

The Laffite Society Chronicles

VOLUME XIII NUMBER 1
FEBRUARY, 2007

CONTENTS

ARTICLES	AUTHOR	PAGE
THE EDITOR'S PAGE.....	Don C. Marler	1
The Enterprize Midshipman's Letters	Pam Keyes	2
Incidents of Travel in the Yucatan, January, 2007	R. Dale Olson	7
How Laffite Became the Real-Life Byronic Hero	Pam Keyes	19
November Meeting of the Laffite Society	Jean Epperson	23
Laffite Society Christmas Party	Jean Epperson	25
Book Review	Pam Keyes	27
CALENDAR.....		29
BULLETIN BOARD.....		29
NEW MEMBERS.....		30
BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....	INSIDE BACK COVER	
MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION	INSIDE BACK COVER	

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The Laffite Society
Post Office Box 1325
Galveston, Texas 77553-1325
<http://thelaffitesociety.com/>

Editor'Page

Don C. Marler

Has any group of pirates, except those who are part of the official governments of the world, ever captured the imagination of the people as has the brothers Laffite? Everyone seems to know something about them and the interest in them and their activities remains high in many parts of the world. Those interested range from the school child, the man and woman on the street, the novelist, to treasure hunters, college professors and aficionados. It is little short of amazing. I have read somewhere that more books have been written about Napoleon than about anyone else. Jesus, according to the source I read, is a distance second. Why?

Napoleon and the Laffites were active at the same time and there was some interaction between, at least some, of the men associated with both groups. What is it that attracts so powerfully.

There is growing evidence that Jean may have had children. Most students

of the Laffites have, until recently, shied away from making claims for his having children and direct descendants. Perhaps the next big challenge for Laffite researchers is to clarify this issue. I look forward to seeing it addressed in coming issues of *The Laffite Chronicles*.

The Laffite Society has met monthly for eleven years and the interest and participation remains high. In the past few months we have had a wonderful Christmas party, publication of a translation into English of Rubio Mane's *Los Piratas Lafitte*. Laffite Society past president Jeff Modzelewski did the translation. This is a major contribution to the goals of the Laffite Society of making Laffite material available to the interested reader and researcher. See the announcement below to order it for your library. Another major event is the field trip taken to the Yucatan by some members. The chronicle of their trip, written by Dale Olson, is in this issue—don't miss it.

A Translation Of Rubio Mane's *Los Piratas Lafitte*

AVAILABLE NOW

Former Laffite Society President, Jeff Modzelewski, has completed the first and only translation of Mane's Spanish language book *Los Piratas Lafitte* into English. This is a major contribution to the Laffite Society's effort to assemble and make available relevant materials on the brothers Laffite. Jeff has made the book available through a variety of sources:

1. It can be ordered through Island Books at 2115 Post Office St., Galveston, TX 77550-2023. or by email to: modz@airmail.net; or his home telephone, 409-762-3617.
2. It is available at some local bookstores in the Galveston area.
3. It is also listed on ABE Books, for those who do a search on-line.

All those interested in the Laffites should have this rare and interesting book.

Cost is \$18.00 Plus \$3.00 Shipping and Handling.

The *Enterprize* Midshipman's Letters

Pam Keyes

About a year ago through the mail from an antiques seller in Spartanburg, S.C., I obtained a collection of three very old "stampless" cover letters, all written by the same young US naval officer, Cyrus A. Branch. This article tells his story.

The small brig lay becalmed with slack sails in a sea of wax off the Florida Keys. Just finished with his watch for the day, a young officer took out his writing desk, smoothed a sheet of paper and began to write to his brother back home so far away in Virginia:

"U.S. Brig *Enterprize* At Sea
March 6th 1820

Since my last from New Orleans we have been to the town of Galvestown, in the possession of General Laffite..."

The author of this historic, recently discovered letter, was the real-life midshipman made famous in the *United States Magazine* and *Democratic Review* July 1839 story, "The Cruise of the *Enterprise*, a Day with LaFitte." His name was Cyrus Branch.

In the tale of the visit by the *Enterprize* crew to Galveston, it is said that a brunette quadroon woman was "flirting dreadfully with our Mid, so far as dividing oranges into quarters and drinking silent healths could go" until Laffite darted her such a concentrated sharp look that it scared her away from the diners.

Continuing with the letter,

"(General Laffite) who was released from prison in New Orleans, on, or about the 8th of January 1815 where he was confined under a charge of Piracy. But on condition of his being released he bound

himself and crew to serve under General Jackson, during the attack of the British forces. You no doubt recollect of his having fought Bravely on the 8th_

After the ratification of the treaty with Great Britain, General Laffite established himself at Galvestown (an old Spanish settlement) and under the Venezulian (sic) flag carried on a war against the King of Spain.

From Galvestown, Laffite cruisers fitted out and not being able to take a sufficient plunder from the Spaniards, commenced their depredations (sic) on all Neutral flags. It was intended that the squadron fitted out under Capt. Henly against the Amelia Islands should have acted against Galvestown also, but this part of the expedition was laid aside from what cause I know not.

Lately the depredations (sic) on our coast by pirates under commission from this place; has been so frequent, that our government came to a determination of rooting them from their hold. To effect which Comm. Patterson has been authorized to offer such terms as would best be likely to rid us of such Neighbours. Laffite did agree to raise the fortification from the village and evacuate the port, on condition that a free passport be granted for himself and effects, which being agreed to, he fired the Buildings before our arrival with his passport and intends the destruction of the fortification as soon as he is

ready to Leave the place which will be in all this month. He intends joining Com Aury at the Providence Islands. Com. Aury has sorten sail and is said to intend an attack against Port Amoa on the main.

We are now on our passage for Kingston, Jamaica, for the purpose of taking specie to Charleston and New Orleans, after which we expect to return to New York, I suppose about June next. On our arrival in New York I shall leave the *Enterprize* and endeavor to get orders for the yard, for the purpose of benefitting (sic) me by study. There is a school established on board the *Washington* for studying mathamaticks, (sic) which I shall attend, and when the board convened in the fall, shall present myself for examination.

Give my Love to all the family and believe me your Brother,
Cyrus I shall write my sister the first port I arrive at.

This letter was addressed on the stampless cover to Christopher Branch, Esquire, Manchester Virginia, and bears a "Ship 20" postmark.

The Branch *Enterprize* letter is important as it confirms the date at which Jean Laffite was preparing to leave Galveston, plus it attests to a previously unknown fact, that Lt. Lawrence Kearny, captain of the *Enterprize*, brought Laffite the passport from Patterson. Interestingly, the Branch letter also adds further insight to Laffite's stated plan to join Aury at Old Providence. Although Cyrus makes no mention of the dinner given by Laffite to the *Enterprize* officers, it is obvious he was with Laffite at the same time Kearny spoke with him.

One curious aspect of the letter is the *Enterprize*'s mission immediately after leaving Galveston. Some unknown party loaded the small, 84-foot ship's hold with specie at Kingston, Jamaica,

to deliver to Charleston, S.C. and New Orleans. This most likely was a hidden Masonic agenda, as that was their business financial network. Kingston controlled Masonic activities at Charleston, which controlled New Orleans Masons. The specie likely was to be used to further the political and banking interests of Masons.

Alas, poor Cyrus apparently failed his coursework for advancement, or else his plan to study did not materialize because he was away at sea: US naval records show he attained only the rank of a midshipman before his death in a duel in May 1821 at Havana. No detailed information about the duel has been located.

In researching Cyrus Branch, a birth date was not found, but he was the illegitimate son of Daniel Bernard and an unnamed Branch woman. Cyrus and his brother Christopher were raised by Mary Fleming Branch of Manchester, Va., just across the river from Richmond. He was the great-nephew of Mary's brother, William Fleming, a prominent Continental Congressman and judge who likely got Cyrus his appointment to the US Navy in 1814.

Very little is known about Cyrus Branch other than the intelligent, observant tone of his letters. He must have received schooling as his penmanship, grammar and spelling are all remarkably good for a young man of the early 1800s. A short history of Branch can be pieced together from the two other letters written about other US naval vessels earlier in his maritime career:

The first letter was sent to William Fleming at Summerville, Va., and is dated April 27, 1815:

"Dear Uncle,
I this day received my orders to join the sloop of war, *Torch*, commanded by Capt. Chauncy. She is a very handsome vessel for her size, and sails very fast. I could wish to be on board of a larger vessel, but must be content with my present

situation, for a while. The fleet is near by ready for sea, and a part of them will go down to the hook tomorrow; I shall go on board in the morning as my vessel is one, that is to drop down.

