

The Laffite Study Group

Newsletter

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

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

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THE LAFFITE NETWORK

Jean Laffite lives! Tom Townsend's living history presentation, "Jean Lafitte--Texas Hero" is a 24-minute videotape designed for students grades 3-7. Townsend is the Bluebonnet Award-winning author of children's books. The Laffite video was named best children's educational video at the 1986 Houston International Film Festival. Townsend, as Jean Laffite, presents a slice of Texas history in a fresh, highly entertaining manner. Made in and around Galveston, the production draws heavily on the "Journal of Jean Laffite" for background information. Says John Howells: "Tom Townsend has written several childrens books related to the Texas pirate era. He appears at schools...dressed up as Jean Lafitte in a very beautifully made uniform resembling ...the picture in Saxon's Lafitte the Pirate...It's very good...I saw him at the library in Richmond, Texas (near where Jane Long is buried) and enjoyed it."

Jean Laffite and Thomas Jefferson Beale. Richard Ray's article in TREASURE SEARCH (Jan/Feb 1987) links Beale's treasure with Jean Laffite. According to Ray, the Spanish ship "Santa Rosa" was taken by Venezuelan privateers at Havana, sailed to Matagorda and scuttled. The treasure from the "Santa Rosa" was sent overland by packtrain and buried near Hendricks in East Texas to keep it out of the hands of Mexican soldiers. Laffite ordered

the treasure trove sent from Texas to St. Louis when he retired. Beale was Laffite's agent (or brother) . . . or Jean Laffite himself!

Traditional Boatbuilders. The Center for Traditional Louisiana Boat Building at Nicholls State University is building a sailing lugger, a type used extensively in Louisiana waters in the 19th century. The project, superintended by master boatwright Elie Guidry of Houma, is funded by the National Park Service, the Louisiana Division of the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

A Theodosia Burr Connection? Found in the Marie Oliver Watkins Papers in the State Historical Society of Missouri Joint Manuscripts Collection at Columbia: an undated clipping from THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, entitled "Burr Mystery, 132 Years Old, Solved?" According to the article, Aaron Burr's daughter was a "favorite" of Jean Laffite and the model for novelist Joseph Holt Ingraham's mysterious Mary Mornton character. It gets better: Jean Laffite's letter to Gov. Claiborne (about the British offer to the Baratarians) was taken to a certain Professor Finley Foster, head of the English Department at Western Reserve University, who was satisfied that Laffite did not write it: "I see no reason why Theodosia Burr could not have written it." If anyone has heard this story or can provide the complete citation for the AMERICAN WEEKLY article, we would appreciate hearing from you.

LHA/MHS Meeting in New Orleans. The joint meeting of the Louisiana Historical Association and the Mississippi Historical Society was held March 12-14 1987 at the Holiday Inn/Crowne Plaza Hotel in New Orleans. Fourteen sessions covered topics ranging from agricultural history to Louisiana legal history. Of special interest was Dr. William Coker's paper, "How General Jackson Learned of the British Plans for their Southern Campaign in the War of 1812". Our own Sir Jack D. L. Holmes spoke on the role of forensic history in the Mississippi Sound Case. An extraordinary presentation on Gulf Coast hurricanes by Charles Sullivan of Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College, illustrated with slides and videotaped interviews, literally took the Friday afternoon session by storm.

LAFFITE TREASURE: CUBA

"Legend of Jean LaFitte Gold Revived in Cuba," announced the headline of the article in the GALVESTON DAILY NEWS Sunday 24 March 1929 edition. According to the AP wire story, the pirate "Latrobe," said to have been an associate of Jean Laffite's, had bequeathed \$6,000,000 in gold to the "Pirate of the Gulf" before he went to the gallows. Laffite buried the loot and committed to paper a detailed description of its location. He never returned to recover pirate Latrobe's legacy, leaving the task to treasure seekers of the next century. According to the AP's man in Havana, the papers describing the Cuban treasure trove were dis-

covered in the ruins of a building in Key West, Florida, in September 1925. The finders are identified as Charles and William Pent. Alas, the Key West documents were subsequently "lost," leaving treasure hunters with only some vague clues (example: the treasure lies buried "ninety feet from the head of a boiling spring"), which seem to point to some spot on the north coast of Cuba near Cojimar.

SHIPS' HISTORIES: USS CAROLINA

Carolina was built at Charleston, South Carolina, and purchased by the United States Navy while still on the stocks. Commissioned on 4 June 1813, **USS Carolina** (14) was a schooner of 230 tons burden and measured 89 feet in length, with a 24 foot beam and a compliment of 100 officers and men. Under the command of Lt. J. D. Henley, **Carolina** captured the British schooner **Skark** en route to New Orleans, and arrived on that station on 23 August 1813. With Master Commandant Daniel T. Patterson aboard, the schooner participated in the 16 September 1814 raid on Barataria Bay and took several prizes. Following the British invasion of Louisiana, **Carolina** carried out defensive operations with other naval vessels in the approaches to New Orleans. On 23 December 1814 she dropped down the Mississippi River to bombard the British bivouac. While providing support to Jackson's army on 27 December, **Carolina** was struck and set afire by heated shot from a British battery; abandoned by her crew, she exploded and sank.

(Information about **USS Carolina** is from the U.S. Naval History Center, Washington, D.C.)

BORDERLANDS NOTES

The Evangeline Genealogical and Historical Society is offering a reprint of Dr. John Sibley's **REPORT FROM NATCHITOCHE IN 1807**, edited, with an introduction by Annie Heloise Abel, with a forward by Elizabeth Shown Mills and preface by Winston DeVille. This important document, originally published in 1922, is one of the major records of the Texas-Louisiana borderlands. The paperback edition is available for \$7.50 postpaid from the Society, P. O. Box 664, Ville Platte, LA 70586-0664.

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