

MINUTES
Tuesday, March 10, 2009
THE LAFFITE SOCIETY
Nonus Gallery, 2411 Strand, Galveston, Texas 77550

BOARD PRESENT: President, Ed Jamison; 1st Vice President, Jim Nonus; 2nd Vice President, Kathy Modzelewski; 3rd Vice President, Lynette Haaga; Secretary Pro Tem and Archivist, Jeff Modzelewski; Press Director, Dave Roberts; Parliamentarian, Diane Olson; Historian, Ginny Roberts; Treasurer, Nancy Beaman.

BOARD ABSENT: Editor of Publications Pro Tem, Dan Cote; Coordinator of Research, Pam Keyes; Coordinator of Research, Gary Fretz; Privateer-at-Arms (nominal), Wil Zapalac.

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.

[Note: a sign-in paper was not circulated, so the member and visitor tallies below are incomplete, but they are nearly accurate. Total attendance numbered approximately 30.]

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE: Ed and Betty Conner; Wayne Cox; Frank and Connie Dryden; Bill Haaga; Clifford Johnson; Linda and Ondree Kuhn; George Najarian and Lizette Gaudin; Rob and Carolyn Peterson; Larry and Jan Porter; Terri Wright.

VISITORS: Lady Elizabeth Ashley; Eugene Aubrey; Jean Epperson's brother [name = ?].

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:35 p.m.

President Ed Jamison reminded attendees who had not paid their 2009 dues to kindly do so.

Linda Kuhn discussed a project which she and Jean Epperson have undertaken: to scan and geo-rectify maps of Galveston Island in the Laffite era and estimate where latitude and longitude markings would fall upon them, so as to then attempt to determine the exact location of Laffite's "Maison Rouge." Linda asked that anyone who could make available maps of the Island dating from approximately 1815 to 1835 contact her.

Rob Peterson discussed a project he has undertaken: to accumulate and scan into .pdf files the complete set of publications of the Laffite Study Group. The set that Dale Olson loaned Rob was nearly complete, and Dave Roberts was able to fill in some of the few gaps from his set. Eventually Rob will compile a list of any items he cannot obtain and send out a broader query regarding their availability for loan.

PROGRAM: Ed Jamison moderated a question-and-answer round-table of a number of topics basic to the Laffite saga. These included:

- ◆ Others present on Galveston Island in Laffite's time – the Frenchman Louis Michel Aury and the Spaniard Francisco Javier Mina, the stories of both of whom are interesting of themselves, apart from their Laffite connections;
- ◆ Other early names for Galveston Island: "Snake Island" (in Spanish versions, "*Isla de Culebra*" and "*Isla de Serpiente*"); "*Isla de Malhado*" ("Island of Misfortune"); Campeche; St. Louis Island (perhaps after San Luis Pass, or vice versa);

- ◆ Letters of marque - also called “commissions” and “patents,” and may still be issued by the U.S. government today;
- ◆ Frederick/Dominique Youx – possibly a brother of Jean and Pierre Laffite;
- ◆ The provenance of the name of the Laffite enclave in Louisiana, “Barataria” (present-day Grand Isle and Grande Terre) – derived from the Spanish word “*barato*” (“cheap,” “inexpensive”)? Named after the fictitious land promised as a governorship by Don Quixote to Sancho Panza as an enticement to retain his company? Related to the legal concept of the English word “barratry”?
- ◆ Laffite’s relationship with Napoleon Bonaparte: were they classmates? Did they serve together in the French armed forces? Did the Laffites plot to rescue Napoleon from exile in St. Helena? Are Jean and Napoleon buried at The Temple, along with Jean Paul Jones (Laffite’s uncle, per one theory)?
- ◆ Birthplace of the Laffites: France? Hispaniola (Haiti)?
- ◆ Place and year of death of Jean Laffite: in the Caribbean, in a sea battle with two Spanish ships, about 1823? In Alton, Illinois, in about 1850?
- ◆ First appearances of the Laffites in New Orleans: Jean circa 1804? Pierre a bit earlier, before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803?
- ◆ Laffite descendants - many claim to be. Both Jean and Pierre had mulatto mistresses. Pierre had many children. Some believe Jean had a son and a daughter, and that the son had no progeny but the daughter did. Some “descendants” are Laffites, from a section of Louisiana called “Bayou Pierre,” are actually of no relation; Jean Epperson provided some history of these Bayou Pierre Laffites and referenced an article from the July 1996 issue of the *Laffite Society Chronicles*;
- ◆ The spelling of the surname “Laffite” - many variations were used, including all four combinations of single and double “f”s and “t”s. A Hispanicized version, ending in “a,” is also seen;
- ◆ The “Blacksmith Shop” French Quarter tavern and its relation to the Laffites – it is not believed that this location was ever owned by the Laffites, but a lot across the street may have belonged to them, or to one of their mistresses.

Dale Olson mentioned that the east wall of the supposed Maison Rouge site was a casualty of Hurricane Ike. Architect Eugene Aubrey discussed the method of construction of the wall, and noted that its collapse afforded an opportunity for some interesting research – e.g., to look for markings on brick indicating date of casting, to do an archaeological dig (such as was done several times in years past elsewhere on the property) around the wall’s base, etc. Jim Nonus offered to head a committee to plan such a project.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:45 p.m.

Submitted by

Jeff Modzelewski
 Recording/Correspondent Secretary Pro Tem
 The Laffite Society