My situation will not be one of the most pleasant nature at first, as I am not acquainted with any of the officers by whom she is commanded; yet I flatter myself that by my good conduct and willing exertions to do my duty, that I shall gain the confidence of my superiors and by so doing pass my time ease and contentment.

There has arrived this morning a vessel from France freighted with news of the most astonishing & unexpected nature: Bonaparte is again master of France, and Louis the 18 is again a resident in England. Such news would not be credited by me, was it not for the undoubted proof that I have before my eyes. This vessel (the *Sine-qua-none*) is 25 days from Rochelle (Capt. Pond) he brings Bonaparte's official proclamation to the good people of Paris as he styles them. Bonaparte landed at Frejus and marched to and took possession of Paris without the losing a drop of blood. I must refer you for further particulars to the public Print and offer you my most affectionate farewell until times may bring me back I hope with honor to myself and satisfaction to those that feel a wish for my welfare.

Your most affectionate and truly revering nephew,
Cyrus Branch"

As a postscript, he wrote:

"My Dear Mother
You will see from what I have said to my uncle what my situation in the fleet is and whether it will be changed

after I get up the straits, I can not tell. When you have an opportunity, you may let Mrs. Heth know that I parted with Jack this evening, he well and is thought very much of by his officers. Give my love to my brother and sister and I shall write to them tomorrow if I have time for I have little or none to devote to any but my public duty, it being now past ten.

Give my love to all the family. Tell cousin Caroline I will bring her a present from the Mediterranean and take to heart my unfeigned and most affectionate love, believe me your dutiful son,
Cyrus Branch"

The *Torch* was a small schooner active mostly in the Mediterranean from 1814-1816. About a year later, Branch had changed ships to the much larger US Frigate *Macedonian* (161 feet long) and had gone on an adventure to Carthage. The following letter was written to Mrs. Mary F. Branch:

"US Frigate *Macedonian*
Annapolis Roads July 18th,
1816

You are no doubt apprised of our arrival at this Place, before this; and also of the success of Mr. Hughes mission to Carthage. We were thirty two days from Boston to St. Martha at which Place we first came to an anchor, for the Purpose of obtaining the Best information possible of the number of prisoners in the Spanish possessions, and where confined. One making applications to the governor, we were informed that there were a few prisoners in that Place, but that he would not be justified in delivering them without an order from the commander of the forces at Carthage. This being a plausible reason, we got underway and Proceeded to

the said Place where we arrived on the 7 of June. Mr. Hughes sent his letters on shore to inform the general of his mission, and the demands of the american government. His communication was well received, and he invited on shore, for the arrangement of the releae of the Prisoners. After a few days negotiation it was agreed that the Prisoners should be given up. But the then commanding officer (general Montalbo) refused to negotiate as respected the property seized aledging that he had not received any instructions on that from the commander in chief (general Morillo) who was at distance of seven or 8 hundred miles on an expedition against the patriots. Finding that no satisfaction could be obtained on that point, we got underweigh and returned to St. Martha where we obtained the remainder of the Prisoners. We remained in St. Martha a few days and on the 19th of June go underweigh and shaped our course for the united states. We were Blessed with the finest weather I ever experienced, a thing that is not common in those latitudes. Uncle Fleming I suppose is in Kentucky at present, and you must have heard from him since his leaving Summerville. Therefore when you answer this let me know how he was when you last heard from him, and when he expects to return to Virginia, Tell my sister that she must not wait for me to write, but that she must give me the news of neighbourhoods as soon as Possible. Let me know how my Brother drives on, and whether he and my uncle came to an accomodation before he left Virginia for I am particularly anxious in that affair.

Capt. Worthington expects to go to Washington in a few days

and on his return we shall know what will be done with this ship. It is surmised that she will either go to Washington or Norfolk for repairs. If she should be go to either of those Places I think it possible that I may obtain leave to visit Old Summerville once more.

Give my most affectionate love to my Sister and Brother and tell them they must not stand up on Punchbo. Likewise to cousin's Caroline, Eliza, Mary, Graham, Robert and John, and tell them that I shall expect to hear from them all shortly.

Give my love also to our good old aunt Nelly Howel and tell her that I hope to see her yet in a few months. Remember me also to all the rest of the servants. Give my best respects to the famillys of Salisbury and the coalmine also to Doctor Wooldridge and lady and don't forget to remember me Particularly to my friend Thomas Bolling and tell him I was much disappointed in his not writing me while I was in Boston. My love would appear nearly exhausted, But there still remains much for my dear mother who I hope will still believe me Her most affectionate son, Cyrus A. Branch

P.S. My health is much mended since I wrote my Brother and I hope when I write again that I shall be perfectly well." ¹

These three letters are all that remains to tell the story of Cyrus Branch, the *Enterprize* midshipman who visited Galveston. A genealogical search for his family turned up no wife or children, but his brother Christopher has many descendants. Interestingly Cyrus and his brother were related to Thomas Jefferson through their Bolling kin. The Branches also were direct descendants of Pocahontas.

Endnotes:

1. Louise du Bellet, *Some*

Prominent Virginia Families,
(Lynchburg, J.P. Bell, 1907, Chapter
XII, Boling Family).

FOUNDING LAFFITE SOCIETY PRESIDENT HONORED

R. DALE OLSON RECEIVED THE DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS AWARD

Former President of The Laffite Society, R. Dale Olson, has received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from his alma mater, The University of North Texas, and will be honored at an Awards Dinner in Denton, Texas on Friday 20 April 2007.

The Distinguished Alumnus Award is the most prestigious conferred by the University. Of approximately 250,000 former students, only 160 have received this honor. Previous recipients include, International concert pianist, Ivan Davis, football player, "Mean" Joe Green, former Miss America, Phyllis George, golfer, Don January, former Press Secretary to President Lyndon Johnson, Bill Moyers, author, Larry McMurtry, jazz trumpeter, Marvin Stamm, and television personality, Phil McGraw ("Dr. Phil").

Olson is noted for his successes in the fields of professional music performance, brass musical instrument research and design, real estate investment, and his activities related to the history of Texas and the Gulf Coast.

CONGRATULATIONS DALE! WE ARE PROUD OF YOU.

**BUT JUST TO KEEP YOU HUMBLE, DON'T FORGET THAT BEHIND EVERY GOOD MAN
THERE IS A GOOD WOMAN.**

INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL IN THE YUCATAN, JANUARY, 2007

R. Dale Olson

In 1841, the publishers, Harper and Brothers of New York, printed the first edition of what later became an essential reference for those having an interest in Mexican history, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, written by explorer John Lloyd Stephens. Stephens (1805-1852) was already famous for having written earlier, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia, Petrae, and the Holy Land*, and *Incidents of Travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia, and Poland*.

In 1839, Stephens made arrangements to travel to Mexico and Central America, and took with him illustrator Frederick Catherwood. It was Catherwood's excellent artistic representation which greatly enhanced the written descriptions of Stephens, and whose works have long been reproduced in separate volumes.

During his travel in Yucatan, Stephens attempted to locate a gravesite purportedly holding the remains of Jean Laffite. Further, he located the individual referred to as Lucy Allen, who had accompanied Pierre Laffite and Canadian Privateer George Donald Schumph after a fierce battle at Isla Mujeres which resulted in the death of Pierre. Although he found Lucy years later, she was in such a perpetual state of inebriation that a personal interview was useless. So, in addition to his other myriad activities, Stephens disclosed an interest in the subject of the Laffites, and their activities in the Yucatan following their departure from Galveston.

The title of this writing has been chosen with respect to both Stephens and Catherwood and their contributions to the study of the Laffites. For learned travelers in the Yucatan, the works of both of these men continually hover over one's shoulders. Today, the bookstores of Merida continue to display reprints of Stephens' books and

Catherwood's drawings. Tour guides to the Mayan sites such as Chichen Itza and Uxmal often refer to both Stephens and Catherwood, although the names may have little relevance for most casual tourists.

Laffite Society President, Jim Nonus, announced a trip to Yucatan in January, 2007 at the Society's annual Christmas party in December, 2006. So it was that seven members made plans to revisit Yucatan and many sites associated with the Laffites.

