



The Laffite Society Chronicles

Volume XVI Number 1

April 2010

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

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.

Meets at 6:00 pm on the second Tuesday of the month
at Edgewater Retirement Community
23rd Street and Seawall Blvd

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Annual dues:

Student	\$ 15.00
Senior (Over 65).....	\$ 20.00
Institution	\$ 20.00
Individual.....	\$ 35.00
Family.....	\$ 40.00
Sustaining Member . . .	\$100.00
Sponsoring Member.....	\$100.00
Life Membership (One Payment).....	\$300.00

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Editor's Page

Dan Cote
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Thought you'd never see a new Chronicle? Me, too. But saints be praised, here on the day after the wearing of the green the editor got down to it. No more excuses . . . or reasons (given your frame of mind). Good photos of events and articles in this issue.

The President's Page will bring you up to date on official happenings in the Society.

The Annual Christmas Party was a success but only a page of the pictures is shown to illustrate the event.

Wil Zapalac has written an interesting article highlighting the pitfalls that can trap the unwary researcher.

Highlighting the need to upgrade the positioning of the Laffite memorial is the thrust of the article by Tom Linton. Read and think about his suggestions.

The Board is concerned that the information on the monument probably does not reflect the history which has been gathered since the 1930s: the spelling of Laffites name and actual presence of Laffite or his men at this site on the date given.

Jeff Modzelewski reviews *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin who wrote about the Louisiana islands frequented by the Laffites.

The **Laffite Society** maintains an Internet newsgroup on the social-networking site Yahoo. Group members can post text and upload documents and pictures of interest. The group is titled "laffite."

To join the Yahoo group, one must first have a (free) Yahoo account. To register, go to www.yahoo.com and follow the instructions. Make a note of your user ID and password for future reference.

Once registered, browse the groups for "laffite" and follow the instructions to request to join it. A group moderator must review and approve your request before you may join (so that we can exclude those who wish to join simply to post spam, promote their businesses, etc.).

If you have difficulty, e-mail Jeff Modzelewski at jeffiemod@gmail.com for assistance. However, please do not request assistance before you have a Yahoo account - a Yahoo account is a prerequisite for joining the "laffite" group. If you have a Yahoo account but cannot navigate the procedure to request to join the group, inform Jeff and he will send you via e-mail an "invitation" to join, which you then simply need to accept with a click of your mouse.

President's Page

Ed Jamison
ezlife71@comcast.net

It is spring and we are on the move! For the past three to four years we've been meeting in facilities provided by the inimitable Jim Nonus. Circumstances and the need for more space have warranted the move to a larger "home" with more amenities: Edgewater. The Edgewater Retirement Community is located on 23rd Street in Galveston. The room they are providing us is more spacious and will better accommodate our ever growing attendance. It also offers sound and video equipment that our speakers will be able to utilize to their advantage. Further, it is rent-free. This is a win-win situation for the Society that I know our membership will enjoy.

For those unfamiliar with the location, the entrance to Edgewater is approximately ½ block north of Seawall Boulevard. On 23rd Street. There is both street parking and a parking lot at the rear of the building. The next meeting on April 13th will be held here.

It has been many years since Society membership dues were set at the current rate. Alas, it is time to implement an increase, albeit a modest one. Effective May 1 of this year the dues listed in this edition of the Chronicles will be effected. With the exception of the Student membership and Sustaining Member categories, most others will increase by \$5.00. There is, however, a reduction in the fee for a Lifetime membership; this will be a one-time payment of \$300.00 rather than \$350.00. Too, there is a new category: a Sponsor Membership at \$100.00.

If you missed the Annual Holiday Banquet in December, then we missed you. This event included the usual frivolity, sazeracs, a program of music about Galveston, sazeracs and an overdue presentation to Dale and Diane Olson in honor of the Society's 15th Anniversary. I encourage you to attend this years' event in December for a truly good time.

Finally, we have to admit to the fact that our web site is sorely outdated. I also admit that the previous sentence is an understatement. We have some answer to the problem and I assure you that within 60 days we will have a rejuvenated site for you. Thank you for your patience.

And thank you for being Laffitians.

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2009

Sixty-two members and guest attended the December party held at the Jokusch Building in December. Reports to the Chronicle indicate that a good time was had by all. Below are a few pictures of the event.



Diane & Dale Olson



Ed Jamison & Walter Modzelewski



Philip & Martha Randolph



Arthur Kennedy, Cathy Hitchcock & Steve Austin



There were presentations



Jane Chance & Ed Conner



Bill & Lynette Haaga



Jeff Modzelewski with Larry & Jan Porter



There were songs



Mike Gilbert, Janice Sheaffer, Jim Nonus & Victor Lang

Laffite Researcher, BEWARE!!!

