



The Laffite Society Chronicles

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

DON C. MARLER

I always appreciated the excellent professional job Jeff Modzelewski did as editor of the *Chronicles*--just spelling his name correctly was an accomplishment in itself. Now that I have stepped into his shoes I appreciate his work even more. He developed and maintained a standard of dignity and professionalism that can only earn for The Laffite Society a measure of credibility. In carrying on where he left off, it is my intention to hold to the first tenet of a profession--first, do no harm. That does not mean that we may not try some new ideas. Reginald Wilson has suggested that we start a Bulletin Board-- (BB). Let's try it. See the announcement of the BB later in this issue for its purposes.

However, an editor and new ideas do not a journal make. The sinew of a publication such as *The Laffite Society Chronicles* is articles of substance and interest. Over the years the *Chronicles* have been published the supply of articles has gone through cycles of drought and inundation. Currently, it is not only the weather that is dry; the pool of Laffite related articles is at low ebb. So, if you have been thinking of writing an article or report now is the time to get that project going. The timeliness of publication of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* is dependent upon the availability of material to publish.

My goals as editor of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* are:

1. to maintain the standards of quality previously established,
2. publish on time when availability of materials allow,
3. add new features consistent with membership needs and interests,
4. develop written policies and procedures for the publication of the *Chronicles*, and

5. encourage broad participation in an increasingly more interactive journal.

How to submit materials

We will accept items submitted for publication consideration in any medium and any form. However, an electronic method makes the task easier. We use a Power Macintosh computer capable of handling a 3 1/2 inch disk, Zip Drive Disk or Compact Disk. We use Microsoft Word as a word processor. This computer is capable of converting most IBM compatible programs. Saving the material in more than one program will increase my chances of opening it. When you save your article in its final form you may be able to select the Macintosh (Microsoft Word) program and save it there, then save it also in one of the IBM programs.

Please do not use the automatic footnote feature. You can send most electronic items by email or send the disk by snail mail. But don't let the "Digital Device" keep you from submitting your material. Do not send your only copy of anything written or electronic by U.S. Mail Service. Printed material can be sent by fax. We have no dedicated fax line so you have to call ahead and we get set to receive.

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Bettie Marshall has graciously agreed to assist with proof reading. I cannot express how much I need and appreciate that kind of assistance. Her assistance will begin with the next issue.

WHO WAS JOHN ANDRECHYNE LAFFITE

Jean L. Epperson

John Andrechyne Laffite said he was the great grandson of the famous corsair/privateer, Jean Laffite. He sold a collection of papers, pictures, letters, bibles, copy books and a journal written in French to an antiquities dealer. Former governor of Texas, Price Daniel, Sr. bought the collection in 1976. These memorabilia are housed and partially displayed in the Sam Houston Regional Library in Liberty, Texas.

The authenticity of the collection has spawned many debates among historians and laymen alike. The arguments of the collections avid advocates and determined detractors have focused on historical facts, French grammar, names, places, etc. Numerous articles and some books have been written citing the collection.

Those who came in contact with John during his lifetime agreed that he was a strange and difficult man to understand. At the time of his death (of emphysema) in 1970 in Columbia, South Carolina, he and his wife of some 20 years were estranged. A writer, who tried to collaborate with John on a book about Jean Laffite, invited him to her home for a few weeks. She later stated that those were the worst two weeks of her life.¹

Recently discovered records of the Railroad Retirement Board and United States Census Records reveal the fact that John began

his life in Omaha, Nebraska as the son of John and Mary MATEJKA, Bohemian emigrants. Working for the Missouri Pacific Railroad in 1914, John was using the name, NAFSINGER. He later stated this was the name of his step-father. For some mysterious and unknown reason, John filed a delayed birth certificate in April 1947 claiming his name was JOHN ANDRECHYNE LAFFITE, that his father was Leon Jean Lafitte and his mother was Mary Pauline Fontenelle.²

In summary, John was not who he said he was; i.e., the great grandson of Jean Laffite. The authenticity of the Jean Laffite Collection is now in serious doubt. Hopefully renewed interest in the collection will encourage new research and give added knowledge about John and Jean Laffite.

Footnotes:

1. Jean Laffite Collection, Letters, Sam Houston Regional Library, Liberty, Texas.
2. John Nafsinger-Lafitte File-U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, Chicago, Illinois. Copies in files of the author, U.S. Census Records for 1900, 1910 and 1920 of Omaha, Nebraska, copies in files of the author.

To be continued



John A. Laflin
a.k.a. Laffite
a.k.a. Nafsinger

Commodore Patterson's Raid on Grand Terre

Reginald Wilson

Gov. Claiborne commissioned Patterson to destroy Laffite's commune on Grand Terre for two reasons. First, he was afraid that the Laffites might side with the British, and second, the smuggling was evading taxation.

