

The Laffite Society Chronicles

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

DON C. MARLER

The Laffite Society was founded in 1994 and has continued to meet monthly since its inception. Much research and writing on the brothers Laffite has been accomplished in these short eight years. Much of the confusion and misinformation about them has been eliminated. *The Laffite Chronicles* has recorded the Society's successes, failures and findings since January 1995. Membership of the Society is a mixture of those who do scholarly research and writing and those who are only interested in tracking the story at close range -- both groups have made this a healthy organization. The Society's accomplishments have been made by a relatively small (under 100) membership; it speaks to the quality of the membership. It is this editor's opinion that another reason for the success of the Society is the open acceptance of expression of all ideas by any member.

On the *Editor's Page* in the last issue an erroneous statement was made that that issue would report the Yucatan Trip. Instead that report is in this issue.

Perhaps it would be beneficial to read it together with "The Final Years of Jean Laffite." In this article society member, Jean L. Epperson, goes a long way toward answering the questions about when and where Jean Laffite died. The absolute final answers to those questions are still out there, so we look to Jean and others for a continuation of this most interesting story.

We encourage submission to the *Chronicles* of articles related to the Laffites and their life and times. Examine past issues to get an idea of the preferred format. Submission of articles that are typed on a computer is preferred, but other methods are accepted. When using the computer please do not use automatic footnotes, footers or headers.

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THE FINAL YEARS OF JEAN LAFFITE

Jean L. Epperson

The last years of Jean Laffite's life were filled with action, grief and misfortune. His crew mutinied, his brother died, he was jailed, he escaped, then he reportedly ended his life violently in a sea battle while flying the red flag signifying "no quarter".

Preparing to abandon his base on Galveston Island in 1820, Jean Laffite sent Captain William Mitchell and the schooner *Pegasus* to New Orleans for supplies and men. Pierre Laffite was also aboard. Arriving dockside March 7, 1820, they began provisioning and recruiting.¹ About ninety men enlisted to cruise for four months on a brig of 22 guns under a flag called the Patriot Flag of white, red and blue (Republic of Mexico). The recruits were to receive a bounty of Galvez-town.² Before all preparations were finished, the vessel was seized on March 18, impounded by the United States Marshall \$30.00 each on boarding the brig in and charged with piracy. A trial ensued. The government did not prove its case and the *Pegasus* was returned to Mitchell. He took the schooner back to Galveston with the supplies and men for Jean.³

Pierre left New Orleans for Havana where he was hoping to collect part of the promised pay for his and Jean's espionage services for the Spanish Crown. The Laffite brothers planned to spend their final years near Havana and had purchased a ranch situated in what is now the crossroads of Correa and Calzada de Jesus del Monte. This home was enjoyed by their descendants as the brothers did not survive long enough to live there.⁴

Loading the brig *New Enterprise* and the armed schooner *Minerva* with men and supplies, Laffite torched the village on Galveston, slipped across the bar and out to sea May 12, 1820.⁵ George Schumph, the master-at-arms of the brig, said their destination was Santa Catalina (Old Providence) Island

in the Caribbean Sea where they were to join Luis Aury.⁶

Sailing along the coast of Mexico, Laffite's ships fell in with the Spanish schooner *Constitution* on May 22 and seized her. She was in route to Veracruz from Cadiz and was loaded with 1,200 barrels of Spanish whisky, 900 bottles of oil, a trunk of belts, 200 handkerchiefs and other cargo.⁷ Clemente Camara, a fisherman, disposed of the ship's goods for Laffite from his ranch in Cancun.

After the capture of the *Constitution*, three or four of Laffite's crew left the *Minerva* and returned to New Orleans. They were put on trial for piracy in the United States District Court in July. They pled not guilty, claiming they were misled about the purpose of the voyage. Jacques La Croix, Michel Lebrequet, James Louis Roey and possibly Alexis Pacou, all subjects of the King of France, were found guilty but were later pardoned by the President of the United States.⁸

Sometime between June and September Jean captured another ship described as an "unworthy coastal vessel" of eight cannon owned by Don Vincente Milet, and commanded by Don Pedro Cuppull. The ship was going from Tampico to Campeche.⁹

Jean and Pierre Laffite made their base of operations on Isla Mujeres, an island off the coast of the Yucatan. In September 1820 Jean's crew mutinied, put officers of the brig *New Enterprise* on shore and turned the ship in to custom officials at the Balize in the Mississippi River.¹⁰ This probably happened because Jean's privateer commission from the Republic of Mexico had expired and the men would have been classed as pirates if they had continued to sail with him.

The *Louisiana Courier* reported February 22, 1821 that (Pierre) Laffite, the brother of the celebrated pirate, (Jean) Laffite, departed Charleston,

South Carolina on board the schooner *Nancy Eleanor*. Pierre was thought to have been conferring with the notorious slaver Le Maitre.¹¹

Miguel Molas, a pirate turned government agent, attacked the Laffite's base on Isla Mujeres in November 1821. During the ensuing skirmishing Pierre Laffite was mortally wounded. Jean sailed around the island and repeatedly attacked Molas but was not able to rescue his brother and companions. Left on the beach when Molas retreated into the hills, Pierre, George Schumph, and Lucy Allen, escaped by boat northward along the coast. Pierre died on a small rancho three leagues from the lookout of Dzilam. His body was taken to Dzilam and given a church burial sometime during the first ten days of November. Schumph was jailed and interrogated and Lucy, ill, was left in Dzemul. The tribunal conducting the investigation of Pierre's death received information that the captain of the pirate boat, more than likely Jean Laffite, arrived in Merida and stated that in view of the state of independence of the Mexican Empire he had stopped seizing ships and offered his help in returning them and their cargoes to the owners.¹² Typical of the quixotic reactions of Jean Laffite when he learned his prizes were not Spanish.

The Mexican coast no longer offering Spanish prizes or safe haven, Jean sailed into the Gulf toward Cuba. No doubt he was despondent over his brothers death and he became reckless and careless.

The historian, Francisco Mota wrote, "Pierre died in the Yucatan in November, 1821 and Jean continued smuggling slaves, more than pirating, around the Cuban coast, until in January of 1822 the small fleet still belonging to him from his yesteryear's powerful squadron was destroyed by cannon fire by a brigantine of the English navy off the coast of Cuba. Surviving the catastrophe, he swam with some of his companions to the Cuban shore, where he ended up taken prisoner by the guards near Santa Cruz del Sur. He was in the jail at Puerto Principe (now Camaguey) for some weeks, and because he was sick he managed to be transferred to the

Hospital of San Juan de Dios, from which he escaped the 13th of February of 1822, to flee toward some inlet of the Camagueyan coast."¹³

The narrative continues saying, "The report of the governor of Puerto Principe, dated the 19th of March said that Jean Laffite is established in a pirate guairo (a small, two masted vessel with leg-of-mutton sails) and several boats crewed by people of every nation and color, up to the number of thirty men, in the anchorage of Rincon Grande, one league distant from Viaro, on the north coast of this jurisdiction and adjacent to Boca Carabela."¹⁴

The *Louisiana Courier* of November 29, 1822 reported, belatedly, that Laffite wrecked on the Island of Cuba, was apprehended and brought to Porto Principe, jailed, and escaped with the help of influential persons, thus confirming the Mota narrative.

The ships *Alligator* and *Grampus* of the United States pirate hunting squadron of Commodore David Porter reported engaging Laffite and other raiders in a hot skirmish off Sugar Key, Cuba on May 1, 1822.¹⁵

An article dateline December 25, New Orleans, from the Boston Newspaper, *The Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot*, of January 25, 1823 reads: "The *Schr. Columbus Ross*, at this port from Jamaica, on the 26th November, Lat 19, Long 82, fell in with the Colombian private armed schooner, *Gen. Santander*, Capt. John Laffite, 95 days from Carthagen on a cruise; had captured 2 Spanish vessels, one of which they had manned for Carthagen. Capt. Laffite treated us with the greatest politeness, without even looking at our papers of cargo, and convoyed us for two days, until he judged us out of danger of Pirates. He sent us about 30 4 lb shot for our gun, when we informed him we had none, and offered us any other supplies he could furnish. The *Gen. Santander* is a schooner of about 40 tons, with a brass 4 lb on a pivot." This was the last contemporary source noted by the author that Jean Laffite was still alive.

It is interesting to note that The *Rhode Island Republican* newspaper of June 4, 1823 stated, "South American News: the Colombian national schooner *General Santander*, Capt. J. Smith,

arrived in New York on Sunday last, in 16 days from La Guaira, having on board His Excellency Senator Leandro Palacios, Consul General,¹⁶

A long time, respected, Laffite researcher writes, "(Simon) Bolivar had no privateers at sea in 1822-23 (he never had any use for Aury or Jolly and his government formally abolished privateering on 6 October 1821), but the government of Colombia/Venezuela did apparently from time to time hire private armed vessels to perform naval functions mostly against pirates and ex-privateers rather than Spanish merchant marines."¹⁷

When and where did Jean Laffite die? The prevalent and often repeated story is that he died in the Yucatan in 1827 or 1828. This story originated with the Mirabeau B. Lamar Papers which were published in 1922. Captain S. R. Fisher wrote to Lamar in February 1836 saying that a turtle fisherman named Gregorio told him that Laffite died of a fever near Teljas, a small village on the Yucatan, about 1828. In May of 1838 Fisher again writing to Lamar said Laffite died at Lasbocas, on the north coast of the Yucatan, about 1827 and was buried at Salam (sic).¹⁸ It is obvious that Fishers source was talking about the death of Pierre Laffite in 1821 and not Jean Laffite.¹⁹

Some authors have said that Jean died off the coast of the Yucatan in a hurricane, another stated that he died in Venezuela of wounds suffered in a battle with a Spaniard, yet another wrote that he was assassinated by Cuban associates in the slave traffic. None have given supportive documentation.