SUNDAY, 14 JANUARY 2007

On Sunday January 14, 2007, Jim Nonus and Secretary, Dorothy McDonald Karilanovich, arrived at the home of Diane and Dale Olson in the East End Historic District of Galveston. At 1:00 p.m., the four departed Galveston for Houston Intercontinental Airport.

Others in the group were Robert Vogel and Kathy Taylor of Minnesota, Ed Jamison and Sandra Rogers of Galveston.

DEPARTURE

Upon arrival at the Houston airport, an unexpected problem arose which prevented Dorothy from going. Changes in passport requirements were scheduled to become effect on 23 January, after the group's scheduled return to the United States. However, the Mexican government modified the effective date of their new requirements. Dorothy, traveling on an original birth certificate, had an expired passport. Continental Airlines would not allow Dorothy to board the plane, as it was expected that a) the Mexican government would not allow her entry into their country, or b) Dorothy would be detained in Mexico when attempting to leave days later. Neither set of circumstances were tolerable, and

Dorothy reluctantly, but wisely, returned to Galveston.

A severe blizzard was predicted to arrive in Houston Sunday evening, and Continental Airlines Flight Number 1842, carrying Jim Nonus and the Olsons, was scheduled to depart at 6:50 p.m. The flight, which was scheduled to only require two hours, was delayed one and one-half hours. Now, icy rain began to appear, which had the potential of canceling the flight. Finally, the plane departed at 8:00 p.m.

The itinerary for this trip was to differ from the previous trip to the same area taken by The Society in 2001. The Olsons and Vogels were the only ones to have been present on both field trips. In the earlier trip, the focus was on Merida, with a day trip to Dzilam de Bravo, Dzinzantun, Progreso, and other remote villages. Again, we plan to drive to Dzilam and Dzinzantun. But, this trip will include a more precise revisit to the route taken by Canadian privateer George Donald Schumph and Lucy Allen following their arrival in Dzilam de Bravo with the body of Pierre Laffite.

Additionally, the group plans to travel to the colonial city of Campeche on the Mexican Gulf Coast, a town rich in pirate lore and legend. Several members also plan to travel to the Maya Indian sites of Chichen Itza and Uxmal. All against a backdrop of education, investigation, and Kahula fortified coffee, Pina Colatas, and fine Mexican food!

Intense scholarly preparation is not typically a hallmark of Laffite Society field trips, but most members engage in often significant preplanning to enhance the trip. We recalled, as but a few examples, when visiting Fort Livingston on Grande Terre years ago, Robert Vogel had thoughtfully taken a set of original plans for the group to study while actually standing on the site. And, for the last trip to the Yucatan, the group printed and distributed the entire deposition by Schumph for all to study.

For this foray, members had again familiarized themselves with the Schumph deposition. Ed Jamison purchased the Saxon book and gallantly attempted a reading of the Spanish language "Las Piratas Campeche". Greatly enhancing this trip was the very recently published English translation of "Las Piratas Laffite" by Jorge Rubio Mane, by Jeff Modzelewski. And, Dorothy McDonald Karilanovic engaged in electronic communication with Michel Antochiw and others at the General Archives in Merida.

At the elegant Christmas party in December, each member present received a copy of the now Mane-Modzelewski book. The Vogels, living in Minnesota, had not attended and Diane and Dale Olson hand-carried a copy to them from Jeff and Kathy Modzelewski. It was Robert who contributed a biography of Mane for the book.

ARRIVAL IN MERIDA

Proceeding through Mexican customs upon arrival in Merida was a smooth operation with only the checking of passports and the execution of a few short documents. By 10:20 p.m., Jim, Diane, and Dale were in a taxi traversing the route into the "Colonia Centro" of Merida. Before 11:00 p.m., they had joined the others, who had left earlier, in the beautiful atrium of Hotel Villa Maria, a renovated 17th century mansion. The standard late night cocktails and discussion of history, such a prominent part of Laffite Society field trips, was held in abeyance in deference to sleep and preparation for the next day's activities.

Ed, Sandra, Robert, and Kathy had arrived the day previous. After exploring the weekly market in the "Zocalo" (the main square of Merida), Robert and Ed arranged for a driver and van for Monday's day trip.

MONDAY, 15 JANUARY 2007

Promptly at 8:00 a.m., our driver "Raul" a "specialist" in archaeology,

and highly knowledgeable concerning matters of Yucatanian history, appeared at the Villa Maria. During the exit from Merida, Raul slowly drove down Paseo de Montejo, a major street of Merida, which is the site of many huge, elegant 18th. Century mansions previously occupied by merchants and wealthy dealers of "henequen" (fiber) in earlier days. This natural fiber was eventually replaced by synthetic fibers and the wealth of the henequen growers diminished. Many of these mansions easily rival the elegant larger homes in Europe.

Raul questioned our reasons for choosing the route we had given to him. None of the locations were typical choices of tourists. We explained, in general, the fact that we were traveling, in reverse for convenience, the trail of George Schumph, which Robert had created.

By 9:15 a.m., we were on the road to Motul, a small village. Vogel explained that "this place has absolutely nothing to do with Laffite", but was included to visit the old church dating to 1651. This is a "sister" church to that of Dzidzantun, which we will later visit. Motul, now with a population of approximately 20,000 is a large city compared to others we visited during the day. Founded in the 11th. Century, it was molded into a colonial city by the Spanish

One hour later, at 10:15 a.m., the group departed Motul and arrived in Dzemul at 10:45. Dzemul, home to about 2800 individuals, is 27 miles northeast of Merida. Upon arrival, we immediately visited the huge 17th Century Santa Ana Cathedral of the Franciscans. Dzemul is the town where Lucy Allen was left when she became ill, possibly with malaria. The only Europeans in the area would have been the Franciscan monks, and it is presumed that Schumph and his guard would not have left Lucy with native Mexicans at the time, but chose to leave her at the Santa Ana Cathedral. Although conjecture, it may have taken Lucy several months to recover from the fever. In that she arrived in Dzemul in

October, she possibly remained at the church until at least December, 1821.

No records of Lucy exist in Dzemul. It is interesting to note that Lucy was not taken to Merida to be deposited, and that there is no record of authorities sending a emissary to Dzemul to question her. In reality, her presence in the story of the Laffites is rather transitory.

Members, with Raul driving, departed Dzemul at 11:00 a.m. again on the road traversed by Schumph, but in reverse.

Dzidzantun was the next stop, arriving at 11:40 a.m. This little town of 7100 people is 40 miles east northeast of Merida. During the Society's visit in 2001, the church was closed, and the group agonized over poor fortune when it was again found to be locked. Diligence was rewarded when we met several young school children who showed how to enter from a side door. The huge roof of this old church had collapsed circa 1923, and destroyed much of the floor. According to Robert, who had studied the history of this old structure, congregants had just left Mass when the roof collapsed, and no one was killed or injured. The roof, made of cement or plaster, appears to have been at least two feet thick and the combined weight of the massive collapse could have approximated hundreds of tons of materials falling some 50 feet onto the floor of the sanctuary.

This church, and the town of Dzinzantun, were the subjects of raids by pirates operating long before the Laffites. One story recounted by Vogel, as originally told to him during a tour of the facility years earlier, recalled how pirates hung the supervising monk upside down by his heels until he admitted the location of money. Afterward, heavy fortifications were constructed around the church to save it, and the monks, from future attacks.

Hundreds of people would have lived in Dzinzantun in 1821 when Lucy Allen was there. One marker in the church disclosed the identity of one parishioner who would have lived there at that time:

Eusubio Coral Y Ferraz
Born 15 December 1769
Died December, 1846
Age 77.

Eusubio would have been 52 years of age in 1821.

By 12:25 p.m., the group departed Dzinstantun and headed for one of the most famous names in the story of the Laffites, Dzilam de Bravo, on the Gulf Coast of the Yucatan.

At 12:50 p.m., the van stopped at a Mexican military checkpoint, where armed police typically search vehicles for drugs, or contraband. Upon stopping, Dale quickly jumped out of the van to take a photograph. The action was upsetting to the guards who appeared to immediately go on alert. The incident was quickly resolved when the Mexican police realized that Dale was simply taking photographs. They smiled and waved as the van drove away.

Five minutes later the group entered the village of Dzilam de Bravo and quickly congregated for lunch at El Pescador Restaurant on the town square. With a driver, Society members were able to enjoy a Mexican beer, or "Cerveza" ("Sol", "Modelo Negra", or the standard "Corona") with lunch and at breaks in the drive. Raul politely abstained.

