copies would be mailed to members absent from the meeting. Mr. Modzelewski also discussed business issues related to the *Chronicles*, including the possible acquisition of software which would facilitate the layout and generation of the publication, and the ongoing search for competitive printing and reproduction charges.

Mr. Modzelewski reported that Mary Faye Barnes, Society member and retired Chairperson of the Galveston County Historical Commission, had donated to The Society several copies of the pamphlet *A History of the Leadership of Galveston County: Biographical Sketches of the County Judges, County Clerks, and County Commissioners: 1838-1996*, compiled by The Galveston County Historical Commission, Galveston, Texas (Mary Faye Barnes, Chairperson; Lara J. Duhon and Merrick C. Gearing, Researchers).

Press Director Dave Roberts has mailed out "Letters to the Editor" to various newspapers published in coastal cities in Texas, Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi, to publicize the existence of The Society, to foster new membership, and to encourage an interchange of information with, and contributions of documents for its archives from, interested inhabitants of the Gulf coast.

President R. Dale Olson displayed a lengthy alphabetized printout of a database of names he had begun to compile of historical figures central to the Laffite saga. The database is one step in the evolution of a "Laffite Primer," a publication project planned by The Society to familiarize those interested in Laffite with the many threads of the legend. Coordinator of Research Bill Foley reported that he had begun a reference list of ship names associated with nineteenth-century privateering activity which, likewise, could mesh well as a part of, or support with further references, the "Primer."

Tuesday, March 11, 1997

As this month's featured presentation, The Society screened a film of a mock trial of Jean Laffite, the actors in which were law professionals performing under the auspices of the New Orleans Bar Association. See the article entitled "Mock Trial of Jean Lafitte" in this issue.

In the business portion of the meeting, Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski, standing in for Treasurer Jim Earthman, reported that he had entered into computer accounting software all financial transactions of The Society from its inception in August 1994 until the present time. Mr. Modzelewski had also prepared financial statements for the same period, which would be discussed at a future Board of Directors meeting. The Society's finances had heretofore been tracked only manually, and the change to

computerized bookkeeping will enhance the ability to analyze its income and expenses, particularly via the multitude of reports that the software can generate with just a few keystrokes.

Second Vice President Kathy Modzelewski distributed data on hotel accommodations in preparation for the special-event trip to Grand Isle and Grande Terre, Louisiana, scheduled for May 1997. Ms. Modzelewski announced that a flyer with complete information would be sent to all members.

Press Director Dave Roberts stated that he had received four or five mail responses, and several telephone calls, in response to his "Letters to the Editor" mailings, mentioned above in the next-to-last paragraph recapping the Tuesday, February 11, 1997, meeting.

Society members Andy and Becki Hall of the Laffite Society Archaeological Committee have begun an analysis of the many boxes of artifacts collected during the 1984 excavation of the supposed site of Laffite's Maison Rouge, 1417 Avenue A in Galveston. The Halls have created a computerized database in which they are entering information regarding the classification and description of the items, and they displayed to attendees sample printouts of same. The Halls and fellow Society and Archaeological Committee members Tom and Sarita Oertling (who, amongst the four of them, hold degrees in terrestrial archaeology, nautical archaeology, and anthropology) will collaborate in the continuing effort to classify and analyze the items recovered from 1417 Avenue A.

Ms. Hall reported that she had learned the significance of the charcoal residue found near a well site on the excavated property. Per information she received from an archaeological group via the Internet, it seems that charcoal was used to filter well water in the 1820's.

Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski announced plans to develop a Laffite Society World Wide Web page on the Internet, and member Andy Hall, who has relevant experience, offered to lead the project.

Tuesday, April 8, 1997

In lieu of a standard meeting this month, Laffite Society members and friends instead convened at the lovely home of Society members Jim (also The Society's Treasurer) and Margaret Earthman in Galveston for a buffet supper and cocktail party. A pleasant time was had by all, and the Earthmans expressed the intention of making the event an annual one, just as The Society eschews a formal meeting in December each year and instead enjoys a Yuletide holiday social.

Tuesday, May 13, 1997

No speaker was featured at this month's meeting. Instead, attendees who had participated in the special-event trip to Grand Isle and Grande Terre, Louisiana, the previous weekend discussed their impressions and displayed photographs of the outing. Various artifacts recovered on Grande Terre were exhibited, including glass and pottery shards, pipe stems, nails, and flints.

In the business portion of the meeting, Parliamentarian Diane Olson reported that plans were taking shape for a boat trip to Virginia Point in mid- to late summer to visit the supposed site of the interment of James Campbell, one of Laffite's captains. The boat transportation would be provided through the generosity of Ms. Olson's brother and sister-in-law, Joe and Judy Dolfi, and participants would also enjoy food and liquid refreshments.

President R. Dale Olson and Parliamentarian Diane Olson displayed photographs of cannons commissioned by Douglas Zwiener and originally intended for placement atop the concrete foundation remaining at the supposed Maison Rouge site, 1417 Avenue A, Galveston. The cannons are now at a property in Independence, Texas. Mr. Olson also mentioned that Society member Robert Looper of Golden Meadow, Louisiana, had provided him with a Laffite ship listing, which Mr. Olson would pass along to Coordinator of Research Bill Foley. It is expected that Mr. Foley can use the listing in the project discussed above, in the last paragraph pertaining to the February 1997 meeting.