The most recent account of Jean Laffite's death was contained in a publication entitled, *The Journal of Jean Laffite*, published in 1958 by John A. Laffite, the self acclaimed great-grandson of Jean Laffite. This account relates that Jean returned to the United States a few years after leaving Galveston in 1821 (he actually left in 1820) lived until 1854 when he died in Edwardsville, and was buried in Alton, Illinois.²⁰ John A. Laffite was actually the son of John and Mary Matejka, Bohemian immigrants into Omaha, Nebraska in the 1880s. John, while

working for the Southern Pacific Railroad, changed his surname twice, from Matejka to Nafsinger to Lafitte.²¹ Later he changed the spelling to "Laffite" when he discovered that was the way Jean signed his name. Although many researchers have tried to authenticate the lineage that John A. recorded, in detail from Jean Laffite, they have never met with success. *The Journal of Jean Laffite* is undoubtedly a fictional account whose original source is a mystery.

A few researchers have suggested that Jean spread stories of his death to confuse the authorities. It is more realistic to assume that rumor and mystery surrounding his death gave rise to fanciful suppositions.

The earliest account of Jean's death was published on March 19, 1823, in the *Gaceta de Cartagena* (Cartagena Gazette) in Cartagena, Columbia according to the Mexican historian, Rubio Mane. The article said that Jean Laffite died in a naval battle fighting in the service of the liberator of South America, Simon Bolivar.

Two other 1823 accounts of Jean Laffites death were published in United States newspapers. The *Washington Gazette*, April 23, 1823 ran this item, "We learned by the arrival at this port this morning of the schooner *Gleaner*, Saunders of Portsmouth, N. H. from New Orleans, that he was boarded on the 10th inst. by a boat from Commodore Porter's squadron, and informed by the commanding officer that a British sloop had captured a piratical vessel of 60 men, commanded by the celebrated La FITTE, who has been for a long time notorious as a pirate and smuggler on the Florida coast and Barataria, and that he was killed in the action." The second publication, the *Niles Weekly Register*, Baltimore, April 26, 1823 noted, "It is stated that a British Sloop of war has captured a piratical vessel that had a crew of sixty men, under the command of the famous *Lafitte*. He hoisted the bloody flag and refused quarter, and fought until nearly every man was killed or wounded — Lafitte being among the former."²²

A lurid and romanticized account of the sea battle and the death of Laffite was published in 1837 in a

book entitled, *The Pirates Own Book: Authentic Narratives of the Most Celebrated Sea Robbers*.²³ Although the story lacked names and sources it may have been based on facts but was so embellished with "penny dreadful prose" that historians later discounted it.

The final results of research inquiries on Jean Laffite's death are still not in. Analysis of the existing data leads this researcher to believe that Jean Laffite died in the early months of 1823, probably in a sea battle with an, as yet, unknown adversary. All reports of his death after this date are nebulous, contradictory, or lacking corroborative evidence.

ENDNOTES

¹ Milton P. Reider and Norma Gaudet Rieder, *New Orleans Ship Lists* (Metairie: self published, 1966): 8.

² Federal Court Records, Case #1509, Fort Worth, Texas. Samuel Hughes sworn testimony, March 18, 1820, concerning the Schooner *Pegasus*.

³ Jean Epperson, "Jean Laffite and the Schooner *Pegasus*," *Laffite Society Chronicles* (February 2000): 10.

⁴ Francisco Mota, "The Adventures of Laffite and the Pirates of Baratania," *The Laffite Society Chronicles* (August 1998): np.

⁵ Federal Court Records, Case #1588, Fort Worth, Texas. Trial of three of Jean Laffite's men; Col. J. S. Thrasher, "Early History of Galveston," *Galveston City Directory* (1857): 62. The Schooner *Minerva* arrived in Galveston from Cuba in April under Captain Guy R. Champlin of New London. The ship's name had previously been *General Artigas* and prior to that *Captain Champlin* gave her to D. Moran and sent her back to Havana to lie in wait for prey. Apparently she returned to Galveston in time for Laffite's departure. Descriptions of the brig *New Enterprise* and the schooner *Minerva* were given in the *U. S. Magazine and Democratic Review* July 1839 by an officer of the brig-of-war *Enterprise*. He reported that the brig was a pretty model of about 200 tons with 16 guns, and the

schooner was the very beau-ideal of a pirate, clipper built, with a long, low, black hull and lofty fishing-rods of masts.

⁶ Archives of the Laffite Society, Galveston, Texas, manuscript, page 20, "Institute de Cultural de Yucatan, Year of 1821 summary Investigation Against the Englishman don Gorge Schumpph (Relative to the Pirate don Pedro Lafitte, his Death and his Burial in the Port of Dzilan)", Merida, 1995. Translation by Dorothy Karilanovic and Jeff Modzelewski. Later cited as Manuscript Institute de Cultural de Yucatan, etc.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Manuscript, "Institute de Cultural de Yucatan, etc.", page 16; *Niles Register* January 20, 1821.

⁸ *Loc. cit.*, Federal Court Records, p. 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Federal Court Records, p. 16.

¹⁰ *Niles' Register* September 30, 1820.

¹¹ Personal correspondence, March 31, 2001 Robert Vogel to Jean L. Epperson.

¹² *Ibid.*, Manuscript, "Institute de Cultural de Yucatan, etc." Lucy Allen was described as an English-American woman of Mobile. She was undoubtedly the mulatto mistress of Pierre who died in her arms. He had lived in New Orleans with several mixed-blood mistresses in the past, Marie Louise Villars and Adelaide Maselari. The liaison between women of color and men of Pierre's acquaintance was a common occurrence. Luis Aury, Barthelemy Lafon, and Francois Rene Dupuis had mulatto mistresses and children. Lucy bore a daughter after the death of Pierre. The daughter, Felipa Cedelies married Simon Estrada and sired a son, Jose Yores Estrada whose family of Dzilam are considered to be Laffite descendants.

¹³ *Loc. cit.*, Mota, Adventures of Laffite, np.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Mota, np.

¹⁵ Robert Vogel, "some Background Concerning Laffite's Departure from Galveston", *Laffite Society Chronicles*, (August 1999): 8.

¹⁶ E-Mail, Gary Fretz to Jean L. Epperson, July 18, 2001.

¹⁷ Letter, Robert Vogel to Reginald Wilson, July 3, 2001.

18 Charles A. Gulick, Jr. and Winnie Allen, eds., *The Papers of Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar*, (Austin: A. C. Baldwin and Sons, 1922), 152& 153. Note that the name "Laffite" is spelled many different ways but that Jean and Pierre wrote it with a double "f".

19 *Loc. cit.* Manuscript, "Institute de Cultural de Yucatan, etc."

20 Jean Laffite, *The Journal of Jean Laffite*, (New York: Vantage Press, 1958); *Houston Chronicle Newspaper*, November 9, 1966.

21 Jean L. Epperson, "Who Was John Andrechyne Laffite" *The Laffite Society Chronicles* (September, 2000): 2.

22 The *Washington Gazette* article was called to my attention by Betje Klier, and the *Niles Weekly Register and Boston Register* article by Pam Keys, members of the Laffite Society.

23 Charles Ellms, "The Life of Lafitte : The Famous Pirate of the Gulf of Mexico", *The Pirates Own Book* (1837 Boston; reprinted 1993 by The Marine Research Society, Salem, MA): 79-82.

SUMMARIES OF MINUTES & TALK ABSTRACTS
OF LAFFITE SOCIETY MEETINGS
Jan., 2001 through June, 2001
by
D. McD. KARILANOVIC

January, 2001

No meeting was held. Members attended the annual meeting of The Louisiana Historical Society in New Orleans, LA.

February 13, 2001

President Jeff Modzelewski announced that the office of First Vice-President had become vacant because of a resignation due to family illness, and that the duties of the Second Vice-President had been turned over to Mike Eubank as Membership Chairman.

Mike Eubank reported that some of those who had traveled to the Yucatan in January of this year were able to visit briefly the archives in Isla Mujeres, the Cultural Institute of Mérida, where no data on the Laffites were immediately available, and Puerto Adventuoroso where the CEDAM museum was located. The Municipal Archive in Mérida was closed during the day the group visited. Other sites visited were: 1) San Francisco of Santa Clara church, where some say that

Pierre Laffite may be buried; 2) Mission Santa Anna at Dzemul; and 3) the Laffite grave monument at Dzilam de Bravo. Photos of these sites were shown to members. Ex-Officio President R. Dale Olson and Editor-of-Publications Don Marler, who both participated in the trip, will give a more detailed account of sites visited and impressions in due course.

The President reported that he had submitted an article for publication in *The Laffite Society Chronicles* describing the recent trip in January, 2001 by members to New Orleans to attend the annual meeting of The Louisiana Historical Society at which author/historian W.C. "Jack" Davis was the featured speaker.

Members were reminded of the upcoming symposium at The University of Texas in Austin, TX March 8, 9, 10, entitled *The French in Texas*, at which Ex-Officio Laffite Society President R. Dale Olson will speak March 9 during the segment from 12:30-2:30 p.m. on the history of the document alleged to

PIERRE AND JEAN LAFFITE: GOING TO THE PRIMARY SOURCES

ROBERT C. VOGEL

Historians and biographers are always on the lookout for primary sources – journals, diaries, narratives, family papers, letters, deeds, wills, ledgers, government and business records – that provide the raw material for successful scholarship. Avocational researchers and even those with a casual interest in a subject will also want to go to the original sources to seek authenticity or to find that tangible link to the past which so often brings history to life. Consulting primary sources is, as Martha Stewart would say, a good thing for anyone who is seriously interested in writing or reading about history.