Dzilam, an ancient Maya settlement has a population of approximately 1900 inhabitants. Its primary industry today, as in pre-Spanish days, is salt.

According to the Schumph deposition, Pierre was buried at the Campo Santo of the church at Dzilam. This site has long been taken away by the encroaching Gulf of Mexico and no longer exists. Little exists today in Dzilam which is related to the Laffite story, except for a monument on the beach dedicated to Jean Laffite, under the erroneous assumption that it was Jean, not Pierre, who was buried at the place.. All gathered at the monument, took photographs, and spent a few minutes walking the beach. Diane and Jim picked up sea shells and conch shells to place in their collection in Galveston.

The Alcocer family is prominent in Dzilam, and many are of the belief that they are related to Jean Laffite. This has a very, very low level of probability. If there are any relationships to the Laffites at all, it would be to Pierre, not Jean.

Raul took the only available road from Dzilam to the port of Progreso, driving along the Gulf. At 4:10 p.m., members reached Progreso and stopped for drinks and guacamole at an open, outside bar appropriately named "Laffites". In 2001 Progreso was a small village with few distinctions. Today, in 2007, it has one of the longest piers in Mexico stretching out into the Gulf of Mexico to accommodate the many cruise ships which visit. New hotels, bars, restaurants, and souvenir shops have blossomed as a result of the new tourists which visit the place from the cruise ships.

By 5:00 p.m., the group departed Progreso, and the weather turned cold and overcast. Less than one hour later, all were again at the Villa Maria and gathered in Ed and Sandra's room for Kahula, wine, and conversation. Later, all except for Jim (who had returned to his hotel for the evening), had dinner in an elegant private dining room at the hotel. Jim later advised that, while we were traveling, Dr. Michel Antochiw visited his Maison Laffite and left a photocopy of the original Schumph deposition, the first ever seen by any Society members. It remains unclear where the original copy resides, but it has been reported to be in a "private collection". It would be two days before the group attempted to contact Dr. Antochiw for a personal visit.

All retired to their respective rooms at the Villa Maria, having completed the first full day of activities, and planning for the trip on Tuesday to Campeche.

TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2007

The city of Galveston, or at least the portion of that Island occupied by Jean Laffite, was, according to some reports, at one time referred to as "Campeche". Today, the Laffite Society was going to the original Campeche. Jim joined the

others at the Villa Maria at 8:15 a.m. for breakfast at the hotel prior to departing.

Today, all took a public bus, the ADO line, rather than a private driver. Some members chose to return to Merida after visiting Campeche, while others planned to remain overnight. Ed, Sandra and Jim left on a bus at 11:00 a.m. Tickets were sold out, so Robert, Kathy, Diane, and Dale departed at 11:30 a.m.

The 102 mile distance between Merida and Campeche, took approximately two hours, and provided a most interesting trip in that the terrain near Campeche was very hilly, whereas that near Dzilam, experienced the day before, was completely flat. Arriving at 11:45 a.m., the Vogels and the Olsons took a taxi to the Francis Drake, a hotel investigated using the Internet prior to departure on Sunday. By 2:15 p.m., both couples had checked into the hotel, and left on a walking tour of the historic downtown section. Shortly thereafter, about 3:00 p.m., the Olsons and Vogels met up with Ed, Sandra, and Jim for lunch at Casa de las Arcas, on a beautiful second floor exterior balcony. Following lunch, all again walked Campeche, shopping and visiting the small museum. Again, the group stopped at 6:45 p.m. for coffee and treats on the downtown square.

Several hours later, Jim, Ed, and Sandra departed by bus for Merida, while the Vogels and Olsons attended the pirate show, "Espectaculo de Luz Sonide" held at one of the old fortifications protecting Campeche from attacks by pirates long ago. The show was excellent. After an introduction by actors dressed in pirate garb, the tour group of approximately 40 to 45 guests climbed to the top of the huge concrete fortification, and heard more of the history of Campeche. This was followed by a movie in Spanish with English sub-titles moving quickly across the screen.

Later, all descended the steep, small stone stairs, across a large grassy area, to bleachers where the show is recorded in several different languages. Actors,

on top of the fortifications portrayed the history of Campeche, with emphasis on the pirate theme. Action included the shooting of flaming arrows with a bow, and the standard sword fight.

After the show, the Vogels and Olsons walked the six or eight blocks back to the Hotel Francis Drake for the night.

Day three had come to a conclusion.

WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY 2007

Six years ago this date, members of the Laffite Society departed for Yucatan, a diary of which appeared in the *Laffite Chronicles* in the same year.

Having remained in Campeche for the night, the Vogels and Olsons were planning to return to Merida and rejoin Ed, Sandra, and Jim. By 9:00 a.m. the two couples had breakfast at the dining room of the Hotel Francis Drake (the Balandra Restaurant) and by 10:00 a.m. separated and went into different directions to shop and further explore Campeche.

Although the city of Campeche strongly promotes the theme of piracy, the local bookstores were devoid of any books regarding pirates. Not even the small children's book, "Las Piratas Campeche" by Miguel Angel Tenorio, published in five editions between 1999 and 2005, was available.

Shortly after noon, all met at the Hotel and took a taxi to the ADO bus terminal, and by 1:30 p.m. all had departed for Merida. Arriving at the Hotel Caribe in Merida at 4:15 p.m., the Vogels and Olsons soon joined the others who had returned the day prior. Robert and Dale enjoyed a cerveza while Kathy and Diane shopped. By 7:30 p.m., all met for dinner at an Italian restaurant nearby, the Il Coffee. Following dinner, all bade farewell to Ed and Sandra, who were leaving early the next morning.

Tomorrow will be the first, and only, day of the trip which will not involve driving or traveling from one place to another.

THURSDAY 18 JANUARY 2007

Ed and Sandra departed at 6:55 a.m. on a flight from Merida to Houston, bringing to an end the portion of the trip which involved all members. Jim will leave early tomorrow, and the Vogels and Olsons early on Sunday. No one understood Continental Airlines scheduling which had the sole flight of the day departing at 6:55 a.m.!

By 8:15 a.m., Jim, Robert, Kathy, Diane, and Dale met in the restaurant at the Hotel Caribe for breakfast, sitting in the open air atrium with lush tropical foliage and caged tropical birds. One hour later began the search for a peripheral figure in the study of the Laffites, the thus far elusive Dr. Michel Antochiw.

In the 1990s, Dr. Antochiw, former Director of the Center for Support of Historical Research in Yucatan, had produced a pamphlet in Spanish based upon a transcription of the deposition of Canadian privateer, George Schumph.

George Donald Schumph was a young man who had purportedly been with Jean Laffite on Galveston Island, and later followed the Laffites to Isla Mujeres, an island near Cancun, Mexico. It was on Isla Mujeres that Mexican authorities, lead by Miguel Molas, attacked the pirates, severely wounding Pierre. Schumph, Pierre, Pierre's probable consort, Lucy Allen, and perhaps a Mexican guard quickly departed Isla Mujeres in a small boat. They landed near Dzilam de Bravo, and Pierre died at "Los Bocas", near Dzilam. After Pierre's burial in Dzilam, the remaining members of the party traveled inland, headed for Merida. Lucy became ill and was left at Dzenul. Upon arriving in Merida, Mexican authorities took a deposition from Schumph. This document remained unknown for over a century, until the late 1930s.

In 1937, Mexican historian J. Ignacio Rubio Mane based four chapters of his work, *Los Piratas Laffite* on this deposition. Jeff Modzelewski, in 2006, completed an English translation of

Mane's work. During the translation process, Dorothy McDonald Karilovich and Jeff Modzelewski, had corresponded with Dr. Antochiw discussing various aspects of his work with the Schumph deposition. This trip to Merida provided an excellent opportunity for some of the group to personally meet Dr. Antochiw.

Dorothy had communicated with Antochiw, advising that Jim Nonus would be staying at the Maison Laffite, and could be reached at that locale. Jim was not, however, at the hotel the entire day, and Dr. Antochiw visited during one of Jim's absences, and left a photocopy of the original Schumph deposition. No one in the group had yet had the opportunity to meet Antochiw. Today may be the day!

The entire group began the search for Michel Antochiw by going to several libraries and federal institutes asking for the location of the "Cultural Archives of the Yucatan". The place and location was unknown to all. A search of the Merida telephone directory disclosed no "Cultural Archives ...".