Wil Zapalac

With all the mysteries and puzzling info surrounding the privateer Laffite, it is small wonder researchers of the man/legend are so fascinated and persistent. Hard, cold facts are few and far between ... scattered throughout the fables and tales of the bayous ... and, elsewhere, like a trail of doubloons, on a long stretch of wind-blown beach. Any research leads, at all, are hard sought and can go from sizzling 'hot' interest to bitterly cold disillusion.

A good case in point is what this writer encountered only a scant time ago. It was somewhere in April or May ... of this century. Perhaps 2004. Perhaps.

I was headed into the third floor, archive section of the 'Rosey', Galveston's foremost and premier Rosenberg Library, when the attendant of the front desk questioned my intent of quest. After grudgingly filling him in, he smiled and informed me that the old days of brittle, faded hard-copy sources were gone. At least for what I sought. "Micro-film, mezzanine level," he noted and returned to his work at hand. My main source, at times, at the 'Rosey'?

This is no secret to true Laffite researchers that have ventured to Galveston Island and used the facilities of the 'Rosey'. The present-day name is some hybrid of the Isle and surrounding areas, yet in days early on it was simply called the 'Gazette'. Another name was also involved but, in all, such was what Jean Laffite may have been looking for ... the highly controversial Dogwood Press release, "The Journal of Jean Laffite". On page 111 of the Journal, Laffite laments of having no press (newspaper) to defend him. That fact was true, regardless if the Journal was a total fake or of true nature.

Yet, this article is not about whether the Journal should be thrown in the campfire or rescued from it. It is about the tale that is about to unfold. Info in the 'Gazette' really runs the gauntlet and staggers the modern day imagination. So as not to lose anyone, I will reiterate that the 'Gazette' was the news publication on the island, at least 18 years after Laffite had disbanded his people.

As to the news gauntlet the paper did run, there appear factual reports of Texas Indians being tricked into false peace treaty meetings and then being murdered, in Austin, Texas. Along with the Texas Indian Wars is mentioned all manner of news. Fictional romantic love stories appear. So innocent and naive that even a jaded script writer in nowadays L.A. would sigh. Also noted was a good number of ads and price lists ... of all types of items. Apparently, doctors back then had concluded that the cocoa leaf was useful in human hair shampoos. Of course, many political opinions and constant articles of what heard lately of the East Coast.

All printed from 1838 and on ... with many gaps of issues.

As it also happens in research, at times, one may be looking directly at a real gem of a find and still totally miss it. Such was the case of what I read, probably for more than twice or more, that morning. It was there, right at the top of the page's right-hand column, hardly hidden at all. Yet, somehow I had blundered past it. Over and over. But, for some odd reason, perhaps it was the sound of Laffite's ghost, softly chuckling behind me ... but that morning it leapt out at me.

The column's heading read, and still does read, 'COMMERCIAL'. This was followed by a second heading announcing 'Port of Galveston', and then were what could have only been listings of ship's movements, headed appropriately, 'Departure' and 'Arrival'. Further into the column, other business was printed, such as passengers, fares, happenings, etc.

There, at the very first of the 'Departed' listing was the date-Dec.4, 1837(?). After that swung out the name 'Laffite', slightly smudged, then the name 'Havilland' and then 'Columbia'. "What the #&*%?", I muttered to myself and then glanced to see if my profanity had attracted the library's gendarmes.

Quizzedly peering back at the column, I double-checked and read the same. 'Laffite, Havilland, Columbia'. The second listing showed for Dec. 5 and the names 'Patrick Henry' and then 'Hood' and then 'Houston'. The third was Dec. 6 with 'Albert Gallatin', 'Sterret' and "Houston", again.

Look at this, I thought. A captain named Laffite departing on the vessel Havilland for Columbia. A day before Captain Henry and two before Gallatin, both headed up the mud ditch to what was then ... swamp Houston.

And such it is with excitement. The pulse quickens and the heart jumps. I felt as though I had just asked a girl to dance, at the dance hall, and received a nod. But something was odd. Something was telling me that someone at a previous Laffite meeting had mentioned something of the item. So, at the next meeting, I inquired and only got curious looks and shakes of the heads. No one had ever seen such. Just how could that be, I wondered. And how did I notice it?

Elation was now turning to perplexion. NO ONE? Dorothy Karilanovic, a long-time Laffitian, recommended that I make a copy of the find and submit it to the Archives of the Society. That, at least, made some sense. So I ventured back to the library.

