



The Laffite Society Chronicles

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AUGUST, 1999

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WELCOME, NEW LAFFITIANS, JULY 1, 1998 - JUNE 30, 1999

CALENDAR

"THE STORY OF LAFFITE" AUDIO TAPE PROJECT

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

JEFF MODZELEWSKI

Dear Laffite Society members,

I am happy to present you with this, the tenth semiannual issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*. In its "Meeting Summaries and Abstracts" section, this issue focuses on Society activity for the period of January through June, 1999. It also contains other articles of relevance to the Society's theme.

Since this is our tenth *Chronicles*, and since we publish the *Chronicles* twice per annum, a simple mathematical computation leads us to the realization that The Laffite Society has now been in existence for five full years.

Earlier in our history we purposely exercised humility by choosing to regard ourselves as simply a small group of history buffs with a particular focus, to wit, Jean Laffite and those events of his era which impacted him. Although ideas for new undertakings arose from time to time, no conscious, precise, detailed plans for the group's growth and longevity were devised.

Yet now, after five years, we cannot easily be accused of arrogance if we congratulate ourselves for having survived the fledgling-organization phase, for having laid down what has become a solid and established track record of research, documentation, and publication, all cemented by the bonds of good fellowship.

Those of us who are fortunate enough to be involved in the meetings and administration of The Laffite Society have witnessed both an evolving solidification of the group and, more excitingly, a recent expansion of its sphere of recognition. This expansion is apparent in several ways, of which the following is one example.

Although our Internet home page, created and maintained by member Andy Hall, has been functional for some two years, in the past several months it appears to be receiving an increasing number of "hits," presumably due to the continued and accelerating growth of this medium. It is no longer a rarity for us to receive correspondence from individuals who obtained our e-mail address from The Laffite Society Web page and who wrote to ask general Laffite questions, to inquire about joining the Society, and, in multiple instances, to purchase all back issues of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

(In fact, as a consequence of this last item, we recently found it necessary to run a second printing of fifteen copies each of issues #1 and #3, dated January 1995 and January 1996, respectively.)

As our Society celebrates its fifth anniversary we pause to reflect on a sadder result of this passage of time, the passing of three of our members or their spouses: Bob Lilliston of Overland Park, Kansas; Hugh Epperson, husband of Jean L. Epperson, of Dayton, Texas; and Joy Peak, wife of Don Peak, of Galveston, Texas. I take the liberty of quoting below the gracious comments of Bob Lilliston's widow, Katie, as a demonstration of the enjoyment we strive to bring to our group:

"To members of The Laffite Society - I want to express my appreciation for the *Chronicles* mailed to Bob this last time; he would so have enjoyed them. Bob died ... after many, many hospitalizations due to serious lung problems. He was an asthmatic all of his life and our winters in Galveston were special because he always felt better there.

"He truly enjoyed his affiliation with The Laffite Society. He felt that you did all things with a dignity and propriety that he held in deep respect. He spent many happy moments telling his children all about The Laffite Society. I always teased him that perhaps in a former life he was a pirate! He always told me it was a part of his childhood play. I thank you again for all of those in your group that added enrichment to his personal life."

We keep their families in our thoughts, and we pray that they rest with God.



LE RAISONNABLE
WIL ZAPALAC

Insanity - has no technical meaning for psychiatrists. Is used in law to denote a mental state in which a person is not legally responsible for his or her actions.

Perhaps this is an overly voracious attempt to broach such a touchy subject when writing of Laffite and the boys.

First, one has to try to set that specific time period in one's mind. Society had one wholly different manner of viewing insanity then. Obviously, certain stages or displays of it were purposely ignored. Eccentricity may have begun its evolution from its original scientific origin then, to being that which was much more acceptable or easy to say. A person was "eccentric" - rather than outright "looney-tooney."

On the other hand, insane asylums were basically hell-holes, with patients hovering on the ledge before death. Many impaired mental states, when discovered early, could have been treated but were not. Depending on the degree of wealth in a family, concern for a mentally-ill person could be genuine, or genuinely non-existent.

So once again the brave and gentle reader is humming this thought through his or her head: "So what has insanity to do with Jean Laffite?"

Perhaps quite a deal, should one care to embrace the subject.

To begin the key-in, was Laffite himself insane?

To this writer, he seems not to have been a "crazy man." Perhaps there were periods in his working career that brought him into great bouts with worry and depression.

Other research seems to show that he was a bit *naturelle melancole* just in personality alone, *ergo* perhaps more capable to deal with such bouts.

Many would surmise that his immense releases of anger and hatred toward the navies, spies, and backers of Spain and England were not homicidal thrusts but a flavored, inner belief in justice. Granted, it was his own particular flavor of justice, but justice nonetheless.

No, Laffite was too crafty and busy to drive himself into the drafty doldrums.

But what of his underlings, various partners, and confidants?

It has been stated that anyone who

would take the life of another is most certainly insane. Self-defense might be a totally different story, but the religious commandment that warns not to take another's life does have its merits.

But surely the cruelties that Laffite's men inflicted on captured Spaniards would register as insane. No doubt many of the common seamen of his fleet were basically blood-thirsty, homicidal maniacs who would as soon slice a throat as look at it.

Obviously, several individuals or officers who were once privateers for Laffite left his ranks to become outright pirates, only to succumb to the ravages of the mind, which the sea is more than willing to deal out. Long periods of sea travel, interlaced with dangerous weather, squirrely uncooperative crews, and excessive consumption of rum, had more than one pirate captain going "over the edge" mentally.

The constant on-and-off-again excesses that riddled the life of a "working" seaman in Laffite's time surely promoted the vice.

After all, one day brandy-soaked pheasant, then crummy seagull the next.

Laudanum appeared on the scene. Sweet as it was, it only dulled the roaring, conflicting desires of sea-robbers.

So, then. Interesting to note the "shamans" who worried and cast spells behind the steady tread of Laffite's boot-heels. Misguided mystics who were as kooky as plaid on plaid - but just wishy-washy-correct enough with their hocus-pocus to keep the commune in fear.

After all, did not "the Bos" come from the "ol' debbil," *noir*?

Was it not even harder, psychologically, on the few women of the Laffite following? Death dangling about their worried heads. Few words of comfort and then, suddenly, unimaginable displays of the men's victories. Bountiful nirvana.

It seems rather unnaturally strange that only Captain Campbell's wife ever spun or wove any tales of the life then. What happened to the other women?

Had they adhered to the strict code of secrecy with which Laffite cloaked his "dealings"? To the grave? *Fin*?

This writer attempts to show some similarities between the seafarers of today and those of Laffite's nautical ventures. I still see the

same similarities and enjoy people reading of them. Immensely.

Given to witty outbreaks of nonsense, straight insanity occurs on the water these days. One such incident left visual reminders strewn about the interior of a vessel on which I worked.

After supposedly learning of an on-shore lover spurning him, a man went over that same psychological edge. His instrument of revenge on society was readily-enough available. In fact, required "safety" equipment on modern vessels.

The fire-ax.

Once again, the "cat" among a crew ... *le gascon* ... the humble cook, played to be the hero. He had noted the increasingly odd behavior of the man and had already sprung for the vessel's phone before the ax was "obtained."

Rampaging about the vessel, the man went from deck to deck seeking release for his shattered mind. Yet, thanks to the cook, the work "went up" very neatly. The captain himself was chased into his quarters, and then the man savagely hacked away at the thick, heavy door.

In the meantime, the action on the captain's door gave the mate just enough space to slip by unnoticed and send out a mayday on the radio.

Another vessel picked up on the call and started for the position. There were no radio transmissions from then on, for the man had

entered the wheelhouse and hacked all the equipment this way and that.

Smelling salvage in the breeze, the other vessel responded quickly. After all, if the "looney-toon" had either killed the crew or chased them overboard, then the vessel was just a ripe plum floating on the water.

However, after arriving they found - to their gloom - that the man was still frantically chasing various people to and fro in a game of musical doors.

So the rescue vessel's captain asked his own crew what was to be done.

The idea that was hit upon was this. Remember the movies? Use a butterfly net to catch the cuckoo. Even better, use the shrimp net they had on board.

Two brave and sane men played a taunting game of seek-and-run with the ax-wielding man until he turned his back on the fellow with the net.

One might note that I refer to the fellow as the "man," not the "madman." Reason being, once he was taken ashore, the Rx authorities found a lesion on his brain, slowly chewing into his sanity and living off stress.

To this day, I still remember first coming on that vessel and wondering what caused the dents in the radar sets and interior handrails. Strange.

VOYAGE FROM BORDEAUX TO HAVANA IN 1821

LUCILE BOURRACHOT

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY DOROTHY MCD. KARILANOVIC

[Not to Be Quoted Without Permission]

[Translator's note: the following was excerpted from information provided by M. Henri Bouet, a descendant of Pierre Goux, and published in *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, Number 103, April, 1998, pp. 2188-2190. The French title of the article is "Un Voyage de Bordeaux à La Havane en 1821."

The article is an account of a likely fairly typical transatlantic crossing of that era. The text consists of excerpts of letters from April 13, June 20, and July 31, 1821, and includes a description of an encounter with a pirate ship off the coast of Cuba, commanded by a Frenchman who proclaimed himself and his crew "insurgents."

While no identity of this French captain is given, it is tempting to speculate that the ship might have been under the command of one of the Laffites or, perhaps, another of their associates. As we know, there is documentation that the Laffites continued their privateering activities in the Cuban environs after leaving Galveston in 1820, as well as archival testimony that Jean Laffite spent a short time in a Cuban prison in 1822.]