The flagship, *Carolina*, with 70 infantry men, joined by six gun vessels and a tender, sailed on September 13, 1814, for Barataria. Upon approaching Grand Terre, the *Carolina* was anchored off shore while the gun boats approached the island. At first the privateers prepared to give battle. When they realized the ships were U.S. gun boats, they immediately began to flee the island in small boats. Jean Laffite had given strict orders not to fire on U.S. ships. Dominique Youx, who was in charge, surrendered without a shot being fired. Jean and Pierre Laffite, having been warned, were not on the island. Col. Ross, in charge of the infantry, began to load several of the captured ships with goods and merchandise from the warehouses, and to destroy the village.

On September 20, the privateer ship *General Bolivar*, commanded by Joseph Clement, approached Grand Terre. Too late, Capt. Clement recognized the situation. He turned about to flee, but after two hours of battle with the *Carolina*, the *General Bolivar* was caught in shallow water. The Captain surrendered.

On September 23, Patterson started his return trip with Dominique Youx, 80 captured Baratarians, and 8 captured vessels loaded with Laffite's goods. During the return, the *LaPopa* escaped one night with Renato Beluche aboard.

When Patterson reached Grand Terre, there were 27 vessels in the harbor. Those captured were: *General Bolivar*, *Dorado*, *Almable Maria*, *Petit Milan*, *Cassadore*, *Genny*, *Comet*, *Flora Americain*, *Guepe*, *Louisa Antoine*, *Luna de Novembre*, *Misere*, *Non-Telle*, *Surprendre*, *Melita*, *Mouche*, *Esperanza*, *Ponchita*, and *Prise-Derniere*. Those burned were: *Wilgas*,

Veloce, *Penwith*, *Spiritus*, *Success*, and *Pinar de Lucien*.

In New Orleans an inventory of the goods was as follows: (some words were illegible because of poor handwriting)

Eighteen bags of Samonide flowers, Seventeen bags of Senna, One bag of annised, Nineteen barrels of antimony and blue stone, Three bags of gum, One hundred and twenty bags of salt, Two anchors, One hundred and twenty bars of iron, Nine bars of iron, Four barrels of glass ware, Ten demi johns fine _____ seven sails, One cable, Two boxes of soap, Four boxes of antimony, One hundred and fifty three and a half dozen glass tumblers, One box containing fifty four pieces of German linnen (sic) marked T No. 11, Box containing forty three pieces of linen marked No. 5, One ditto No. 8 containing fifty three pieces of German linen, One ditto No. 2 containing forty eight pieces of German linen, One ditto No. 7 containing fifty five pieces of German linen, One ditto No. 10 containing fifty pieces of German linen, One ditto No. 4 containing eighty pieces of German linen, One ditto No. 2 containing thirty one pieces of German linen, One trunk containing forty five dozen and a half of silk stockings, Twenty two pieces of Ruplin sheeting, Six and a half pieces of _____, Two boxes of sewing silk, Three bags of coffee, forty eight bags of aniseed, Nine sails, One hundred and eighty two bales of paper, Seventy bales of cocoa, Twenty three bales of rope grass, One box of window glass, Two boxes of glass tumblers, One hundred fifty two whole pieces of Rupin Duck and forty three pieces of loose pieces of ditto, One hundred and thirteen whole pieces of Rupin sheeting, Forty one loose pieces of ditto, Eight pieces of Tichlenbury, Sixteen pieces of rolls, Three pieces and one half pieces of Blue _____ Eight whole pieces of _____ and two loose pieces of ditto, Trunk containing fifty eight pair of silk stockings, One box of window glass,

One chest containing one hundred dozen glass tumblers

Signed by Jn R Grymes

Nor included in the list above: 20 canons, numerous small arms, powder, flints, species, and jewelry.

The captured *General Bolivar* added: 21 packages of dry goods, one long brass 18 pounder, one long brass 6 pounder, two 12 pounder carranades, some arms, and an unknown amount of species. The merchandise from this ship was sold at auction for \$4753.00. The *Dorado* was sold for \$3050.00 and the *Almable* for \$3850.00

Commodore Patterson set the value of the inventory at \$400,000. Jean Laffite claimed the value at \$600,000. It is said that an independent appraiser gave the value as \$500,000.

In the libel suit, District Court #746, Jean Laffite claimed all goods were legally his because all were seized under a letter of Marque. However, the Court decided in favor of the Claimants, Patterson and Ross, who claimed the

goods to be "lawful prizes." Jean Laffite, who petitioned the President of the United States, never received any of the proceeds from the auction of his ships and goods.

Bibliography

1. Ramsay, Jack C. Jr. *Jean Laffite, Prince of Pirates*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1996.
2. De Grummond, Jane Lucas *Renato Beluche*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.
3. Saxon, Lyle *Laffite the Pirate*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing, Co. 1994.
4. U.S. v. Certain Goods Taken at Baratavia. Microfilm 7RA10-1 District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana, New Orleans, National Archives P.O. Box 6216 Ft. Worth, Texas 76115 Unpublished manuscript by unknown author.