It was then that the girl at the dance apparently changed her fickle mind, for, as I prepared the necessary machinery for the work, I studied the rest of the column. Chagrin began to build. I spotted the following ... 'Captain Sterret'. Now what I wondered? 'Captain Sterret'? Was the reporter or the editor for the Gazette already into the rum that day? Then I noted, with agitation, that for Dec. 4, the entry showed 'STMR. Dayton', 'Jenkins', 'Houston'. That ... unfortunately ... was the 'Steamer Dayton'. The first name on the listings was not a captain but ... alas ... the #%*!\$#! vessel's name!

Ah, wreckage and rum at the rocks of the beach, all for the following of the wrong lantern. As luck, or the lack of it, would have it, all three of the first mentioned vessels had masculine names. If just one had been named the 'Pretty Jean' or something, this tale would be of no value.

And so fellow researchers take heed. And take your time. And, if so betricked, take aspirin. Oh, yes. For those that might want to know, the actual sailing of the 'Laffite' to Columbia, on that day, went for a mere ten dollars. American. Fini.

A New Home for the Jean Lafitte Monument

Tom Linton

It has a desolate, forlorn and deserted look about it, especially in the late afternoon on a chilly January day. It sits on a sliver of land facing on to a busy road, backed by a pool of stagnant water that is fringed with pond scum. This is what I saw in my most recent visit to the site of the Jean Lafitte Monument on Stewart Road.



The monument has a slightly tilted off center --- a result of the inundation it received from the waters of Hurricane Ike. It is a site poorly tended and deserving of far better treatment than it presently receives. And that is purpose of this article --- to enlist the assistance and support of the Jean Lafitte Society in securing that, "better treatment" of that monument which is the namesake of your Society.

I am proposing that the monument and the granite bench be moved to a more suitable location, Galveston Island State Park.

The Galveston Island State Park is getting a new lease on life! For awhile after Hurricane Ike it appeared that the park might cease to exist. Instead it is in the process of being restored even bigger and better than before. Bigger in that the old Outdoor Theater will come back as a part of the park, being the site for construction of a major meeting/education facility. Better by having an expanded set of out-door amenities for the public on the 800 acre of land on the North side of SH 3005 --- one being the History Trail.

The yellow line showing the location of the trail in the Park on the North side of 3005, the Park Welcome Center in the left hand corner of the picture and 13 mile Road along the right-hand margin



The History Trail in the State Park has been approved by Texas Parks & Wildlife officials for inclusion in the rebuilt Galveston Island State Park. Along with life sized statues, 6 feet in height, of a West End cowboy, Cabeza de Vaca and a Karankawa there will be a statue of Jean Lafitte.

The will be made The statues will be made from oak trees removed from the median in Broadway and retained for these purposes



Selecting Trees to Use for Statues on the History Trail

Perhaps you have seen some of the carved wood statues in Galveston made from trees that were killed by the saltwater flooding from Hurricane Ike. They were done by the man shown here selecting the trees for the statues. Some examples of his work are show below.



We have an agreement with this individual to make the statues. He has the four tree trunks in his work yard in Houston in readiness to carve the statues for placement in the park. Permission to move the monument into the Park has been obtained (in writing) from the governmental entitles (TXDOT, Texas Historical Commission, Galveston Historical Commission) that have jurisdiction. It would be most helpful to have a resolution passed by The Laffite Society endorsing the transfer of the monument from its present location on Stewart Road to the Galveston Island State Park to be a part of the park's History Trail. So think of this as an



FROM A NEGLECTED MONUMENT!



Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*

Jeff Modzelewski

[Author's note: the following material formed the nucleus of the program I presented at the Laffite Society monthly meeting held on Tuesday, October 13, 2009. Much of it – e.g., the author's biography, and the plot summary and literary analysis of *The Awakening* – was culled from the Internet site Wikipedia, the content of which may be modified by anyone and thus may contain inaccuracies and opinion.]

Introduction

Many times our program topics do not directly involve the Laffites, but in the sense that they involve the milieu in which the Laffites flourished – e.g., New Orleans, Creole and/or plantation society of 19th-century Louisiana – a connection does indeed exist, since the same socioeconomic and cultural influences operated upon them all. Such is the case with the late-nineteenth-century author Kate Chopin and her novel *The Awakening*.

Kate Chopin

Kate Chopin was born Katherine O'Flaherty in St. Louis on February 8, 1850. Her father was an immigrant from Ireland and a merchant, her mother an aristocratic Creole well-connected in the St. Louis French community. At the age of nineteen, she began to write both adult and children's stories. A year later, in 1870, she married Oscar Chopin and settled in New Orleans.