Finally we visited a bookstore, "Dante" on the main square of Merida and inquired if any clerks spoke English. One young college student, Ana Herrera Pareja came forth and immediately began to offer assistance. She knew nothing of Antochiw or the Cultural Archives. Again, the telephone directory was consulted and the name "Antochiw" was searched, successfully. Obtaining the telephone number of Mr. Antochiw, Dale and Ana went to an adjoining office with a public telephone where Ana called and asked for "Mr. Antochiw". "He is not in Merida today", his wife advised. Ana explained the reason for wishing to meet with Antochiw, and his wife provided their home address.

Jim had brought a copy of *Profiles of Pillage* by Bill Doree (with a photograph of a pirate-costumed Jim Nonus on the cover), and Robert had donated his copy of Jeff Modzelewski's *The Pirates Laffite* to give to Michel Antochiw. We arranged for Ana to deliver the two

books to the Antochiw home after work. Ana is a college student in Merida studying tourism.

So, no one in the Laffite Society met with Dr. Antochiw, but a great effort was made, and our search ended about noon. A gift of two books eventually reached the elusive Dr. through the generosity and cooperation of Ana.

Afterward, the Vogels strolled the streets of Merida taking photographs of historic buildings. The Olsons and Nonus went shopping! An hour later all were back at the Hotel Caribe in the restaurant for drinks and relaxation.

The trip was essentially without adverse incident, except for what we began to refer to as "The Great Guacamole Controversy", instigated by no less than President Jim Nonus. A connoisseur of this green colored dip made from avocados, Jim promised, before leaving Galveston, to sample guacamole from as many restaurants as possible. At a restaurant adjacent to the Hotel Caribe, "Main Street", Jim ordered guacamole. Immediately, he sensed that the chef had used excessive amounts of lime, and so advised the waiter. Demonstrating great diplomacy and candor, Jim explained that "the guacamole in the bar across the street is much better", and that perhaps the chef from Main Street should go across the street as an educational venture after work some day. Jim did not, however, ever complain about the quality of the myriad Margaritas inhaled during the trip.

By 5:30 Diane and Jim strolled across the street to the bar which boasted the fine guacamole and confirmed Jim's pronouncement and evaluation, supported of course, with an equally fine Margarita or two.

The Vogels and Dale walked one block to the Zocalo to observe the flag lowering ceremony, held daily by the Mexican military. Each day at 6:00 p.m., a drum and bugle corps plays on one side of the square. It is soon joined by six "goose-stepping" Mexican military personnel who march to the flag in the center of the square, lower it

slowly, and carry it, waving in the wind, across the street to a federal building, where it is folded and stored for the night. Each morning one may observe the same ceremony when the flag is raised.

Thousands upon thousands of birds occupied every square inch of the large trees surrounding the square, but made the decision to leave when the bugle corps began playing.

By 7:30 p.m., the Vogels and Dale joined Diane and Jim, and all walked to El Greco Café, a Cuban restaurant, for dinner.

The end of another great day in Yucatan, and the end of the search for Michel Antochiw.

Jim leaves tomorrow morning at 6:55 a.m., leaving only the Vogels and the Olsons to complete the trip.

FRIDAY 19 JANUARY 2007

At this point in the trip most Laffite related activities have ended. Today, the Vogels and the Olsons traveled to the Maya site of Chichen Itza, about a two hour drive from Merida. Tomorrow, Saturday, the Vogels plan to remain in Merida, while the Olsons plan to visit the Maya site of Uxmal, a one hour drive from Merida.

Details of both of these sites are readily available and have no particular relevance to the study of the Laffites. For this reason, descriptions of these truly impressive locales are not provided.

Today, Jim Nonus arose very early and departed on Continental Flight #1843 at 6:55 a.m. for Houston. The Vogels and Olsons had breakfast at the Hotel Caribe and departed at 9:15 a.m. in a van with a total of ten guests for Chichen Itza. Although Robert and Kathy are very experienced Yucatan travelers, neither had ever visited this most famous Maya site. The Olsons had visited neither Chichen Itza nor Uxmal.

During the drive out of Merida, the driver again drove slowly by some of

the great mansions of Merida. By 10:50 a.m., all arrived at Chichen Itza. The guided portion of the tour was completed by about 12:30 p.m., and all participants had until 2:00 p.m. to stroll the site independently. Dozens of vendors were in evidence selling numerous Maya themed items.

By 2:15 the group had returned to the van and had lunch at a nearby restaurant, "Xaybe". This was a beautiful, relatively new, "hacienda", patterned after the original haciendas several hundreds of years old. The grounds and the structure were in immaculate condition, demonstrating a rather unexpected level of maintenance. Food at Xaybe was tolerable, but the restaurant is designed to accommodate very large numbers of tourists, usually arriving by bus. The operation was very smooth, with highly attentive waiters, although guests traversed a buffet bar. Local dancers performed during the meal on a large stage in the restaurant.

Leaving at 3:15, the Vogels and Olsons were back at Hotel Caribe by 5:00 p.m., where Robert and Dale enjoyed cervezas at the Main Street restaurant. Kathy and Diane joined the men and all walked to the Zocalo shopping and viewing the very busy square on Friday night.

SATURDAY 20 JANUARY 2007

Today was Dale's birthday and he and Diane celebrated by traveling to Uxmal, a truly impressive Maya site one hour from Merida by van. The Vogels spent the final day of the trip strolling Merida and taking photographs of numerous historic buildings and examples of architecture.

By 1:00 p.m., Diane and Dale left for Uxmal. The driver took extra time leaving Merida to drive through an ancient cemetery, very reminiscent of those found in New Orleans where the graves were above-ground. Highly decorated and often painted white, the graves were densely packed, an obvious reminder of the very large number of people interred within the grounds.

Prior to arrival at Uxmal, the driver again took a slight detour and drove the grounds of an abandoned hacienda, Yaxcopoil, a 17th. Century structure of bygone magnificence. Upon returning to Texas, the Olsons viewed real estate sites associated with the Yucatan, and found that some of the old haciendas were for sale in the very broad range of \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000 American dollars. Often, this price included very large acreage, and buildings requiring extensive repairs. Small houses in Centro Merida were listed in the \$30,000 range, with larger, older, more historic homes upward to the \$500,000 range.

Arriving at Uxmal at 2:30 p.m., the Olsons learned that they were the only English speaking members on their van of ten people, and, as such, were given a private tour by the English speaking, and highly knowledgeable driver. Uxmal was a sharp contrast to Chichen Itza. Few people were in evidence, and long range photographs could easily be taken without including visitors. Chichen Itza is the most famous Maya site in Yucatan and, due to its relatively close proximity to both Merida and the popular tourist city of Cancun, thousands of visitors are often present. On 21 September each year, a "magic" number in Maya culture, it was reported that 65,000 would descend upon Chichen Itza in a single day!

The "cenote", or sacrificial well at Chichen Itza was explored by Edward Thompson in the early part of the 20th. Century, and was described by John Lloyd Stephens much earlier. This is a very large "sink hole" with dark green water standing far below the lip of the well. Human sacrifices were common at the cenote. Uxmal had no cenote, but probably practiced human sacrifices at some of the temples and other structures on the site.

The Olsons ate dinner on the grounds of Uxmal and attended a light and sound show at 7:00 p.m., describing the history of the place.

By 9:00 p.m., Diane and Dale had returned to Merida and the Hotel

Caribe. Robert and Kathy had experienced Merida for one final day, and all were preparing to depart early the next day, bringing to an end the Laffite Society field trip.