The quantity of primary source material that is directly related to Pierre and Jean Laffite is not particularly voluminous, but it is widely dispersed and not all of it is easily accessed. The great bulk of the archival data is contextual, in the sense that it did not originate with the Laffite brothers themselves, but was written by their associates, their adversaries, and in rare cases by disinterested third-party observers. Indeed, much of the Laffite historical record consists of documents generated by clerks, attorneys, bureaucrats, naval officers, soldiers, and government functionaries. While some of the documents exist in printed form or have been reproduced on microfilm, most are unpublished manuscripts deposited in public archives. Quite a bit more than half of the documents discussed in the following pages were composed in English and some of these have been translated into that language by scholars, but many important texts are available only in their original Spanish or French. A sizable proportion of the archival data consists of file copies of letters and reports that take the place of originals that failed to survive the vicissitudes of nearly two centuries, and some groups of documents duplicate

the materials deposited in other collections.

Major concentrations of Laffite archival material are found in the Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain; the National Archives, Washington, D.C., and Fort Worth, Texas; the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; and the Archivo General y Publico de la Nacion, Mexico, D.F. In addition, individual Laffite documents and groups of related records are located in the holdings of the Center for American History at the University of Texas and the Texas State Library, Austin; and the Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans. Some minor manuscript items have been deposited with other research collections in Louisiana and Texas.

By far the largest and most important body of documentary data about the Laffite brothers is located in Spain. The Archivo General de Indias or AGI is housed in the Casa Lonja in Seville and its vast holdings include the Papeles Procedentes de Isla de Cuba, the working papers of the colonial administration at Havana, Cuba, that were transferred to Spain after the Spanish-American War. Several *legajos* (bundles) of documents contain items pertaining to the activities of the Laffites and their fellow travelers during the period 1812-1821. These include the intelligence reports compiled by the Spanish consuls at New Orleans as well as a considerable amount of correspondence generated by secret agents, informants, and other operatives on the ground in New Spain and the United States. Of particular interest are more than a score of letters written by the Laffites and their closest associates, describing in detail the affairs of the privateers and filibusters and the efforts of secret agents 13-A and 13-B to secure their royal pardons; a letter recommending Pierre Laffite for service as a Spanish spy with a biographical sketch of the pirate compiled by his

fellow turncoat, Dr. Juan Mariano Picornell, in 1815; and Jean Laffite's diary of his clandestine visit to Galveston in March-April, 1817. Stanley Faye and Harris Gaylord Warren mined the Cuban Papers for Laffite material, which they used to great effect in their books and articles. However, while Faye and Warren had to rely heavily upon photostats and typescripts of Spanish documents collected for American libraries under the auspices the Carnegie Institution of Washington during the early decades of the twentieth century, modern-day researchers can conveniently access the Seville collections on microfilm through several major research institutions in the United States. The starting point for work in the Cuban Papers is Roscoe R. Hill's *Descriptive Catalog of the Documents Relating to the United States in the Papeles Procedentes de Cuba Deposited in the Archivo General de Indias at Seville* (Washington, 1916).

While a considerable quantity of correspondence and other documents relating to piracy and filibustering, including numerous Laffite items, remains in Havana as part of the Archivo Nacional de Cuba (formerly known as the Archivo General de Cuba), the majority of these appear to be copies of items deposited in other archives. In addition to the Cuban Papers, the AGI contains the Audiencia de Santo Domingo and the Audiencia de Mexico, where colonial authorities also grappled with Baratarian corsairs and Texas filibustering expeditions. Important documents concerning Galveston and Pierre Laffite's "great stroke" are preserved in the *expedientes* of the Spanish mission to the United States, which form part of the Seccion de Estado at the Archivo Historico Nacional in Madrid.

Several extensive collections of manuscript material relating to the activities of the Laffite brothers in Louisiana and Texas are located in Washington, D.C. The principal depositories are the National Archives and the Library of Congress. At the National Archives, the Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library (Record Group 45) has the letters of naval officers serving in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean,

including reports written by David Shaw, Daniel T. Patterson, Lawrence Kearny, and others describing their efforts to interdict the pirates and smugglers operating from Barataria and Galveston. These records also include letterbook copies of the correspondence between Jean Laffite and the captain of the U.S.S. *Lynx* in November, 1818, and the January 3, 1820, letter of Pierre Laffite to Commodore Patterson proposing the evacuation of Galveston Island. The General Records of the Department of the Treasury (Record Group 56) contains the official correspondence between the Treasury Department and the Collectors of the Port of New Orleans that describes in detail the federal government's efforts to suppress smuggling along the Gulf Coast. The Records of the Revenue-Cutter Service form part of the Records of the Coast Guard (Record Group 26) and includes letters from revenue officers and the log books of revenue cutters operating in Louisiana waters. Preserved in the General Records of the Department of State (Record Group 59) are the dispatches from the American consuls in Havana and notes from foreign consuls in the United States containing information relating to Galveston and revolutionary events in Latin America; there are also groups of miscellaneous records relating to filibustering expeditions against Mexico in 1811-1816. The Records of the Office of the Secretary of War (Record Group 107) also contain several items relating to the Battle of New Orleans. Some, but not all, of the records in the National Archives have been microfilmed and the National Archives staff have published guides to most of the major collections. A good place to start research is George S. Ulibarri and John P. Harrison's *Guide to Materials in Latin America in the National Archives of the United States* (Washington, 1974).

The Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress has three important groups of papers of interest to Laffite researchers. Probably the best known document is Jean Laffite's petition to the President of the United States, dated December 27, 1815, which is archived in the Papers of James Madison. Less well known, but probably more

important, are the letters exchanged between Jean Laffite and special agent George Graham during the latter's mission to Galveston in August and September, 1818. The Library of Congress also owns an artificial collection of formerly secret government documents entitled U.S. Department of State Spanish Affairs that deals with Mexican insurgents and filibustering expeditions in 1810-1816, with letters written by Jose Alvarez Toledo, Manuel Herrera, and other patriot notables.

A treasure trove of primary archival data awaits Laffite researchers in the Records of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, which form part of Record Group 21 deposited in the National Archives and Records Center-Southwest Region at Fort Worth, Texas. These records consist of the dockets, case files, minute books, grand jury presentments, and other documents relating to the federal court proceedings against the Laffites and other privateers, pirates, filibusters, and contrabandists before Judge Dominic A. Hall in New Orleans. Of particular interest are the criminal and admiralty cases proceedings involving the Laffite brothers and their associates, the records of the court-ordered medical examination of Pierre Laffite while he was in jail awaiting trial in 1814, and the famous 1819-1820 *Le Brave* piracy case. In the late 1930's, the Louisiana historical records project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) under Stanley C. Arthur compiled an index, synopses, and transcriptions of some of the piracy case files, but these contain many errors and should be used only as a last resort.

The important sources of Spanish archival material outside of the Archivo de Indias are in the Archivo General y Publico de la Nacion, or AGN, in Mexico City. Collections with key documents relating to piracy, privateering, and filibustering include the Provincias Internas series, which deals with events in Texas; Operaciones de Guerra, with several volumes devoted to military affairs during the revolutionary period of 1810-1821; and Historia, volume 152 of which concerns the activities of Louis Aury and Xavier Mina at Galveston. The AGN

also includes the archives of the various provinces, including Yucatan and Vera Cruz. An excellent guide to the Mexican archival sources, though somewhat outdated, is Herbert E. Bolton's *Guide to the Materials for the History of the United States in the Principal Archives of Mexico* (Washington, 1913).

The most extensive collection of Laffite-related primary source material in Texas is in the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Collection, the core collection component of the Center for American History (formerly the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center) at the University of Texas in Austin. The documents relating to Jean Laffite and the Battle of New Orleans assembled by New Orleans bibliophile Edward Alexander Parsons were purchased by the University of Texas and remain in Austin; though never fully authenticated, the September, 1814, letters of Pierre and Jean Laffite represent the pirates' earliest known writings. The Papers of Louis Aury, the French privateersman who occupied Galveston in 1816-1817, are also at the University of Texas. But the most important data base is the Bexar Archives, which represent the working papers of the Spanish colonial administration in San Antonio de Bexar and the official papers of the last governors of Spanish Texas, with numerous letters and reports dealing with piracy and filibustering where the names Laffite, Aury, Humbert, et al., appear frequently. In addition to its Texas history holdings, the Center for American History has a large collection of Latin American archival material on microfilm, including numerous items from the AGI and AGN.

The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, a collection of historical material gathered by the second president of the Republic of Texas, are available for examination at the Archives Division of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission in Austin. Lamar collected two of Jean Laffite's letters to the filibuster James Long as well as items relating to James Campbell, Warren D. C. Hall, and others who were active in Texas during 1810-1821. The July 7, 1819, Laffite letter (number 19 in the Lamar Papers,

Rosenberg accession number 26-0392) is also owned by the Rosenberg Library in Galveston, and the question of authenticity remains unresolved. The Texas History Center at the Rosenberg also has typed copies of dispatches from Felipe Fatio, the Spanish consul in New Orleans, regarding the activities of the Laffites in 1817-1819, made from originals in the Cuban Papers. The Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty owns the Journal of Jean Laffite and related papers, the historical validity of which has been called into question by scholars, most of whom regard the Journal as a hoax.

Several important groups of primary documents of particular interest to Laffite researchers are available for study in New Orleans. The Historic New Orleans Collection, a private institution located in the French Quarter, has acquired privateer commissions issued to the brothers Laffite and Dominique You by the French consul at New Orleans in 1812-1813, which are curated in the Pierre and Jean Laffite Collection and the Dominique You Papers. The New Orleans Notarial Archives and the Civil District Court Archives, which are both housed in the Civil District Courts Building, have several property transaction and civil court records bearing the names of the Laffites. The St. Louis Cathedral Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans has a number of sacramental records for various individuals named Laffite, including the marriage of Jean Lafite [sic] to Isabel Roche on December 5, 1777, and the baptism of their son Jean (recorded as Juan), who was born on December 27, 1778. Linking any of the individuals named in the cathedral registers to the pirates of Baratania is problematic – inquiring minds should also be aware that Lyle Saxon took liberties with the church records when he wrote his famous historical novel, *Lafitte the Pirate*.