Preliminary quotes are being solicited from local travel agents for a proposed trip to Mexico's Yucatán sometime in the first half of 1998. The historical objective of the trip would be to visit alleged burial sites of Jean and Pierre Laffite at Dzilam de Bravo and Dzinzantun, respectively. A group of fifteen to twenty persons has thus far exhibited tentative interest in a trip of five days and four nights. In addition to the two alleged burial sites previously mentioned, participants would also visit Cancun, Isla de Mujeres, and Mérida. President R. Dale Olson stated that prior to the trip, participants would be provided with study materials to enable them to become familiar with the historical background of the sites. Those interested in possibly participating should make such known, and suggest preferred dates, to Third Vice President Jim Nonus

through The Eiband's Gallery or The Laffite Society, the addresses of which are found in the "Calendar" section of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

Finally, attendees discussed the charging of an admission fee for the several special events that The Society hosts each year. An analysis of The Society's income and expenses since inception reflects that though such events have unfailingly proved to be a positive experience for participants, they have also always been underwritten to one degree or another by The Society, usually to its fiscal detriment. Attendees agreed that a nominal charge for future special events might be a wise business move, to conserve The Society's limited funds for projects of greater priority.

Tuesday, June 10, 1997

As this month's featured speaker, First Vice President Jean Epperson read the text of three articles she had written, some or all of which will eventually be published in *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

The first article dealt again with the issue discussed as the February 1997 special presentation: namely, whether Laffite abandoned Galveston Island in 1820 or 1821.

The second article raised the question of whether: a) the supposed red color of the Maison Rouge; b) the belief that Laffite lived primarily not in the Maison Rouge, but rather on the grounded ship *Pride*; and c) the legend that because and while the "Yellow Rose of Texas" was entertaining Santa Anna, the Mexicans lost the Battle of San Jacinto, were in fact all only myths created and fostered by the writer William Bollaert. (See the article entitled "Maison Rouge and the *Pride*: Myth or Fact?" in the previous issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.)

The third article dealt with yet another tale of Laffite buried treasure, this one courtesy of an old Indian and specifying a trove in the vicinity of Armand Bayou in the Clear Lake area.

After the readings, attendees engaged in some interesting and lively discussion of the articles, particularly as concerns the question of the Maison Rouge's structure and appearance.

In the business portion of the meeting, Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski reported that the fifth issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, covering the semiannual period July 1996 through December 1996, had been completed, and would be sent to a printer within the next few days.

Mr. Modzelewski also touched again on a topic discussed in past meetings when he noted that the cost of producing each issue of *The Chronicles* is high enough that The Society may need to consider issuing just a one- or two-page quarterly newsletter for the first three quarters of each calendar year, and a *Chronicles* only at year-end, as The Society "annual."

Mr. Modzelewski discussed Society member Andy Hall's creation of a Laffite web page, currently under development, on the Internet. As a result of several requests, Mr. Modzelewski stated that he would e-mail both the Laffite web page address, and the known e-mail addresses of members, to all those whose e-mail addresses he possessed.

Press Director Dave Roberts mentioned an idea which might bring The Society both local publicity and new members: the presentation of weekly, three-minute radio vignettes about Laffite on Galveston's local radio station KGBC, with a potential for selling such "spots" to other Texas Gulf Coast stations. Mr. Roberts has extensive commercial radio experience, and is willing to tape and promote the vignettes to the radio stations. He already has had an expression of interest from KGBC, but since the station would require a substantial number (perhaps as many as one year's worth) of the shorts scripted, taped, and ready for the air before it would schedule them for broadcast, some significant work is entailed in advance before results can be expected.

Third Vice President Jim Nonus suggested that The Society institute informal, Saturday morning "coffee-klatch" workshops for the Board of Directors and all interested members, as a method of making progress on some projects The Society has added to its "to-do" list. Since monthly business meetings fall during the week and subsequent to any featured presentation, attendees are generally fatigued, and the hour has become late, by the time business matters begin to be discussed, and it is sometimes difficult to generate much enthusiasm for work.

A CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER SYNOPSIS OF JACK C. RAMSAY, JR.'S
JEAN LAFFITE, PRINCE OF PIRATES, WITH SOME INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS
JEFF MODZELEWSKI

The publication of Jack C. Ramsay, Jr.'s *Jean Laffite, Prince of Pirates* (Eakin Press, 1996, Austin, Texas) should prove of great interest to students of the life and times of the privateer. The book is well written and includes copious end notes and a substantial bibliography. These characteristics, coupled with the substantial academic credentials of the author, and a verbal style not imbued with the overly flowery and melodramatic language of, for example, Lyle Saxon's *Laffite the Pirate*, lend the volume an air of significant credibility.

In attempting to sort fact from fiction - always a struggle with our subject - Mr. Ramsay deserves credit for taking a stand on Laffite matters long in dispute. For example, he believes that Jean and Pierre were born in the French colonial Caribbean, probably Saint Dominique (present day Haiti); that Jean died in the Yucatan in the mid-1820's; and that "The Journal of Jean Laffite," although perhaps dating to the mid-nineteenth century, was not authored by the buccaneer but by Mathew Laflin, ancestor of the man who in 1948 brought the journal to light.

The book is an easy and pleasant read, yet one filled with substance which provides the reader a well-rounded exposure to the economic and cultural environment of Laffite's day. For example, Chapter 5, "In Serious Straits," presents an enjoyable description of the mercantile mechanics of the New Orleans of the 1810's, and several chapters combine to provide a history-class refresher on the Gulf Coast theater of the War of 1812.

Probably of most importance, however, is the wealth of source material listed, which is a boon to all Laffite researchers, both professional and avocational.

SYNOPSIS OF *JEAN LAFFITE, PRINCE OF PIRATES*

Preface: "The Mysterious Jean Laffite"

Many different views of Jean Laffite have come down to us through the years, and, through anecdotes, we realize that he was seen as everything from seductive charmer to cold cutthroat to presidential ally. Even the multiple spellings of his surname which he employed add to the mystery of the real Jean Laffite.