Pierre Goux, born in 1800 at Passage d'Agen on the border of Garonne opposite Agen, descendant of a long line of boatmen from the same location as his father Jean. He wanted to attempt an overseas adventure and embarked at Bordeaux in 1821 for Havana. He wrote as often as possible to his mother, Vitale Canot (she, also from a family of boatmen). Some letters were copied by his descendants. Certain phrases in them are incomplete, probably because of difficulty in reading them.

The first letter is from April 13, 1821. Goux goes to embark on the three-masted *La Colombe* which belongs to a Mr. Larrieu. The captain is named Travers and the second [officer], Dubouil, is from Tonneins. Pierre Goux unpacks his luggage on board "as well as the boxes of plums."

April 21 the ship is before Royan and Goux writes a second letter which he sends by ship's post which leaves from the estuary. Goux describes to his mother the daily menu on board: breakfast at 9 hours [9:00 AM] with butter, cheese, dried sausage, "a plate of tidbits," some good bread and some wine, "as much as wanted,

but you know well that we know how to moderate ourselves." Supper takes place at 4 hours [4:00 PM] with good soup, boiled meat, cutlets or roast or chicken fricassée, some coffee. Dessert consists of dried fruit or apples.

As Goux tells his mother in his first letter upon his arrival at Havana, this comfortable life is not going to last during all of the crossing.

It is dated June 20, probably exactly two months after his first departure. His account begins by expressing the confusion of one who leaves a family which is very dear to him for an adventurous destiny. "While I was longing for all those who were dear to me, the wind, always blowing with more force, was putting us into open sea ... I was seeing nothing more than sky and water, an involuntary thrill coursed through my being. Gentle waves were breaking against the hull and seemed to add to my apprehension. A prayer that I addressed to God arose from this kind of terror ... I asked him for the grace to give me a good crossing and to give me support in your absence, with more patience, and shortly I found myself feeling better.

"I try to distract myself by reading. I spend some three quarters of a day in this. I am able to do this because Spanish has very much [the rest of the phrase is incomplete in the French text] and which is very instructive, like Roman history, the Greek history of Monsieur Voltaire, and many others from which I have learned things I did not know. The fish also amuse me very much. I have many kinds of fish, and I can assure you that they are very good. But unfortunately the cook fell ill as soon as we were at sea. That caused us very many problems. We had only one bad [word omitted from French text due to illegibility] who did not know how to do anything and who was the dirtiest in the world. Finally, we were obliged, each one, to do a little of the cooking. Fortunately, the lieutenant knew how to make the bread. That is the best we had during the crossing. He has never failed us, but he has failed us well in other things. In leaving Bordeaux, nothing lacked. But once on the open sea, good-bye good times, it was necessary to eat whatever there was. I was obliged to eat two smoked sausages and a box of plums which I would not have done if I had not been sick. But the supreme being who watches

over all mortals seemed to want to help us in our misery by giving us continually good weather and always the most favorable winds. My health was perfectly restored and this compensated me for all the unhappiness I was having.

"At last, after thirty-eight days of the most successful sailing, we saw the land of Saint-Domingue [Santo Domingo] at six o'clock in the morning. Joy spread throughout the vessel, and everyone was happy although we still had 400 leagues to make to get to Havana, but always one could see the land. At noon, we were no more than a league away. One could distinguish objects well, one was able to see coconut palms, banana trees, mahogany trees, cedar, camphor, and a thousand kinds of other trees which ornament this beautiful country. Everything there is wild and uncultivated, at least along the edge of the sea. There everything represents pure nature. There are superb, small valleys, very large plains, mountains which, because of their height, lose themselves in the clouds. Everything is remarkable because of its beauty and bizarreness. Never in my life had I seen anything so beautiful. My eyes were not able to take themselves away from it. During the time I was occupying myself in contemplating these beautiful regions we came in view of Cap. With the field glass we saw the fort that is situated at the edge of the sea. There are more than a hundred pieces of cannon, and very well-guarded. It leads to the entrance of the port which is also one of the most beautiful. There was a large number of vessels. It is really a shame that this colony does not belong to the French anymore. It is very commercial. The city is one of the most beautiful, thus is given the name of 'second Paris'.

"Up to that time, everything went well enough, but the following day did not turn out as fortunate. We had passed Port of Prince and we saw already the island of Cuba which is the island of Havana when we saw a 'goletta' coming straight toward us. The captain believed this to be a coastal boat. But we were well deceived. When it was almost at a distance of a quarter league, they fired a shot. It was the signal to lower our sails and wait.

"The captain gave an order for the boat to cross, and in five minutes it was at our side. They shouted out with the megaphone: 'You on the frigate, where do you come from?' Someone responded: 'from Bordeaux.' They shouted again: 'to put your canoe in the water so that the captain might come aboard with the papers!'

"There was consternation throughout, we realized that they were pirates. They were almost all Negroes and Creoles. They were without shirts, without shoes, and without hats, in a word, like brigands. We put the canoe in the water, and the second officer went with two crew members to their side. They started to take hold of the manifest and to put them in the hold, then all those who could enter were embarking in the canoe. On the return visit to us, they were all armed with sabres, pistols, and poignards. I supposed at that moment that we were the object of laughter.

"As soon as they arrived, they all climbed on board and demanded to see the merchandise that was found to be Spanish and the luggage of the passengers. They [the passengers] were very brave, I would not have believed it, and I was very at ease when presenting to them the little silver that I had to see them refuse it, saying that they take only Spanish merchandise and nothing which belongs to the passengers. Because, it was said, they were revolutionaries. But they were really true brigands, and they made us put the longboat in the water because the canoe was too small to transport the merchandise. They looted everything there was of the most value. They took from me two boxes of plums and six dried sausages. In the last instance, he [sic] took all he could find in his hands, despite the captain shouting to take nothing that belonged to the passengers. I believe that we owe our lives to him because he was French. For otherwise we would have been in flames. ¹

"Finally, after having robbed us, they saw another vessel and left us to go do the same to the others. We put our longboat back on board and set sail. Our sailors who had profited from the occasion, were, during the disorder, provided with wine and liquor, so that after supper they were all drunk. They fought among themselves. They also argued with the captain because he wanted to restore order for the safety of the vessel. Fortunately, it was good weather, for otherwise we would not have been able to do otherwise but to sink.

"The day that dawned dispelled all of their bacchanalian humor, but the weather was overcast, thunder was making itself heard, flashes of lightning followed one upon another rapidly and seemed to announce to us a frightful storm. In effect. At 2:00 PM we suffered one of the most terrible blows. We were thus carried away, our masts broken. The next day we were in another one of them in the canal of Havana,

which is the most dangerous place from Bordeaux to Havana. We stayed two days to maneuver near the port without being able to enter. At last we entered the desired port. It was necessary to bow to the will of heaven. It had made me worry very much. But at present I enjoy the pleasure of being near my [incomplete phrase in French text relating to his cousin Picharry].

"I have conveyed to him as a witness all the esteem that you have for him as well as all of his relatives and friends. He seems very happy about my arrival [... omitted from French text]. He has put to me a thousand questions on the health of his mother, to which I responded that she is well, as is his dear sister. I believe that I could have recounted to him for one month all that has happened since his departure ... he is always the same, always sweet, always obliging...

"I thank heaven every day for having found him [Picharry] in perfect health and that he wanted very much to receive me in his home, for otherwise I assure you my first reaction was to return from there. Havana is like France. Business is not any better there. It is only by economizing and working hard that one can be successful in business. But still it is necessary to have a position ["situation"], and I had no position at all. To get a place in business here is impossible. There are many quite proper young people who know several languages and who, with all this, cannot find a place for themselves. Since the eight days that I am here, three of them have come to present themselves to see if someone wants them to work. The poor unfortunates were rather misled. Picharry had given a dismissal to one the evening of my arrival which was the day of Pentecost. My trip has been fifty days. I still have not sold the plums that remain to me. They are very cheap, and I would be very happy if I could get my money back.

"I have nothing else to say to you, my dear Mother, but that my health is of the best. Provided that it lasts. At present there are frequent illnesses especially in the city. Please give my compliments to all those who have asked

about me, principally to Laborde, to Carrère, to Delille, and may they not think about coming to this country because they would still be more unhappy then they are in their homes ... As for me, I will do everything possible to do something in order to return to be near you, to enjoy the fruits of my work and to lavish on you, in turn, my care and gratitude."

A new letter dated July 30 follows: "I am very happy that my letter did not leave. The next day after I wrote it I fell ill. I came down with the 'sickness of the islands' [*maladie du pays*].² I remained eight days without getting up, but, thanks to heaven, I am recovering from it. At present my health improves day by day. I assure you I had a narrow escape. It is impossible to count the number of French who are dying in Havana at present. It is a sickness through which one can pass. If one has the good fortune to escape from it, one does not fear having it afterward. I hope that you will not reproach me for not giving you enough details as you wanted about Picharry."

Pierre Goux does not seem to have prospered in Cuba. On an unknown date he went to live in Mexico. He married Trinidad Ursua there, age 15, in 1831. The following year his wife died in giving birth to a son, Louis-Pierre-Elie, at Pachuca, July 10, 1832. May 30, 1836, the mayor of Havre delivered a certificate to Pierre Goux, resident businessman of Mexico, accompanied by an infant of 5 years, a passport to return to Bordeaux. Pierre Goux did not remarry. He returned to Passage d'Agen where he died in 1866.

Notes

1. See the translator's note at the beginning of this article. Could the obliging French captain who spared the French passengers from having their valuables removed - claiming that, as an "insurgent," he was only interested in seizing Spanish merchandise - have been Jean or Pierre Laffite or one of their associates?
2. Although only speculation, the "sickness of the islands" referred to here by Goux may have been yellow fever or some other type of fever endemic in this part of the world.