Kate Chopin was not a typical woman of the era; she dressed unconventionally, she smoked, she took long unchaperoned walks. She gave birth to all of her six children by the age of twenty-eight. When Oscar Chopin died unexpectedly in 1882 after twelve years of marriage, leaving the family with a significant amount of debt, Kate took over the management of some small plantations and a general store in Cloutierville, in southern Natchitoches Parish. But after two years, having met with no financial success in the endeavor, she moved back to St. Louis to be near her mother.

After the death of her husband, while in her early thirties, Chopin began writing in earnest. Her stories were published in such periodicals as *Vogue*, *Century Magazine*, and *Atlantic Monthly*. She also published a novel and two collections of stories prior to publishing, in 1899, *The Awakening*, the tale of a woman trapped in the confines of a restrictive society which demanded that its members behave within rigid bounds.

The Awakening aroused a national scandal for its "indecentcy." It was assailed for its frank depictions of female sexuality and banned by libraries. The book even prevented Chopin's admission into the St. Louis Fine Arts Club, despite Chopin's renowned literary salon, which attracted distinguished artists and writers from all over the country.

Sensitive to criticism, Chopin was devastated by harsh reception of *The Awakening*, which ultimately caused her to stop writing. She died of a brain hemorrhage while visiting the St. Louis World's Fair on August 22, 1904, at the age of fifty-four.

The Awakening – a short novel at some one hundred fifty paperback pages – was a book far ahead of its time. Out of print for decades, it eventually came into its own, as did the literary reputation of Chopin, who is now considered by some to be a forerunner of 20th-century feminist authors. *The Awakening* was dramatized in 1991 as the film *Grand Isle*.

Plot Summary of *The Awakening*

The Awakening is set at the end of the nineteenth century on the southern coast of Louisiana and in New Orleans. The plot centers on Edna Pontellier and her struggle to reconcile her increasingly unorthodox views

about femininity and motherhood with the prevailing social attitudes of the turn-of-the-century South. *The Awakening* is one of the earliest American novels that focus on women's issues without condescension. It is also considered by some to be one of the most important novels written by an American woman in the nineteenth century - perhaps second only to Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in terms of historical and social significance.

The novel opens with the Pontellier family vacationing in Grand Isle, Louisiana, on the Gulf of Mexico, at a resort run by Madame Lebrun and her two sons, Robert and Victor. The Pontellier family is composed of Léonce Pontellier, a businessman of Acadian heritage, and Edna, his twenty-eight-year-old wife. They have two sons, Etienne and Raoul, who do not feature prominently in the plot and who are largely symbols of Edna's proscribed existence.



Edna spends most of her time in Grand Isle with her close friend Adèle Ratignolle, who reminds her of her duties as a wife and mother. Edna eventually forms a connection with Robert Lebrun, a charming and earnest young man who actively seeks Edna's attention and affections. They start to fall deeply in love, but Robert, sensing the doomed nature of any relationship that would develop between them, flees to Mexico under the guise of pursuing a business venture.

The narrative focus of the novel then shifts to Edna's complex and changing emotions as she reconciles her familial duties with her desires to be with Robert and to obtain social freedom.

At summer's end, Edna and her family return to their home in New Orleans. Gradually, Edna begins to reassess her personal priorities and to pursue her own happiness. She increasingly isolates herself from New Orleans society and withdraws from some of the duties traditionally associated with motherhood. Léonce eventually calls

in a doctor, fearing that Edna is losing her mental faculties, but the doctor advises Léonce to let her be.

When Léonce travels to New York City on business, the children are sent to stay with his mother. Edna is thus left alone for an extended period, and this solitude provides her the physical and emotional room in which to breathe and to ponder various aspects of her life. She decides to move from her large house into a small, nearby bungalow, and during this period of transition begins an abortive affair with Alcée Arobin, a persistent suitor with a reputation for being free with his affections. It is the first time in the novel that Edna is shown as a sexual being, but the affair proves awkward and emotionally fraught.

During this period of solitude, Edna reaches out to Mademoiselle Reisz, a gifted piano recitalist by whose music Edna was profoundly moved while both vacationed in Grand Isle. Reisz, renowned in New Orleans for her musical talent, generally maintains a hermetic existence, but she does remain in contact with Robert Lebrun in Mexico, receiving letters from him regularly. When Edna begs her to reveal the letters' contents, Reisz does so, and they prove to Edna that Robert is likewise thinking about her.

Eventually Lebrun returns to New Orleans. At first aloof, he finds excuses not to be near Edna, but he eventually confesses his passionate love for her. He admits that his business trip to Mexico was an excuse to distance himself from a potential relationship that would be doomed to failure.