Chapter 1: "A City in Confusion"

The city of New Orleans is transferred among three sovereignties in less than one month in 1803: from Spain, to France, to the United States (this last shift a result of the Louisiana Purchase). The largely French population of the city is unhappy with the change of allegiance from France. Renato Beluche and Jean Laffite are spectators at the public ceremony in which New Orleans officially becomes American territory.

Chapter 2: "The Lady New Orleans"

Under European control, New Orleans had flourished and developed while being granted a great degree of independence. Now, with the inhabitants already chafing under new American rule, authorities seem determined to impose unaccustomed restraints on marine commerce - especially, the "no questions asked" permission to use its harbor to even those ships of questionable endeavor, such as privateering in general and slave trading in particular.

Chapter 3: "The Louisiana Connection"

Although the origin of Jean and Pierre Laffite is cloaked in mystery, the author believes they were born into French colonial society, probably on Saint Dominique (present day Haiti), and moved to Louisiana in the 1780's. As a young man Jean became familiar with the Mississippi delta topography and its mercantile and plantation society, including a member of the latter and a later cohort, Renato Beluche.

Chapter 4: "A Mistress in the City"

The ambiance of New Orleans in the early years after the 1803 annexation is a colorful one: the threat of yellow fever, the burgeoning population, the social life, and the mixed-race society (Creole, mulatto, quadroon, octoroon) from which Jean Laffite chooses a mistress.

Chapter 5: "In Serious Straits"

The delta economy is growing, and the mercantile mechanics of New Orleans in the first decade of the 1800's, from importation of cargoes, to their warehousing (an occupation which Jean Laffite pursues for a time), to their retail distribution, are efficient. But even as the economic boom attracts entrepreneurs, governmental restrictions throttle them: toughened laws on slave trading, embargoes on

overseas shipping (a reflection of tensions with Great Britain that would culminate in the War of 1812), and more consistently applied Customs duties.

Chapter 6: "A Seaward Island"

The topography of the bayou country of Grande Terre, and the difficulty of navigating its narrow channels, provides protection from the authorities. Grande Terre becomes a home to some with legitimate occupations (i.e. fishermen), but also to others (including Renato Beluche and, by 1807, Jean Laffite) with the illegitimate one of privateering. The mechanics of quasi-legal sea raiding are described, as are several examples of the increased penalties meted out to those who are apprehended for engaging in this activity.

Chapter 7: "Kingdom by the Sea"

The Laffite operation expands after 1810, with Pierre acting as agent in New Orleans while Jean organizes and administers the work on Grande Terre. To minimize the time required to transport goods from Grande Terre to New Orleans, a retail outlet is established between the two settlements at an Indian mound in the swamp called "The Temple." A slave revolt in 1811 focuses unwanted negative attention on Grande Terre, through which the slaves were found to have entered the country.

Chapter 8: "A Nation Goes to War"

Varied are the attitudes of Congress and the nation toward the international tension, and manifest is the state of unpreparedness for military activity of the United States, at the opening of the War of 1812. Louisiana has achieved statehood. The government is increasingly concerned with privateering, which costs the country Customs revenues which are sorely needed for the war effort. Members of the Laffite crew, including Jean and Pierre, are ambushed and arrested by the authorities, but are released on bond.

Chapter 9: "A Bold Gesture"

Jean registers a brig as the first step in obtaining a letter of marque from the United States to use in the war effort. His appearance in New Orleans also makes clear that he will not be treated as a hunted fugitive, despite the indictment against him. The government increases its criticisms of his affairs, and he is no longer esteemed in some circles after reports of sea raid atrocities become widespread in New Orleans. Still, Grande Terre flourishes.

Chapter 10: "The British Menace"

Laffite is besieged on all sides: by a British warship off Cat Island in June of 1813; by another order for his arrest in New Orleans; by a challenge to his authority by some of his band, including Vincent Gambi. Tales of debauchery on Grande Terre circulate. Although the brothers still have influential friends, Pierre is imprisoned in New Orleans. Interestingly, the author does not believe the famous legend that it was Jean Laffite himself who posted a reward for Governor Claiborne after the latter posted one for him.

Chapter 11: "The Stray Sheep"

In the autumn of 1814, the British attempt to persuade Laffite to enlist on their side in the campaign for New Orleans, while the privateer, adept at deception, instead conveys this information to the American government in that city and offers his band's allegiance. [Editor's note: a copy of the cover letter to Jean Blaque described in the first two paragraphs of page 51 is in possession of The Laffite Society, and its original French was, to the extent that legibility permitted, transcribed and translated in December 1996 by Jeff Modzelewski for Dr. Reginald Wilson, both Laffite Society members.]

Chapter 12: "A Bloodless Conquest"

A successful raid by U.S. Commodore Daniel Patterson on the Baratarians nets some \$4,750 in captured vessels and booty. The mid-September 1814 raid is precipitated by American fears that Laffite will throw his lot in with the British. The eighty Baratarians captured and brought under arrest to New Orleans include Dominique Youx, but the Laffite brothers are absent, perhaps hiding out on a plantation up-river.

Chapter 13: "Hellish Banditti"

General Andrew Jackson's arrival in New Orleans on December 1, 1814, is immediately followed by his realization that the city is completely unprepared for a British attack. His change of opinion, from viewing Laffite's band as "hellish banditti" to valuing them for military support and for their influence on the attitudes of the New Orleans populace toward the approaching warfare, is thus a practical one. Laffite agrees to side with the Americans if Jackson will push for the desired pardon for the privateers for past offenses.

