

The Laffite Society Chronicles

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Guest Editorial

Ed Jamison, Pres.

Waves washed higher and higher up the beach, whipped by the wind and storm surge, until they simply washed over the island. (From *The Pirates Laffite* by William C. Davis).

Mr. Davis's description of the 1818 hurricane that struck Galveston 190 years ago, perhaps to the day, is a haunting reminder that we do indeed share a common, if unwanted, bond with the Laffites. Like Jean, many of you suffered losses that easily match those of his and those of his men. But through the ensuing hardships, they survived, and so will we. One can't help but wonder, though, how the infamous Jean would have dealt with a power company or a reluctant bureaucracy.

While our newly elected president, Barak Obama, ran a campaign based on change, and others seek survival, it is simply continuation that many of us want today. And it is no different for The Laffite Society. The Society's archives were no match for the nine feet of water that inundated its location. While much of the collection has been gathered, there is no way of knowing at this time what can actually be salvaged. It will take time and the effort of several individuals to pore through the remains. The archives have always been a source of pride to The Society, and rightfully so. It was the culmination of thousands of hours of investigative research and collecting by members and non-members, all with a common goal: the separation of fact from fiction regarding the lives of Jean and Pierre Laffite, their comrades and followers. It was also the repository of information and inquiries by non-members from all over the world. But the archives are not The Society.

The Society is the people who, several years ago, joined founder, R. Dale Olson as the successor to the dormant Laffite Study Group. They are Diane Olson, Jim Nonus, Don C. Marler, Randy Pace, Dorothy McDonald Karilanic, Kurt V. Voss, Lou MacBeth Olsen, Bill and Bernadette Foley and Jim Earthman. The Society is the people who subsequently enrolled in the venture, many contributing greatly in the form of scholarship and leadership. These, and the newest members to join, are The Laffite Society, ensuring that no matter how many waves wash over the island, The Society and its goals are met.

The first Society meeting since Hurricane Ike took place November 11; there were 30 of us in attendance including 3 potential members. It would not be an understatement to say that there was an air of conviviality at the gathering; simply stated, we were glad to see one another. But 'see' is the operative word here for just as the Laffites and their guests would have, we met by lantern light, electricity being non-existent that evening. Thus again, it is the people who make The Society.

As to the archives, I have already stated that a concerted effort will be put forth to salvage all that we can. But it is of the highest importance that we, first, re-establish the archives and next, finally find a permanent location for them. Many Society members have already stated that they have copies of their investigative works, which will find their way to the archives. Consequently, I am asking all contributors, far and near, to donate materials to this cause. I also ask you to recommend an accessible location where you think our collection might be housed. The importance of accessibility cannot be overstated, the research you do and have done is too important to be locked away where interested parties, scholars and the curious alike, cannot have access to it.

Finally, as to the future, there are a variety of interesting things in store for The Laffite Society in 2009. I hope that many of you will kick off the New Year by joining a group of us at the Louisiana Historical Association's annual banquet to be held January 8th, 2009 at the New Orleans Country Club. For the uninitiated, the banquet commemorates the Battle of New Orleans in which Laffite played a famous part. It will be an excellent, carefree start following a year that became dismal to many. Otherwise, I look forward to seeing you at the first monthly Laffite Society meeting on January 13th.

Of Journals and Diaries

William Groneman III

Members of the Laffite Society are well aware of the arguments concerning the "Journal" of Jean Laffite and its one time owner and possible creator John A. Laflin (or Matejka, or Nafsinger, or Lafitte, or Laffite, etc.). This article is not an argument for or against the journal's authenticity, but a comparison of the journal with another contro-versial Texas historical document.

The "Diary" of José Enrique de la Peña purports to be a first hand account of the Texas Revolution by an officer of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna's army. Its original owner, Jesús Sanchez Garza, self published the document in 1955 in Mexico as *La Rebelión de Texas - Manuscrito Inedito de 1836 por un Oficial de Santa Anna*. There is no record of the diary prior to this. Carmen Perry translated and published it in 1975 as *With Santa Anna in Texas: a Personal Narrative of the Revolution by José Enrique de la Peña*, with Texas A&M University Press. Its publication in the United States generated much hoopla and media attention since it contained one paragraph detailing the execution of David Crockett following the battle of the Alamo. This became the "hook" and *With Santa Anna* is never mentioned without reference to this passage.