One day, as her relationship with Robert Lebrun appears to be at the point of carnal consummation, Edna is called away to help Adèle Ratignolle as she goes through a difficult childbirth. Adèle pleads with Edna to

consider what she would be turning her back upon were she to behave inappropriately with Lebrun. When Edna returns home, she finds a note from him stating that he has left and will not be returning.

Edna is devastated and travels immediately to Grand Isle, where she and Robert first met. It was also at Grand Isle that Edna had learned to swim that past summer; the episode was for her both exhilarating and terrifying, and she wrestled with these same conflicting emotions repeatedly during the remainder of the novel. *The Awakening* ends as Edna allows herself to be overcome by the waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Literary Analysis

The narrative style of *The Awakening* is essentially realistic, with its perceptive focus on human behavior, the banalities of everyday life and the complexities and impact of social strictures. Also evident is the nascent Southern novel as a distinct literary genre, not just in setting and subject matter but also in narrative style.

Chopin's portrayal of her protagonist's shifting emotions is a narrative technique upon which Mississippi author William Faulkner would expand in novels such as *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and the Fury*. Alternately – and almost contradictorily – the stark absence of sentimentality and the uncluttered nature of the plot presage the stories of Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor and the plays of William Inge.

Edna Pontellier's emotional crises and her eventual tragic demise point ahead to the complex female characters of the plays of Tennessee Williams. Aspects of Chopin's style also prefigure the lyrical and experimental style of novelists such as Virginia Woolf and the unsentimental focus on female intellectual and emotional growth in the novels of Sigrid Undset and Doris Lessing.

Chopin's most important stylistic legacy may be the detachment of her narrator. The narrator does not treat women's issues with condescension nor offer an assessment or opinion of the protagonist's behavior, a departure from the contemporary Victorian tendency toward narrative judgment and editorial commentary. It is left to the reader to assess the merit of the protagonist's decisions, and this is arguably the novel's boldest stylistic choice.

Publication and Critical Reception

The Awakening was particularly controversial upon publication in 1899. Chopin's novel was considered immoral not only for its comparatively frank depictions of female sexual desire but for its portrayal of a protagonist who chafed against social norms and established gender roles. The public reaction to the novel was similar to the protests which greeted the publication and performance of Henrik Ibsen's landmark drama *A Doll's House* (1879), a work with which *The Awakening* shares an almost identical theme.

Published reviews ran the gamut from outright condemnation to the recognition of *The Awakening* as an important work of fiction by a gifted writer. A good example of this can be found in the divergent reactions of two newspapers in Kate Chopin's hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. The *St. Louis Mirror* said:

One would fain beg the gods, in pure cowardice, for sleep unending rather than to know what an ugly, cruel, loathsome Monster Passion can be when, like a tiger, it slowly awakens. This is the kind of awakening that impresses the reader in Mrs. Chopin's heroine.

Later in the same year, however, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* would praise the novel in an essay entitled "A St. Louis Woman Who Has Turned Fame Into Literature."

Some reviews clucked in disappointment at Chopin's choice of subject. The *Chicago Times-Herald*: "It was not necessary for a writer of so great refinement and poetic grace to enter the over-worked field of sex-fiction." Others mourned the loss of good taste, as when the *Nation* referred to Chopin as "one more clever writer gone wrong." And some reviews indulged in outright vitriol, as when *Public Opinion* stated: "We are well-satisfied when [Edna Pontellier] drowns herself."

However, Chopin did not garner universally negative reviews. The *Dial* called *The Awakening* a "poignant spiritual tragedy," with the caveat that the novel was "not altogether wholesome in its tendencies." In the *Pittsburgh Leader*, none other than Willa Cather would set *The Awakening* alongside *Madame Bovary*, Gustave Flaubert's equally notorious and equally reviled novel of suburban ennui and unapologetic adultery. She famously quipped: "A Creole *Bovary* is this little novel of Miss Chopin's."

The Laffite "Connection"

Much of *The Awakening* takes place in and around the Barataria of the Laffites, but three quarters of a century subsequent to their departure.

In the first portion of the novel the protagonist, Edna Pontellier, is summering in Grand Isle, as her creator Kate Chopin did annually for more than a decade.

Pontellier spends an afternoon on nearby Grande Terre Island, across Barataria Pass east of Grand Isle, where she and a friend visit the "old fort" – Fort Livingston, which members of the Laffite Society explored on a field trip in the 1990s.

Pontellier also crosses by boat to attend church in nearby Chenière Caminada, west of Grand Isle. Chenière Caminada occupies a tragic place in coastal Louisiana history via its devastation by a powerful hurricane in early October, 1893. The storm killed an estimated two thousand people, including more than one-half of Chenière Caminada's 1,500 inhabitants, mostly from storm surge.