Some of primary source material concerning the careers of Pierre and Jean Laffite has been published in the United States. Harris Gaylord Warren published translations of several important Laffite documents from Spanish and United States archives in the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*,

under the titles “Documents Relating to George Graham’s Proposals to Jean Laffite for the Occupation of the Texas Coast” and “Documents Relating to the Establishment of Privateers at Galveston, 1816-1817” (1938), and in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* as “Documents Relating to Pierre Laffite’s Entrance Into the Service of Spain” (1940). English translations of the Laffite brothers’ correspondence in relation to the British offer of September, 1814, were first printed in the appendices to Arsene L. Latour’s *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana in 1814-15* (Philadelphia, 1816), an excellent reprint of which is now available. The Parsons documents were also published in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (1940). John V. Clay and Robert C. Vogel translated Spanish consul Felipe Fatio’s June 27, 1818, report on the Laffite scheme to betray the Champ d’Asile colonists (from the Cuban Papers in the AGI) in the 1982 number of *The Life and Times of Jean Laffite*. Some Laffite-related material from Mexican archival sources appears in Hubert Howe Bancroft’s opus, *History of the North Mexican States and Texas* (San Francisco, 1889).

William S. Dudley of the Naval Historical Center in Washington, D.C., has edited two fine volumes of documents from the Naval Records Collection, entitled *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*. Volume one (Washington, 1985) covers the year 1812 and volume two (Washington, 1992) covers 1813; both have sections devoted to the Gulf theater of operations. Some of collector Beverly Chew’s letters to the Secretary of the Treasury, with his graphic descriptions of the events at Galveston in 1816-1817, were printed in an 1818 House Committee on Foreign Relations report on the suppression of piratical establishments that was later reproduced in volume four of the *American State Papers: Foreign Relations* (Washington, 1834). William R. Manning’s three-volume *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States Concerning the Independence of the Latin American Nations* (New York, 1925), consisting of state papers and dispatches, is a rich source of

background information on the privateers and patriots of Mexico, Gran Colombia, Venezuela, and the United Provinces (Buenos Aires).

The Laffite brothers and the Baratarians were a recurring problem for Louisiana's first American governor, and several relevant letters and proclamations were printed in volumes two and six of *The Official Letter Books of W. C. Claiborne*, edited by Dunbar Rowland (Jackson, 1917). The Papers of Andrew Jackson contain numerous Laffite items in connection with Jackson's New Orleans campaign, many of which were published in John Spencer Bassett's *The Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, 1926-1935) and in volume three of the University of Tennessee Press edition of *The Papers of Andrew Jackson* (Knoxville, 1991). The Texas Library and Historical Commission published six volumes of *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar* (Austin, 1925), where the Laffite items are found in volume one. Virginia H. Taylor translated and edited *The Letters of Antonio Martinez: Last Spanish Governor of Texas 1817-1822* (Austin, 1957), from the governor's papers in the Bexar Archives, which includes numerous references to pirates and filibusters. *The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diaries from 1795-1848* (Philadelphia, 1874-1877), edited by Charles Francis Adams, provides a behind-the-scenes look at the diplomatic problems created by the Galveston colony of adventurers and the State Department's handling of filibusters, privateers, and clandestine operations.

There are a number of important printed primary sources in Spanish. Documents from the notarial archives in Merida, Yucatan, relating to the death of Pierre Laffite near Dzilam in 1821 were published by Jorge Ignacio Rubio Mañe in the *Boletín de la Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística* (1940). The Archivo Nacional de Cuba published a volume of documents relating to Mexico, including a number of Laffite items, in *Documentos para la historia de Mexico* (Habana, 1961) as part of its *Publicaciones del Archivo Nacional de Cuba* series. Materials from the AGI and

AGN relating to Barataria and Galveston also appear in the volume published by the Ministerio de Acuntos Exteriores for the U.S. Bicentennial, *Documentos Relativos a la Independencia de Norteamérica Existentes en Archivos Españoles* (Madrid, 1976).

Newspapers are an undervalued but critical source of primary source material. In New Orleans, *Le Moniteur de la Louisiane*, *The Louisiana Gazette*, *The Louisiana Courier/Le Courier de la Louisiane*, *The Orleans Gazette and Commercial Advertiser*, and *Le Louisianais de L'Ami des Lois* all printed news items on Barataria and Galveston as well as intelligence obtained from correspondents. In Washington, D.C., the semi-official *National Intelligencer*, edited by Joseph Gales, routinely printed government reports and correspondence relating to the Gulf region; and in Baltimore, one of the hotbeds of Spanish American privateering activities, *Niles' Weekly Register* also devoted considerable ink to piracy news and accounts of filibustering in Texas between 1814 and 1825, with several pertinent editorial notes by publisher Henry Niles. Unfortunately, early nineteenth century newspaper editors were not especially critical of the sources of their information and were seldom inclined to undertake anything resembling investigative journalism. Nevertheless, many of the first-hand, eye-witness accounts found in contemporary newspapers are not preserved in any archival collection, and are therefore of critical value in reconstructing the chronology of historical events involving Pierre and Jean Laffite.

The foregoing brief summary of primary sources is by no means exhaustive: there are many other archives and collections of documents that have the potential to yield important data. For example, Laffite researchers have not yet explored to any great extent the archives of the French West Indies and Central America, the traditional stomping grounds of the corsairs. The extent of the material possessed by the national archives of Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, and Haiti relating to republican privateers and filibustering

expeditions in the Gulf of Mexico is also unknown; it would be strange, indeed, if there were no Laffite documents in Cartagena, Caracas, Bogota, Buenos Aires, or Port-au-Prince, or, for that matter, in Jamaica, Santo Domingo, or Guadeloupe. Presumed to be Frenchmen by birth, traces of the brothers Laffite

may turn up some day in one of the European provincial archives, hidden away in some obscure church register or conveyance record. Finally, though far removed from Barataria and Galveston, the Archives Nationales in Paris and the Public Record Office in London would also seem to offer fertile fields for Laffite research.

Summary of minutes

Continued from page 6

The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story. According to Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson, French Laffite Society member Sylvie Feuillie is scheduled to present a paper at the symposium.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that he had made an audiotape recording of historian and author W.C. Davis' talk on Jean Laffite presented at The Louisiana Historical Society's annual meeting in New Orleans on January 8 of this year. According to Dr. Wilson, author Davis stated that there is a wealth of information to be uncovered in the Cuban archives and in the New Orleans Notarial Collection. Member Norman Sachnik volunteered to make a copy of the tape for the Laffite Society archive.

In addition, Dr. Wilson mentioned that certain correspondence involving John Matejka (a.k.a. John A. Laffite) had been located in the Missouri Historical Society. Dr. Wilson also stated it had come to his attention that certain persons had remembered seeing a grave marker with the name of Jean Laffite in an "old Catholic cemetery." He also noted for genealogical interest that the name of John Matejka's step-father, "Nofsinger," had an alternate spelling of "Nofzinger."

March 13, 2001

The President expressed thanks to Editor-of-Publications Don Marler for his diligent efforts to get out a timely issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. Members present received the February, 2001 issue, Vol. VII, #1 at the meeting.

President Jeff Modzelewski announced again the resignation of two officers and their replacements, and that Mike Eubank is now Web Master for the Society in addition to assuming the office of Second Vice-President as Membership Chairman.

An up-dated membership list was distributed to members presented written reminder from Treasurer Jerry Eubank to send in dues for 2001. The list and reminder is being sent out to other Members-at-Large who cannot attend the regular meetings.

Mike Eubank announced the new Web address as : <http://laffite.participant.org>. Mike asked members to let him know if there are errors or changes to be made on the Society's Web page.

Press Director Dave Roberts reported he had submitted an article to *The Galveston County Daily News* about the recent special event trip by members to attend the annual meeting of the Louisiana Historical Society on January 8. The article was not

YUCATAN DIARY

R. Dale Olson

The importance of the Yucatan area of Mexico, as it relates to privateering in general, and to Jean and Pierre Laffite specifically, cannot be ignored. For several successive years, Laffite Society members Robert Vogel and Kathleen Taylor have traveled to the Yucatan every January for purposes of research and relaxation. Other members have considered the possibility of joining them, but, until January, 2001, each proposed expedition failed to coalesce. This year, however, five additional Society members joined the Vogels.

On Wednesday evening, 17 January, 2001 members Don C. Marler, Jerry and Mike Eubank, and R. Dale and Diane Olson met at a hotel near the Houston Intercontinental Airport, preparatory to departing early the next morning for a flight to Mexico. The plan was for the Eubanks, Don Marler, and the Olsons to meet Robert and Kathleen Vogel several days later in Merida.

What follows is partial travelogue and, to a lesser extent, a brief explanation of the places visited and their relevance to the overall story of the Laffites.

Wednesday 17 January. Mike and Jerry Eubank picked up Dale and Diane Olson at their home in Galveston and drove the hour-and-a-half trip to Houston Intercontinental. Upon arriving, they met Don Marler, publisher/owner of Dogwood Press, who had driven from his Sabine River home in East Texas. The five immediately began discussing the upcoming trip over dinner at the Hyatt.

Thursday 18 January. Everyone arose at 4:45 a.m., and was transported, by hotel van, to the airport for a check-in at 5:45. Passports and other documentation required for foreign travel were checked. The group departed at 7:15 a.m., leaving Houston

at a chilly 45 degrees and, two hours and ten minutes later arrived in Cancun, with the temperature at 80 degrees!

The group took a small bus to Puerto Juarez, the ferry landing in Cancun and boarded the "slow" ferry for Isla Mujeres, a 40 minute trip over extremely rough seas. There are several modes of transportation between Cancun and Isla Mujeres. The "slow" ferry (\$2.00 United States Dollars), takes 40 minutes to make the trip, while the "fast" ferry (\$3.50 USD) takes 15 minutes. Private boats are also available at considerably higher rates, but questionable seaworthiness! From the landing at Isla, there was left only a short walk to the Hotel Posada del Mar, which was to be home for the next three days. The Posada is an efficient hotel, with large rooms, balconies overlooking the Caribbean, and coconut palms covering the grounds. Although a new section is currently being constructed, the older rooms would lend themselves well to refurbishing.