The "dairy" itself is an unbound stack of hand written pages within a larger collection of de la Peña and related materials now in the Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin.

The Laffite "journal" and de la Peña "diary" have a number of similarities. Both tell the story of legendary events and people in Texas history. Although called a journal and diary respectively, implying a first hand immediacy to their stories, neither is such. The Laffite document is in the form of a memoir supposedly written some time between the 1840s and '50s. The de la Peña document is

obviously a researched work more resembling an historical novel. It is definitely not something written *during* the 1836 Texas campaign. True believers in the document began referring to it as a *memoir* in the 1990s when questions about its authenticity first became public.

It should be noted that the de la Peña document contains three or four handwritings, sometimes changing in the middle of a passage, not one of which is de la Peña's. Curiously, there *is* a handwritten diary of events of the Texas campaign in the collection, and it *is* in de la Peña's handwriting. However, it contains none of the juicy details of the published versions and the published versions make no mention of this actual diary.

A bit of smoke and mirrors authentication is common to the journal and diary in their published forms. An illustration in the *Journal of Jean Laffite* shows a handwritten page from the holograph. Superimposed over it is a letter on Library of Congress Stationary dated September 5, 1956 and bearing the signature of David C. Mearns, Chief of the Library's Manuscript Division. It reads:

"We have examined, and now return the leaf from an account book which you enclosed in your letter of August 11. The paper compared favorably with other specimens of the early nineteenth century; the record could have been made in or about 1830. The small scrap which contains writing in French appears to be on paper of somewhat earlier manufacture." ¹

The letter appears to authenticate the journal until one realizes that there is nothing in the letter linking it to any Laffite papers. Mearns wrote his findings in response to a brief letter enclosing a page from a receipt book and nothing in the letter connects that book to Laffite.

Library of Congress records show no evidence that a group of Laffite papers were sent there for examination at the time. In addition, the name of the addressee of Mearns' letter had been obliterated before it appeared in the published *Journal*.²

Both published versions of the de la Peña "diary" contain an illustration of a handwritten letter supposedly signed by de la Peña. The letter serves as a prologue in Sanchez Garza's and Perry's versions. The photo of the letter seems to bear verification of de la Peña's signature replete with official looking stamps from the Mexican Archives. Actually the signature does not match de la Peña's authenticated handwriting, and the verification and stamps are on a 3" wide piece of blue paper glued to the letter. Lines are blurred in the Perry version so that the verification and stamps seem to be right on the letter itself. There is nothing on the blue paper connecting it with the letter to which it has been affixed.³

There are similarities in the contents of the documents. The Laffite of the journal and the de la Peña of the diary are very close in temperament and personality as evidenced in certain passages. Both are:

Deeply concerned with accuracy.

Laffite:

The manner in which I shall begin this story of my life will no doubt involve me in some years of research before I can collect the necessary proofs of Authenticity.

De la Peña:

I had to take some time to verify those acts which I was not an eyewitness and to obtain more accurate information about, important objectives which I achieved by collecting the daybooks from the various sections that constituted the Army.⁴

Noble defenders of the truth:

Laffite:

Only in this way shall I be free of the fear of contradiction and only in this way can I hope that my words will expose the deceit and cunning of degenerate writers – both present and future – and their slanderous conjectures and erroneous fairy tales about me. At the same time, I may hope to prevent others from multiplying such conjectures and perpetuating a false legend.

De La Peña:

The accumulation of lies told to falsify the events published in national as well as international newspapers... the honor and self-esteem of every military man who participated, so deeply hurt by the great inaccuracies in the official records as to dates, deeds and places and above all the honor of the country, deeply compromised by its leaders and not less by the truth and the atrocity of its crimes – these are the principal causes which compelled me to publish the diary I kept during the time I served in this unfortunate campaign.⁵

Patriots:

Laffite:

At one time I did all I could to save that same nation from complete annihilation in order to preserve the liberty founded on that most sacred document, the Declaration of Independence.

De la Peña:

If in bringing forth my notes I accomplish the noble objectives I have pursued in vindicating the honor of this unfortunate nation.⁶

Selfless volunteers:

Laffite:

Without receiving any compensation for myself.

