

The Laffite Study Group Newsletter

Volume VI No. 1 Spring 1986

The Laffite Study Group is a non-profit educational organization which aims to promote research in, and the dissemination of knowledge concerning Jean Laffite's role in American history, literature, and folklore. The focus of interest is the Western Caribbean and Gulf Coastal Region in the early nineteenth century, with prime concern in Louisiana and Texas. The study group publishes this **Newsletter** and a series of occasional papers entitled, **The Life and Times of Jean Laffite**.

The LSG invites the participation and support of all who share its interest in Jean Laffite and the lore of Gulf Coast piracy, privateering, and filibustering. Membership is open to all. Annual dues are \$10.00 for individuals and institutions; \$15.00 outside of the United States. Applications for membership in the LSG should be sent to: Secretary-Treasurer, Laffite Study Group, 2570 Kevin Lane, Houston, Texas 77043.

EDITOR'S CORNER

As the new Newsletter Editor, I wish to first of all express my appreciation to the previous editor, Pam Keyes. Over the past five years, Pam has developed the **LSG Newsletter** into one of the better publications of its type. She can "retire" with the knowledge that she has done an excellent job.

I will do my best to maintain the editorial standards and informational value of the **LSG Newsletter**. However, this Newsletter will continue to be published only with your help. Please continue to send news of your activities and other pertinent information, as well as short articles and reviews.

The growth of the Laffite Study Group since its inception more than a decade ago has been phenomenal. When we handed out the first copies of **The Life and Times of Jean Laffite** at the Louisiana Historical Association's annual meeting in 1975, none of us probably thought we would ever have a Laffite network of nearly two hundred individuals and institutions!

THE LAFFITE NETWORK

Memorial Hall, which houses the Confederate Museum, is the oldest museum in Louisiana. To keep Memorial Hall open and growing, memberships are being offered in the Memorial Hall Foundation. Individual membership categories are general (\$10), regular (\$25), and corporate (\$100). Donations are tax deductible. Send to: Memorial Hall Foundation, 929 Camp Street, New Orleans, LA 70130.

Lawrence D. Lynch explores the uses of personal computers in genealogy in the "Genealogist's Corner" in the Summer-Fall 1985 issue of **Legacy** (Vol. 9, Nos.3-4, p. 7). Lynch discusses the application of word processing and data base programs as well as genealogical software, such as the Mormons' "Personal Ancestral File", to the needs of the family historian. **Legacy** is the newsletter of the Louisiana State Archives & Records Service. Copies may be obtained from the editor, P. O. Box 94125, Baton Rouge, LA 70804 (504/342-5440).

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LAFFITE AND THE KARANKAWA INDIANS

The following is a translation of a letter dated at San Antonio de Bexar 21 October 1820, from Governor Antonio Martinex to the Commandant at La Bahia, which is preserved in the Bexar Archives.

"Having noticed that on the Island of Culebra [Galveston] there may be a gathering of rebellious adventurers under the command of General Long and the pirate Laffite, and that said rebels have attacked the Karankawa Indians, killing some quantity of these Indians, it is necessary that you send a reconnaissance party to the coast to get a look at said Island of Culebra under the charge of a competent officer, who is to be accompanied by experienced citizens, availing himself, if possible, of the same Karankawa Indians, for observing if said rebels may be found on said island, [and] managing as far as may be possible to learn of the boats that they have, the number and quality of people [there] and the rest, [so] that he may be advised, giving you a report of all his observations, in order that you may have the same original report placed before me for the measures that may be proper." (R.C.V. trans.)