"NEZ COUPE" SWORDS AT AUCTION

R. Dale Olson

Two swords, purportedly once the property of Louis Chighizola, the illustrious "Nez Coupe," were sold to an unidentified bidder at a recent auction in New Orleans.

Neal Auctions, of 4038 Magazine Street in New Orleans, published a catalog describing items in a "Louisiana Purchase Auction," held October 2, 3, and 4, 1998 in New Orleans.

The Nez Coupe Swords constituted Lot#938 of a total of 1633. According to the catalog there was to be presented, --"Two swords, both of Western European origin, c. 1800, the first being a typical French cavalry sword, with a pierced and engraved hilt, leather wrapped handle, and a burnished blade, length 37 in., the second sword being a typical N.C.O.'s cutlass, brass hilt, with a curved blasé, length 28 3/4 in."

Neal Auction, referencing Laffite works by Lyle Saxon and Jack C. Ramsey, continued, "Louis Chighizola acquired the name 'Nez Coupe' because he had lost part of his nose, either in a duel (as Lyle Saxon writes), or in a battle at sea (as Jack Ramsey writes)." "Chighizola was one of the Baratania pirates who joined with Laffite in agreement not to attack American shipping. He was also a beneficiary of the Presidential pardon of the Baratania pirates who participated in the Battle of

New Orleans for their previous crimes of smuggling and piracy."

The provenance: "Descended in the family of Louis 'Nez Coupe' Chighizola, trusted lieutenant of the pirate Jean Lafitte [sic], eventually to Natali Benvenuto Chighizola, Jr. By family tradition, used by 'Nez Coupe' at the Battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815".

According to Neal Auctions, the estimated value of the swords was \$1000/\$1500. When the gavel signaled the close of bidding, however, the new owner had bid \$4600.

In a photograph, the two swords dimmed compared to the brilliance of a gilt presentation sword given to General Christopher Colon Augur by the City of New Orleans for the General's role in the Reconstruction Era. Although the winning bid is unknown, the Augur sword was expected to elicit bids up to \$10,000.

Neal Auctions may be contacted at 800-467-5329, or www.nealauction.com for those interested in being advised of future auctions.

Laffite related material is very rare at auction. In approximately 1994, an auction held on Galveston Island by the firm of William Simpson, of Houston, presented an autograph of Jean Laffite that sold for \$1000. Its provenance was not documented.

The Quest for the Best Early Laffite History

Pam Keyes

The best and first book to relate the history of the Battle of New Orleans and Jean Laffite's participation in that event is Arsene Lacarriere Latour's wonderfully detailed account, *The Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana*, published in 1816 in Philadelphia. Sadly, even the book's 1965 facsimile reprint edited by the late Dr. Jane de Grummond is difficult to find, so many people never get a chance to read this work.

Historians through the years have agreed that Latour's comprehensive history of the British invasion of Louisiana and subsequent battles is the best on the subject. The book includes a fantastic appendix of letters to and from principals in the events, among them several from Jean Laffite. Latour was a close associate of Jean. A separate volume in the original edition has detailed maps of all the battles.

According to Dr. de Grummond's introduction to the facsimile edition,

"Henry Adams, author of *History of the United States*, said: 'Latour was a trained French engineer, whose services were extremely valuable, not only during the campaign but afterwards, for he subsequently wrote a History of the War in West Florida and Louisiana which was far the best military work published in the United States till long after that time and furnished the only accurate maps and documents of the campaign at New Orleans.' One might add that all accounts of the Battle of New Orleans written by American historians since that time have been based on Latour's Memoir. English historians have, for the most part, ignored the War of 1812."

Later in the introduction, Dr. de Grummond wrote:

"Not only did Latour know at first hand all the details, vulnerable and otherwise, of the whole coast area, but he also understood the importance of the Baratarians and their leaders--Jean and Pierre Laffite, their oldest brother Dominique You, and Renato Beluche. All of these were

of French descent. The section of Latour's book that deals with the Baratarians is most enlightening. They felt the same hatred toward England that Latour felt, and had the same desire to get revenge, and so they were loyal to the United States."

The original first edition of Latour is extremely rare, as is the 1965 facsimile reprint edition published in Florida. When copies are located, first editions of Latour have been offered for sale by antiquarian book dealers for prices up to \$4,500, and the 1965 work, \$150.

According to an essay on rare book collecting at the Robert F. Lucas Antiquarian Books website (www.lucasbooks.com),

"the concept of a 'rare book' is easy to comprehend - it is a book which is seldom encountered and presumably exists in very small numbers. To define the term 'rare book' is more difficult"

He prefers to define it,

"based on the frequency it is seen by the bibliographer, collector or antiquarian book- seller who is searching for copies on a continual basis."