De la Peña:

Who expects no compensation.⁷

Sensitive soldiers:

Laffite:

The spectacle of three thousand wounded and dead English soldiers on that marshy battlefield was a dreadful and horrible sight.

De la Peña:

The bodies, with their blackened and bloody faces disfigured by a desperate death, their hair and uniforms burning at once, presented a dreadful and truly hellish sight.⁸

There is plenty to doubt about the authenticity of the "journal" and the "diary," especially after a comparison of the two. But, who would have known during the mid-1950s? The Laffite journal passed from John A. to John H. Jenkins to William Simpson and finally to Texas Governor Price Daniel. It now resides in the Sam Houston Regional Library at Liberty, Texas, a facility for which Gov. Daniel generously donated 114 acres. The De la Peña "diary" was sold to John Peace Jr., a member of the Texas State Board of Regents and instrumental in founding the University of Texas at San Antonio. Peace's acquisition resided for years in the John Peace Jr. Collection in the John Peace Memorial Library, not far from John Peace Boulevard at the University. If an archivist or curator or any employee of the Sam Houston or John Peace libraries ever had any doubts about the documents in question, it is easy to see how discretion and job security may have won out over candor.

The Peace family which still owned the De la Peña papers put the collection up for auction in 1998 after questions about its authenticity became public. Texans Tom Hicks and Charles Tate "rescued" the papers for \$350,000 and promptly donated them to the University of Texas at Austin where they reside today.

Similarities between the journal and the

diary do not prove that John A. Laflin penned both of them. However, handwriting expert Charles Hamilton, who had a good deal of experience with John A's work certainly believed he did, and stated so in the revised edition of his book *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*. He also wrote a certification stating his belief that the handwriting in the "diary" was that of John A. Laflin.⁹

The similarities do indicate some type of common origin and argue against either Jean Laffite or De la Peña as authors of their respective memoirs.

Endnotes:

1. John A. Laffite, ed., *The Journal of Jean Laffite* (New York: Vantage Press, 1958) illustration #1.
2. James H. Hutson, chief of Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. to Bill Groneman, New York, 19 June 1991, original in possession of the author.
3. Thomas Ricks Lindley, *Alamo Traces* (Lanham, Maryland: Republic of Texas Press, 2003), see pages 345-347 regarding the authenticity of de la Peña's "diary's" prologue letter signature.
4. *Journal of Jean Laffite*, 9; and *With Santa Anna*, xxviii.
5. *Journal of Jean Laffite*, 9; and *With Santa Anna*, xxiv.
6. *Journal of Jean Laffite*, 14; and *With Santa Anna*, xxvii.
7. Ibid.
8. *Journal of Jean Laffite*, 62; and *With Santa Anna*, 52.
9. Charles Hamilton, *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes: The Manuscript Forgers of America and How They Duped the Experts* (Lakewood, Colorado: Glenbridge Publishing Ltd., 1996), xxii-xxiii; and Charles Hamilton, "Certification," October 18, 1993, printed in Bill Groneman, *Death of a Legend - The Myth and Mystery surrounding the Death of Davy Crockett* (Plano, Texas: Republic of Texas Press, 1999), 135.

Surveyor's 1807 Report Gives Grande Terre-New Orleans Trade Route

Pam Keyes

Details about the Grande Terre-New Orleans smuggling route used by the Laffites have recently come to light from information gathered by a US surveyor in 1807 while he was checking out sites for a lighthouse on the Gulf Coast west of New Orleans.

The most astonishing fact about this route is the surveyor's statement that one could travel from Barataria Bay to New Orleans in as little as one and a half days, weaving through the bayous and a canal long used by area residents for coastal trading access. By comparison, when Commodore Patterson's forces raided Grande Terre, it took them four days to navigate from New Orleans down the Mississippi past the Balize to the Laffite stronghold.

After an 1806 Act of Congress directed a survey be made of the coast of the Territory of Orleans from the mouth of the Mississippi River westward, then Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin appointed Lewis (or Louis) DeMun, a young French military officer working for architect Benjamin Latrobe, to be surveyor for the project under Latrobe's direction. Latrobe wanted DeMun to check out soil conditions at various sites, particularly at the location of Belle Isle, to see which would offer the best location for a lighthouse.¹

On July 20, 1807, DeMun made his report to Gallatin detailing his findings and complaining up front that the allotted work time of six months was insufficient for a proper survey of what he called "that very intricate and dangerous coast." DeMun had the misfortune of arriving in New Orleans from Philadelphia on Sept. 12, two days before a devastating hurricane struck the city and outlying area. Consequently, the revenue cutter which was to take him on the coastal survey had suffered damage to sails and rigging, and had to be repaired before he could begin, a delay of almost one

month.