Lunch was enjoyed at Pinguinos, the restaurant at the hotel. Pinguinos is an open, thatched-roof structure with swings hanging from the ceiling for those wanting to sit at the bar. The Laffite group chose the relative security of more traditional chairs. After lunch Jerry and Mike rested while Don, Diane and Dale walked to a downtown market for shopping.

By about 6:00 p.m., the group strolled "downtown" to Rolandi's and enjoyed an Italian dinner in Mexico. Dinner talk ranged from Samuel Bangs (Texas' first printer, and one who was on Galveston Island with Xavier Mina and briefly with Laffite), Ellis Bean (of "neutral territory" fame), to George Schumpf (the Canadian privateer who was with Pierre when the latter was killed after leaving Isla Mujeres), and, of course, Jean and Pierre.

After dinner, all inspected a "fixer-upper", deserted home located a few hundred feet from the Caribbean.

The figure "240,000" was spray painted across the front and, upon inquiring of the Realtor the next day, Mike and Dale were still uncertain if the figure represented Pesos or American Dollars. Regardless, all agreed to pass on the potential investment. By 10:00 p.m., all had retired. The trip from Houston to Cancun, to Isla had been very successful, transporting the group across geographic and cultural boundaries of significant proportions. Yet, the Yucatan trip had only begun.

Friday 19 January. Pinguinos was again the meeting place for breakfast. It was also to later become the afternoon rendezvous during which time all enjoyed Pina Colatas. After breakfast, the group split. Diane and Jerry chose to shop at the numerous small stores on Isla while Mike, Don and Dale walked to the Biblioteca, the local library, to attempt some research on the Laffites. The tiny library was fitted with fluorescent lights, none of which were turned on, a few small chairs and tables similar to the type usually found in children's school rooms, and a small assortment of books, many of which related to Marx and Engels! Don Marler found twelve boxes of books stored in a corner, which had obviously been long ignored by the librarian who was giving herself a manicure under the only working light.

In scientific research, one learns of two types of hypotheses, the null hypothesis which states the probability that a certain outcome will not be found, and the research hypothesis, which holds that a certain outcome will be found. After about one hour in the library, Don invoked the concept that "... the null hypothesis has been supported" That is, no significant information concerning the Laffites was to be discovered within the walls of the Biblioteca. The null was to be supported throughout the remainder of the trip.

By 12:40 p.m., all met for lunch at Mason del Bucanero, a most apropos locale. The afternoon adventure began at 2:15 when all took a taxi to Mundaca Park. Mundaca was typically referred to as a "buccaneer" or "pirate" but was more accurately a slave trader in the late 1800s, long after the Laffites were

gone. His park houses the remnants of his "castle", constructed in a futile effort to impress a local lady and coax her into marriage. The hacienda was constructed in about 1874. After being spurned, Mundaca constructed his own tomb, now in the cemetery at Isla. The tomb remains empty. Mundaca eventually went to Merida and died there, insane.

Mundaca's park is a quiet, woodsy place, with small smoldering fires spread about, apparently in an attempt to either clear the ground, or to ward off mosquitoes. The park is inhabited by some crocodiles, alligators, an old Jaguar, and a huge boa constrictor (all fortunately caged). Six monkeys, in a huge cage, were being fed scraps of grass by local children.

At 3:30 p.m., two taxis were found which took the group to the very end of Isla Mujeres and a small Maya ruin. More tourists were at that point than anywhere else on Isla. The terminal end of Isla is a truly impressive melange of craggy rocks, boiling ocean, small, treacherous walking paths, rough, but very blue and green, water. The Maya ruin has been recipient of hundreds of hurricanes during its life, and has been greatly reduced from its presumed original size. One could not escape the thought of the hundreds of ships which have probably been thrust to their end at this point on Isla. Escape from a sinking ship would have been highly improbable due to the extremely rough seas and cliffs.

By 5:00 p.m. all had returned from a very successful outing to Mundaca Park and the end of Isla, and walked the shops of downtown. Jerry had engaged in considerable research to establish the hours, and locations, of "happy hours" at the nearby bars and restaurants. In this, she demonstrated greater success than the researchers looking for information on Laffite!

Dinner at Bistro Parisienne, of grilled snapper, was possibly the best food of the trip. The "chef" at the Parisienne worked behind a glass wall, on a small back-yard style Bar-B-Que. Of course, the "happy hour", involving two-for-one Pina Colatas, was first observed. By 9:00 p.m., all returned to the Posada del Mar and engaged in the first occurrence of what was to become

a ritual each day of the trip, the sipping of Kahlua with either coffee or ice cream. This day found Kahlua poured over cups of ice cream bought at a local corner grocery. Sitting outside, under palms filled with coconuts, and enjoying a breeze from the Caribbean, the group was driven inside by a light rain. Diane and Dale sat on their balcony, finishing the Kahlua and listening to the soft rain striking the coconut palms only feet away. This was the end of the first full day on Isla.

Saturday 20 January. Mike and Jerry decided to remain on Isla for the day, while Diane, Dale, and Don planned a trip to Akumal and Puerta Aventuras, about 60 miles down the Mayan Riviera coast from Cancun. By 7:30 a.m., Dale was having coffee with Don and reading the deposition of George Schumpf, a marvelous original source for the study of Pierre's death. Don and Dale had planned a visit to the Municipal Archives, but found that it was closed on Saturday.

By noon, Don, Diane, and Dale were in Cancun, having taken the "fast" ferry to Puerta Juarez from Isla. A taxi driver, "Pablo", was hired for the day. Pablo, as many others in the area, is Mayan, and is extremely proud of his heritage and to claim pure Mayan ancestry. Maya is his first language, Spanish his second, and English his third. Nevertheless, his command of English greatly superseded any one of the group's ability to speak Spanish. Listening to two Mayas converse in their first language is somewhat bewildering in that it sounds much like an amalgam of Spanish and the guttural sounds of a Germanic language.

At 1:00 p.m., the three, with Pablo, arrived at Puerta Aventuras. Aventuras is a planned resort, with artificial lagoon, a shopping mall and several comparatively up-scale restaurants on the shores of the lagoon. This is a place for tourists, not historians! The reason for the trip was to visit the CEDAM Museum. CEDAM is an organization devoted to underwater archaeology whose exploits were the subject of a book, *The Mexican Caribbean*, taken by Dale for others to read. CEDAM had originally

established a small museum in Akumal, but moved it to Puerta Aventuras.

In 1960, CEDAM founder, Pablo Bush Romero, learned of a rumor that Jean Laffite was buried in a small Mexican village, Dzilam de Bravo, on the Gulf Coast. He had further been told, by a friend in Merida, Luis Gonzalez, that Jean had gone to Dzilam with a beautiful mulatto lady, Lucia Allen, whom he had abducted in Mobile. His plan was to retire and lead a "quiet and honest life, hiding from the world in this remote village". Gonzalez told Romero that Jean died at Dzilam before a daughter was born to Lucy.

In Dzilam, later, Romero and others of the CEDAM group located Don Jose M. Estrada, a white-haired gentleman who confirmed that his family was indeed descended from Jean Laffite. His family was reported to have all been blond and blue-eyed, bearing little resemblance to other inhabitants of the area.

In Dzilam, the old gentleman took the CEDAM research group to Dzilam's "new" cemetery, established when the Gulf overtook the old graveyard. The CEDAM group was shown an old wooden marker from Laffite's grave, stating, "Jean Lafitte, Re-exhumado, 1938". Presumably, the marker had been located on a gravesite which contained the body of Jean Laffite, having been moved in 1938 from a previous location.

Romero and others of CEDAM made an arrangement with the local citizens whereby CEDAM would provide a new stone marker in exchange for the old one made of wood. This was done and, today, even a newer stone marker is found at Dzilam. The Laffite Society group would, within a few days, visit that marker.

According to several documents related to the capture of one George Schumpf, he (Schumpf), with Pierre (not Jean) were captured near Isla Mujeres by a Mexican justice, Miguel Molas, who planned to take the privateers to Merida. Pierre died of wounds before they reached the port of Dzilam. According to the deposition, Pierre was buried at Dzilam. Robert Vogel of the Laffite Society, has suggested that the body was probably interred in the village of Dzinzantun, nearby. Dzilam,

in 1821, was reported by John Stevens, in his book on *Travels in the Yucatan*, to be devoid of permanent structures. Following the burial of Pierre, the others, Molas, Schumpf, and Lucy Allen traveled to the small village of Dzul, where Lucy became ill and was left. Molas, Schumpf, and probably others, moved on to Merida where Schumpf gave his deposition regarding the events surrounding the battle which led to the death of Pierre.

The wooden marker had been, at some time during its early history, in the CEDAM museum, presumably at Akumal. It is no longer to be found in the Aventuras museum. Several hypotheses exist concerning its whereabouts. One is that it was for some reason transported to a museum in Mexico City. The other is that it may have been taken by Pablo Bush Romero to El Paso, Texas late in life. But, in Puerto Aventuras, as on Isla Mujeres, the "null hypothesis was supported".

The CEDAM museum is, even in the absence of a Laffite grave marker, a most valuable repository of underwater artifacts taken from the Caribbean by CEDAM, and is worthy of a visit by anyone interested in Caribbean archaeology.

Don, Diane, and Dale also visited Akumal, only a short drive from Aventuras. Akumal, as Puerto Aventuras, is developed with luxury condominiums, hotels, and villas. Only the thatched roof structures belie its location in Mexico. Akumal, an extremely primitive, nearly inaccessible locale during the 1960s when CEDAM was working in the area, has a statue to the memory of Alma Reed, an early prominent member of CEDAM, and a battery of five old cannon taken from the Caribbean.