The Laffites and their associates would have known well all three of these places – Grand Isle, Grande Terre and Chenière Caminada.

The remainder of the book's activity occurs in New Orleans, another long-time Laffite haunt where Jean and Pierre resided intermittently for perhaps a decade and a half.

Lastly, Kate Chopin lived for a time, and began writing in earnest, in southern Natchitoches Parish. On a plantation in that same parish called both "Melrose Plantation" and "Yucca Plantation," author Lyle Saxon spent much time relaxing and writing, from the nineteen-teens or -twenties until his death in the mid-forties. Saxon penned perhaps the most well-known book about the Laffites, *Laffite the Pirate*.

MINUTES

October 13, 2009

BOARD PRESENT: 1st Vice President Jim Nonus; 2nd Vice President Kathy Modzelewski; Treasurer Nancy Beaman; Secretary *pro tem* and Archivist Jeff Modzelewski; Editor of Publications *pro tem* Dan Cote; Parliamentarian Diane Olson; Privateer-at-Arms (nominal) Wil Zapalac.

BOARD ABSENT: President Ed Jamison; 3rd Vice President Lynette Haaga; Historian Ginny Roberts; Press Director Dave Roberts; Coordinator of Research Gary Fretz; Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes.

ADVISORY BOARD PRESENT: Jean Epperson; Jeff Modzelewski; Kathy Modzelewski; R. Dale Olson.

ADVISORY BOARD ABSENT: Pam Keyes; Don Marler; Gene Marshall; Robert Vogel; Dr. Reginald Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 6:42 p.m.

1st First Vice President Jim Nonus welcomed this month's meeting attendees in the absence of President Ed Jamison. Member Jan Porter, an administrator locally with the Salvation Army, asked for volunteers to take part in the organization's 2009 Red Kettle Campaign, which will take place from November 27 through December 24.

PROGRAM: Jeff Modzelewski presented the evening's program on the late-19th-century American author Kate Chopin and her novel *The Awakening*, published in 1899.

Chopin (1850-1904) was born in St. Louis and raised there, but she moved to Louisiana upon her marriage to Oscar Chopin in 1870. The couple lived in New Orleans for a number of years and vacationed in Grand Isle in the summers. Kate published a number of stories in major periodicals of the day. When Oscar's cotton brokerage in New Orleans failed, they moved to Natchitoches Parish to manage a plantation. His unexpected death about 1882 left Kate a young widow with significant debts, and she began to write in earnest.

She published her best-known work, the short novel *The Awakening*, in 1899. It received a mixed reception because it was ahead of its time in depicting women's issues without condescension and because it was viewed by some as scandalous. The married protagonist, Edna Pontellier, rebels against the proscribed role of women in American society in the late 19th century. She falls in love with a single man, and he with her, but the relationship is doomed, and she commits suicide by swimming out into the Gulf of Mexico and drowning herself.

Kate Chopin is now viewed as a forerunner of the feminist genre of American literature, and perhaps the second most important American female author of the nineteenth century after Harriet Beecher Stowe.

At the end of his talk about Chopin, Modzelewski spoke about various locales in Louisiana with connections to Laffite, Chopin and *The Awakening*, including Melrose Plantation in Natchitoches Parish, Grande Terre, Cheniere Caminada, and Last Island/Isle Derniere.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Submitted by Jeff Modzelewski Secretary *pro tem* The Laffite Society

November 10, 2009

BOARD PRESENT: President Ed Jamison; 1st Vice President Jim Nonus; 2nd Vice President Kathy Modzelewski; 3rd Vice President Lynette Haaga; Treasurer Nancy Beaman; Secretary *pro tem* and Archivist Jeff Modzelewski; Editor of Publications *pro tem* Dan Cote; Parliamentarian Diane Olson; Historian Ginny Roberts; Press Director Dave Roberts; Privateer-at-Arms (nominal) Wil Zapalac.

BOARD ABSENT: Coordinator of Research Gary Fretz; Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes.

ADVISORY BOARD PRESENT: Jean Epperson; Jeff Modzelewski; Kathy Modzelewski; R. Dale Olson.

ADVISORY BOARD ABSENT: Pam Keyes; Don Marler; Gene Marshall; Robert Vogel; Dr. Reginald Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

Ed Jamison welcomed attendees and noted that invitations to the Christmas Party, to be held on Saturday evening, December 12th, 2009, were in the mail.

PROGRAM: Physicist and avocational archaeologist Sheldon Kindall gave an oral and video presentation about archaeology in Texas. His presentation was a condensed version of one he had previously given to the Texas Archaeology Society entitled "Texas Archaeology: An Invitation to Participate."