The first object of his study was several miles westward, at the mouth of the Chafalaya [Atchafalaya] and the start of Bayou Teche in the region of the Attakapas. He then proceeded to Belle Isle, one of the salt domes on the Louisiana coastline:

"Belle Isle is one of the most remarkable objects on this coast: it is not an island, according to the general sense of the word, but only an island of high woodland, in the midst of very extensive marshes....In the vast and uniform level of marsh and water, which fatigues the eye, on this coast, it is truly surprising to see an island rise about 150 feet above the marshes, covered with the most beautiful trees. They are principally live oak and green oaks. Some of the former I have measured, and found to be from 14 to 18 feet diameter about three feet above the ground. There are the remains of the trunk of a live oak which has been burnt, which form a circle of twenty feet in diameter. The island contains between three and four hundred acres of most excellent land. There is, at the foot of the hill, on the north side, a sulphurous spring, about which pure sulphur is found in large veins, only a few inches below the surface of the ground."²

DeMun stayed at Belle Isle until Feb. 14, when bad weather compelled him to stop his coastal survey. He decided to ride out the storm in Barataria Bay, about 20 leagues to the west of the Mississippi River, and curiosity led to a quick exploratory venture up the bay from Grande Terre. He does not mention whether or not there were any

ships at Grande Terre at the time, but the following information makes it clear that he had discussed the assets of the area with some knowledgeable local:

"The bay of Barataria is the best harbor on all the coast from the Mississippi to the Sabine: ten feet of water can be carried in, and you may ride inside in six and seven fathoms in perfect safety. There is, also, a good communication, from this bay to New Orleans, for pirogues or boats, by going through several lakes and up the bayou Barataria, till you come to the race of a saw mill, up which you proceed to the mill. The boat must then be hauled through the mill by the works which bring up the saw logs. This race joins the bayou with the Mississippi, about three leagues above New Orleans; with a moderately fair wind you may go from the Bay to New Orleans in a day and a half or two days. This bay is an excellent harbor for vessels falling to leeward of the Mississippi; for, besides good shelter, water, fish, and oysters, are found in great plenty, and there are several little plantations along the coast, where cattle and poultry may easily be got. "³

The sawmill that DeMun describes was operated by Francois Mayronne (aka Don Francisco Mayronne), who happened to own the island of Grande Terre during the time the Laffite settlement was there. The mill race's other name was Dubreuil's Canal, and since its creation in 1740 had served for many years as a major route of commerce and communication between the Gulf of Mexico and New Orleans. It was by no means a secret shortcut, but nevertheless was not widely noted in official communications or maps of the time. Probably dug by Dubreuil's plantation slaves, the canal was 25 feet wide and connected Bayou Fatma with Bayou Barataria, leading into the Bayou Rigolets, Little Lake Barataria, and Barataria Bay.⁴ It was the perfect smuggling route for quick access to

New Orleans, and for New Orleans merchants and other residents to use to access the nearby Temple mound site where the Laffites held their auctions of smuggled goods. No doubt it was this excellent shortcut access to the port city plus the harbor's benefits that figured in to the Laffites' occupation of Grande Terre.

DeMun's report concluded with an important postscript which said although the mouth of the Atchafalaya was not very good as a military position, it did provide an access to inland navigation to New Orleans which could be accomplished in four to five days. Most interestingly, DeMun notes: "it is of immense importance to the interests of the United States, to possess a perfect knowledge of the whole of this inland communication, and to obtain a map of all the numerous entrances to the Mississippi between the Chafalaya and New Orleans...(using an eastward path) an enemy, having a sufficient number of small boats, or seizing the pirogues of the country, could reach New Orleans without any notice of his approach." ⁵

Incredibly, this sensitive information was published in many Washington, D.C., area newspapers in the early summer of 1811. One can only wonder how British intelligence made use of the details in formulating their later plan to approach Laffite.