SOME BACKGROUND CONCERNING LAFFITE'S DEPARTURE FROM GALVESTON

ROBERT VOGEL

[Editor's note: the following text is excerpted from a letter dated 27 March 1999 from Laffite researcher and Laffite Society Advisory Board member Robert C. Vogel to Laffite Society Past President R. Dale Olson, and is here published with Mr. Vogel's permission.]

...I recall our discussion regarding the sequence of events surrounding Laffite's abandonment of Galveston Island. Looking at my notes and the draft of an article I am writing about events at Galveston in 1815-1820, I thought you might find the following information (much of it based on primary documents) useful in your efforts to reconstruct the early history of Galveston.

The decision to expel the pirates from the Texas coast was made by the Monroe Administration at the close of 1818, following George Graham's mission to Galveston. On 22 February 1819, Secretary of State John Q. Adams and Spanish Minister Luis de Onís concluded their negotiations over the disposition of East Florida, with the *quid pro quo* that the United States suppress the activities of privateers and filibusters aimed at liberating Spanish Texas. As a consequence of the Adams-Onís accord, American authorities actively discouraged local support for James Long's abortive filibustering expedition and stepped up naval activities aimed at pirates and smugglers in the northern Gulf of Mexico. This led directly to the capture of the Laffite-owned corsair *Bravo*, alias *Le Brave*, by the U.S. Revenue Cutter service in September 1819. In October 1819, Commodore D.T. Patterson (commanding the naval forces in the Gulf) ordered the schooner *Lynx* to Galveston - the first U.S. Navy warship to make a landing there - which resulted in the fascinating exchange of letters between Jean Laffite and Commander J.R. Madison (7-10 November), and in the execution of William Brown, leader of the gang that robbed the Lyons plantation in Louisiana (which had occurred on 27 September 1819). Laffite, who had been appointed governor of Galveston by Long on 7 October, presided over Brown's trial at Galveston on 5 November. Shortly after *Lynx* returned to New Orleans, the captain and crew of the *Bravo* were found guilty of piracy in the district court; they received the death penalty, despite the efforts of their legal defense team, headed by Edward

Livingston and John R. Grymes.

The Navy Department dispatched the brig-of-war *Enterprize*, [under] Commander Kearny, to the Gulf of Mexico in December 1819 to assist in the suppression of the Texas-based pirates. Arriving at the Balize in late December, Kearny informed the Secretary of the Navy that while Commodore Patterson wanted him to go to Galveston, he was concerned about how he would identify who was and who was not a pirate, and therefore wanted to act independently against pirates in other parts of the West Indies. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to Kearny, Pierre Laffite had personally reached out to Commodore Patterson and proposed to abandon Galveston if allowed to leave the Gulf unmolested. On 3 February 1820, Patterson issued a directive to the captains of all Navy vessels in the Gulf - "Permission is hereby granted to John Laffite and other now occupants of the Post and port of Galveston in the Province of Texas to depart there from with their Vessels and goods & furniture and whatsoever also may belong to them, without molestation or hindrance from the armed vessels of the United States acting under my orders, to such place or places as they may select not within the jurisdiction of the United States."

With Laffite's safe-conduct pass in hand (a copy had doubtless been transmitted to Galveston by Pierre Laffite), Commander Kearny took U.S.S. *Enterprize* down the Texas coast, arriving off Galveston on 27 February 1820. He later reported to his superior that he observed Laffite, whose forces consisted of a brig, two small schooners, and a felucca, "all badly equipped," with about 100 men, preparing to evacuate the place; Kearny noted that Laffite "has burned his house" and gave assurance that he would comply with the stipulations in Patterson's safe conduct. (General Long, incidentally, had not yet marched down to Bolivar Point from Nacogdoches - he arrived there on 6 April, in time to watch Laffite packing up his remaining possessions). Significantly, Kearny believed that the Laffites were planning to join up with Louis Aury on Old Providence Island in the Bay of Honduras. Pierre Laffite may have been with Jean at Galveston at the time of Kearny's visit - customs records indicate that he returned to New Orleans with the notorious pirate William Mitchell on 7 March 1820. After the mission to

Galveston, *Enterprize* touched briefly at the mouth of the Mississippi before proceeding to Havana with *Lynx* (which went on to independently cruise off Campeachy, Yucatan - a possible attempt to interdict Jean Laffite).

The *Orleans Gazette* (issue of 17 July 1820) reported that Laffite abandoned Galveston on 7 May 1820. In his reminiscences, Warren D.C. Hall (who had been with Long at Bolivar Point) put the date of Laffite's departure down as 12 May. At any rate, Spanish troops from San Antonio scouted Galveston Island in October 1820 and found the place deserted. Pierre Laffite remained in New Orleans, and was there when Jean Desfarges was hanged on 25 May 1820. On 26 June 1820, U.S.S. *Lynx* was back off the Texas Coast, where she captured a Spanish felucca, prize to the Laffite-owned corsair *Minerva*, while it was attempting to enter Galveston (the pirates were apparently unaware that Laffite had abandoned the place). While cruising eastward along the Texas coast, *Lynx* fell in with a vessel carrying some of Long's followers, who had recently abandoned their camp on the Bolivar peninsula. Commander Madison did not find any evidence of the pirate establishment on Galveston Island and reported to Commodore Patterson that he had obtained intelligence to the effect that Laffite had left Galveston on 7 May and "his avowed intention was to join Aury at Old Providence." Sometime later that summer, probably in early August, Pierre Laffite sailed away from New Orleans, never to return.

Spanish intelligence picked up a rumor that Jean Laffite (sailing in the *New Enterprize*) went to Isla Mujeres directly from Galveston. U.S. district court records seem to bear this out; the crews of two of Laffite's vessels (one of them his armed brig) mutinied off the Yucatan and sailed back to Louisiana, where they handed their vessels over to customs officials at the Balize in

September 1820.

The March 1821 date given by Henderson Yoakum, Stanley Clisby Arthur and others for Laffite's abandonment of Galveston appears to have no basis in historical fact. The Laffite brothers had shut down their operations in the Gulf ten months earlier. Jean, with the remnants of the Baratarian pirates, sailed away from Texas in May 1820 and went to the Yucatan, where his outfit was further crippled by a mutiny and the loss of half his vessels. Pierre remained in New Orleans, presumably to close out the rest of their business interests, and then took ship, ostensibly for Cuba but most likely bound for Old Providence. One of the Laffite brothers subsequently returned to the United States and was involved in some clandestine activities in Charleston, South Carolina, in late 1820 - early 1821. Documentation is lacking, but the impression is that the Laffites were involved with Louis Aury's operation against the Spanish Main, which involved several abortive assaults on Central American ports during 1820 and 1821. (Aury died on Old Providence on 30 August 1821.) Pierre Laffite died near Dzilam in October 1821, of course, so it must have been Laffite the younger who was reportedly involved in various piratical escapades in and around Cuba in 1821-1822. The last reported sighting of the Pirate of the Gulf was on 1 May 1822, when he narrowly escaped capture by U.S.S. *Alligator* and *Grampus* in a hot skirmish with pirates off Sugar Key, Cuba.

For your files, I have enclosed a photocopy of Patterson's safe conduct to Laffite [editor's note: see the transcription of this safe conduct, and a photocopy of the original document, on the following pages] which is preserved in a letterbook in the Navy's archives in Washington, D.C. Feel free to share this (and the above comments) with the Laffite Society ...

A TRANSCRIPTION OF THE SAFE CONDUCT PROVIDED TO THE LAFFITES BY
COMMODORE DANIEL PATTERSON AND REFERRED TO IN THE PRECEDING ARTICLE,
"SOME BACKGROUND CONCERNING LAFFITE'S DEPARTURE FROM GALVESTON"

[A copy of the original handwritten document is reproduced following this transcription]

To the commanders of the United States vessels of war attached to the New Orleans Station and to all others whom it may concern:

Permission is hereby granted to John Laffite and others now occupants of the post and port of Galveston in the Province of Texas to depart therefrom with their vessels [illegible] goods & furniture and whatsoever else may to them belong, without molestation or hindrance from the armed vessels of the United States acting under my orders, to such place or places as they may select not within the jurisdiction of the United States; and the commanders of such United States armed vessels as may chance to meet said persons on their routes to the place or places of their destination are requested to respect this permit, provided said persons shall not commit during said passage any act of force or violence [against] the vessels of any nation in amity with the United States.

This permit granted in accordance with the prayer of said John Laffite and those with him, thro' [sic] Pierre Laffite who, for himself and brother guarantees to clear Galveston and disband all those persons who may be there & that they will depart without delay from Galveston, and that the residences, buildings &c. there erected, shall be razed to the ground, that every means shall be removed from thence [illegible] has hitherto rendered it the retreat and security of [Aury?] and others who have from thence preyed upon the commerce of the Gulf of Mexico. And further that the aforesaid port of Galveston shall never hereafter serve as a place of rendezvous for any undertakings with their consent or under their authorization, and as far as may be in their power to control, to the safety of the commerce of the Gulf of Mexico, by drawing therefrom business obnoxiously to the Government of the United States.

(signed) Daniel T. Patterson

New Orleans
February 3rd, 1820

National Archives Record Group 45
Letters Received from Captains by the Secretary of the Navy

To the Commanders of the United States Vessels of War
ached to the New Orleans Station, and to all others whom
may concern.