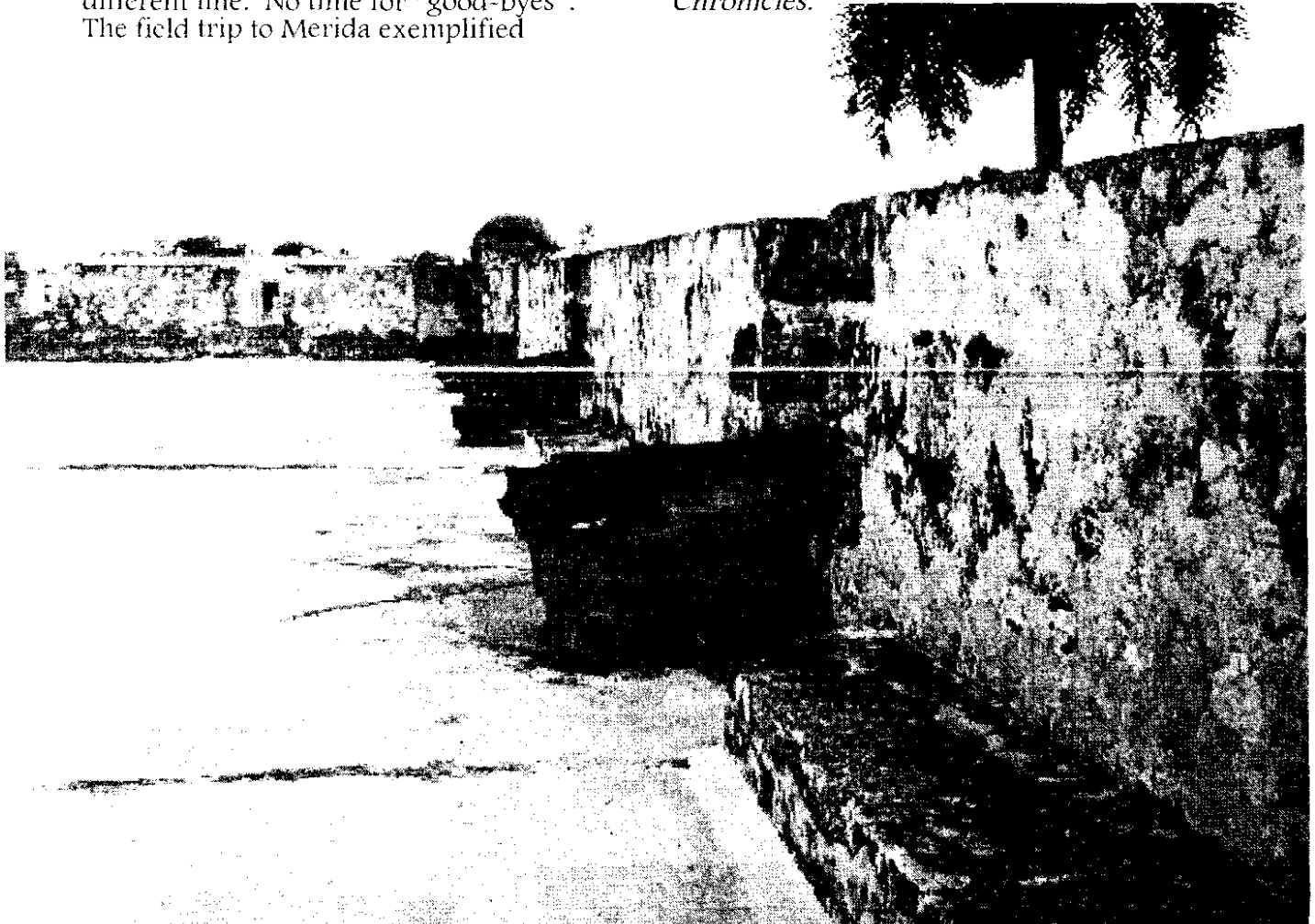
SUNDAY 21 JANUARY 2007

Robert, Kathy, Diane, and Dale arose at 4:00 a.m., departed in a taxi from Hotel Caribe by 5:00, drove through the near empty streets of Merida and reached the airport by 5:15 a.m. All moved through Mexican customs and departed on the same Continental Flight #1843 at 6:55 a.m.

The Olsons, who have a home in Galveston, processed through one line at Houston Intercontinental, while the Vogels, who live in Minnesota and were awaiting a continuing flight, were separated and moved through a different line. No time for "good-byes". The field trip to Merida exemplified

many of the elements common to twelve years of previous trips; scholarship, camaraderie, enjoyment of life, and the study of history.

The Society has traveled many times to New Orleans, took a "plantation tour" of Southern Louisiana, visited Grand Isle, and waded through the swamps of Grande Terre. They have participated in archaeological digs at the Maison Rouge in Galveston, visited the Sam Houston Regional Library and Museum in Liberty, and made dozens of trips of shorter duration than the one week spent in Merida. These trips are a fundamental aspect of The Society. Although only a small percentage of members go on these field trips, typically between 10 and 25, full reports are carried back to the general membership at monthly meetings, and are reported in *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.



FORTIFICATIONS , CAMPECHE, MEXICO



BELL TOWER AT FORTIFICATIONS
CAMPICHE, MEXICO



FEDERAL BUILDING, MERIDA, MEXICO

Possibly the site of the deposition of George Schumpf in 1821.



LAFFITE MEMORIAL
DZILAM de BRAVO, MEXICO

l. to r. Robert Vogel, R. Dale Olson, Sandra Rogers, Diane Olson, Kathleen Taylor, Jim
Nonus, and Ed. Jamison.

How Laffite Became the Real-Life Byronic Hero

Pam Keyes

Since Lord Byron's highly successful poem, "The Corsair," was published in early 1814 well before the Battle of New Orleans, it couldn't possibly have been inspired by Jean Laffite, could it? But indeed it well may have been. George Gordon, Lord Byron, had been following news about Laffite's escapades at New Orleans and Barataria since at least 1813, and maybe even earlier, in the London Times. What's more, it is quite possible that Laffite was the real-life role model for the Byronic hero first forged by the great romantic poet and found so frequently in literature, film and television even now.

"The Corsair" was a huge literary success with seven printings in its first publishing month of February 1814. It is widely known for a stanza that has been tied with Jean Laffite since the early 1800s:

"He left a Corsair's name to other times,

Link'd with one virtue, and a thousand crimes."

This stanza usually has been applied to Laffite in relation to his assistance to the US during the Battle of New Orleans campaign. It actually is about a little known incident that Byron read about. The proof of this may be found in a note Byron wrote about Laffite and Barataria that he inserted in the eighth edition of the Corsair, printed around April of 1814 in Baltimore.

"That the point of honour which is represented in one instance of Conrad's character has not been carried beyond the bounds of probability may perhaps be in some degree confirmed by the following anecdote of a Brother Buccaneer in the present year 1814. Our readers have all seen the account of the enterprise against the pirates of Barrataria, (sic) but few, we believe, were informed of the situation,

history, or nature of that establishment. For the information of such as were unacquainted with it, we have procured from a friend the following interesting narrative of the main facts, of which he has some personal knowledge, and which cannot fail to interest some of our readers.

Barrataria (sic) is a bayou, or a narrow arm of the Gulf of Mexico. It runs through a rich but very flat country, until it reaches within a mile or two of the Mississippi River, fifteen miles below the city of New Orleans. This bayou has branches almost unnumerable, (sic) in which persons can lie concealed from the severest scrutiny. It communicates with three lakes which lie on the northwest side, and these with the lake of the same name, and which lie contiguous to the sea, where there is an island formed by the two arms of this lake and the sea. The east and west points of this island were fortified in the year 1811 by a band of pirates, under the command of one Monsieur LaFitte. A large majority of these outlaws are of that class of the population of the state of Louisiana who fled from the Island of St. Domingo during the troubles there and took refuge in the Island of Cuba. And when the last war between France and Spain commenced, they were compelled to leave that Island with the short notice of a few days. Without ceremony, they entered the United States, the most of them the state of Louisiana, with all the negroes (sic) they had possessed in Cuba. They were notified by the Governor of that state of the clause in the constitution which

forbade the importation of slaves, but, at the same time, received the assurance of the governor that he would obtain, if possible, the approbation of the general government for their retaining this property. The conduct of this part of the favored emigrants, and the refusal of those who could not from local causes join in the illicit confederacy, to obey the draft in that state, which was required by the general government, and ordered by the state itself, prove the fidelity of the allegiance which was promised by these fugitives to the United States.

The Island of Baratavia is situated about Lat. 29 deg 15 min lon 92.30 and is as remarkable for its health as for the superior scale and shell fish with which its waters abound. The chief of this horde, like Charles De Moor, had mixed with his many vices some transcendant (sic) virtues. In the year 1813, this party had from its turpitude and boldness, claimed the attention of the governor of Louisiana, and, to break up the establishment, he thought proper to strike at the head. He therefore offered a reward of 500 dollars for the head of Monsieur LaFitte, who was well known to the inhabitants of the city of New Orleans, from his immediate connexion, (sic) and his having been a fencing master in that city of great reputation, which art he learnt in Bonaparte's army, where he was a captain. The reward, which was offered by the governor for the head of LaFitte, was answered by the offer of a reward from the latter of \$5,000 for the head of the governor. The governor ordered out a company of to march from the city to LaFitte's island, and to burn and destroy all the property, and to bring to the City of New Orleans all his banditti. This company, under

the command of a man who had been the intimate associate of this bold captain, approached very near to the fortified island before he saw a man or heard a sound until he heard a whistle, not unlike a boatswain's call. Then it was he found himself surrounded by armed men who had emerged from the secret avenues which led to this bayou. Here it was that this modern Charles De Moor developed his few noble traits, for to this man, who had come to destroy his life and all that was dear to him, he not only spared his life, but offered him that which would have made the honest soldier easy for the remainder of his days, which he indignantly refused. He then, with the approbation of his captor, returned to the city. This circumstance, and some concomitant events, proved that this band of pirates was not to be taken by land."