Chapter 14: "Beyond the Fog"

The British approach New Orleans by water through Lake Borgne, and on December 14,

1814, under Vice-Admiral Alexander Cochrane, win a naval defeat over U.S. forces led by Thomas A.C. Jones. The British capture five American gunboats and gain control of Louisiana's inland waterways.

Chapter 15: "Desperate Need"

With the British Navy in Lake Borgne and its land forces approaching from Baton Rouge, Jackson declares martial law in New Orleans. Multiple skirmishes occur in and around the city, with Laffite's men actively involved in the fighting. One contemporary account credits Laffite for saving the city through providing scarce supplies such as flints, possibly from secret stores known only to the Baratarians.

Chapter 16: "Hardships and Fatigues"

Continued preparations by both sides culminate in the decisive battle of January 8, 1815, which effectively ends the British campaign against New Orleans. Casualties on that day are 291 killed and 1,262 wounded on the British side, and 6 killed and 7 wounded on the American side. General Jackson publicly acknowledges Renato Beluche, Dominique Youx, and Jean and Pierre Laffite for their contributions to the victory.

Chapter 17: "The Celebration"

Jackson orders a religious and military celebration of the victory, but forbids further public parties for fear that the British have not left the Gulf Coast and may plan a new attack on New Orleans. His insistence on the continuation of martial law leads to a decline in his popularity with some sectors of the citizenry. When news of the signing of the formal peace treaty with Britain is received, the city finally has its grand celebratory ball. On February 6, 1815, President Madison officially pardons all members of the Laffite band who assisted in the defense of New Orleans.

Chapter 18: "A Restless Yearning"

The responses of Laffite's men to the pardon are varied: some accept it and abandon their previous sea-raiding ways, while others do not. Vincent Gambi is one of the latter, continuing his marine plundering on the wrong side of the thin line between legality and illegality. Renato Beluche, on the other hand, continues his activities legally under a letter of marque; he eventually becomes a national hero in Venezuela, where he is buried. Still others, such as Louis Chighizola (a.k.a. "Nez Coupe"), resettle in Grande Isle and elsewhere in southern Louisiana.

Chapter 19: "Mistresses and Espionage"

In March of 1817, Jean Laffite sails for Galveston. He and Pierre have agreed to become informers for the Spanish Crown, and there is news of revolutionaries plotting on the island to overthrow Spanish rule in Mexico. Laffite arrives and meets Louis-Michel Aury and Francisco Xavier Miña. When the latter two men depart the island on April 7, 1817, to pursue their revolutionary goal, Laffite takes control of Galveston Island.

Chapter 20: "Immune from Attack"

The Aury-Miña expedition ends in failure. Only Aury lives to return to Galveston, but he quickly realizes that his revolutionary purposes are inconsistent with the mercenary ones of the new master of the island, Jean Laffite, and his men. Indeed, Laffite has re-created Grande Terre on Galveston Island, and his commune's activities again begin to attract unfavorable press in New Orleans for jeopardizing merchants' livelihoods through the fear his seafaring business causes in international shippers.

Chapter 21: "Suspicion"

The "Maison Rouge," so named for its red color which serves to increase its visibility and apparent size to approaching vessels, is constructed on the Galveston Bay side of the Island. Jean Laffite actually lives aboard the anchored vessel the *Pride*, and uses the Maison Rouge for ceremonial occasions. Laffite is an adept administrator of the island's operations, and arranges the apportionment of shares of captured booty, gives instructions for entry to the harbor, and requires newcomers to swear oaths of allegiance acknowledging him as supreme commander.

Chapter 22: "Blatant Misrepresentation"

A loophole in an 1818 law regarding slave trading provides additional business opportunities to the Galvestonians, who bring slavers to port and arrange for their transport across Bolivar Roads; the slaves are then marched to Lake Sabine and ferried across into the United States. Initial peaceful relations with Karankawa Indians sour violently, an autumn 1818 hurricane devastates the settlement, and George Graham of the U.S. Navy comes calling to question by which authority Laffite has occupied the island.

Chapter 23: "A Balancing Act"

Lieutenant Larry Kearny aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise visits the island, and although Laffite

maintains that he is not a pirate, the government's representative makes clear that it is wished that the privateer abandon the settlement. Laffite promises to leave, but sets no date. Others arrive in the vicinity. Charles Lallemant and a group of French expatriates intend to start a colony inland on the Trinity River, but Laffite informs them to Spain and the ill-planned colonization is doomed. Laffite likewise informs Texas revolutionary James Long, but the privateer can no longer appease Spain, which clearly considers him a pirate.

Chapter 24: "A Body Left Dangling"

When a band of Laffitians led by a man surnamed "Brown" attacks a Louisiana plantation home in September 1819, public opinion sours on the privateer, and the U.S. Navy under J.R. Madison aboard the U.S.S. *Lynx* visits the island. Laffite hangs Brown on a beach-front scaffold in view of the U.S. vessel, and allows the remaining perpetrators to be taken into government custody. In December 1819, U.S. authorities capture a copy of the privateering commission issued to two of Laffite's men arrested for piracy off the Louisiana coast, and the government finally has its documentary evidence of piracy.

Chapter 25: "Sails in the Sunrise"

In the spring of 1820, Lieutenant Larry Kearny of the U.S.S. *Enterprise* again comes to call at the island, and extracts from Laffite a promise to quit Galveston. Members of the band have slowly drifted away as Laffite's reputation turned negative and as penalties administered for piracy are increasingly reported by the news media, and in fact, Kearny's party reacts with surprise at the sparsely-manned settlement. Early in 1821 Laffite departs.