Permission is hereby granted to John Saffitt
others now occupants of the Port and Port of Galveston
the Province of Texas, to depart therefrom, with their Vessels,
goods & furniture and whatsoever else may to them belong,
without molestation or hindrance from the Armed Vessels of
United States acting under my Orders, to such place
places as they may select not within the jurisdiction
the United States, and the Commanders of such United
Armed Vessels as may chance to meet said persons
their routes to the place or places of their destination
requested to respect this permit, provided said persons shall
commit during said passage any act of Force or Violence
the Vessels of any Nation in Amity with the United States.

This permit granted in accordance with the prayer
of said John Saffitt and those with him, thro Pierre Laf
who for himself and Brothers Guaranties to clear Galveston
disband all those persons whomay be there, & that they
depart without delay, from Galveston, and also the
houses, Buildings &c there existing, shall be razed to the
ground, that every means shall be resorted to from thence to
have

has hitherto rendered it the retreat and security of Pirates and others who have from time to time preyed upon the commerce of the Gulf of Mexico. and further that the aforesaid port of Galveston shall never hereafter serve as a place of refuge for any undertakings with their consent or under authorization. and as far as may be in their power to contribute to the safety of the commerce of the Gulf of Mexico by drawing therefrom business obnoxious to the Government of the United States—

New Orleans

(signed) Daniel J. Patterson

February 3^d 1821

WHERE WAS CHAMP D'ASILE?

JEAN L. EPPERSON

The French settlement of Champ d'Asile existed for only about five months in 1818, in east Texas, on the Trinity River. The knowledge of its exact location has been lost. There have been many theories and much speculation about the geographic location of the site.

Contemporary accounts of an event are the most generally acceptable historically, except where these accounts are deliberately fictionalized and romanticized as in *L'Heroïne du Texas*.¹ Hartmann and Millard's *Le Texas* published in 1819 is by contrast an obvious attempt to relate historical fact, although perhaps somewhat embellished, by men who were there.² The travel journal of Captain Juan de Castañeda, who led the Spanish soldiers from San Antonio to apprehend the French and destroy their fortifications, is the best source for identifying the location of Champ d'Asile.³ Correspondence of the time also gives an accurate picture of the people and the places.⁴

Hartmann and Millard located Champ d'Asile on the east bank of the Trinity River, referring to the river site at least six times in *Le Texas*. The map between pages 130 and 131 of their book labels the river "Trinite."⁵

Indian informants told Captain Castañeda that the location of the French settlement was six or seven leagues below Atascosito, between the Trinity River and the mouth of a creek known as Cayo Gallardo. Castañeda said they crossed the Trinity River on October 12, 1818, and passed through Atascosito. The advance scouts of the Spanish sent back word that the enemy fortifications had been abandoned and were not at Cayo Gallardo as previously thought, but further down on the banks of the Trinity.⁶

The site of Atascosito, well known today, is three miles northeast of the Liberty County courthouse in the town of Liberty, on Palmer's Bayou at Woods Springs (Atascosito Springs).⁷ Cayo Gallardo corresponds to the Redmond/Shilow Creek area.⁸ El Orcoquisac, an eighteenth-century site with a fort and a mission, was situated at present-day Wallisville.⁹ (See the map at the end of this article.)

An analysis of the estimated distances mentioned in the contemporary literature follows. It should be remembered that travelers in 1818 had no accurate way of calculating their journeys. Hartmann and Millard said that Champ d'Asile was *about* 20 leagues from the

Gulf of Mexico.¹⁰ It was not stated whether this distance was by sea or by land or a combination of the two. Land and sea measures are sometimes widely different. Moss Bluff would have been 61 or 82 miles from the Gulf of Mexico using, respectively, the French land league of 3.05445 miles or the nautical league of 4.3 miles.¹¹ In the nineteenth century, steamboat captains estimated the nautical distance from Galveston to Anahuac as 50 miles, from Galveston to Moss Bluff as 79 miles, and from Galveston to Liberty as 113 miles.¹² The mileage overland on the modern highways from Anahuac to Moss Bluff is 21.9 miles; therefore Moss Bluff would be almost 72 miles from the Gulf of Mexico by land and sea. The difference of seven miles between land and river distances to Moss Bluff can be explained by the twisting and turning of the Trinity River channel.

Continuing to observe distances, it is interesting to note that the Indians told Castañeda that Champ d'Asile was six or seven leagues below Atascosito. If the Spanish league of 2.6 miles is used, that would be a distance between 15.6 and 18.2 miles. Moss Bluff is actually 17.6 miles from Atascosito by the present highway.

George Graham, a United States government envoy who visited Galveston, wrote to John Quincy Adams from Bayou Rapides (Opelousas), Louisiana, on September 9, 1818, "There is some question as to the exact location of the forts but they are probably located at the Orcoquisac Bluffs about 18 miles above the mouth of the Trinity."¹³

Champ d'Asile colonists Jacobo Tournelle and Vincinte Molina, natives of Spain, deserted the camp on April 9, 1818. They made their way to New Orleans where they told the Spanish authorities that they were misled about the purpose of the colony and that they never intended to fight against the Spanish. They also said that the encampment was 12 leagues from the mouth of the Trinity. At 2.6 miles to the league, that is 31.2 miles and compares favorably with the actual mileage of 29 river miles to Moss Bluff.¹⁴

At the first bluff area upstream on the east bank of the Trinity is located the small community of Moss Bluff. The next bluff on the west bank is Moore's Bluff, once the home of William Moore and now a pumping plant for the city of Houston for obtaining water from the

river. The third bluff is 63 miles upstream on the east bank at the sizable town of Liberty.

Moss Bluff, the first high ground on the bank of the river, would have been the natural selection of weary, hungry travelers, some walking and others rowing boats from the mouth of the river. Moss Bluff was probably called Orcoquiza Bluff in 1818 because the stream just to the east of the bluff was named Arroyo de Calzones (Shilow Creek). Calzones Colorado or Red Breeches was the chief of the Orcoquiza Indians in the 1760s during the years that the Spanish presidio and mission were on Lake Miller. Nathaniel Moss, a native of Louisiana for whom Moss Bluff was eventually named, did not come into the area until the early 1830s. A natural artesian spring flowing from sand at the base of the Trinity River terrace made Moss Bluff attractive for settlement. This spring still exists and flows freely today.¹⁵

Efforts were made by a historian to discredit Moss Bluff as the site of Champ d'Asile. Three reasons were given as proof.¹⁶

The first reason stated that Moss Bluff did not fit the distances from the mouth of the Trinity as described by the colonists Hartmann and Millard in 1819, but the foregoing information disproves this.

The second argument stated that Dave Tevis, an old-timer interviewed by Judge Price Daniel, said that R.O.W. McManus, an early resident of Moss Bluff, contended that the site of Champ d'Asile was at Liberty. McManus never lived at Moss Bluff. He lived at his plantation called Moss Point on the east bank of the Trinity close to Lake Charlotte. He immigrated to Texas in December of 1832 and died at his plantation in 1885.¹⁷ No citation for the Tevis interview is given other than "the Price Daniel file," and the written document has not been found. The interview also was said to have told the story of the "iron hole" where iron rails were buried from the railroad on the north side of the tracks at the Trinity River in Liberty. Tevis supposedly said that the Champ d'Asile site was located just south of where the railroad rails were buried. A limited archaeological survey and excavation were done in 1985 at or near this site by Sheldon Kindall and other members of the Houston Archaeological Society with negative results.¹⁸

The third argument stated that a noted French journalist found the site of Champ d'Asile near Liberty. The French journalist was Frederic Gaillardet who journeyed to Texas in 1838, twenty years after the demise of the French

colony. What Gaillardet was shown, by an unidentified French Canadian, was a carving on a tree, "Honneur et Patrie," which he assumed or was told was the site of Champ d'Asile. In Gaillardet's words the site was "not far from Liberty." How far is "not far from Liberty" - one mile, five miles, fourteen miles, or more? Gaillardet does not state "at Liberty."¹⁹

Various published articles over the years have placed Champ d'Asile at or near Moss Bluff. J.O. Dyer, a physician and a correspondent for the *Galveston Daily News*, wrote many stories during the 1920s using information gathered locally from old settlers. Dyer, a consummate journalist who always endeavored to make a good story better, sometimes mixed his history with fantasy but was always entertaining. In a narrative about a paraplegic French soldier of Champ d'Asile, Dyer places the settlement "on the Trinity River, near the former site of the Orcoquiza village, now Moss Bluff."²⁰

Harbert Davenport, an attorney and noted historian, practiced law at Anahuac, Texas, from 1908 to 1912. In an article published in 1947 Davenport wrote that Moss Bluff was the traditional location of Lallemand's short-lived Napoleonic [sic] Colony.²¹