This narrative is quite interesting as some informant near New Orleans had reported to the *London Times* or to some other Great Britain-based correspondent some exact details about Laffite's smuggling enterprise at Grande Terre and how it was irritating the authorities. Also, there is the detail about the duel of reward offers between Gov. Claiborne and Laffite, something that was not in the newspapers at the time it occurred in November of 1813. Laffite's rebellion against authority, his wit, and his kindness to the mysterious unnamed officer who was sent to destroy his operation obviously impressed Lord Byron. The little detail about the fencing master skills of Laffite and his service for Napoleon has not been corroborated by research, and may have been invention. Or perhaps it is just something else about Laffite that hasn't been discovered yet.

The Corsair was written between Dec. 22 and 31, 1813. It took about a month for a letter from the US to reach London by sea, so could Lord Byron have read about the reward incident from some correspondent in New Orleans before

he began writing his epic poem? There are no clues in Byron's letters about what inspired him, but he was in London at the time, going to socials and visiting with many literary friends. One of those friends may have received a letter from a very special correspondent in America. Army Capt. Charles Wollstonecraft, a member of the US Artillery in Mississippi Territory.¹

Wollstonecraft, the favorite uncle of Frankenstein author Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, was a British sympathizer and quite possibly a double agent during the War of 1812. He kept a close eye on the Laffite operation through various agents, and is the only known British-born person working that area who could have relayed sensitive military information during wartime to London. He is the most likely candidate to have written the following to a British ambassador in New York, dated August 19, 1814, from New Orleans, and published in the *Times* on Nov. 1, 1814:²

"New Orleans: "Some time since a number of reports were circulating here of the intended invasion of this country; at one time by the British, and another by the Spaniards, and again jointly by both. Latterly we have nothing further on the subject and I presume we are as secure as you are in New York. The government of the US are making arrangements (it may be only for appearances) for the supply of a large military force in this quarter. It is said there will be six thousand troops in addition to those already here (about 3500) for which rations have been ordered to be prepared by the contractors of the army. The smuggling business at Barrataria (sic) or Grand Isle, situated sixty or seventy miles from this place, continues to be carried on to a great extent as was ever done, in any other part of the world. One of the principal leaders of this banditti has been secured, and will be tried for piracy; but still that trade goes on. Within the

two last weeks four new prizes have been brought into Grand Isle, one said to be a Russian, from England, bound to Pensacola, another a Dutch galliot, and strange to tell, of the number of vessels taken by these pirates, not one of their crews have ever been seen or heard of -doubtless all murdered; and still stranger to remark, that the general rendezvous of those robbers should remain within 60 or 70 miles of this place, having 3,500 regular troops, and all the militia of the country, and not a single effort made to dislodge them."

Curiously, in a near-synchronistic demonstration of Laffite's topical newsworthiness, within three days of the appearance of this article in the London paper, across the Atlantic, the *Boston Weekly Messenger* of Nov. 4, 1814, reprinted Byron's essay note about Laffite from "The Corsair," adding at the end,

"Our naval forces having always been small in that quarter, exertions for the destruction of this illicit establishment could not be expected from them until augmented; for an officer of the navy, with most of the gunboats on that station, had to retreat from an overwhelming force of LaFitte's. So soon as the augmentation of the navy authorized an attack, one was made; the overthrow of this banditti has been the result, and now the almost invulnerable point and key to New Orleans is clear of an enemy, it is to be hoped the government will hold it by a strong military force."

The Britishers of London readily followed Lord Byron's lead in thinking favorably of Laffite, for in the *London Time's* Dec. 19, 1814, issue after telling about the successful raid by the US authorities against Barataria, the editor opined, "We doubt much that the Americans had any right to destroy the settlement in question. The title of LaFitte and his associates to the

contested ground may vie with that of his conquerors to Louisiana."

It is intriguing to speculate on whether or not Byron began the Laffite legend with *The Corsair* note in the American edition. One must keep in mind the British romanticist's profound, vast influence upon the public. One of Lord Byron's many lovers, Claire Clairmont, recalled that fame years later:

"In 1815, when I was a very young girl, Byron was the rage. When I say the rage, I mean what you people nowadays can perhaps hardly conceive. I suppose no man who ever lived has had the extraordinary celebrity of Lord Byron in such an intense, haunting, almost maddening degree. And this celebrity extended all over the Continent to as great an extent as in England; and remember, in those days there were no railways or telegraphs."

In his "Don Juan" poem, Lord Byron mentioned the speed at which the British public forgot about such great men as Nelson after he died. With Byron's help, Laffite's legend thrived and shows no sign of decline even in the 21st century.

Endnotes:

1. *Lord Byron's Letters and Journals*, Chapter 3: "First Fame"
<http://engphil.astate.edu/gallery/byron4.html>.
2. Arsene Latour< Historical Memoir of the War of West Florida and Louisiana, (Philadelphia, 1816. Gordon Lyndall, *Vindication, a Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*, Harper and Collins, 2005. And "First Battalion Field Artillery," <http://www.riley.army.mil.view/document.asp>.

Wollstonecraft served under General Jackson and was in charge of an American artillery unit at Fort St. Philip, where he fought his own British countrymen's ships with exchanges of bombardment from Jan. 8 through the 18th, 1815. He was commended for his artillery proficiency by his commanding officer, W.H. Overton, in a letter to Gen. Jackson of Jan. 19, 1815. Wollstonecraft married a New Orleanian and owned a home there. According to his military record, he died in New Orleans in 1817.

November Meeting of the Laffite Society 2006

Jean Epperson

An excursion to the Sam Houston Regional Library at Liberty, Texas was made by the Laffite Society on November 20, 2006. Viewing the Library's extensive collections on the Corsair Laffite Brothers was the primary objective.

The group gathered at Casa don Boni, a Mexican restaurant in Liberty and was served an excellent lunch, compliments of Doctor Reginald and Betty Wilson. Members present were Dr. Wilson, Jim Nonus, Dale and Diane Olson, Dorothy Karilanic, Nancy Beaman, Ed Jamison, Lou McBeth, Don and B. J. Peak, Robert Garnham, Don and Sybil Marler, Jean Epperson and Sheldon Kindall.

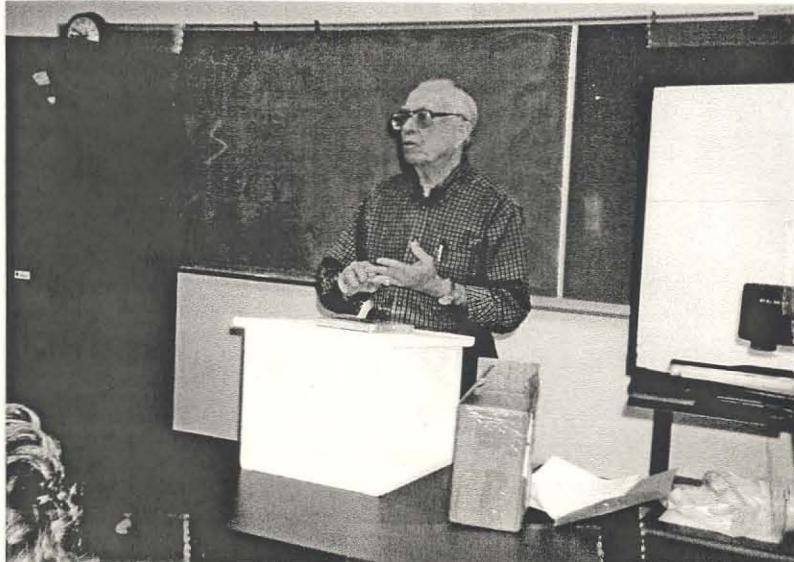
Continuing on to the Library, the party was met and greeted by the Director, Robert Schaadt, and his assistant Darlene Mott. The group toured the main floor where a permanent display of the Laffite Diary and other memorabilia is housed. A special display of Laffite material, usually archived, had been made for the group in the conference room on the second floor. Schaadt opened the meeting with a talk on how the Laffite material had been acquired by retired Governor Price Daniel over a period of years. Parts were purchased from antiquarian dealers, private collectors and

parts were donated. Many researchers have viewed the collections, with able assistance by the Library staff. Schaadt acknowledged that some of the material is considered very controversial.