ARTICLES AND REVIEWS IN THE LSG NEWSLETTER VOLS. 1-5

"Great Stamp Campaign," by Pam Keyes, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter 1981)

"Dr. Strangebreed, Or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love Laffite," by Sir Jack D. L. Holmes, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter 1981)

Great Forgers and Famous Fakes, by Charles Hamilton, reviewed by Pam Keyes, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring 1981)

"The Journal: Forgery or the Real Thing?" by John L. Howells, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring 1981)

"An Update on the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park," by Lionel Bienvenue, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer 1981)

"Hellish Bandid or Gentleman Smuggler?" by Pam Keyes, Vol. 1, No. 5 (Fall 1981)

"Controversy Marked 1958 'Buccaneer' Film," reprint of a film review by Pie Dufour in the **New Orleans Times-Picayune** of 13 December 1958, Vol. III, No. 1 (Winter-Spring 1983)

Renato Beluche: Smuggler, Privateer and Patriot, 1780-1860, by Jane Lucas DeGrummond, reviewed by Pam Keyes, Vol. III, No. 2 (Summer-Fall 1983)

"A Visit to Galveston in 1818, by J. Randall Jones," reprinted from an MS in the Rosenberg Library, Vol. IV, No. 1 (Spring 1984)

"New Laffite Biography Needed," an editorial by Pam Keyes, Vol. IV, No. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1984)

"'Treasure Trove': Classic Laffite Lore," reprinted from **Flake's Daily Bulletin** (Galveston) of 5 November 1871, Vol. IV, No. 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1983)

"The Best Laffite Lore," by Robert C. Vogel, Vol. IV, No. 4 (Winter 1984)

"Ships' Histories: USS Alligator," Vol. IV, No. 4 (Winter 1984)

"The Legend of Laffite is Alive and Well and Living in the National Park Service," an editorial by Robert C. Vogel, Vol. V, No. 2 (Summer 1985)

"Ships' Histories: USS Lynx," Vol. V, No. 2 (Summer 1985)

Historic Resource Study: Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, by Jerome A. Greene, reviewed by Robert C. Vogel, Vol. V, Nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1985)

SHIPS' HISTORIES: USS FIREBRAND

The United States Schooner **Firebrand** was purchased at New Orleans in April 1815 by Master Commandant Daniel T. Patterson for \$3,050. The schooner was formerly the Cartagena privateer **Dorada**, captured at Barataria Bay in September 1814. **Firebrand** was placed under the command of Lieutenant T. S. Cunningham and departed on her first cruise in August 1815. According to Navy Department records, **USS Firebrand** was seventy feet in length, with a twenty-one foot beam, armed with a long six-pounder and six twelve-pounder carronades. The schooner had a crew of fifty-two officers and men.

For the next four years **Firebrand** was attached to the New Orleans station and cruised the Gulf of Mexico. Frequent overhauls and personnel shortages limited the schooner's activities. In the late summer of 1815 she made a prize of an armed schooner and two of the Baratarian privateer's prizes, including a sloop of American registry. **Firebrand** also escorted the republican schooner **Petit Milan** to Boquilla in September 1815, carrying arms for the Mexican insurgents. On subsequent cruises, **Firebrand** carried dispatches and funds between New Orleans and the Mexican insurgents. During the latter part of 1818 **Firebrand** captured four smugglers' boats off the mouth of the Sabine and the armed privateer schooner **La Maison**.

On the night of 28-29 July 1819 **Firebrand** was wrecked on Square Handkerchief Shoal near Pass Christian, Mississippi. The schooner was at anchor and taking on provisions from Bay St. Louis when a heavy gale commenced. The schooner broke up and sank -- wreckage and bodies were scattered for nearly thirty miles along the Mississippi coast. Her skipper, Lieutenant Cunningham, and five of the crew were en route to New Orleans when the storm struck; the second-in-command, Lieutenant James McKay McIntosh, was also not on board when **Firebrand** was lost, having gone ashore to Bay St. Louis accompanied by five bluejackets to expedite transportation of stores.

Lieutenant McIntosh was the same officer who is alleged to have visited Jean Laffite at Galveston in November 1819. McIntosh's account of his encounter with the Galveston privateers appeared in the **Knickerbocker Magazine** for March 1847 (reprinted in the **Louisiana Historical Quarterly** XI (1928), 434-444). The **Knickerbocker Magazine** (1833-1865) was a monthly literary magazine published at New York City. Contributors included Washington Irving, Francis Parkman, Henry Longfellow, William Cullen Bryant, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. McIntosh lived in New York City with his sister, Marie J. McIntosh (born Sunbury, Georgia, 1803; died New York City, 1878), who was a novelist. James and Marie both lost their fortunes in the panic of 1837.