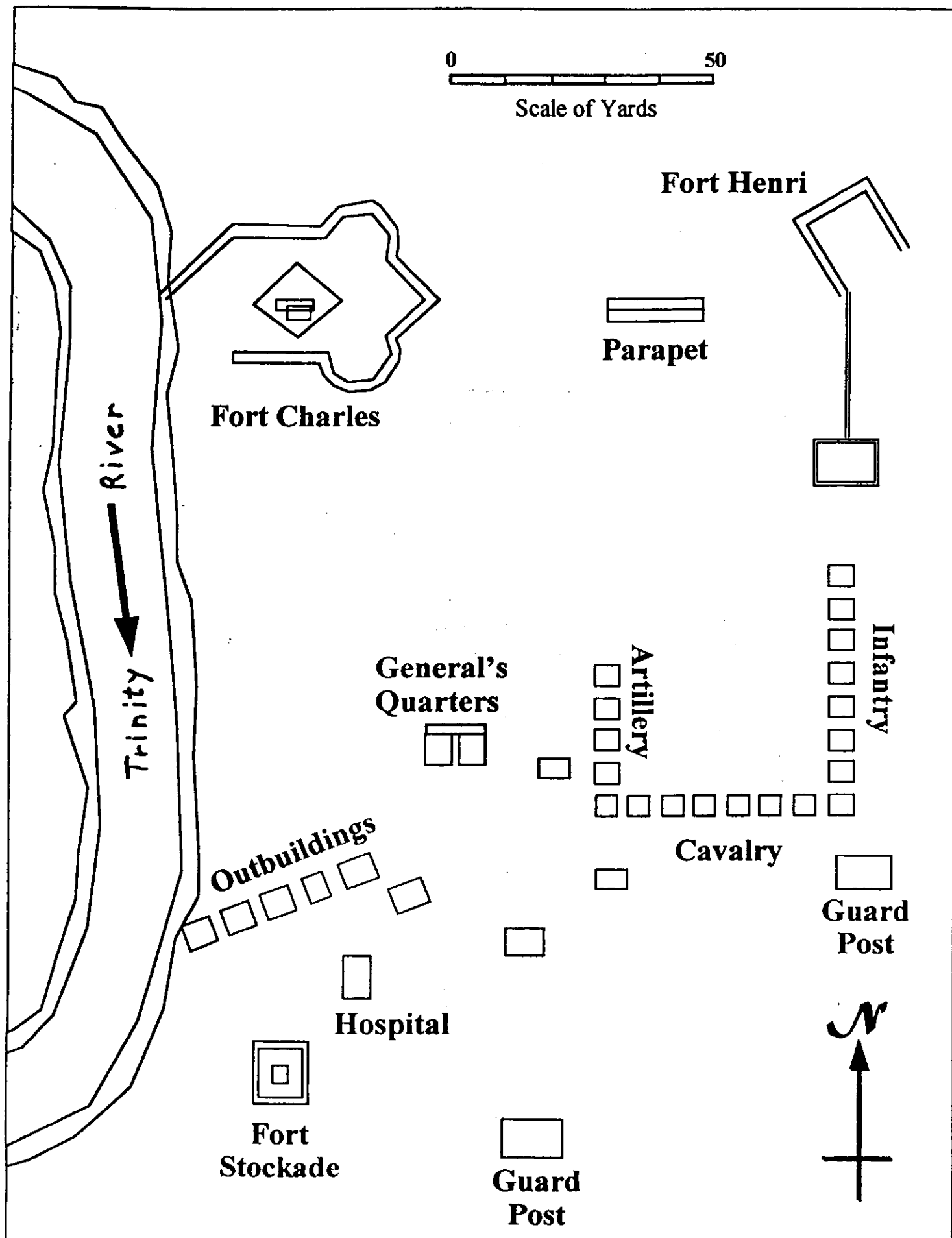
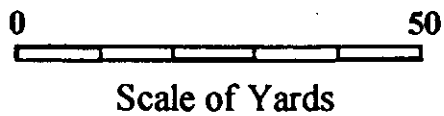
Where was Champ d'Asile? Most of the contemporary and much of the later evidence indicates present-day Moss Bluff as the site of the French settlement.

What are the prospects in the future of finding archaeological evidence of Champ d'Asile? Some historians and others believe that the erosion of the Trinity River and the excavation of Lake Granada have probably obliterated all evidence of the settlement. A few optimistic people hope that some remnants of Champ d'Asile will be found one day.²²

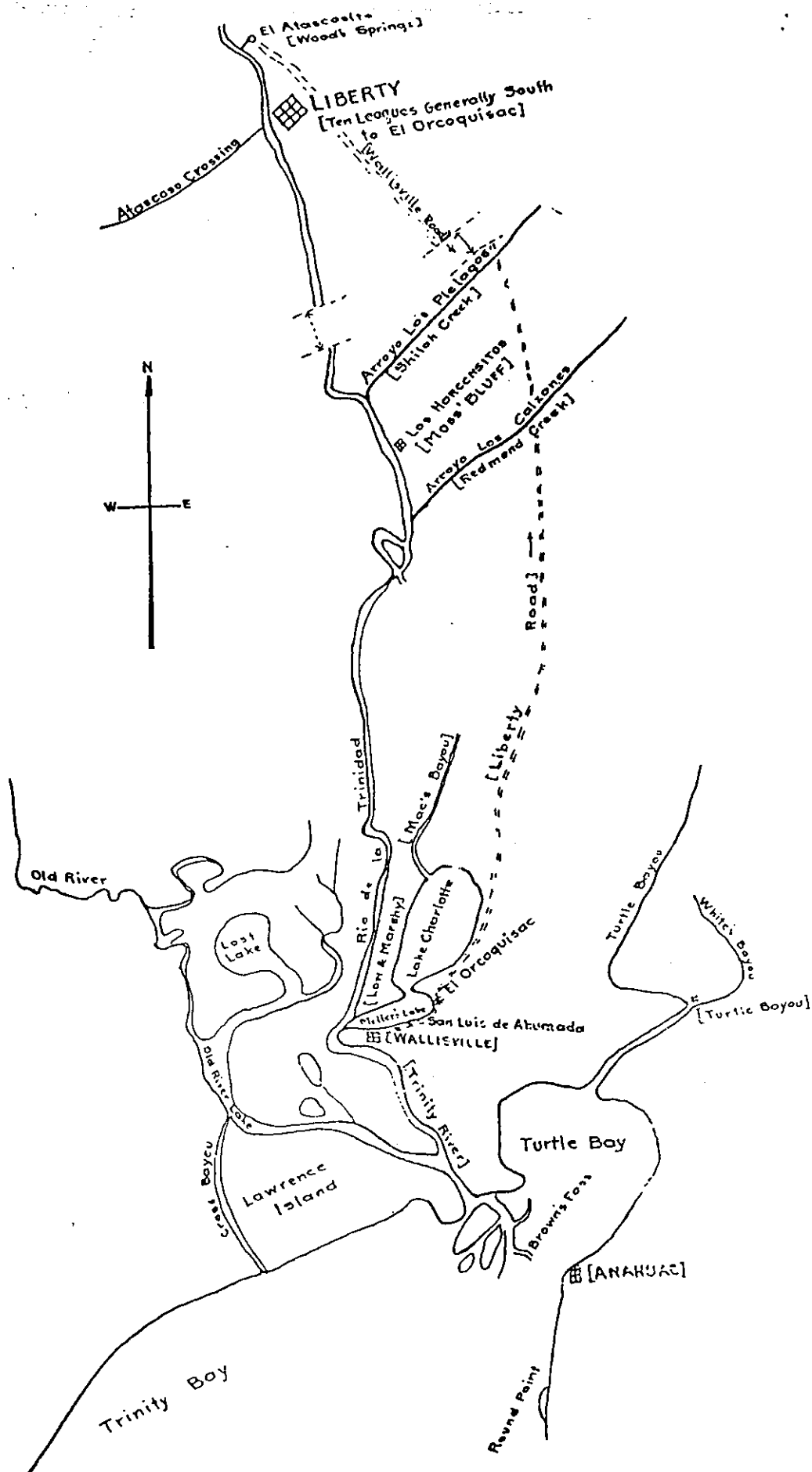
Notes

1. G...n and F...n, *L'Heroine* (Paris: Manuel des Braves, 1819), p. 29. The editor proclaimed that the story was not a novel, that the facts were true, but it was in reality a romanticized fiction.
2. Fanny E. Ratchford, ed., *The Story of Champ d'Asile* (Austin: Steck-Vaughn, 1969), p. 29; Kent Gardien, "Take Pity on Our Glory: Men of Champ d'Asile," *Southwestern Quarterly* (January 1984), p. 252. Gardien says that Millard may never have been at Champ d'Asile.
3. Captain Juan de Castañeda to Governor Martinez, August 26, 1818, vol. 18, pp. 260-266, Nacogdoches Archives; Castañeda to Martinez, November 24, 1818. "Diary of the Journey to the Lower Trinity River," Report #9, pp. 117-119, Bexar Archives, Austin.

4. Letters from the Province of Texas, New Orleans, and Philadelphia to Jean Simon Chaudron. Unknown author, to Monsieur Chaudron, June 1818, Province of Texas. Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.
5. Fanny E. Ratchford, ed., *The Story of Champ d'Asile*, pp. 129, 139-140, 147, and 149.
6. Castañeda, August 26 and November 24, 1818, Bexar Archives.
7. William Louis Fullen and Jean L. Epperson, *Cultural Resource Investigations of the Woods Spring Farm Property and Site 41LB 16, Liberty County, Texas* (Liberty: Liberty County Historical Commission, 1988).
8. Miriam Partlow, *Liberty, Liberty County, and the Atascosito District* (Liberty: Atascosito Historical Society, 1974), p. 42.
9. Curtis D. Tunnell and J. Richard Ambler, *Archaeological Excavations at Presidio Augustin de Ahumada* (Austin: University of Texas, 1967), pp. 5-9.
10. Fanny E. Ratchford, ed., *The Story of Champ d'Asile*, p. 126.
11. Jim Glass, *Lost Measures* (Houston: unpublished manuscript, 1997); Frederick C. Mish, ed., *Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1987), p. 680.
12. Miriam Partlow, *Liberty, Liberty County, and the Atascosito District*, p. 199.
13. Walter Prichard, ed., "George Graham's Mission to Galveston in 1818: Two Important Documents Bearing Upon Louisiana's History," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (April 1937), vol. 20, pp. 642-649.
14. Kent Gardien, "Take Pity on Our Glory: Men of Champ d'Asile," pp. 247-250.
15. Gunnar Brune, *Springs of Texas* (Fort Worth: Branch-Smith, 1981), vol. I, p. 292. Also personal observation by the author.
16. Miriam Partlow, *Liberty, Liberty County, and the Atascosito District*, p. 61.
17. Ron Tyler, ed., et al., *The New Handbook of Texas*, 6 vols. (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1996), vol. IV, p. 435.
18. Sheldon Kindall, letter of November 18, 1985, to Charles W. Fisher. Copy in files of the author.
19. Frederic Gaillardet, *Sketches of Early Texas and Louisiana* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), pp. 130-131. It has been suggested that Gaillardet's guide was Michel B. Menard, one of the founders of the City of Galveston.
20. J.O. Dyer, "The Story of Peg-Leg Louis," *The Galveston Daily News*, February 13, 1921.
21. Harbert Davenport, "Geographic Notes on Spanish Texas: El Orcoquisac and Los Horconsitos," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (February 1947), p. 492.
22. Lake Granada was constructed in 1960 in the middle of the village of Moss Bluff. The lake covers 115 acres, and is surrounded by vacation homes and camp houses today. Interview with Mr. and Mrs. John Cave and Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Stove on August 29, 1997, and Mr. L.Q. (Bubba) Van Deventer on February 21, 1998.