Since DeMun said it would take no more than 2 days to get from Grande Terre to New Orleans via the inland bayou/canal route, some new interpretations need to be made regarding what happened with Laffite after the British offer, and also with what happened once Patterson and the gunboats left for the Grande Terre raid early on the morning of Sept. 11, 1814. The Laffites probably knew about the coming raid by Sept. 13, which means they had three days to get ready for it by relocating some goods and ships. Speculation would say at least some of those flints and powder made it up the millrace to New Orleans before Patterson arrived at Barataria Bay.

The millrace canal still exists today, although the entry to the

Mississippi River has long been filled in. Dubreuil's Canal is now known as Gardiere Canal, just to the east of the Harvey Canal in the suburb of Harvey, La.⁶

advanced the surveyor for passage and expenses, and the same was given to him upon his return to Philadelphia.

ENDNOTES:

1. *American State Papers, Commerce and Navigation*, 1: 840-42, 1832. Gallatin fixed DeMun's pay at \$6 per day including personal expenses, to be computed from the day he arrived at New Orleans, but not longer than 180 days; he also gave him \$150 which Latrobe

2. Ibid.

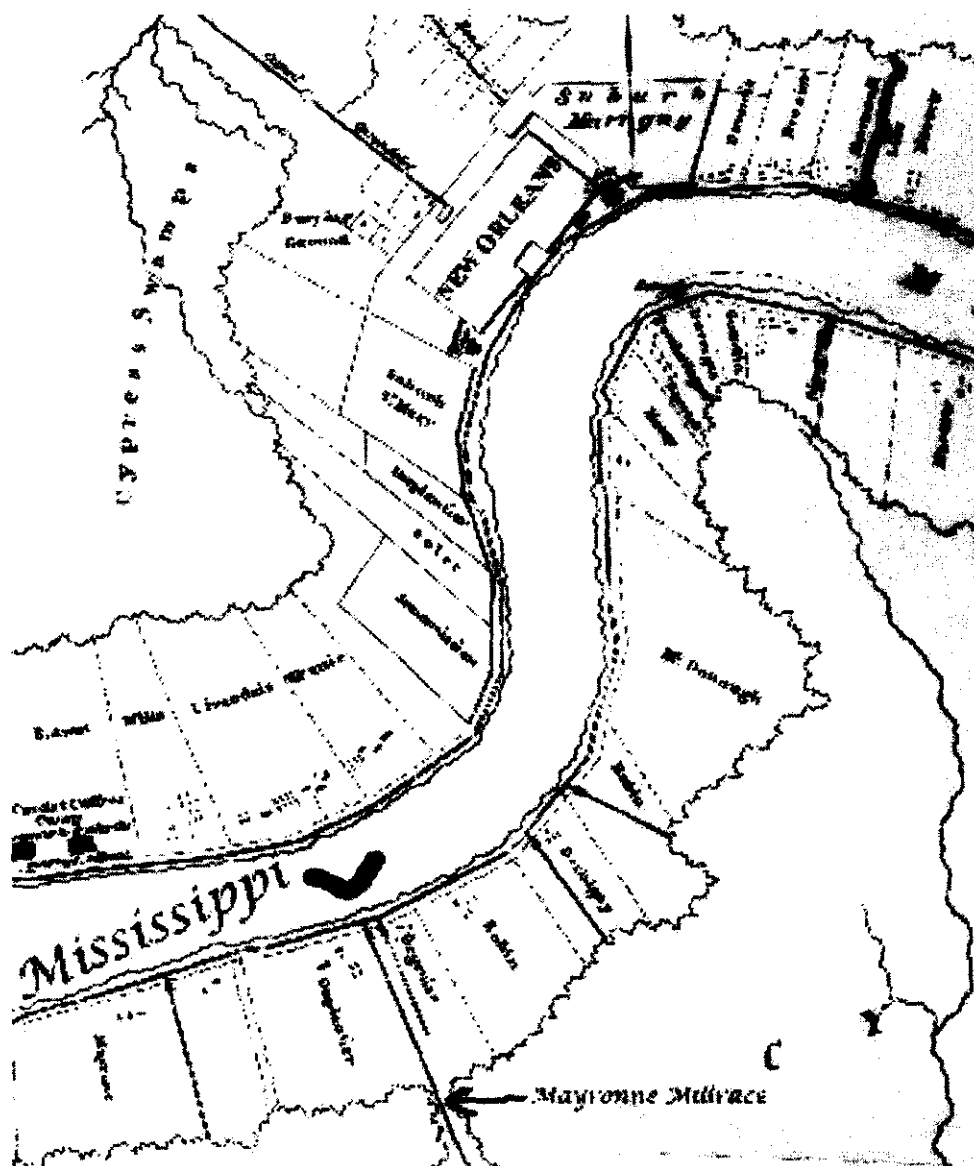
3. Ibid.