Don, Diane, and Dale (with Pedro at the wheel) left Aventuras at 3:15, and drove back to Cancun, passing the "Posada del Captain Lafitte" [sic] on the way. All bade Pedro farewell and boarded the "fast" ferry back to Isla Mujeres at 5:00 p.m. Thirty minutes later everyone had returned to the Posada del Mar in search of Pina Colatas! Mike and Jerry spent the entire evening listening to all they had missed by not going to Akumal and Puerto Aventuras. Dinner was patiently

tolerated, not enjoyed, at 7:20, and all had said goodnight by 10:15. The day was totally invigorating and informative, though somewhat strenuous.

Sunday 21 January. The Laffite Society members awoke to a dark, very overcast morning, in contrast to the brilliant sunshine they had thus far enjoyed. Today would bring the trip to Merida, the capital of Yucatan, and meeting Robert and Kathleen Vogel.

By 7:30 a.m., all met for breakfast one last time at Pinguinos. Everyone had packed the night before and was planning to take the "fast" ferry back to Cancun. By 9:30, all departed and, fifteen minutes later, were at Puerto Juarez in Cancun. All five squeezed into one taxi, with the full approval of the driver. Several minutes later, the Cancun Police stopped the car because Diane was sitting on Dale's lap in the front seat. The driver negotiated with the police officer and apparently paid a 100 Peso fine, in cash, on the spot!!! He grumbled that he was only charging us 50 Pesos for the trip to the bus station.

At 10:30 a.m., all departed on the "UNO" bus, a first class bus fitted with a restroom, bar, and televisions. After becoming settled on the bus, Dale presented Don Marler with a "Letter of Marque", a totally worthless document which Dale assured Don would protect him from any difficulty he may encounter in Merida!!! Don was sufficiently impressed with the phony document (an omnipresent specter in all matters related to the Laffites), that he suggested the printing of one for each Society member.

The four-hour drive to Merida from Cancun was on a road dense with Yucatan jungles on both sides. The weather was now cloudy, but no rain. By 1:00 p.m., the bus passed the turn-off to the famous Maya settlement, Chichen Itza, and, by 2:30, the bus arrived in Merida.

Merida is a large city with all of the congestion and traffic one would expect in a place such as Mexico City. Walking the narrow streets, only inches from fast moving traffic, nearly produced nausea from the exhaust fumes.

The Hotel Caribe was to be home for the next three days. This wonderful three-story structure was, in the 1700s, a monastery and still bears the statues marking it as such. The rooms were much smaller than those on Isla, but also were less expensive. At the Posada del Mar on Isla Mujeres rooms were approximately \$67 (USD) daily, and at the Caribe only about \$45.

Don, Mike, Jerry, Diane, and Dale all walked the downtown plaza in Merida, a crowded, but thoroughly enjoyable stroll. After dinner at Georgio's, in the Gran Hotel next door to the Caribe, the group visited the magnificent Placio Goberniero.

All went back to Georgios where they were united with Robert and Kathleen. Now, the full contingency of Laffite Society members, nine in all, were together for the next few days in Merida. By 11:00 p.m., after Don, Robert, and Dale had enjoyed the Kahlua and coffee, all retired. A busy day, but with more busy days to come. No one came on this trip planning to sit in the hotel lobby!!!

Monday 22 January. In retrospect, this was to be perhaps one of the more relaxing days of the trip. The entire group settled in for breakfast at the Hotel Caribe by 8:00 a.m., sitting next to a large cage of three Toucans, and in the typical open air ambiance so prevalent in the Yucatan. By 9:30 all went on a walking tour of Merida, lead by Robert and Kathleen.

By 11:30 the group split. Some went shopping and walking, while Robert, Don, and Dale went to the English Library. Upon requesting information possibly related to the Laffites, the librarian demonstrated a willingness to help, but simply referred us to short references in various encyclopedias. The trio went on to the Center for Support for Yucatan Studies for research.

Dale had written to the Director of this facility prior to leaving for Mexico, but learned that he is no longer employed, and no one was aware of any letter. Visiting the library, we inquired about information related to Laffites and were given the book by Rubio

Mane, *Las Piratas Laffite*, a reference with which we were all familiar.

Mane had, in his book, asserted his belief that Jean and Pierre had died in the Yucatan, and we were hopeful of locating some information possibly buried within the papers of Rubio Mane. No such papers were found. The null was supported.

Tuesday 23 January. Seven-Thirty a.m., and all met for breakfast at the Caribe. Don Marler had arranged, the day before, for a 9 passenger van (rental at \$90 U.S. dollars a day) which the group was to use driving to Dzilam de Bravo and other points. Don, Robert, and Dale walked the four blocks to the Kimbila Car Rental facility and picked up the van. Robert was to be the chauffeur for the day. By 9:20, the three had returned to the Caribe, picked up the others, and were on Highway 261 headed for Progreso, 25 kilometers away. Progreso is a locale which is often mentioned in Laffite related writings. Today, it is a destination for many vacationing Canadians.

This was a group of scholars, historians, and researchers, not necessarily tourists. Several of us had come prepared with photocopies of articles involving the CEDAM marker at Dzilam and even the deposition of George Schumpf. The works were passed around the van and devoured by the group, although all had read them numerous times in the past. This reading was, however, more significant in that the group was to soon visit the actual sites mentioned in the articles.

By 9:45 the van approached Progreso, a small settlement on the Gulf of Mexico, a body of water not near as clear as the Caribbean. In Progreso, all stopped for picnic supplies at the San Francisco supermarket. Nothing in Progreso related to the Laffites was expected, and the expectations were met. By 10:25 the van left Progreso, heading toward Dzilam de Bravo, taking the only road, along the Gulf. The road bisected small, very primitive villages, showing virtually no activity. The settlements of San Cristanon, then Santa Clara were passed. Near Santa Clara there was an

enigmatic deserted group of buildings labeled "Gold Mine", their identity, background, or reason for being not clearly understood.

At noon, Dzilam de Bravo was reached. At the entrance to the town was a stone wall behind which a group of soldiers with machine guns were watching and waiting - for what! They looked permanently ensconced. The group speculated that perhaps they were looking for drug runners. The Laffite Society members spread a picnic in the town square, nearly deserted except for about a dozen young school children playing. The group walked to the beach, stopped at a Cantina for beer, then walked a few more blocks to the stone marker donated by CEDAM to the citizens of Dzilam, in honor of Jean Laffite. A few children climbed on the marker, and, after the bribe of a few centavos, finally left so members could photograph the monument.

This was the probable locale to which Pierre, not Jean, was taken following his death at sea. The confusion about the "pirate Laffite", usually assumed to have been Jean, having died at Dzilam has been perpetuated for well over a century in hundreds of books and articles. The literature has corrupted the name Dzilam to such manifestations as "Celan", "Silan", "Silam", and numerous other variations on the true name, "Dzilam".

By 1:05, the group bade farewell to Dzilam, now with Don driving the van. The road was still very narrow and primitive, with miles of stone fences, and numerous speed bumps of enormous proportion at the outskirts of each village.

Don's tenure as driver was not uneventful. Ten minutes out of Dzilam two animals, tentatively identified as anteaters by Mike, crossed the road. Even with Don's experience in the woods of East Texas and Louisiana, he had never experienced an encounter with an anteater!

At about 1:30, the van entered another site legendary within the study of Laffite, Dzinzantun. The group spent most of the time in Dzinzantun visiting the enormous, ancient, stone church where it is believed Pierre is buried. Rubio Mane, the Mexican author of *Las*

Piratas Laffite felt that Pierre was buried within the church, and other reports indicate that he was buried in an orchard behind the church. The orchard no longer exists, having been replaced by a soccer field. There is, however, a large garden area at the side of the church that may have been the burial place of Pierre.

The church was locked during our visit and the group felt that insufficient time remained to search out a church official. Research by Robert Vogel indicates that the roof of the church collapsed years ago and obfuscated all traces of grave markers on the interior.

The church in Dzinzantun is enormous, and most impressive. Of stone construction, it is obviously ancient. A simple walk around the structure communicates a sense of awe, reverence, and wonderment about all that has transpired in and near the church over the centuries.

Having spent one hour in Dzinzantun, the van left at 2:15 and, thirty minutes later drove through the village of Suma. Back on the open road, the group, with Don driving, was startled when a loud "splash" was heard. At first appearing to have been a very sudden rain storm, it was soon discovered that a large swarm of bees had been struck, nearly covering the entire windshield.

By 3:20 the van entered the village of Dzul. It was at Dzul that, according to the Schumpf deposition, Schumpf and Miguel Molas left a very ill Lucy Allen. Many reports over the years have claimed that Jean, with Lucy Allen, "settled" in Dzilam and that many of the contemporary townspeople are descended from the couple. The Alcocer family, as one example, claims Jean Laffite as an ancestor and one newspaper article has compared the facial appearance of one Dzilam native with a "picture" of Jean Laffite and noted the similarity. There are, however, no authenticated facial likeness of Jean Laffite, rendering this claim invalid. From the Schumpf deposition, it must be concluded that the relationship with Lucy Allen involved Pierre, not Jean, and that there are probably no descendants of either Laffite on Dzilam. Following recu -

peration from her illness, Lucy may have returned to Dzilam from Dzulmul, but no documents have been discovered to support this theory. Pierre was dead, and Jean was very probably elsewhere. Although some members of the Society are engaged in research on the subject, the fate of Lucy Allen is unknown. Likewise, the subsequent activities of George Schumpf following his deposition in Merida, are unknown.

An un-named missionary stationed in Dzinzantun, during the 1960s, was reported to have created a genealogy of families of Dzilam tracing them to the Laffites, but the identity of the missionary, and the location of whatever work he compiled is unknown.

By 4:35, the Society members had arrived in Merida and returned the red van to the rental agency. Walking back to the Hotel Caribe, all had a "happy hour" at the hotel in Mike and Jerry's room, and discussed the events of the day.

We had retraced the essential route of Molas, Schumpf, Lucy, and the body of Pierre.