Champ d'Asile



Harbert Davenport, Geographic Notes on Spanish Texas: El Orcoquisac and Los Horconsitos, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (February 1947), pp. 489-492.

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 Society Chronicles* abstracts of featured talks presented at the 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 of those topics of discussion.

The Society recognizes that *The Laffite Society Chronicles* is its primary link with those members who do not attend monthly meetings. Therefore, whether or not monthly meetings include a featured presentation, the topics therein discussed are presented in summarized fashion in this section, to impart some feeling of those meetings' content.

Tuesday, January 12, 1999

There being no featured presentation for this date, the meeting commenced with Officers' reports.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Laffite Society checking account of \$1,305.00 as of December 31, 1998.

Mr. Modzelewski, as Editor of Publications, proposed that additional copies of back issues of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* be reproduced as necessary and offered for sale through The Laffite Society Web page at a suggested price of \$7.50 per copy.

President Kathy Modzelewski, standing in as Membership Chairperson, announced that membership renewals were due.

Regarding upcoming special events, Ms. Modzelewski announced that information on places of historical interest, hotels, etc., in Natchitoches, Louisiana, had been requested by mail, and that this information would be made available to members for the special-event trip to that city scheduled for March 19-21, 1999.

In a discussion of on-going research, members talked of their latest findings and the acquisition of information on topics of interest:

- Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson stated that fellow Advisory Board member Pam Keyes, on her trip of October 26, 1998, to Alton, Illinois, discovered an 1863 business directory that included several names that are mentioned in *The Journal of Jean Laffite: The Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*. One such name was that of a physician. Also noted were 1850 and 1855 censuses of Madison County, Illinois, which contained the name "Little," the married name of Denise Jeanette Laffite, Jean Laffite's daughter.
- Dr. Wilson also stated that he had received an inquiry from Fred Eaton, a researcher in Del Rio, Texas, asking for confirmation of knowledge of "silver bars removed from a ship, the *Santa Rosa*, in 1816, supposedly by Jean Laffite." Dr. Wilson said that, as far as he could determine, there was no listing of a ship by that name owned by Jean Laffite.
- Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson mentioned the title of a book about a French engineer-cartographer: *Un Aventurier Visionnaire, L'Etrange Parcours d'un Français aux Amériques. Mémoires de la Société La Haute-Auvergne*, by Jean Garrigeaux, 1997.
- Ms. Epperson also reported that she had obtained a copy of the index of the Edward A. Parson collection, and would donate a copy to The Laffite Society archives. Edward A. Parson was President of The Louisiana Historical Association for many years.
- Secretary Dorothy McD. Karilanovic reported briefly on correspondence she had received from Richard B. Smith of "The Company" in West Yorkshire, England, and his group's on-going project to decipher the Thomas J. Beale codex. In his letter to Ms. Karilanovic, Mr. Smith suggested that the Society might want to purchase for its archives a copy of Peter Viemeister's book, *The Beale Treasure: "NEW" History of a Mystery*, published by Hamilton's, Bedford, Virginia. Mr. Smith makes reference to a certain passage on pages fifty-two and fifty-three of that book regarding an opinion on the Beale cipher system expressed by Lt. Col. William F. Friedman, a "widely acclaimed expert in the field of cryptology," which may have some bearing on his group's efforts to decipher

the codex.

Ms. Karilanovic also mentioned that she had received a Christmas greeting from "The Company" by fax, addressed to members of The Laffite Society, and had returned one in similar fashion.

On the subject of new books of a Laffite theme, the title *The Laffite Case* by Ray Peters (1997) was noted.

At the close of the meeting, Ms. Modzelewski extended thanks for the evening's refreshments, and to Coordinator of Research Wil Zapalac for the libations.

Tuesday, February 9, 1999

President Kathy Modzelewski welcomed back Mary Frances and Lloyd Johnson of Virginia, who spend the winter months in Galveston and attend Laffite Society meetings while they are here.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Society's checking account of approximately \$1,200 at the end of January, 1999.

Second Vice-President and Membership Chairperson Judy Dolfi announced that 1999 dues were in order. Ms. Dolfi suggested that, for the purpose of simplifying record-keeping, all future renewals be due the first of each year. A mailing to the membership announcing this change and reminding members to send in their dues for calendar-year 1999 is planned.

With regard to upcoming special events, the date of the trip to Natchitoches, Louisiana, was changed from March 19-21, 1999, to March 12-14, 1999, to accommodate those who also wish to attend the annual meeting of The Louisiana Historical Association on March 12, at which Advisory Board member Robert C. Vogel will be a speaker. Standing in for absent Special Events Chairperson Jim Nonus, Ms. Modzelewski stated that a visit to nearby Melrose Plantation had been arranged for that same weekend, and that a block of hotel rooms in Natchitoches had been reserved for the convenience of trip participants. She urged those who wished to make the trip to inform her as soon as possible so that hotel rooms could be booked.

Secretary Dorothy McD. Karilanovic reported that she had available several copies of the Louisiana Historical Association meeting and hotel registration forms, which Advisory Board member Robert Looper had sent for those interested in attending.

Editor of Publications Mr. Modzelewski reported receiving numerous questions over the Internet about The Laffite Society, and asked if members who used e-mail would assist in answering these inquiries.

Ms. Karilanovic spoke about the latest correspondence received from Richard E. Smith of "The Company" in West Yorkshire, England, in answer to her letter of September 29, 1999, and offered copies to those interested in reading this correspondence. No new information regarding the Beale ciphers was apparent in this letter from Mr. Smith.

Regarding new acquisitions for The Laffite Society archives, Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that fellow Advisory Board member Pam Keyes had acquired three documents on the Internet, copies of which she would make available to The Laffite Society in due course, as follows:

- A letter dated November 8, 1819, first published in Alexandria, written by Jean Laffite to the captain of a schooner, *Lynx*, then anchored off of Galveston
- A letter in response to the above from Captain Madison of the *Lynx*
- A letter from McIntosh to General Long

Dr. Wilson also mentioned the following:

- a group of letters from government offices, published by President Adams, on "Piratical Depredations" off the northwest coast of Cuba (copies to be given to The Laffite Society archives and to the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center at Liberty, Texas)
- bound copies of six months of issues of *Niles Register* covering the *Le Brave* incident

Ms. Modzelewski reported receiving from French member Patrick Laffite a photocopy of *The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, along with correspondence and a report of Patrick's studies undertaken to determine whether or not the handwriting in the *Journal* is that of Jean Laffite himself. Referring to his twenty-page list of words and phrases culled from the document, Mr. Laffite states his conclusion that the *Journal* was not written by a French-speaking individual, nor was the writer familiar with Spanish, Basque, old French, or Creole. Mr. Laffite does say, however, that his findings do not preclude the possibility that the *Journal* may have been copied from other sources, the

author of which may have been Jean Laffite. Mr. Laffite's intent was not to challenge the historical content of the *Journal* but only the authenticity of the handwriting.

In conjunction with Mr. Laffite's report, Dr. Wilson offered to contact French scholar and linguist Professor Gene Marshall of McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana, who recently completed his own translation of the *Journal*, to inquire if he would be interested in reviewing Mr. Laffite's findings. Ms. Karilanovic also mentioned that she had noted an acknowledgment of receipt of Mr. Laffite's studies in the December, 1998, issue of the French genealogical bulletin *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*.

Concurrently with receipt of the manuscript, Dr. Wilson had written to Mr. Laffite to ask if he would contribute a copy of his work to The Laffite Society for its on-going research.

Tuesday, March 9, 1999

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Laffite Society checking account of \$1,683.61.

It was announced that all membership dues for 1999 would be requested to be paid by April or May of this year.

In other business, President Kathy Modzelewski stated that she had received a formal letter of resignation from Jim Nonus asking that he be relieved of his duties as Third Vice-President and Special Events Chairperson, due to the pressing responsibilities relating to his parents' illnesses. Ms. Modzelewski stated that as of this date, no slate of nominees to fill this office was available. Ms. Modzelewski called for names from the floor of members who might be interested in filling the position and stated that the matter would be further addressed at the next monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 13, 1999.