Chapter 26: "An Isolated Cove"

Since he speaks Spanish and has been in contact with authorities in Havana, Laffite sails for Cuba, which he views as perhaps the last safe haven for those of his occupation. Continued tales of pirate atrocities make the news with an increasing frequency. By the late fall of 1822 Laffite appears to have abandoned Cuba after being captured, transported to a Haitian prison, and escaping. Reports of his destination vary from Charleston, South Carolina, to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and one report even tells of his death in action against a British sloop of war.

Chapter 27: "The Last Island"

Laffite finds sanctuary on Isla de Mujeres off Mexico's Yucatan coast. He does not attempt to re-establish a sea-raiding base, but welcomes the easy access to the jungles of the nearby mainland should flight be required. Surviving on seafood and supplies from off the island, he dies in 1826 or 1827, the opulence of his former surroundings on Grande Terre and Maison Rouge long since a memory. His death (possibly from a fever) and burial take place in the Yucatan, but different sites for these events are reported, and his grave is thought to be unmarked.

Epilogue: "The Lure of the Sea"

Perhaps Laffite wanted the various legends told about him to create confusion regarding some of the aspects of his life. His existence begins nowhere and ends nowhere, as far as historic certainty extends. What of the multitude of rumors of buried treasure? the tale that he rescued Napoleon from exile on St. Helena and brought him to be buried in Laffite's old haunts in southern Louisiana? What, even, of Laffite's physical characteristics, the statistics of which are themselves subject to differing accounts? Was he a good man or bad? a legal privateer or an illegal pirate? For certain, he was not a man who could have accepted the government's pardon and turned to a staid, conformist life.

Appendix A: "The Journal of Jean Laffite"

In 1948, John Andrechynne Laflin brought to light a manuscript which he claimed was a journal written by Jean Laffite over the years 1845 to 1850. After much discussion and analysis, substantial controversy still exists regarding the author of the manuscript. The paper stock and ferrous ink with which the document was created appear to date unquestionably from the mid-nineteenth century. However, the conclusions of handwriting experts are debatable, and some of the journal's substance can also be interpreted so as to cast doubt that the privateer were its author. Author Ramsay's opinion is that the journal was created by an ancestor of John A. Laflin's who, because of a mental aberration, came to believe that he was himself Jean Laffite, "Prince of Pirates".

Appendix B: "Capt. Dominique Youx's Company, December 23, 1814 - March 16, 1815, Battery Number 3"

A roster drawn from *Louisiana in the War of 1812* by Powell A. Casey, 1963, Baton Rouge.

IN WHICH YEAR DID LAFFITE ABANDON GALVESTON: 1820 OR 1821?
A SELECTED REFERENCE BASE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, WITH SOME OPINION ON THE ISSUE
KATHY AND JEFF MODZELEWSKI

LET'S HEAR IT FOR 1820!

1.) *The Story of Jean and Pierre Lafitte the Pirate-Patriots*
Including a Note on the Indispensable Victory at New Orleans January 8, 1815
A Publication of the Louisiana State Museum (Issued March 20, 1938), James J.A. Fortier, Editor
and a reprint of

"Historical Sketch of Pierre and Jean Lafitte the Famous Smugglers of Louisiana, 1809 - 1814"
by Charles Gayarre
from *The Magazine of American History*, Vol. X, Jul-Dec. 1883, Historical Publication Co., New York
by courtesy of Howard Memorial Library, New Orleans

"John [Lafitte] is mentioned as having settled at Galveston, Texas, in 1816, and to have occupied it until 1820, when he was expelled from that locality, some say by the Mexican government, and others, by the United States."

[p. 73, in the Gayarre portion of the book]

2.) *The Handbook of Texas II*
The Texas State Historical Association, Austin, Texas, 1952

"...Jean Lafitte abandoned Galveston early in May, 1820, and sailed away to Muger Island off the coast of Yucatan."

[from a passage on "Jean Lafitte" authored by Harris Gaylord Warren, pp. 4-5]

[Authors' Note: An additional reference from the *Handbook*, from an article on "Galveston County," p. 57, appears to contradict the above citation in stating: "Lafitte, hunted by the United States government for plundering an American vessel, burned Campeche and left...in 1821."]

3.) "The Life and Times of Jean Lafitte," Volume XII, No. 1 (Spring, 1992)
Published by The Lafitte Study Group

When Did Jean Lafitte Actually Leave Galveston?

Most books and encyclopedias give March 21, 1821 as the date of his final departure from Galveston. This erroneous date was probably carried forward by historians from the otherwise excellent Yoakum's *History of Texas* published in 1855. But in the U.S. Federal Archives, Record Group 45, #108, Office of Naval Records, Captains Letters, Vol. I, for 1820 is Lt. Lawrence Kearney's [sic] report of Lafitte's departure to Commodore Patterson, dated March 7, 1820, and Patterson's cover letter passing along Kearney's report to the Secretary of the Navy, Smith Thompson, Washington, dated March 17, 1820, reproduced as follows:

U.S. Brig Enterprise
Off Tortuga, March 7, 1820

Sir:

I was at Galveston on the 27th ult. and found the force there to consist of one Brig, two Small Schooners, and one Felucca and but few men attached to them.

Lafitte has burned his house and embarked on board the Brig. There is no doubt of his intention to abandon the place immediately, his works of defense razed to the

ground, his vessels are preparing for sea and only wait a favorable time to cross the Bar for which purpose the Brig is lightened, her draft of water being too great.

He assures me he will fully comply with the stipulations of the agreement to abandon the place and will cruise no more in the Bay of Mexico. A few houses are yet standing for their present conveniences which are to be burned as soon as they can get over the Bar. The Felucca, now used as a lighter for the Brig, he will not carry with him, but also burn, together with all useless vessels or boats.

The preparation [sic] already made induce a belief that full compliance on his part may be depended upon.