Dinner at Le Petite Santa Lucia at 7:15 was an experience most would not want to repeat, but the after dinner coffee at Hotel Caribe with Don, Robert, and Dale made an end to a most exciting and rewarding day.

Wednesday 24 January. This was our day to depart Merida and return to Cancun, preparatory to our return to the United States. A 7:30 breakfast at the Caribe involved much discussion about Laffite Society issues, and Don was still bemoaning the often repeated "support of the null hypothesis" encountered in Mexico.

After some last minute shopping and walking downtown Merida, Mike

and Jerry left on a bus for Cancun at 10:00 and Don, Diane, and Dale left at 11:00.

All exchanged farewells with Robert and Kathleen, who were to remain in Merida for several more days, then go on to Isla Mujeres.

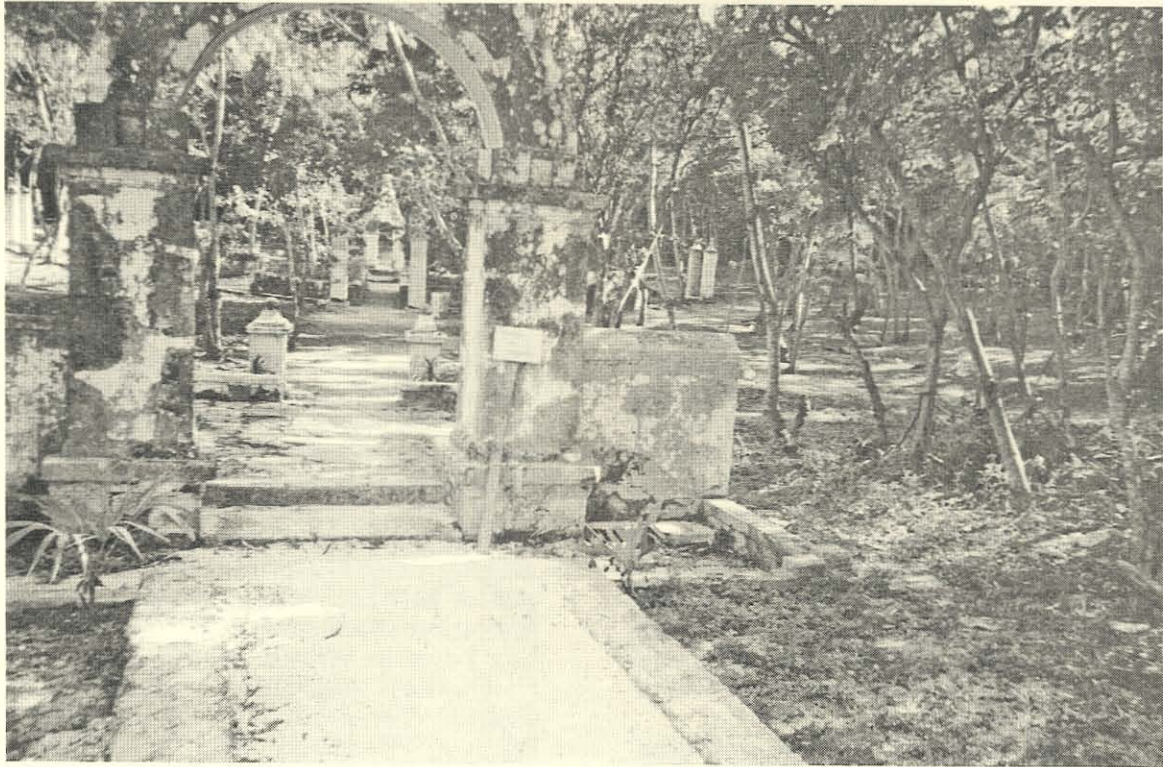
Later that evening, back in Cancun, Mike, Jerry, Don, Diane, and Dale had an excellent dinner at their hotel, the Santa Margarita, and retired early.

Thursday 25 January. All arose early and arranged for two taxis to take them to the Cancun airport. The group landed at Houston and all headed for their respective homes.

The Yucatan trip was not an official field trip of The Laffite Society, although a pre-trip announcement was made on the Internet issuing an invitation to all members. The Society has been to New Orleans numerous times, has gone to Grand Isle and Grande Terre on several occasions, taken a "Plantation" tour in Louisiana, visited the Sam Houston Regional Library in Liberty, visited the burial site of James Campbell on the mainland near Galveston, and attended various meetings of the Southwest Archivists Association, the Louisiana Historical Society, and an upcoming seminar on "The French In Texas" at the University of Texas.

Interaction between members make these trips an educational experience very difficult to duplicate. Exchanges of information and discussions related to nearly every aspect of Laffite research is invaluable. The trip to Yucatan was one of the highlights of all field trips.

Note: Photos were made by Don C. Marler and Mike Eubanks.



Mundaca Park



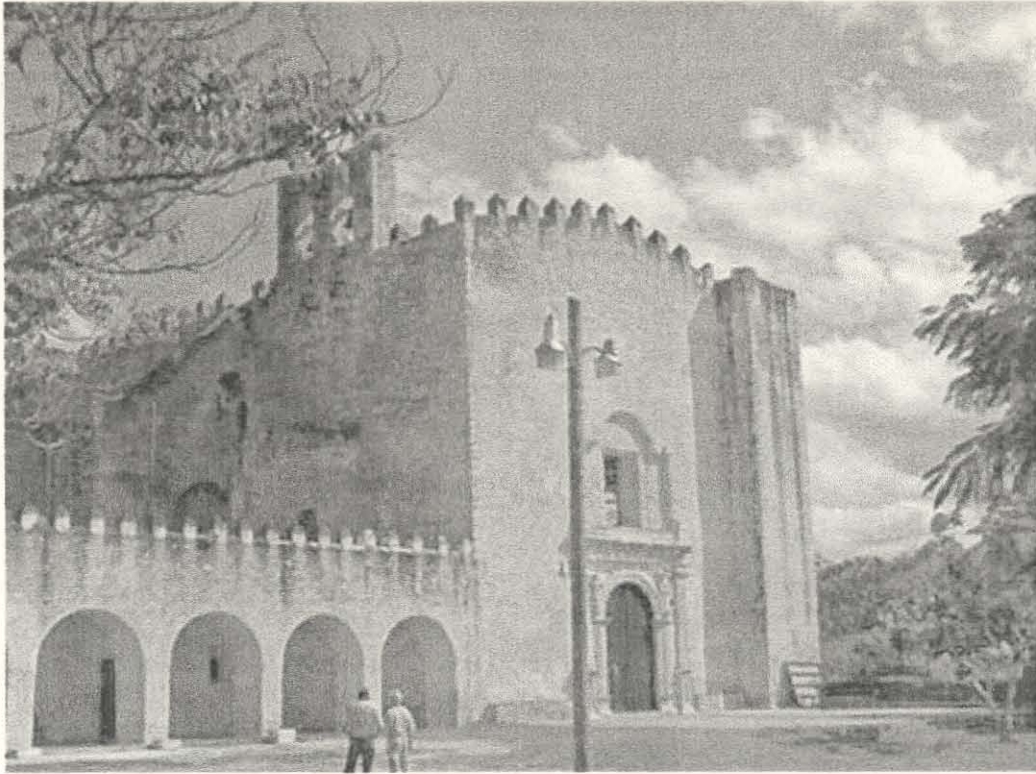
CEDAM Museum



The "Gold Mine"

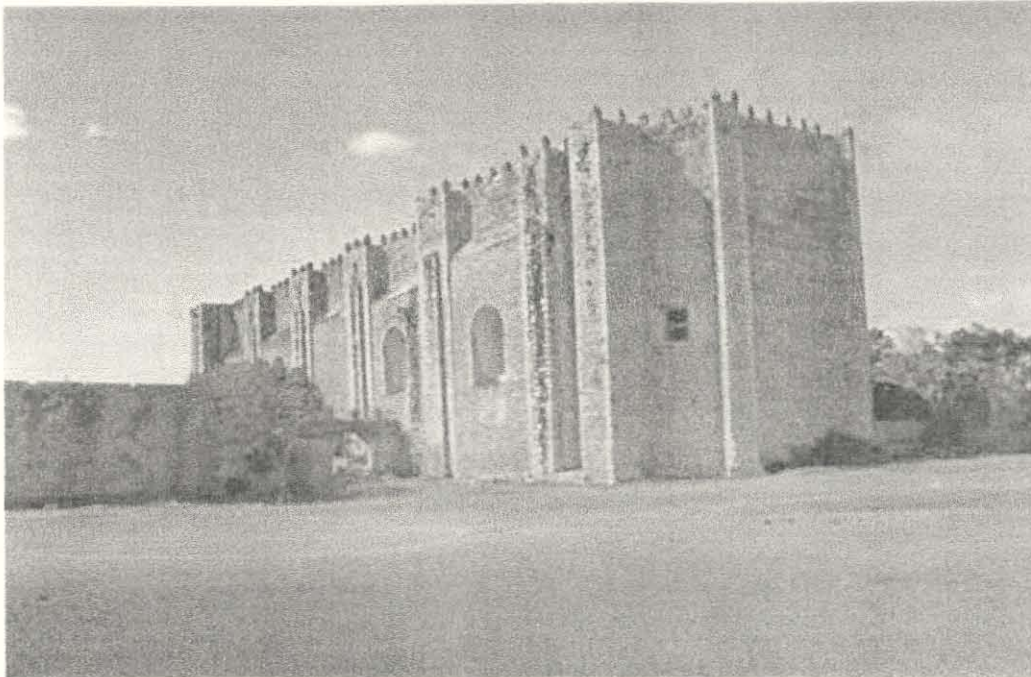


The Jean Laffite Marker
At Dzilam de Bravo



San Francisco (or Santa Clara) Mission
Dzidantun, Yucatan
Where Pierre Laffite
was reported to have been buried.

Front view



San Francisco (or Santa Clara) Mission

Rear view

Continued from page 12

Summary of minutes

published although two photographs of some members were published in the "Scenes" column of the February 11 Sunday issue.