Lucas says:

"A rare book is one encountered only occasionally by those working with and/or collecting books in the specific genre. A book that is encountered about once every five years or less frequently is a rare book (In the case of a specialized bookseller, in his/her stock) (in the case of a collector - having a specific opportunity to purchase the book) (in the case of a bibliographer, locating a "previously unrecorded" copy). A very scarce book might be encountered more frequently, but less often than once a year, perhaps once every two to four years. A scarce book is normally encountered approximately once a year by those actively seeking it. An uncommon book may be in the stock of a speciality book- seller four or five times a year, but is not always readily available as is a common book.

Theoretically you should have no problem finding a fine copy of a common book at any time, an uncommon book may take a bit of searching."

My search for a Latour first edition occurred shortly after I first became acquainted with the work when Dr. de Grummond gave me a copy of her edition during a visit to her Baton Rouge home in the 1980s. My personal quest for an 1816 first edition was to span over 20 years before I finally located one for \$500 in 1999 at a used book store in Tennessee. It was missing the accompanying atlas with the battle maps, but that wasn't important to me considering I had finally found the one rare Laffite book that was always at the top of my book search lists.

Over the years, you might say the 1816 book had become sort of my Laffite "holy grail" of books, as I never expected to find a copy for sale. I figured they were all in libraries, and not very many of those. I truly never expected to find a copy for sale at a price I could afford.

When my search first began, I used the free search services offered by book dealers across the United States and advertised in such publications as *The Antique Trader*. It was through such venues that I located a copy of the very rare Vantage Press edition of the *Journal of Jean Laffite* (for \$25, a real buy!). In 1982, the search service located an 1816 Latour at Chalmette, La., for me, but it was too pricey at \$1,000 since it was in fine condition with the atlas volume. The search continued, with no more Latours turning up for sale in over 19 years, and then something wonderful happened: the internet brought thousands of bookstores together online, and searches for even the extremely rare became much more successful: I finally found my Latour through a Bibliofind want list on the internet. And within three months of finding it, two more 1816 Latours surfaced (albeit at extremely high prices), and just in the past month,

another one has become available also (again, for an astronomical amount). But that is in the nature of online book searches.

My Latour is in fair to good shape, bound in full calf, with the frontispiece portrait of Andrew Jackson, although oddly it is a different portrait than the one shown in the 1965 facsimile reprint. According to book reference works dealing with historical volumes, some of the 1816 Latours didn't even have the portrait at front. The best aspect of my book is the pink bookplate on the front endpaper, signifying it was owned by the Military Depot, Quartermaster General's Department. According to the used book dealer, my book was sold by the Shreve Memorial Library at Shreveport, La., to help raise funds for flood repairs. It has a Shreve Memorial Library stamp on the title page.

Finally finding the Latour has made it a bit challenging to think of more rare books to look for on the internet, but there are a few that I have been working on without too much success lately.

In addition to the Bibliofind search service on the internet, one excellent source of Laffite books are the internet auctions on eBay. I have purchased several rare books, including all my *Niles Weekly Register* bound volumes, in that manner. Internet auctions are particularly challenging as you do not know until the last few seconds of the auction if you're going to win the item or not, as sometimes there is another bidder willing to pay more than you, and able to "snipe" (last second bid) faster than you can.

In summary, if you are looking for a rare book (Laffite-related or not) take heart from my tale and keep up the search, one will turn up, trust me.



Member Pam Keyes bought this gin bottle over the Internet auction from a bottle dealer in Metairie, La. The bottle was reported to have been found along with a stash of similar old bottles near the end of Grande Terre in the bay. A worker for the Wildlife and Fisheries Department found the bottles.

This bottle is handblown, has a large pontil mark on the base, and dates to around 1780. It is a semi-translucent olive green in color, with lots of surface iridescence. It is about 9 1/2 inches tall, and has a very crude looking lip. Due to the location where it was found, and the age of the bottle, it likely dates to the Laffite encampment.

GENERAL MEETING SUMMARIES AND FEATURED PROGRAM ABSTRACTS

PREPARED FROM MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES BY SOCIETY SECRETARY DOROTHY
MCD. KARILANOVIC

The Laffite Society generally publishes in The Laffite Chronicles abstracts of featured talks and papers presented at monthly meetings, when the nature and length of these featured presentations lend themselves to such inclusion, and when the speakers facilitate same. These abstracts might contain information which is in conflict with the opinions of others or with established documentation. The material contained in this section does not, therefore, necessarily reflect an official position of The Laffite Society. The Society does, however, encourage discourse regarding conflicting viewpoints, because it believes such discourse often leads to a broader and deeper understanding.