I am very Respectfully [sic] Your Obent. Servt.,
(signed) Lawrence Kearny

Comg. The U. S. Brig *Enterprise*

Com. Dan. T. Patterson
Commdg. New Orleans Station

[p. 8]

4.) "The Laffite Study Group Newsletter," Volume II, No. 1 (Spring, 1982)
Published by The Laffite Study Group

This source cites Col. J.S. Thrasher's "Early History of Galveston" from the *Galveston City Directory*, 1866-1867, in stating that "Laffite left Galveston on May 12, 1820, sailing into the veils of mystery."

ALL IN FAVOR OF 1821, SAY "AYE"!

5.) *The Buccaneer (The Story of Jean Lafitte)*
(Originally Published Under the Title *Jean Lafitte, Gentleman Smuggler*)
by Mitchell V. Charnley

Grosset and Dunlap, Publishers, New York (published by arrangement with The Viking Press)

In a passage which does not lend itself to a concise citation, Charnley states that Lafitte's final departure from Galveston occurred on May 11-12, 1821.

[from Chapter XXXII, entitled "Finis"]

6.) *The Handbook of Texas*
The Texas State Historical Association, Austin, Texas

"Laffite, hunted by the United States government for plundering an American vessel, burned Campeche and left...in 1821."

[from an article on "Galveston County," p. 57]

[Authors' Note: An additional reference from the *Handbook*, from a passage authored by Harris Gaylord Warren on "Jean Laffite," pp. 4-5, appears to contradict the above citation in stating: "...Jean Laffite abandoned Galveston early in May, 1820, and sailed away to Muger Island off the coast of Yucatan."]

7.) *Lafitte the Pirate* by Lyle Saxon
The Century Company, New York / London, 1930, Illustrated by E.H. Suydam

"Historians disagree concerning the date of Jean Lafitte's departure from Galveston; some writers assert that he left the island as early as May 12th, 1820, while others give various dates in 1821. William Bollaert, one

of the most painstaking and accurate chroniclers of the buccaneer's history, speaks of the exodus as taking place 'on an unnamed day, early in 1821.' And I am inclined to agree with him."

[from Chapter XXX, entitled "Fragments"; additional text in the chapter entitled "The Last of Campeachy" also makes manifest that Laffite was still in Galveston in 1821]

8.) *Jean Laffite, Gentleman Rover* by Stanley Clisby Arthur
Hermanson, New Orleans, 1952

[Note: This work drew heavily upon *The Journal of Jean Laffite* as a source]

Saturday, March 3, 1821, those on board the *Enterprise*, anchored directly off Galveston Bay, kept watch as, one by one, privateers found the channel, sailed out of the harbor, crossed the bar and, with canvas filled with a soft spring breeze, vanished into the far reaches of the blue-green waters...it was the gentleman rover himself who first applied the torch...Soon a roaring flame swept Campêche and the *Maison Rouge*...In this fashion, so says the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Jean Laffite "sailed away into the legendary realms from which he had come."

[from Chapter 22, entitled "The Exodus"]

9.) *The Pirate Laffite and the Battle of New Orleans* by Robert Tallant
Random House, New York, 1951; Illustrated by John Chase

...in 1821...United States ships entered the harbor and the officers called upon Laffite. They told him Campeach had to go...The officer in charge...would order his ship...to destroy the village unless Laffite and his men left it. That night Laffite set fire to Campeachy. Men aboard the USS *Enterprise* saw it burst into flames during the night. When they went ashore at dawn they found only ashes and rubble.

[from Chapter 20, entitled "New Orleans, American City"]

10.) *The Journal of Jean Laffite: The Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*
Dogwood Press, Woodville, Texas, 1994

On Saturday, March 3, 1821 I saw Lieutenant Kearny and his crew for the last time...Preparations had been made to blow everything up with powder...Everyone left the island at four o'clock...Homes were put to the torch and blazed all along the shore. My ships headed toward the south. Four leagues out at sea I could still see Galveston on fire, looking like a sunset. That was the last time that I saw the Gulf of Texas.

[p. 119]

11.) *Jean Laffite Prince of Pirates* by Jack C. Ramsay, Jr.
Eakin Press, Austin, Texas, 1996

"Early in the year 1821, Jean Laffite was forced to keep his promise to Kearny and Patterson...As the sails of Laffite's schooner disappeared beyond the ocean's rim, even the off-shore islands of Texas had become, once more, a desolate waste of windblown sand."

[from Chapter 25, entitled "Sails in the Sunrise"]

[End note #20 to Chapter 25 states that "The fact that privateers continued to sail from Galveston as late as September 1820 would indicate that a remnant remained on the island until late in the year or early in 1821," citing the September 30, 1820, issue of *Niles' Weekly Register*, Volume XIX, p. 80, as its source.]

12.) *Galveston: A History* by David G. McComb
University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1986

"The most remarkable description [of Laffite], however, resulted from an 1821 visit by the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. Because of piratical depredations, the United States ordered Laffite to leave Galveston and sent the *Enterprise* to enforce the order. Following the visit of the *Enterprise*, Laffite burned Campeachy, departed on his ship, *Pride*, and disappeared into the mists and legends of history."

[pp. 36-37]

13.) *History of the Island and the City of Galveston*, Volume I, by Charles W. Hayes
[Completed in 1879, but not published until 1974]
Jenkins Garrett Press, Austin, Texas, 1974

After having seen the last vestige of his town one mass of cinders and ashes, and having fully complied with his promise to Lieutenant Kearney, he assembled his favorite crew of sixty men, under command of William Cochrane, his trusted Lieutenant, on board of his vessel, the *Pride*, and, on the 12th of May, 1821, with a favorable wind and tide, sailed out over the bar, followed by the vessels of his faithful adherents, and "looked his last" on the scenes of his many triumphs.