Sheldon mentioned various digs in Texas in which he had participated, including: two at the purported site of Laffite's Maison Rouge in Galveston's East End; Bernardo's Plantation in Hempstead; and multiple and on-going searches for the French settlement Champ D'Asile near Liberty, the lifespan of which settlement was just five months.

Sheldon noted that various Native American tribes had inhabited Texas, including the Caddo, Comanche, Karankawa and Orcoquisac, the last two of which had lived on the western and eastern portions, respectively, of Galveston Island. It is known that all of these tribes descended from peoples from Asia because of dental characteristics.

Sheldon told the group that archaeology is a science that attempts to learn: *when* living beings occupied an area; *what* they did while there; and *why* they chose that location. Archaeology divides time into pre-historic and historic periods. The historic era in Texas began in 1528 with the arrival of the Spanish explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. The forms of spear and arrow points help identify various periods of occupation.

Sheldon spoke of the Clovis occupation, which lasted just 200 years some 13,000 years ago before mysteriously vanishing. The Clovis occupation predated the Roman Empire by 11,000 years, ancient Egyptian civilization by 7,000 years, and Indo-European settlement and language by 5,000 years. Unlike the Native American tribes mentioned above who originated in Asia, the Clovis people may have originated in Europe.

Some of the talk touched on linguistics. For example, Sheldon noted that approximately twenty years ago the Caddo requested assistance with keeping their language alive, as few could then understand it and even fewer speak it. Sheldon noted that the priority there was to first document the language so that a written record of it would exist.

In closing, Sheldon noted that membership in the Texas Archaeological Society and participation in its digs is open, not just to archaeologists, but to all. _____

Following Sheldon's presentation, Tom Linton, who has written a series of columns about Texas state parks for the *Galveston County Daily News*, spoke about the History Trail at the Galveston Island State Park, with which he encouraged involvement. Tom mentioned that a monument related to Laffite and located on the western end of the Island had been moved there from elsewhere and might prove more beneficially located as part of the History Trail.

Lastly, members Rob and Carolyn Peterson were acknowledged for their great efforts in scanning all of the *Laffite Society Chronicles* and all of the publications of the Society's predecessor, the Laffite Study Group, into .pdf files on CD-ROMs. The importance of such a preservation effort was forever underscored for members by the loss of the group's archives to Hurricane Ike in mid-September, 2008. It was suggested that a future archival effort place images from the various Laffite Society's field trips onto CD-ROMs as well.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:10 p.m.

Submitted by Jeff Modzelewski Secretary *pro tem* The Laffite Society

January 12, 2010

BOARD PRESENT: President Ed Jamison; 1st Vice President Jim Nonus; 2nd Vice President Kathy Modzelewski; Treasurer Nancy Beaman; Secretary *pro tem* and Archivist Jeff Modzelewski; Editor of Publications *pro tem* Dan Cote; Historian Ginny Roberts; Press Director Dave Roberts.

BOARD ABSENT: 3rd Vice President Lynette Haaga; Parliamentarian Diane Olson; Privateer-At-Arms (nominal) Wil Zapalac; Coordinator of Research Gary Fretz; Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes.

ADVISORY BOARD PRESENT: Jean Epperson; Jeff Modzelewski; Kathy Modzelewski.

ADVISORY BOARD ABSENT: Pam Keyes; Don Marler; Gene Marshall; R. Dale Olson; Robert Vogel; Dr. Reginald Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 6:26 p.m.

Ed Jamison welcomed attendees, and Jim Nonus introduced several first- and second-time visitors.

Several announcements followed.

Lizette Najarian invited all to the upcoming East End Historic District Association's Casino Night fundraiser

Kathy Modzelewski updated the group on plans regarding the trip to New Orleans at the end of the month.

Jeff Modzelewski thanked Dave Roberts for taking the photographs at the holiday party on 12/12/2009, which have been uploaded to the Yahoo Laffite group. He also thanked Dave for facilitating coverage of the affair, including some photographs, in "The Diva's" column in the Sunday, 01/10/2010, *Galveston County Daily News*.

PROGRAM: The evening's program was an interesting, broad, round-table-type discussion of the Laffites spurred by a number of articles in vintage periodicals in the personal collection of Jim Nonus. Jim began by asking Jeff Modzelewski to read an article on recent piratical activities – part of which involved the Laffites - from the *Niles Weekly Register* of April 26, 1823. After some questions and discussion, Jim recessed the group for a refreshment break so that attendees could browse his collection and choose other articles to read aloud after the break, thereby generating discussion as well as ideas for research. Newer members and visitors proved to be catalysts in the program, asking good questions which caused more seasoned Laffitians to summarize portions of the Laffite canon to the benefit of many whose memory of same may have dimmed over the years.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.