4. *Historic Jefferson Parish From Shore to Shore*, Betsy Swanson, Pelican Publishing Co., Gretna, 1975, p. 88.

5. Op. cit. *American State Papers*, pp. 840-42.

6. Op. cit. *Historic Jefferson Parish*, p. 88.

Mayronne's Mill Race



Map detail from large map by Arsene Latour for the *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana*, with Mayronne's Mill Race marked with arrows.

Jean Laffite's Letter to the Editor

Pam Keyes

A newly-found letter to the editor makes it clear Jean Laffite first arrived at Baltimore, Md., when he traveled to the East Coast in 1815 seeking federal restitution for his losses in the Patterson Grande Terre raid of September 1814. The letter, signed in type by Laffite, bears a Baltimore boarding house address and a date of September 25, 1815. It was sent to William Duane, the notoriously radical editor of the politically controversial *Weekly Aurora* of Philadelphia. The letter was published in the October 3, 1815, issue.¹

Laffite planned to contact various government officers to seek reparations for the raid, so apparently his first order of business was to correct his much-maligned public image in the press. The *Niles Weekly Register* of Baltimore had especially disparaged him as a bloodthirsty pirate, "famous for crimes that the civilized world was against, who...certainly murdered the crews of all that he took."² One newspaper wag had even tagged him the "Barratarian Blackbeard."³ Here's his letter to the editor, in full, as it appeared in both the *Aurora* and as a reprint in at least a few other East Coast newspapers:

"Sir Several calumnies having appeared against me for two years past, in various Gazettes of the United States, I take this method to give them a formal and public contradiction. It has been asserted that privateer vessels belonging to me, committed acts of piracy, in making prizes without being duly commissioned, and in capturing American vessels. In answer to such assertions, I offer the inspection of the letters of marque, under which my privateers sailed to all persons who may wish to examine them: and if any one knows of any piracy or injustice perpetrated by me or by my orders it will of

course be his duty to give information of it to the officers authorized to prosecute such offenses; who will find me always ready to appear when duly called upon.

I remain, very respectfully sir,

Your most obedient servant JH.
Laffite"⁴

The "JH" appears to have been Duane's mistaken interpretation of the "Jn" used in Laffite's signatures. The address below the signature in type is "Baltimore South Gay Street, No. 4, 25th Sept. 1815". This was the location of Mr. Clifton's Pianoforte Room and music school according to the 1816 Baltimore city directory, and was near the city's docks.⁵ Laffite apparently had rented an upstairs room. The *Baltimore Patriot* newspapers of September 1815 advertised a few such boarding places with rooms available for "pleasant gentlemen."⁶

It's curious and informative that the letter was sent to the editor of the *Aurora*, a Philadelphia pro-Jeffersonian newspaper, rather than the *Baltimore Patriot* of the city where Laffite was staying. The *Aurora* was known as an independent, pro-Jeffersonian publication whose editor was so verbosely anti-Federalist and critical of John Adams that years earlier, he had been arrested under the Alien and Sedition Act. The charges were dismissed after Jefferson's ascent to the presidency.⁷ Duane, like Jefferson, was sympathetic to the French, and often published complimentary articles about Napoleon's latest adventures. Duane regularly filled the eight page *Aurora* at length with long editorials about such things as the "prostitute press" and corruptness in American government, particularly in Pennsylvania.⁸ This newspaper was a freethinking intellectual's news source, so since that's where Laffite chose to send his

letter, he must have been an admiring reader. This says a great deal about Jean Laffite's level of English literacy since the *Aurora* did not have a French edition. Also, the fact he states in the letter that he had read the negative newspaper articles of various "gazettes" the previous two years is proof that he was highly literate for his time, when the average American could not read even a newspaper in his own language, let alone one in a foreign tongue.