The Society recognizes that The Laffite Chronicles is its primary link with those members who do not attend monthly meetings. Therefore, in an effort to impart some feeling for the meetings and their content, the topics therein discussed are presented in summary fashion.

Tuesday, January 11, 2000

Minutes of the October 12 were not read by the Secretary or approved due to time constraints. Minutes of Nov. 9, 1999 were approved as read to members by the Secretary.

Treasurer, Jeff Modzelewski, reported a balance of \$1,962.00, less cost of postage (approximately \$250.00) for latest issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, Aug., '99.

Members were reminded that they could subscribe to Andy and Becki Hall's e-mail Listbot address, the purpose of which, according to Andy is to "share information of interest to Laffite Society members, such as meeting schedules, research techniques, and inquiries about source material."

Secretary, Dorothy Karilanovic, read a list she had prepared of new acquisitions for The Laffite Society archives consisting of copies of thirteen documents from French archives, compiled and sent to The Laffite Society for its archive by French Member-at-Large Patrick Lafitte.

Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson reported that the President of the Contraband Days buccaneer group in Lake Charles, LA, Mr. Ben Zaleski, had confirmed that funds would be available for the Jean Laffite national marker to be erected in Lake Charles, research and inscription of which were undertaken by Ms. Epperson and submitted for approval Dec. 27 to the Division of Historical Preservation, Office of Cultural Development in Baton Rouge, LA.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that, during a recent telephone conversation with Mr. William Simpson, antiques and auction dealer of the Simpson Auction Gallery in Houston, the latter stated that he had no knowledge of an 1820 painting of Jean Laffite executed by an unknown painter in South Carolina, which is the object of a present search.

R. Dale Olson announced that he will be an invited speaker at the April meeting of the Louisiana Genealogical Society in Baton Rouge, LA, during which time a special event trip for members is planned to the St. Francisville, LA area.

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

The Minutes of January 11, 2000 were approved as read to members by the Secretary.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in the account of \$1,918.00.

President Kathy Modzelewski reminded members to send in their dues.

R. Dale Olson mentioned two new titles & a postgraduate transcript he had purchased for his library, as follows: 1) *The Memoirs of Lafitte or the Baratarian Pirate*, a novel written in 1826 by Mortimer Wilson of Westchester, New York) 2) a publication on Luis Aury, written in 1965, entitled *La Presencia de Luis Aury en Centro América* by Hector Humberto Samayoa Guevara, and 3) a Ph.D. dissertation on Xavier Mina.

Discussion continued on the upcoming special event trip to St. Francisville and West Feliciana Parish, LA April 28,- 30, to include a visit to The Myrtles Plantation.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that Professor Gene Marshall's new translation of *The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story* will be published in the following format: an introduction of 34 pp., followed by the translation of the text and three indices of persons, places, and the names of ships.

As a special presentation, Member-at-Large Stephen Broadstone presented a talk on his recent trip to West Feliciana Parish, LA with emphasis on his visits to 1) The Myrtles Plantation, one of the ten most "haunted" homes in the nation, according to the Smithsonian Institute, and 2) Rosedown Plantation where 85% of the original contents from the 1850s remain, and gardens are patterned after those Versailles, France. In support of his talk, Mr. Broadstone provided packets of xeroxed copies of interesting architectural details of the above homes, as well as maps and lists of hotels and restaurants in the St. Francisville area. Members were also treated to a view of personal photos of interiors of The Myrtles and to two texts entitled 1) *Ghosts Along the Mississippi* by Charles Loughlin (1948), now out of print, and 2) *Plantation Homse of Louisiana and the Natchez Area* by David King, Gleason Collection, 1982, Louisiana State University Press.

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Minutes of the February 8 general meeting were approved as read by the Secretary to members present.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Laffite Society account of \$1,858.00

Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson reported that the Contraband Days buccaneer group of Lake Charles, LA had approved her proposal for a joint effort to fund a Jean Laffite national marker for the Lake Charles, LA area, costs to be divided as follows: \$200.00 from The Laffite Society and \$1,000.00 from the Contraband Days group. President Kathy Modzelewski read to members in attendance Ms. Epperson's inscription which she had researched and prepared for the marker, and extended thanks to her on behalf of The LS for the generosity of her efforts in creating this good will gesture.

Member-at-Large Stephen Broadstone volunteered to contact The Myrtles Plantation in St. Francisville, West Feliciana Parish, LA to arrange for dinner reservations at Kean's Carriage House Restaurant at The Myrtles, and a tour of the plantation house for the April 28-29 special event trip planned by Laffite Society members.

Continuing his on-going research to verify the authenticity of historical information given in *The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, alleged to have been written by Jean Laffite, Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported he had received information on the family of Lucien Fontenelle who was, according to Jean Laffite in *The Journal*, p. 93, "a commercial agent for the Indians." Dr. Wilson reported that Jean Laffite's grandson, Leon, married Lucien

Fontenelle's granddaughter, Mary Pauline Fontenelle. Dr. Wilson is in the process of gathering more information on the Fontenelle family history which he hopes to make public in due course, pending verification of reliable sources.

Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson read a paper she had prepared on the 36-ton schooner *Pegasus*, from information obtained from 1) The U.S. Federal Archives 2) the Ships' Registry and Enrollments of New Orleans 3) *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* and 4) New Orleans Ship Lists by M.P. Reider and N.G. Reider.

Secretary Dorothy Karilanovic reported she had recently translated a one-page document in French provided by Member-at-Large Patrick Lafitte of Corneilla del Vercol, France, which is an application for foreign travel for a certain Pierre Laffite, dated May 2, 1802, from Bordeaux, France to Louisiana, for the purpose stated: "... to join the rest of his brothers." A copy of the translated document, which includes a brief physical description of Pierre Laffite, along with the original in French will be entered in The Laffite Society archive at the Eiband Gallery.

Tuesday, April 11, 2000

Guest speaker Carroll A Lewis, Jr. presented a discussion on the subject of "Treasure Legends Along the Gulf Coast." Mr. Lewis, who is the author of *Treasures of Galveston Bay*, published by Texian Press initially in 1966, spoke on his experiences as a traveler to South America, to the islands of Providencia and Santa Catalina off the coast near Colombia, S.A., which were for generations the stronghold of pirates. According to Mr. Lewis, Pilgrims arrived at Providencia and Santa Catalina in 1620 on *The Sea Flower*, sister ship of *The Mayflower*, where four fortifications were erected.

Members were also presented with copies of historical information the author had written on the Texas Revolution for independence: 1) a 12 page booklet entitled *Texana: Fort Anahuac: Birthplace of the Texas Revolution* and 2) a legal-sized, one-page account of the view of Texas colonists at Anahuac 160 years ago of the initial causes of the revolutionary outbreak due to the tyranny and despotic acts on the part of Col. John Davis Bradburn, a Kentuckian, who had joined the Mexican army and who was commandant of the Mexican fort at Anahuac at that time in 1832.

Minutes of March 14, 2000 were not read or approved due to the Secretary's early departure from the meeting. Notes for the remainder of the meeting were taken by Editor-of-Publications, Jeff Modzelewski.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in the account of \$2,442.45, plus \$65.00 undeposited funds, less costs of about \$350.00 for printing the next issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

Editor-of-Publications Jeff Modzelewski reported that Prof. Gene Marshall's new translation of the French document, *The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, would be available in the near future via the Internet under Xlibris publications.

Advisory Board member Reginald Wilson stated that he is still searching out a lead on Lucien Fontenelle's connection with the Jean Laffite family, and will report his findings if and when information becomes available (see March 14 Minutes).

President Kathy Modzelewski presented copies to members of a basic itinerary she had prepared for those planning to travel to St. Francisville, LA April 28-30. A brief discussion followed on sign-up for the trip, hotel locations available, and on plans for a wine and cheese gathering the day of arrival for which Mrs. Betty Wilson volunteered to provide refreshments.

Tuesday, May 9, 2000

Following serving of refreshments at 6:00 p.m., and in lieu of a special presentation for the evening, discussion continued on research in progress, prior to the general business meeting.

Through recent research, Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson presented startling new evidence from the Railroad Retirement Board and U.S. Census Records revealing that John A. Lafflin/Laffite, long-alleged, self-proclaimed great-grandson of Jean Laffite, privateer-pirate, had been born in Omaha, Nebraska on June 4, 1893, the son of John and Mary Matejka, Bohemian emigrants. According to Ms. Epperson, while working as a lineman for the Missouri Pacific Railroad, John was noted to have used the name of Nafsinger in 1914, which he later stated was his step-father's name. Ms. Epperson further stated that, "For some mysterious and unknown reason, John filed a delayed birth certificate in April, 1947, claiming his name was JOHN ANDRECHYNE LAFFITE, and that his father was Leon Jean Laffite and his mother was Mary Pauline Fontenelle. Ms. Epperson made available for members' interest copies of a short biography on John A. Laffite and a tentative chronology of his life, spanning the years 1893 to 1970, from his birth to death.

Jean Epperson also donated to The Laffite Society archive a copy of a newspaper article from *The Baytown Sun*, Vol. 78: No. 161, Friday, May 5, 2000, entitled: "Pirate Still a Controversial Figure: Area Researcher Questions the Legitimacy of Pirate's Relatives," by staff writer Jeff Riggs. The article featured a photograph of Ms. Epperson in her library, and one of Direct Robert Schaadt of the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center at Liberty, Texas, where the controversial *Journal* and other Jean Laffite memorabilia are currently housed.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson presented further information on his research on correspondence between writer Audrey Lloyd and Lacey Seuratt Laffite, widow of John A. Laffite (a.k.a. as John Mytejka), and on Lucien Fontenelle family history and their association with Jean Laffite's grandson, Leon Jean Laffite. According to Dr. Wilson, from a recent telephone conversation he had had with a descendant of one of Lucien Fontenelle's sons, there is no evidence in their family history of a Mary Pauline Fontenelle being married to Leon, Jean Laffite's grandson.