Dr. Wilson, The Laffite Society's most knowledgeable member on the Laffite Collection, spoke primarily of new material acquired from Benjamine Maygarden, a New Orleans researcher, about a possible daughter of Jean Laffite named Adele.

According to Maygarden the reason Adele was not found to be the daughter of Jean Laffite is that she was not baptized and no other record of her birth was made. Maygarden found, however, that in all city Directories and censuses Adele was found to be in the household of Catherine Villiard and Catherine made a statement that Adele was her natural child.

The session ended with the group examining, with much interest, the material laid out for them. They were then given a tour of the sumptuous, replica of the Governors Mansion next door to the Library. Somewhat later B. J. Peak was heard to say she thoroughly enjoyed the trip and learned a lot.



Dr. Reginald Wilson



Jim Nonus, President
 Dale Olson
 Robert Schaadt, Center Director
 Dr. Reginald Wilson

Governor's Mansion
 2006



Laffite Society's Christmas Party

Jean Epperson

The Laffite Society's Christmas Party gala was held on December 10, 2006 at the 1866 Jockusch Building 21st Street of the Strand on Galveston Island. Some eighty-five members, friends and notables attended in formal and semi-formal attire.

The pre-dinner reception featured an open bar on the third floor Maco Bakery room. An American version of the famous French Sazarac cocktail was featured and was enjoyed by the more adventuresome attendees.

An excellent buffet dinner was served in the Buccaneer Room, catered by Bistro Le Croy. Individual tables, tastefully decorated, circled the large room.

President, Jim Nonus, began the ceremonies with opening remarks and introduced Edward Jamison the Society's archivist. An annual tradition, Ed had the pleasure of recognizing all of the attendees with a few special comments and plaudits.

Introducing the evening speaker, Jeffery



P. Modzelewsky, a past president of the Society, was made by R. Dale Olson, the Society's founding president. Jeff gave a brief summary of the Laffite brothers history and journeys for the uninitiated Laffite buffs. He also concentrated on the J.L Rubio Mane book *Los Piratas Lafitte*. This book was written in Spanish in 1927 and had never been translated into English. An important source of Laffite material, it was only available to those who understood Spanish. Jeff gallantly undertook the time consuming task of translating the book into English. An excellent and meticulous translator, Jeff has an advanced degree in Spanish and spent two years in Spain during his schooling. With help and encouragement from Dale Olson, Dorothy Karilanovic and other members of the Society, a book of Jeff's translation of *Los Piratas Lafitte* has been published.

The highlight and conclusion of the evening came when a copy of the book was given as Christmas present to each of those attending the party.

Troy Marler and Carmen Wainwright



Warren and Verna Stauffer



Mike Bailey
Sheldon Kindall

Book Review

By Pam Keyes

X Marks the Spot, the Archaeology of Piracy

Russell K. Skowronek, and Charles R. Ewen, Editors

X Marks the Spot, the Archaeology of Piracy edited by Russell K. Skowronek and Charles R. Ewen, is an entertaining, scholarly look at the artifact record left behind by buccaneers ranging from Captain Kidd and Blackbeard to Jean Lafitte.

First published in hardback by the University Press of Florida in 2006, this collection of essays written by archaeology professionals will be available in paperback in late March 2007. It is illustrated with charts and black and white photos, and is 339 pages with index.

Members of the Lafitte Society will be particularly interested in Chapter 3 from the book, "On the Trail of Jean Lafitte," which discusses archaeological survey work completed around Grande Terre and Barataria Bay. Essay author, Joan M. Exnicios, says in 1977 the New Orleans District of US Army Corps of Engineers began a contract for a cultural resource survey of Grande Terre, and that subsequently, the Lafitte Settlement was identified by Richard Weinstein on the north side of Grande Terre along the shore and shallows of Barataria Bay. In 1989, another archaeologist, Allen Saltus, found a scattering of artifacts. He observed in the shallows ceramic fragments, pearlware, bottle glass, clay pipe pieces, gunflints, wrought nails and animal bones, all of which appeared to date between 1800-1820. The site was 330 by 290 feet in area. In 1995 and 2001, Earth Science Inc. discovered in less than a decade, 14 meters of the Lafitte site had eroded into Barataria Bay. Exnicios noted that archaeologists believe progressive and accelerated erosion of Grande Terre means all of

the terrestrial portion of the island will be underwater within 20 years.

Interestingly, the archaeologists at Grande Terre determined there was enough material remaining in the Lafitte site deposits to make the 800-yard long Lafitte Settlement eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Using a magnetometer and sonar, G&N Services identified some abandoned vessel fragments in Barataria Bay, along with tangible remains of docks, warehouses, and houses. All were discovered on the west end of the island.

Accompanying Exnicios' text is a very interesting comparison of maps of Grande Terre, from 1818, 1833, 1841 and 1853. An aerial photo from 1999 is overlaid with the 1841 map showing the loss of land on the bay side of the island.

The book *X Marks the Spot* is divided into three parts: Pirate Lairs, Pirate Ships and Their Prey, and Pirates in Fact and Fiction. There are 14 chapters in the book.

This represents the first time a serious look has been made into archaeology relating to pirate activities. The authors have endeavored to examine through these essays what has been learned from recent discoveries like the wreck of Blackbeard's *Queen Anne's Revenge* off Beaufort Inlet, N.C., and how archaeologists usually have to work with historical archivists to identify wrecks as belonging to pirates because there are no features that clearly distinguish a pirate ship from a typical merchantmen, other than the number of guns. Areas discussed range from off

the coast of Madagascar, throughout the Caribbean, and around the United States.

One of the most enjoyable essays was written by editor Skowronek, on "X Marks the Spot Or Does It? Anthropological insights into the Origins and Continuity of Fiction and Fact in the Study of Piracy." As Skowronek points out, "Archaeologists are faced with a conundrum when asked to find the real pirates expected

by the general public, whose images are firmly ingrained. Who were these people? Were they earlier versions of the Mob or drug cartels?" He decides that pirates "could be as invisible in their world as gangsters are in ours, a brotherhood at once fearsome to outside authorities and friendly to its neighbors."

This is an excellent, absorbing study well worth a spot in your library, the kind of book you will return to again and again for its reference value.



Among Grande Terre artifacts in Pam Keyes' collection are a red brick with shell mortar with "Juillet 92" inscribed into it; an Irish hallmarked silver spoon circa 1810; hand-forged ship nails; large crude coat buttons; an interesting small ceramic ink pot; clay pipe; 1777 two reale; broken chandelier prisms; crystal chandelier ball; a button circa 1812 featuring a silver gilt armed right-hand, and a majolica pottery shard.

CALENDAR

General meetings of The Laffite Society are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the first floor of the Trolley Stop Building (on the south side of the 2000 block of The strand, Galveston, Texas, 77550. Many of the meetings feature interesting and informative presentations by members or guest speakers. The exception is the December meeting, the annual "Holiday Social," which is an evening of food, drink, and entertaining conversation in a relaxed and festive setting is announced ahead of time.

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 consult the webpage at: thelaffitesociety.com and the newsgroup at, laffite@yahoogroups.com. The Laffite Society attempts to mail information (snail mail or email) to members and interested parties on the Society's mailing list as special event details are determined.

The Laffite Society Chronicles are published two times per year—in the spring and fall. The publication schedule is not always kept precisely.

Bulletin Board

* The meetings of the Laffite Society have reverted back to the second Tuesday of each month as they were originally observed.

* We will bring back the continuation of old newspaper items about the Laffites in the next issue.

New Members

Membership information will be updated in the next issue.

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Laffite Society is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the study of the privateers Jean and Pierre Laffite and their contemporaries, and to the geographical locales and chronological era associated with them.

Annual dues are as follows:

Student.....	\$ 15.00
Senior (Over 65).....	15.00
Institution.....	15.00
Individual.....	30.00
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Sustaining Member.....	100.00
Life Membership (One Payment)	350.00