Submitted by Jeff Modzelewski Secretary *pro tem* The Laffite Society

Tuesday, February 9, 2010

BOARD PRESENT: President Ed Jamison; 1st Vice President Jim Nonus; 2nd Vice President Kathy Modzelewski; 3rd Vice President Lynette Haaga; Treasurer Nancy Beaman; Secretary *pro tem* and Archivist Jeff Modzelewski; Parliamentarian Diane Olson; Editor of Publications *pro tem* Dan Cote; Historian Ginny Roberts; Press Director Dave Roberts.

BOARD ABSENT: Privateer-At-Arms (nominal) Wil Zapalac; Coordinator of Research Gary Fretz; Coordinator of Research Pam Keyes.

ADVISORY BOARD PRESENT: Jean Epperson; Don Marler; Jeff Modzelewski; Kathy Modzelewski; R. Dale Olson.

ADVISORY BOARD ABSENT: Pam Keyes; Gene Marshall; Robert Vogel; Dr. Reginald Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. Ed Jamison welcomed attendees, and Jim Nonus did an excellent job in introducing the several visitors/new members.

Several announcements followed:

- Dale Olson informed the group of the untimely passing on Sunday 02/07/2010 of Harry Forester IV, eldest son of members Harry Forester III and wife Anne, and of the dates and times of the visitation and funeral.
- Jean Epperson discussed the need to begin a new Laffite Society Archives to replace that washed away by Hurricane Ike. The purchase of a filing cabinet or bookshelf was authorized, and it was agreed that same would be housed at the Nonus Collection at least for the present. Jean contributed two folders of material to the nascent archives, one on member and Pierre Laffite descendant Diane Burkett, the other on the Hicks Brothers.
- Jeff Modzelewski summarized the recent trip of some twelve or fifteen Laffitians to New Orleans for a symposium held at the Williams Research Center on Saturday 01/30/2010, at which member and author of (among other books) *The Pirates Laffite*, William C. "Jack" Davis, presented a module.
- Ed Jamison spoke about a possible field trip back to Grand Isle and Grande Terre, Louisiana, the Laffites' Baratavia, to which the group has traveled before but not since its early years. It was noted that the Society had had no communication with its prior contacts in that area, principally Pat and Jean Landry of Grand Isle, since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, nor did it possess an e-mail address for them.

PROGRAM: Jim Nonus introduced the evening's speaker, member and past officer Don Marler, who spoke about the "Neutral Zone."

The Neutral Zone is the portion of western Louisiana bounded on the west by the Sabine River, on the north by Bayou Pierre in the vicinity of Natchitoches, on the east by the Calcasieu River, and on the south by the Gulf of Mexico.

The area was first inhabited by as many as thirty native-American tribes, including Caddo, Choctaw, and even Apache (as prisoners of the Spaniards around Zwolle, Louisiana). The Spaniard Cabeza de Vaca passed through the area about 1528, nearly one century before the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. Hernando de Soto followed some fifteen years later, but

another one hundred forty years elapsed before the next non-native-American passed that way: La Salle, in 1682.

The French built Natchitoches, the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase, in 1714; in 1721 the Spanish built Los Adaes, the capital of Tejas from 1729 to 1770, on the northeastern frontier of New Spain, about fifteen miles southwest of Natchitoches.

In 1763 the territory containing the future Neutral Zone was ceded by the French to the Spanish in the Treaty of Paris, partly influenced by marriage between the royal families of the two nations. But the Spanish were already finding it difficult to govern their vast expanse of lands in the New World, and in 1803 they returned the territory to the French. The French promptly sold it to the United States; the latter had been negotiating to acquire New Orleans, but Napoleon Bonaparte needed funds and sold the entire Louisiana Purchase for \$15 million.

Three years later, in 1806, Spain and the U.S., to decrease political tension over national boundary disputes, created the Neutral Zone as a buffer between the uncontested territories to either side. The two nations agreed that new settlement would be prohibited therein and that neither side would send peace officers into the region; the result was an immediate influx of outlaws and adventurers, about many of whom Don recounted anecdotes.

Don Marler has authored, among other books, one on the Neutral Zone. It is titled *The Neutral Zone: Back Door to the United States*, and it is available for purchase at the following link:
http://dogwoodpressonline.com/product_info.php?cPath=17&products_id=111&osCsid=5d83a7061f6cb48633dcbcc0b46d216b.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.

Submitted by Jeff Modzelewski Secretary *pro tem* The Laffite Society