[p. 62]

SOME OPINION ON THE ISSUE

It is possible that the opinion espoused in the introductory paragraph of the reference in this article numbered "3", from "The Life and Times of Jean Laffite" - namely, that Laffite's departure from Galveston happened in 1820, but was erroneously listed as occurring in 1821 in Yoakum's seminal *History of Texas*, said error thenceforth perpetuated by later works - is true. However, another, and perhaps more interesting, view is that the departure did indeed occur in 1821, as could be supported by the following.

Although in this same reference "3," the reproduced letter from Lawrence Kearny of the *Enterprise* to Daniel T. Patterson would seem to present incontrovertible evidence in support of the earlier of the two years, it is important to note that Lieutenant Kearny acknowledges in this letter that he did not actually witness Laffite leave the island. Although the Maison Rouge had apparently been burned, Jack C. Ramsay, Jr., in *Jean Laffite Prince of Pirates* (see Chapter 21, entitled "Suspicion") writes that Laffite actually used that structure only for ceremonial occasions, and lived aboard the vessel *Pride* anchored in the harbor. Thus, a house on land was not necessary for the privateer's comfort.

In addition, Mr. Ramsay notes that the population of the Laffite colony in Galveston had dwindled markedly in its latter days (see Chapter 25, entitled "Sails in the Sunrise"). The torching of unneeded dwellings might thus not have negatively impacted the remaining residents, yet would have deceived the Navy into believing that Laffite's departure was imminent when in fact it was not.

Could Laffite - a known master at deception - have actually gone to the extent to which he seemingly did, in order to convince Kearny that he was leaving Galveston immediately, but then lingered on for another year?

Note, finally, that it is possible that the multiple visits by the U.S. Navy to Laffite in Galveston (in *Jean Laffite Prince of Pirates*, Mr. Ramsay cites four; in chronological order, they are: one by George Graham; one by Lawrence Kearny of the *Enterprise*; one by J.R. Madison of the *Lynx*; and a second by Lawrence Kearny of the *Enterprise*) themselves gave rise to inaccuracies about which was the final visit of the series. As was mentioned above with regard to Yoakum's *History of Texas*, such errors, once committed to print, could have been perpetuated through the years in subsequent publications which used these earlier ones as sources.

[For support for Mr. Ramsay's text related to Navy visits to Laffite's Galveston, Laffite's daily residence on board the *Pride* and not in the Maison Rouge, and the dwindling of the colony's numbers, see especially, in his aforementioned work, Chapter 21 and its end note 7; Chapter 22 and its end notes 34-36; Chapter 23 and its end notes 1-11; Chapter 24 and its end notes 5, 7-9, and 11; and Chapter 25 and its end notes 10-12 and 14.]

MOCK TRIAL OF JEAN LAFITTE

A VIDEO PRESENTATION PRODUCED IN 1993 BY THE NEW ORLEANS BAR
ASSOCIATION AND THE LOUISIANA CENTER FOR LAW-RELATED EDUCATION
DOROTHY McD. KARILANOVIC

This video presents a mock trial designed to educate non-lawyers about law-related issues. The script of the dramatization is based on an actual trial of the privateer Jean Lafitte. It includes actors who represent the defendants as well as real judges and lawyers, dressed in costumes of the period.

In this dramatized trial, the charges before the bench relate to the evasion of Customs taxes, as follows:

1) That on November 16, 1815, Jean Lafitte did knowingly and willfully intend to defraud the United States Government by not paying \$3,000 in Customs duties.

2) That Jean Lafitte did conspire to smuggle goods without the intention of paying taxes and to sell such goods at prices that had the effect of undercutting those of the merchants of New Orleans {see End Note}.

3) That Jean Lafitte, and fellow privateers, conspired to seize three Spanish ships and confiscate their cargoes, with the intent of selling them at auction in west New Orleans, some items of said cargoes being brandy, wine, oil, flour, and tallow, examples of which are shown as exhibits.

The defendants appearing before the prosecution and defense are as follows:

1) Vincent Gambi, a fellow privateer of Lafitte, captured by the authorities on Cat Island in possession of three Spanish ships, along with their cargoes. Under questioning, Gambi denies that he said previously that he had been pressured by Lafitte to seize the ships.

2) Walker Gilbert, a client of Jean Lafitte and an owner of a sugar plantation at Donaldsonville, Louisiana, who paid a bond for Vincent Gambi's release from jail. Gilbert denies purchasing any merchandise from Lafitte, but, on firm questioning from the prosecuting attorney, admits that prior to 1812 he had purchased many items from Lafitte at auction. Gilbert rationalizes his illegal purchases by saying that even though such practices were against the law and in violation of the United States Constitution, Lafitte was the only person who offered the merchandise that Gilbert desired to purchase. Gilbert also states that Lafitte cheated him, with Lafitte making the same claim against Gilbert.

3) Dominique Youx (or Alexander), older brother of Jean Lafitte, owner of a tavern on St.

Anne's Street, "The Cat Island Booty," where Lafitte was arrested in April, 1816.

4) Jean Lafitte, self-professed privateer and patriot, stating that he had been a privateer during the period 1805-1812, and denying that he had engaged in smuggling activities after receiving a pardon from President Madison and the United States government for his part in defending New Orleans during the War of 1812.

Witnesses for the defense and the prosecution include:

1) (Witness For the Defense) General Andrew Jackson, speaking fervently of Lafitte's loyalty and patriotism to the American cause, praising the exploits of Lafitte and his men in the defense of New Orleans against the British in 1814-1815.

2) (Witness For the Prosecution) Pierre Dubourg, United States Customs official, with whom Lafitte had several encounters related to evasion of Customs taxes.