In the absence of a Third Vice-President, Ms. Modzelewski asked for volunteers to handle arrangements for wine and cheese socials during the Natchitoches special-event trip. Past President R. Dale and Parliamentarian Diane Olson gave out copies of an attractively-formatted itinerary which they had prepared for participants in the event, scheduled for March 12-14, 1999, in Natchitoches, Louisiana. For members' interest, Ms. Olson read parts of a text relating to the history of nearby Melrose Plantation (a side trip to which had been scheduled for that weekend), which included interesting references to author Lyle Saxon's *Friends of Lyle Saxon and Some Friends of Joe Gilmore* (1948), an account of Saxon's experiences during the years he resided, wrote, and "sought refuge" at Melrose.

In lieu of a special presentation for this date's meeting, Mr. Olson talked briefly on the following topics:

- *Les Memoires due Bayou Lafourche*, Vol. 19, #4, December, 1998: this publication, submitted to The Laffite Society by Advisory Board member Robert Looper, included the text of Mr. Olson's special presentation to The Louisiana Historical Association's annual meeting in New Orleans on January 7, 1998, titled "Mysteries of the Laffites, Unraveling"
- "The Legacy of a Pirate," *Genealogical Research Society of New Orleans*, Vol. XXXVIII, #148, Oct., 1998: article relating to François Boutté, alias Jean Laffite, who owned a tract of land in Grand Isle, Louisiana, in the 1700's from which his descendants continue to receive oil royalties

Relating to new acquisitions for The Laffite Society archives, Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported the donation of a copy of six months of bound issues of the *Niles Register*, dated September 1819 - March 1820, with twenty pages relating to pirates, privateers, and slaves. This donation was made possible through the research efforts of Advisory Board member Pam Keyes, who purchased them through the Internet.

Dr. Wilson mentioned that a new book on Laffite is in the making by author William Davis, who also wrote *Three Roads to the Alamo*. Davis says his new work will take about two years to finish.

In other business, Dr. Wilson reported that Advisory Board Member Jean L. Epperson has offered for sale an original 1958 edition, published by Vantage Press, of *The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, written by John A. Laffite, self-claimed great-grandson of Jean Laffite. Dr. Wilson also mentioned that he had recently acquired a copy of this work for his personal library.

According to Dr. Wilson, Robert Schaadt, Director of the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center at Liberty, Texas, said he expected to retrieve the original *Journal* from the Texas State Archives in Austin in May, to which it has been on loan for copying onto CD-ROM. Dr. Wilson further

stated that completion of the new translation of the *Journal* by French linguist and scholar Professor Gene Marshall of McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana, was on hold until the return of the original document to Liberty.

Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski read a letter from the aforementioned Professor Marshall stating that he would be available to speak to The Laffite Society after September of this year on the results of his re-translation of the *Journal*, and requesting that a date for his presentation be scheduled. In his letter, Professor Marshall also reported that French Laffite Society member Patrick Laffite, who claims descent from Jean Laffite, presented a copy of his recently completed study of the language and handwriting of the author of the *Journal* to the mayor of Lake Charles, Louisiana.

In connection with his own on-going research efforts, Dr. Wilson stated that he is now awaiting access to the original *Journal* to compare the handwriting in that document with that in an eight-inch by fifteen-inch ledger of eight to ten pages which is presently owned by John and Jane Surratt, the former a descendant of John A. Laffite.

Mr. Modzelewski reported that a list of member W.T. Block's articles on Jean Laffite and related topics is now available on a Web site.

Coordinator of Research Wil Zapalac stated that he had heard through third-hand information of the existence of another Laffite Society organization said to be based in Detroit.

Before adjournment, Ms. Modzelewski expressed thanks and appreciation to members Killeen and Richard Prather and Richard Rasche for the evening's buffet.

Tuesday, April 13, 1999

For the special presentation this date, Dr. Stephen Curley, Professor of English at Texas A. & M. University at Galveston and popular local folk music singer, presented a talk on Jean Laffite. Dr. Curley also entertained members on his guitar as he sang tunes of familiar folk music containing lyrics he had written, some on the subject of Jean Laffite. Two such songs were "The Battle of New Orleans" and a very memorable "Three Trees."

Following the special presentation, the general meeting resumed with the regular business of the evening. President Kathy Modzelewski mentioned that Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson's husband, Hugh, had passed away. Members were invited to send their individual condolences. As close friends and as representatives of The Laffite Society, Advisory Board member Dr. and Mrs. Reginald Wilson attended the funeral.

At the beginning of the meeting, Ms. Modzelewski acknowledged a visit from Ms. Robin Munson, curator at The Galveston County Historical Museum. Ms. Munson announced the opening in June of a new exhibit on piracy and Jean Laffite. She asked for assistance from The Laffite Society in providing information and interesting artifacts from past excavations at the Maison Rouge site, 1417 Harborside Drive in Galveston.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Laffite Society checking account of \$1,893.61.

As Editor of Publications, Mr. Modzelewski stated that preparation of the next issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* was in progress.

Ms. Modzelewski called once again for volunteers to fill the remaining term of the office of Third Vice-President and Special Events Chairperson, recently vacated through resignation.

Regarding destinations for future special-event trips, the following suggestions were offered:

- The Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center at Liberty, Texas, and
- the Matagorda Bay area, with a stay at the historical Luther Hotel in Palacios, Texas. First Vice-President in Charge of Programs Dave Roberts and spouse and member Ginny Roberts volunteered to follow up on accumulating information for this special-event suggestion.

With reference to book acquisitions, Dr. Wilson mentioned that Advisory Board member Pam Keyes had purchased an 1816 edition of *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana* by Arsène Latour.

Before adjourning, Ms. Modzelewski thanked member Richard Rasche for providing sandwiches, chips, and other edibles for the evening's buffet.

Tuesday, May 11, 1999

There being no special presentation for this date, the general meeting began with Officers'

reports.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Laffite Society checking account of \$1,864.00.

President Kathy Modzelewski stated that the Chairman and Executive Officer of a Louisiana river-barge cruising company had visited The Eiband's Gallery recently to inquire as to the availability of anyone willing to lecture on Laffite history to tour passengers during their stopover at Galveston.

Secretary Dorothy McD. Karilanovic reported that she had seen information in the French genealogical bulletin *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe* ("G.H.C.") on a new book entitled *Barataria* by Louis-Jean Calvet, published by Plon, 1998. The book contains reproductions of baptismal certificates of Jean and Pierre Laffite and their parents, indicating that Jean was born in Biarritz in southwestern France on the Bay of Biscay in 1783 "at Maison Candelé." According to Ms. Karilanovic, the editors at G.H.C. consider the research "serious" and worthy of note. She suggested that The Laffite Society might want to obtain copies of the reproduced baptismal certificates for The Laffite Society archives.

Ms. Karilanovic reported that she had submitted a letter requesting renewal of the subscription to the aforementioned French genealogical bulletin, G.H.C., along with a check for \$44.00 from The Laffite Society to cover the annual cost of the subscription. Six International Coupons to cover costs of return postage, as requested by G.H.C., were also included with the remittance for renewal.

In her letter to G.H.C., Ms. Karilanovic also expressed condolences on behalf of The Laffite Society in acknowledgment of the death of Laffite researcher and frequent contributor to G.H.C. Mr. Michel Camus, some of the writings of whom are contained in The Laffite Society archives.

Ms. Karilanovic stated that she had recently spoken via telephone with Peter Viemeister of Bedford, Virginia. Mr. Viemeister is the author of *Beale Treasure: "New" History of a Mystery*, a 1997 updated second edition, and is the owner of Hamilton's Bookshop in Bedford. Members were reminded that Richard B. Smith and colleagues of West Yorkshire, England, a group which calls itself "The Company," has recommended that The Laffite Society examine pages fifty-two and fifty-three of the book. "The Company" is presently engaged in deciphering the Beale codex, which allegedly contains encrypted information on the location of buried treasure.

During the phone conversation, Mr. Viemeister allowed that this new edition contains a summary of professional attempts to solicit interest in the recovery of a large treasure alluded to in the ciphers, such as one by Mel Fisher, famous salvager of the Spanish galleon *Nuestra Señora de Atocha*.

Ms. Karilanovic further stated that Mr. Viemeister had expressed an interest in The Laffite Society, and that she had volunteered to send him a copy of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* and membership information. A copy of biographical information on Mr. Viemeister and a book description from his Web page were made available for members' interest.

Ms. Modzelewski provided copies of notices posted on the Internet by families with an interest in, and ties to, the Laffites. Family surnames provided were Troxell, Ayres, Alonzo, and Jessup. As regards this last, and as quoted from the Internet posting: "Captain Jessup out of South Carolina [was] captured by Jean Laffite's men off the coast of Galveston Island ca. 1816-1820. He was blinded by pirates, eventually escaped with the aid of his first mate and returned home ..."

With regard to book acquisitions, Past President R. Dale Olson mentioned the purchase of two books of note:

- > *CHARTIFACTS CATALOGUE 4B, Florida Gulf and Pacific Coasts, Historic, Antique U.S. Coastal Survey Charts from 1800s*
- > *C.E.D.A.M. International, the Mexican Caribbean, Headquarters at Akumal, Quintana Roo. Twenty Years of Underwater Exploration.* By Earl J. Wilson, Exposition Press, Smithtown, NY, 1980, 1982. Book dedicated to Don Pablo Bush Romero, pioneer in underwater exploration.

The latter book contains a photograph of the gravestone memorial provided by C.E.D.A.M. ("Conservation, Education, Diving, Archeology, and Museumology") members in the 1950's over the site in the village of Dzilam de Bravo, Yucatán, Mexico, where locals claimed that Jean Laffite's body had been placed after removal from its original burial site in that same town in about 1938. The book claims that, in exchange for the grave monument erected, citizens gave to C.E.D.A.M., for their museum at Akumal, the wooden cross with rose and cross carving that had stood on the original gravesite.