Following the evening's series of discussion, the General Meeting resumed with an approval of the Minutes of March 14 and April 11, as read by the Secretary to members in attendance.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Laffite Society account of \$2,777.45, less publication costs of the next issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, now pending.

Laffite Society Archivist, Don Marler, reported on extensive organizational work he and his wife and Member Sybil Marler, had completed in collating and cataloging the contents of The Laffite Society archive over the past several months. Mr. Marler called for volunteers to continue with the collation, recording, and filing of documents, suggesting that they follow the procedures he had implemented for the sake of consistency and security of documents.

A recently received e-mail inquiry from a woman in Rockville Center, New York, representing a Brandeis Women's University organization, requested information on "Jewish origins of Jean Laffite," referred to in a book on Jewish frontier settlers by Harold Sharfman.

Archivist Don Marler reported that he was in the process of contacting a Jewish genealogical group in New Orleans to see if there is historical documentation to validate a claim for Jewish origins, made by Jean Laffite himself, in *The Journal*, alleged to have been written by Jean.

Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson reported that a date for the dedication of the Jean Laffite National Marker in Lake Charles, LA, for which she had done the historical research and preparation of inscription, has not yet been decided upon. Discussions are under way between the Contraband Buccaneer group and city leaders as to the most appropriate location for the marker.

The President stated that The Galveston County Genealogical Society had made a request for a speaker from The Laffite Society to give a genealogical overview on the pirates Pierre and Jean Laffite.

Tuesday, June 13, 2000

The Minutes of the May 9th General Meeting, as read to the assembly by the Secretary, were approved with a motion by Jeff Modzelewski, seconded by John Hunger.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in the account of \$2,6661.25.

Editor-of-Publications Jeff Modzelewski announced that the upcoming issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* will be the last publication under his editorship. Publisher and current Archivist for The Laffite Society, Don Marler, has offered to accept a nomination for this important office.

The President suggested tht members submit names of those whom they would like to see nominated for the new Board, for a slate to be presented at the July meeting.

President Kathy Modzelewski expressed thanks to Dr. Reginald Wilson for his gift of the "Jolly Roger" flag to be displayed in The Laffite Society archive.

Jeff Modzelewski reported that Island Books will have available for sale at cost for members Professor Gene Marshall's new translation of *The Journal of Jean Laffite; the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, hard copies for \$21.00; soft, \$12.00. Professor Marshall will be available at a future meeting to sign copies as desired.

Secretary Dorothy Karilanovic spoke briefly about a book written in French and published in France in 1998 by French author Louis-Jean Calvet. Her comments focused on the final chapter entitled "The Laffite Dossier," in which the author recaps the principal genealogical "trails" of research concerning the origins of the Laffite brothers and their possible fates. According to the Secretary, the author also offers opinions based on his research regarding the authenticity of the controversial *Journal*, his conclusion being that the document was probably written by an English-speaking person who then translated his thoughts into French. He cites several instances of so-called anglicized French, the incorrect use of French words based on what the typical English-speaking person might choose to express himself. He further states that the fact that most of the current researchers working on the document in this country have themselves been English-speaking natives may contribute to the belief that the document was written by a native French-speaking person, such as Laffite.

The Secretary reported she had had no further correspondence since January of this year from Mr. Richard B. Smith and The Company, a small West Yorkshire, England research group, regarding their decision as to whether or not to announce their completion of the decipherment of the Thomas Beale codices. Until further notice from this group, the file of correspondence on this research will be considered closed and will eventually be included in The Laffite Society archive.

In continuance of his search for the "lost 1820 painting of Jean Laffite," Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that he had located information in correspondence of writer Audrey Lloyd that John Matejka (a.k.a. John A.Lafflin/Laffite) had, in fact, himself created the painting of Jean Laffite, formerly attributed to an "unknown painter" in South Carolina in the 1820s.

A letter arrived from French member Patrick Laffite saying that he will send to The Laffite Society a "dossier" concerning Chevalier Anne Louis de Tousard from French Archives, along with an analysis of *The Journal* by a "premiere handwriting expert in France."

Dr. Reginald Wilson spoke on his observations of information obtained in Professor Gene Marshall's recent translation of *The Journal* that was not in the original document, first published in English in 1958 by Vantage Press. He also briefly

mentioned that John Matejka (a.k.a. John A. Lafflin/Laffite) was known to have "retraced" letters alleged to have been written by Jean Laffite.