The jury's verdict, a unanimous one on all three counts: "Not guilty," proven "beyond a reasonable doubt."

The Lafitte Society expresses its thanks to member Robert Looper of Golden Meadow, Louisiana, who donated a copy of this video to the Lafitte Society Archives in Galveston, Texas. Those wishing to view it may borrow it via contact with Jim Nonus, Third Vice President - Special Events, or Dorothy McD. Karilanovic, the Society's Secretary. For inquiries regarding the purchase of a copy of the video, contact the New Orleans Bar Association and the Louisiana Center for Law-Related Education at (504) 566-1600.

End Note

Competition among merchants must have been rife. In 1803, the "city" of New Orleans consisted of only about eleven blocks of mostly one-story houses situated along the levee and extending about six blocks to its back limits. There were a few two-tiered structures, places of business, located wharf-side. At that time, the Cabildo and the Cathedral were probably the only two imposing buildings in that area. [See *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, eds. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1992.]

WELCOME, NEW LAFFITIANS

JANUARY 1, 1997 - JUNE 30, 1997

Vittoria Abercrombie
Galveston, Texas

Ryan Beavers
Apalachicola, Florida

Daniel and Claire Cardina
Tampa, Florida

Cherlyn Glanville
Houston, Texas

Jeanette Haydel
Galveston, Texas

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Houston, Texas

John Hunger
Galveston, Texas

Lloyd and Mary Frances Johnson
Fairfax, Virginia

Joseph Kuca
Galveston, Texas

Susan Olsen
Galveston, Texas

Jack and Karin Ramsay
Irving, Texas

Arthur and Marcia Wilcox
Galveston, Texas

Don Wood
Galveston, 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 monthly meetings, one or more special events are normally scheduled during the year. Examples of such special events which have taken place in the past include the summer 1996 excavation of the supposed site of Laffite's Maison Rouge and the June 1996 "Plantation Tour" to Louisiana, both of which have been the subjects of articles in prior issues 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 Third Vice President - Special Events, Jim Nonus, at (409) 763-5495. The Laffite Society will mail information to members and interested parties on the Society's mailing list as special event details are determined.

SPONSORSHIP OF MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING SPEAKERS

Since its inception, a special feature of The Laffite Society has been a presentation at monthly meetings by a Laffite Society member or guest speaker.

In an effort to augment the pool of available speakers, The Society has begun a program of "sponsorships" in which the expenses of guest speakers are paid by donations from individual members.

Given that all members of The Society do not enjoy equal access to meetings due to their distances from Galveston, it was felt by the Board that any expenses incurred relative to a guest speaker should not be taken from the general fund.

Sponsorships in the suggested amount of

\$20.00 each are available to members who wish to make such donations. While speakers, themselves, do not receive an honorarium, accommodations and other expenses incurred during travel are underwritten by The Laffite Society through these sponsorships of its members.

Members purchasing sponsorships are given special recognition at the appropriate meeting, and in the pages of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. Persons wishing to make suggestions regarding future speakers should contact First Vice President Jean L. Epperson in care of The Laffite Society, P.O. Box 1325, Galveston, TX, 77553.

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS AUGUST 1996 ~ JULY 1998

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

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

Annual dues are as follows:

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

THANK YOU FROM THE SOCIETY

To Pat and Jean Landry of Grand Isle, Louisiana, for going above and beyond the call of duty in making our group feel welcome during its May 1997 Grand Isle/Grande Terre excursion, and for arranging the events for a delightful weekend.

To Bob Looper of Golden Meadow, Louisiana, for inviting the Grande Isle/Grande Terre participants to his beautiful home to browse through his extensive Laffite archive; also, for donating the videotaped mock trial of Jean Laffite shown as the March 1997 monthly meeting's featured presentation.

To Kathy Modzelewski, for performing the important but unglorious task of maintaining accurate membership records in her role as Second Vice President.

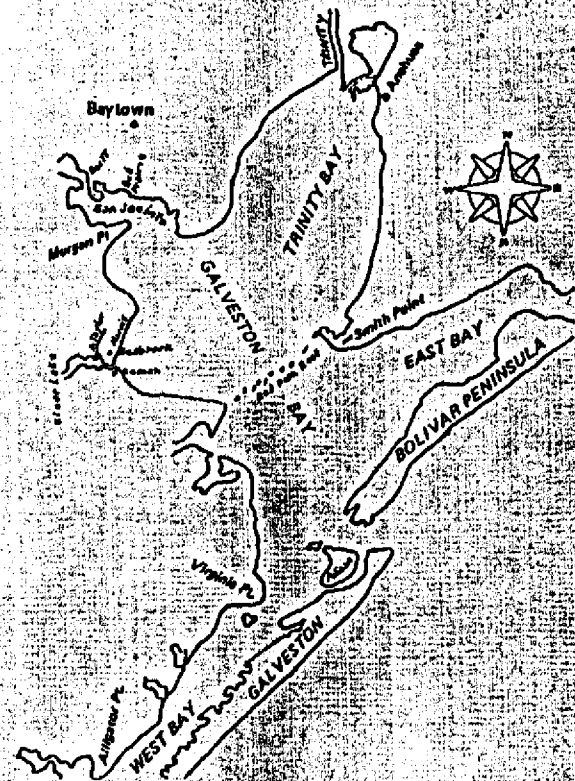
To Dr. Reginald Wilson, for being the research spark among the Galveston-area members who keeps us all fresh and up-to-date on the many (and still-surfacing) threads of the Laffite saga.

THE JOURNAL OF JEAN LAFITTE



The Privateer-Patriot's Own Story

HISTORICAL VIGNETTES OF GALVESTON BAY



Jean L. Epperson

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