Mr. Olson read to members excerpts of a letter sent him by Laffite Advisory Board member, author, and researcher Robert C. Vogel, summarizing his research regarding the final departure date of

the Laffites from Galveston Island - probably May 7-12, 1820, rather than in the spring of 1821, as has been previously believed. Mr. Vogel quotes from a copy of a safe-conduct pass for the Laffite band contained in *Directive From Commodore Daniel T. Patterson, Feb. 3, 1820, to The Command of U.S. Vessels of War*, housed in the Naval Archives in Washington, D.C.

According to Mr. Vogel, further corroboration of the departure date of 1820, rather than 1821, is provided by documentation that Spanish troops found the island deserted in 1820. The Laffites were thought to have remained in Cuban waters for a time following their departure from Galveston, for in May 1822 Jean Laffite was sighted off of Sugar Key, Cuba.

In other news, Jean L. Epperson, Advisory Board member, was quoted in a Lake Charles newspaper. Celebrating "Contraband Days" in Lake Charles, writer Warren Arceneaux of the *Lake Charles American Press* quoted author/historian Epperson's research account of Laffite's use of the privateering Cartagena flag. The article also mentions The Laffite Society of Galveston.

Members were informed to keep in mind a special-event trip planned for the weekend of Friday, April 28, through Sunday, April 30, 2000. On Saturday, April 29, Mr. Olson will speak by invitation at a Louisiana Genealogical Society conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Mr. Olson previously presented a lecture to the Louisiana Historical Association at its annual meeting at the New Orleans Country Club in January, 1998.

Tuesday, June 8, 1999

As no special presentation was scheduled for this date, the meeting began with the Officers' reports.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Laffite Society checking account of \$1,909.61, with \$323.00 to be deducted in the short term for printing costs of the ninth issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* and \$100.00 for related postage.

President Kathy Modzelewski extended thanks to Second Vice-President and Membership Chairperson Judy Dolfi for preparation of an updated Laffite Society membership list, dated June 6, 1999, as requested by Secretary Dorothy McD. Karilanovic. The list reflected eighty-seven memberships, including seventeen from either out of state or out of country (excluding those in Louisiana, which are numerous). One member resides in Alaska and two reside in France. The list counts four institutional memberships: The Historic New Orleans Collection (Museum), the Galveston County Historical Museum, the Wallisville Heritage Park Museum, and the Dupré Library of the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette.

Ms. Dolfi reminded members present who had not already done so to remit their dues for 1999. A notice regarding same will be mailed to the membership at large.

Editor of Publications Jeff Modzelewski distributed to those members present copies of the latest issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, Vol. 5, No. 1, dated February, 1999. Expressions of appreciation were extended by members to Mr. Modzelewski for his steadfast dedication in producing a publication that consistently embodies a high academic standard of presentation.

Mr. Modzelewski, proprietor of Island Books, also thanked members for their continued interest in and patronage of this book shop, which is located in The Eiband's Gallery in Galveston. The store stocks titles available for purchase in numerous categories, including Galveston history and the Laffites and their contemporaries.

Regarding new acquisitions, Ms. Karilanovic stated that she had placed in The Laffite Society archives a copy of an article she had recently translated from the French genealogical bulletin, *Généalogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*, No. 103, April, 1998, titled "Voyage from Bordeaux to Havana in 1821," by Lucile Bourrachot. The text describes experiences recorded in correspondence of French traveler Pierre Goux while crossing the Atlantic from Bordeaux, France to the island of Cuba, covering the months of April, June, and July, 1821. One exciting experience included an encounter in the waters off of Cuba with a French privateer captain. This captain, proclaiming himself and his crew to be "insurgents," desired only to confiscate the Spanish merchandise on board, and excused the passengers from having their valuables removed.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that the document known as *The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, which had been on loan for transfer onto CD-ROM for the state archives, had finally been returned to its home at the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, Texas. According to Dr. Wilson, Professor Gene Marshall, French linguist

and scholar at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana, will shortly resume his final editing of the linguistic elements of the document. Dr. Marshall hopes to present the findings of his research at The Laffite Society regular monthly meeting on July 13, 1999.

Dr. Wilson stated that Advisory Board member Pam Keyes had purchased through the Internet:

- an 1853 geodetic survey of Grand Isle and Grande Terre, Louisiana
- an 1816 edition of Arsène Latour's *Battle of New Orleans*, and
- a copy of the first novel published about Jean Laffite, Ingram's *Pirate of the Gulf*

In discussing on-going research, Dr. Wilson reported that new evidence had been uncovered by researcher Paul Gardiner of Edwardsville, Illinois, regarding identification of the alleged burial site of Jean Laffite in the environs of Alton, Illinois. Mr. Gardiner says that the site where Laffite may have been buried in 1854 is located in the "Fosterburg Cemetery," located north of Alton, rather than in the "Culp Cemetery," another site referred to in articles published in previous issues of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

Dr. Wilson presented a discussion on correspondence between the great-grandson of Jean Laffite, John A. Laffite, and writer Audrey Lloyd, and on letters of Lacie Laffite, the wife of John A. Laffite. This information, containing interesting, sometimes intimate, details about Laffite family personalities and relationships, was brought to light following Dr. Wilson's extensive reading of six folders of correspondence in archival holdings. According to Dr. Wilson, it had come to his attention that the two trunks containing personal effects of Jean Laffite, burned in a house fire according to family correspondence and statements by others, included four photograph albums, many ledgers with names and sailing dates of ships, and several large paintings. Dr. Wilson still hopes to see a ledger, said to have belonged to Laffite, that is now in the possession of John Surratt, a Laffite descendant in South Carolina, with which he will attempt to compare known samples of Jean Laffite's handwriting.

Before adjournment for the evening, Ms. Modzelewski extended thanks to George and Mary Frances Najarian for the Middle Eastern cuisine which they prepared and served to the delight of members.

WELCOME, NEW LAFFITIANS

JULY 1, 1998 – JUNE 30, 1999



Stephen J. Barcik, Galveston, Texas
Ronald C. Broadstone, Houston, Texas
Stephen N. Broadstone, Galveston, Texas
Patricia A. Casey, Louisville, Kentucky
John R. Cox, Long Beach, California
William C. Davis, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania
Frederick Eddingfield, Louisville, Kentucky
Edwom T. Harrell, Austin, Texas

Elton Louviere, Lake Charles, Louisiana
Walter and Joan Modzelewski, Galveston, Texas
Norma Jean Nelson, Galveston, Texas
Cynthia Nobles, New Orleans, Louisiana
Keith O'Neal, San Diego, California
Richard and Kileen Prather, Galveston, Texas
Addison D. Tilton, Cleveland, Texas
Bowen and Nell Whittington, Liberty, Texas

CALENDAR

General meetings of The Laffite Society are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at The Eiband's Gallery, 2201 Postoffice Street, Galveston, TX, 77550, (409) 763-5495. Many of the meetings feature interesting and informative presentations by member or guest speakers. The exception is the December meeting, the annual "Holiday Social," which is an evening of food, drink, and entertaining conversation in a relaxed and festive setting.

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

In addition to the 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 President Kathy Modzelewski c/o The Eiband's Gallery at (409) 763-5495. The Laffite Society attempts to mail information to members and interested parties on the Society's mailing list as special event details are determined.

"THE STORY OF LAFFITE" AUDIO TAPE PROJECT

By a vote of The Laffite Society's Board of Directors, it was decided to pursue a project proposed by then-Press Director Dave Roberts, to consist of the creation of a series of audio tapes related to the story of Jean and Pierre Laffite. Over past months, Mr. Roberts has recorded several prototype tapes and played them at some Society regular monthly meetings. Although currently still in a preparatory stage, it is expected that Society members and other interested individuals will assist in the writing, editing, and critical review of each script. Topics will include some of the most basic elements of the Laffite story; initial scripts have dealt with "Descendants of Jean Laffite," "[Galveston Island's] The Storm of 1818," and "Dominique You."

Each tape will be approximately five minutes in length, and will be prepared for airing on the local Galveston, Texas, radio station, KGBC. Background music will be dubbed to provide an introduction and closing to the narration. It is envisioned that a group of perhaps as many as fifty tapes will be recorded in a professional recording studio by Mr. Roberts, who has a long affiliation with the radio industry. Upon completion of the project, The Society will discuss various additional possible uses for the set of tapes, including making them available on loan to members.

Interested parties are encouraged to submit finished scripts; ideas for script topics; or requests for information, length guidelines, etc., to Mr. Roberts in care of the post office box listed inside the front cover of this publication.

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
AUGUST 1998 - JULY 2000

PRESIDENT	KATHY MODZELEWSKI
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT	DAVE ROBERTS
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT	JUDY DOLFI
THIRD VICE PRESIDENT	JIM NONUS
SECRETARY	DOROTHY McDONALD KARILANOVIC
TREASURER	JEFF MODZELEWSKI
ARCHIVIST	DON MARLER
PARLIAMENTARIAN	DIANE OLSON
COORDINATOR OF RESEARCH	WIL ZAPALAC
HISTORIAN	BERNADETTE FOLEY
EDITOR OF PUBLICATIONS	JEFF MODZELEWSKI
PRESS DIRECTOR	GEORGE NAJARIAN

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY
ADVISORY BOARD
August 1998 - July 2000

Jim Earthman	Robert Looper
Jean L. Epperson	Randy Pace
Bill Foley	Robert Vogel
Pam Keyes	Reginald Wilson

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