Dr. Wilson also stated that his cousin and researcher Paul Gardiner plans to look for burial records in St. Louis of Jules Laffite, grandson of Jean Laffite. Further, he also reported he had written to a church in Le Sieur, Minnesota to see if they had records on Mary Matejka, sister of John Matejka, who had resided there as a nun. To date he has not received a response. He also stated he had tried to locate on the Internet persons in several states with the surname of Nafsinger who might have been descended from the Nafsinger who was John Matejka's step-father.

Following up on his search for information on Lucien Fontenelle, Indian courier mentioned in *The Journal*, Dr. Wilson brought for members' interest a genealogical list of Lucien Fontenelle, showing no evidence of a Mary Pauline Fontenelle as a descendant, alleged to have been Lucien's great-granddaughter and to have married Jean Laffite's grandson, Leon.

CALENDAR

General meetings of The Laffite Society are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Eiband's Gallery, 2201 Postoffice Street, Galveston, TX., 77550, (409) 763 5495. Many of the meetings feature interesting and informative presentations by 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

As promised, *The Laffite Society Chronicles* is beginning a new feature -- a Bulletin Board. The purpose of this feature is to increase interaction between members and *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, by publishing messages, notices and letters to the editor.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Jeff,

"... There is an old cemetery located 1 mile north (northwest) of Alton [Illinois] that was either filled or simply abandoned around 1870. This is the reported location of Lafflin's grave. Oral tradition tells of a rumor that Laffite buried his treasure in an area called Hop Hollow, that was an old Ferry Road to the Mississippi. The Catholic burying ground is near Hop Hollow.

Thanks for the info. Call anytime I can send you anything. 618-462-7527.

Sincerely,
Don Huber

ERRATA

Jean L. Epperson requests a correction to her article "Jean Laffite and the Schooner Pegasus", *The Laffite Society Chronicles* (Vol. VI, No. 1), as follows.

The brig *New Enterprise* belonging to the Laffite brothers was the rechristened Spanish prize *Intrepido*. Captured by Renato Beluche in 1816, the *Intrepido* was described as, "a brig-of-war, black of hull, white banded on the sheerstrakes at bow and stern, with mainmast raking sharply, aft and foremast raking not at all, with seven empty gunports in the bulwarks of each board and two anchor ports in the stern." When taken she had fourteen guns and a crew of 140 men.¹

Pierre Laffite bought the *Intrepido*, though she lacked speed and youth, and renamed her the *New Enterprise*. He sailed aboard her in June 1817 for Galveston.²

This was undoubtedly the brig that Jean Laffite departed on when he abandoned Galveston in the spring of 1820, and not the mythical schooner *Pride*.³

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1. Stanley Faye, "The Great Stroke of Pierre Laffite," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (July 1940): 772.
 2. *Ibid.*, 772.
 3. Jean L. Epperson, "Jean Laffite and the Schooner Pegasus", *The Laffite Society Chronicles* (February, 2000), 10.

NEW MEMBERS

The total membership for the Society is 62, and of these there are five new members for the year 2000. They are:

1. Philip and Pamela Brieden -- Grand Isle, La.
2. William Breckinridge "Breck" Lockett -- Fairfield, Ky.
3. Walter and Joan Modzelewski -- Galveston, Tx.
4. Warren and Veronica Stauffer -- Bourne, Ma.
5. Neil Tytoni -- Meraux, La.

JOHN RODRIQUE BOOKS ARE BACK

The John Rodrique books, written by Laffite Society member and former *Houston Post* outdoor editor, KEN GRISSOM, are back in print. These salty mysteries feature a larcenous but likable ex-commercial diver who runs a seagoing wrecker service out of the Galveston Yacht Basin.

Rodrique is the descendant of one of Laffite's captians who honored the amnesty, stayed on the costal prairie of Louisiana, and founded a clan of shrimp fishermen. But John Rodrique is a bit of a throwback whose veins still course with pirate blood. He becomes a U.S. Navy salvage diver, is detailed to the PBRs, or river patrol boats, in Vietnam where he wins the Congressional Medal of Honor and loses an eye. After his discharge, he works in offshore oilfields all over the world as a deep-water specialist until stricken with a life-threatening case of the bends. Now he is retired, drinking too much, and scratching out a living in a 25-foot Boston Whaler.

He's not very particular about the jobs he takes. In *Big Fish*, he is hired to fix a million-dollar billfish tournament. Things go awry when the winning captain is murdered. In *Drop-Off* he is actually covering up a murder. And in *Drowned Man's Key*, the job is to recover a body, one of many left by a category 5 hurricane. But this dead man was an industrial spy, and his pockets hold the secret of the biggest disaster to befall the space program since Challenger.

Big Fish, *Drop-Off* and *Drowned Man's Key* are available via the Internet at iUniverse.com, backinprint.com and Amazon.com.

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

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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