Diane Olson read a short outline of topics presented at the recent symposium March 8, 9, 10 sponsored by the French and Italian departments of The University of Texas at Austin, entitled, *The French in Texas*. According to Diane, forty speakers presented papers and there were about 100 attendees. The following papers were presented representing one section of the symposium on *Corsairs, Pirates, and Filibusters*. 1) *The Adventures of Louis Aury on the Texas Coast*, by Robert C. Vogel; 2) *Was Laffite an Officer of the Grand Army?* by French researcher Sylvie Feuille, and 3) *History of Laffite from His Own Legend*, by R. Dale Olson.

Laffite Society Advisory Board member, author and researcher Robert C. Vogel suggested that the Society consider publishing all of the foregoing papers in one issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

Robert C. Vogel presented a short overview of the topic of his paper on Louis Aury presented at the Austin symposium. Members received copies of information pertinent to the topic. R. Dale Olson spoke on his topic given at the symposium on the history of Jean Laffite, some of the current theories on his birth and death.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson gave out copies of a "sketch" map published June 30, 1815, of *The Position of the British and American Forces during the Operations Against New Orleans from 23rd December, 1814 to 18th January, 1815*. The map was made available to members by Pam Keyes, Advisory Board

member of Joplin, MO.

Advisory Board member and frequent traveler to the Yucatan, Robert Vogel, reported that he intends to gather information for future special event trips to that region and to South America which may be of interest to researchers.

Editor-of-Publications Don Marler gave out copies of a *Proposal to Fund Research*, containing guidelines for making available funds for research to members, and non-members, including researchers in foreign locales.

Member-at-Large Don Peak will have a book signing on April 28 at The Eiband Gallery; the title of his book is *Fire Mission*, an account of the life and experiences of a fellow naval officer in World War II.

Author and professional historian Jack C. Ramsay, Jr., Ph.D., is coming out with a new book on Texas settler Jane Long, and may attend an upcoming meeting to discuss his new book.

April 10, 2001

The President again called attention to the new Web page address for the Society. Diane Olson moved to authorize Web master Mike Eubank to spend the necessary funds to maintain the Society's web site. Motion seconded by Reginald Wilson and approved by members in attendance.

Diane Olson suggested that the Laffite Society consider setting up a budget for the Society's expenses, allowing for a portion to be set aside to fund research. A motion was tendered by Diane Olson, seconded and approved, to set up a committee to consider the proposal submitted by Editor-of-Publications Don Marler who was not present at the meeting. The

committee, to consist of Jeff Modzelewski, R. Dale Olson, Kathy Modzelewski, and Dorothy Karilanovic, will convene on a future date to discuss options for the proposal, to be reported on at a subsequent meeting.

Among several subjects, Dr. Wilson discussed new information obtained through his on-going association with a foreign researcher in the Yucatan on various newspaper accounts from 1823 of Jean Laffite's purported death at sea, as well as accounts from alleged descendants with the surname of Estrada, now living in Dzilam de Bravo, Yucatan, pertaining to their historical connection to the union of Jean Laffite and the "North American woman" known as Lucy Allen. Dr. Wilson stated that, according to his research sources, historian, Dr. J. Ignacio Rubio Mañe had concluded several decades ago that Jean Laffite did not die in the Yucatan, but perished in a naval battle "fighting in the service of the liberator of South America, Simón Bolívar." According to Mañe, Dr. Wilson stated, this event was published in the *Gaceta de Cartagena* [Cartagena Gazette] in Cartagena, Colombia, March 19, 1823. Dr. Mañe is also thought to have believed that a tomb "near the ocean" in Dzilam de Bravo, no longer in existence and purported to be that of Jean Laffite, was in actuality that of his brother Pierre.

In addition, Dr. Wilson reported he had had contact with a Laffite enthusiast in Alton, Illinois who stated that he had direct knowledge of a possible burial site for Jean Laffite in an abandoned Catholic cemetery in use from 1848-1858, from a person who claimed to have seen on a grave stone, sometime between the years of 1959 to 1961, Laffite's name and some dates from the 1800s.

Dr. Wilson also mentioned a discovery by American writer Alma Reed, whose work had been published

in the Mexican newspaper *Excelsior*, of a "true diary of Jean Laffite," found, according to Dr. Wilson's research source, in the "Central Library of New York" [possibly the New York Public Library ?] - the diary attesting to Jean Laffite's occupation of Isla Mujeres, Dzilam de Bravo, and Las Bocas, Yucatan.

The Secretary reported she had translated into English Patrick Lafitte's analysis in French of the handwriting in *The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, and that copies of both the original and the translation would be placed in the Society's Archive. Mr. Lafitte had submitted this report to be read at the March seminar held in Austin, Texas entitled, *The French in Texas*, sponsored by the Italian and French departments at The University of Texas. Due to time limits, reading of the report to members was deferred to a future date.

The President announced that author-historian Professor Jack C. Ramsay, Jr. will present a talk at the May meeting on the subject of his new book on 19th Century Bolivar, Texas settler Jane Long.

May 8, 2001

President Jeff Modzelewski called the meeting to order with a welcome to guest speakers Jack C. Ramsay, Jr. and his wife Karin Ramsay and a short bibliographical sketch preceding the special presentation. Prof. Ramsay discussed the background of his research and preparation for his five published works and encouraged Laffite Society members to "keep on keepin' on with their own good research." Signed copies of Prof. Ramsay's latest work, *Texas Sinners and Revolutionaries* were made available to members for purchase.

Karin Ramsay spoke on the eight flags of Texas, including 1) the Jane Long flag, said to have been made

the official Texas flag; and 2) the 7-star flag of the Southern Confederacy.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that Advisory Board member Pam Keyes had recently noted on the Internet **three new translations** of *The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*.

Laffite Society Historian and Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson reported briefly on research on the continuing investigation of the Mexican fortress at Anahuac overlooking Trinity Bay, built in 1831, the site of which was uncovered with the aid of magnetometer readings. An article on the investigation entitled *Mexican Fort Leaves Imprint in Anahuac*, appeared in the April 21, 2001 issue of *The Houston Chronicle* in which Ms. Epperson, who has spent several years researching the fort, was quoted as saying, "Fort Anahuac should be called the birth place of the Texas Revolution."

Jean L. Epperson presented to the Secretary for the Society's archives, a card dated May 8, 2001, gratefully acknowledging a recent research grant extended to her by the Laffite Society for a search in the British Maritime Archives, which Ms. Epperson reports, revealed "some data on pirate activity in the Gulf and Caribbean during 1822 and 1823, but nothing on Jean Laffite."

Ms. Epperson stated that copies of all material found will be placed in the Laffite Society archives in due course. Her written acknowledgment

of appreciation, according to the Secretary, will be shown to members at next regular meeting.

June 12, 2001

The President called the meeting to order reporting that Press Director Dave Roberts had volunteered to record the Minutes for this date as the Secretary was out of town.

In response to a question regarding Jean Laffite's fort on the island and reference to the Sandusky map of Galveston, R. Dale Olson stated that archeological digs were conducted in 1984 and '96 at the present day site in the 1400 block of Harborside Drive, revealing that something was on the site in the 1820's. It may have been Louis-Michel Aury's and/or Francisco Mina's previous fort attempts prior to Laffite who may have expanded on the earlier efforts.

Dr. Reginald Wilson presented a discussion concerning the Spanish conquest of the Mayans and the mining of silver in South America. Tremendous amounts of silver were taken from a 20-thousand foot mountain over a 200 year span. During the time the Spanish controlled New Orleans, the government was operating up to 700,000.00 pesos in debt there. In an effort to shore up the New Orleans government, Spain began shipping silver to the area, creating a great amount of pirate activity to take place in the Gulf of Mexico.

Dr. Wilson passed around a doubloon and pieces-of-eight. He stated that the next issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* will have a description of the money system - doubloons, *Reales*, etc.

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 Post Office Street, Galveston, TX., 77550, (409) 763 5495. Many of the meetings feature interesting and informative presentations by members or guest speakers. The exception is the December meeting, the annual "Holiday Social," which is an evening of food, drink, and entertaining conversation in a relaxed and festive setting.

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for the first month of each calendar quarter (January, April, July, and October) on the same day as that month's general meeting and normally either precede or follow same. Additional Board of Directors meetings may be scheduled at the Board's discretion.

In addition to the general meetings, one or more special events are normally scheduled during the year. Examples of such special events which have taken place in the past include: an excursion to Grande Terre, Louisiana (Laffite's "Barataria"), the address of the Society's then-President, R. Dale Olson, to the Louisiana Historical Society at the New Orleans Country Club, and a summer archaeological excavation at the supposed site of Laffite's Maison Rouge.

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

The Laffite Society Chronicles are published two times per year—in the spring and fall. The publication schedule is not always kept precisely.

Bulletin Board

This bulletin board can be used for announcements or submission of suggestions for the Society including suggestions for improving *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. If you have a message for the BB send it to the editor of the *Laffite Society Chronicles*.

* The Society now has a new webpage address: <http://thelaffitesociety.com/>

* Dorothy McD. Karilanovic has arranged for Dr. Alex Pratt, history professor at College of the Mainland, to speak to the Laffite Society on November 13. The subject of his talk is slavery as it existed in Galveston.

New Members

Michael C Martinson 2/13/2001
2131 5th Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90018

Carrol Lewis, Jr. 5/8/2001
11103 Wickway
Houston, Tex. 77024

Randy & Cheryl Hanks 3/13/2001
1127 Ball
Galveston, TX 77550

Vivienne K. Bass 6/13/2001
1111 West 16th St.
Houston, Tx. 77008

Jeff Abbott 4/18/2001
4805 Shoalwood Ave
Austin, TX 78756

Cynthia/Thomas Vallar 4/21/2001
13933 W 149th Ter.
Olathe, KS 66062

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AUGUST 2000-JULY 2002

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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