The response to publication of the letter was not what Laffite would have hoped, most newspapers just published a small blurb a week to two weeks later that Laffite was now a resident of Mobtown (a nickname for Baltimore) and an avid partisan of democracy, following that with the snide bit, "Birds of a feather....," obviously referring to the *Aurora's* reputation as being notorious in many circles.⁹

Leaving Baltimore, Laffite likely accompanied Arsene Latour to Philadelphia in October or November 1815, to oversee final proofing details about the publication of Latour's *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana*, plus to mingle with various politicians and foreign dignitaries, like Spanish minister Luis Onis (who was operating a shadow legation in the city).¹⁰ While they were at Philadelphia, Latour decided to boost Jean's cause among the reading public plus drum up advance sales for the battle history by excerpting his chapter about the British visit to Laffite at Grande Terre for publication in the widely read *Analectic Magazine*. It was published in the December, 1815, issue, and received a wide distribution, including Washington, D.C. [For further details, see the article "How a Monthly Magazine Spread the Laffite Legend" in the October, 2007 *Laffite Society Chronicles*].

The significance of Laffite's letter to the *Aurora* is largely in what he states, that he can prove with letters of marque that he was running privateers, not pirate ships; thus since his mission was to end at Washington, D.C., he must have been carrying these letters of marque on his person to present for evidence. It is

quite telling, however, that he does not state in the letter what government had issued the letters of marque. They were most likely Carthaginian.

Although the letter to the *Aurora* did not gain Laffite the favorable public image he sought, it was the first step he took in correcting his reputation in the media and is his only direct public protestation that he was not a pirate, but operated privateers. By May 1816 following the March publication of Latour's history, a turnaround in public sentiment had occurred, and several newspapers were applauding Laffite's help to the US, lauding the "character of Lafitte, who played so conspicuous a part in the defense of New Orleans."¹¹ But Jean was not resting on his much-delayed laurels. By that time, he was in the wilderness of Arkansas territory with Latour, on a spying mission for Spain to check out the Arkansas River as far northwest as halfway into present-day Oklahoma. They would not return to New Orleans until late November 1816, and by then the prospect of taking over Galveston loomed for Jean and Pierre Laffite.¹² The Galveston base ultimately tied the name Laffite forever with piracy when the captain and crew of the *Le Brave*, a ship bearing ship's articles signed by Jean at Galveston, were found guilty of piracy at New Orleans in 1819.¹³

Endnotes:

1. *Weekly Aurora* newspaper of Philadelphia, Oct. 3, 1815, William Duane, editor.
2. *Niles Weekly Register*, Baltimore, Md., Nov. 5, 1814.
3. *Columbian Centinel*, Oct. 4, 1815, Boston, Massachusetts.
4. *Aurora*, Oct. 3, 1815.
5. *Baltimore City Directory*, 1816. The building still stands today, and for more than 100 years has been operated as the Grace and Hope Mission for the homeless.
6. *Baltimore Patriot* newspaper, various

September 1815 issues.

7. URL:
www.encyclopedia.com/doc/IEI-DuaneW1760.html, William Duane biography

8. *Weekly Aurora*, Sept. 12, 1815; Oct. 11, 1815.

9. *Boston Gazette*, Oct. 5, 1815.

10. William C. Davis *The Pirates Laffite: The Treacherous World of the Corsairs of the Gulf*, Harcourt, 2005, p. 249; Arsene Lacarriere Latour, *Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana in 1814-15*, expanded edition, edited by Gene A. Smith, Historic New Orleans Collection and

University Press of Florida, 1999, p. xxviii, introduction. (The fact that the *Analectic* magazine published an excerpt from Latour's book in December 1815 points to the presence of Latour in Philadelphia at least a month before. Proofing of the manuscript for the book would have taken a week or two, so probably both Laffite and Latour had been in Philadelphia since late October 1815, if not earlier.)

11. *American Beacon & Commercial Diary*, Norfolk, Va., May 10, 1816.

12. Op. cit. Davis, pp. 286-288, 319.

13. Ibid., pp. 406-408.

US Navy Captain's Cruise Raises Questions About the Jean Laffite Death Story

Pam Keyes

A U.S. naval officer's unsuccessful pirate chase in 1823 raises considerable doubt about the accuracy of a contemporary Colombian newspaper's claim that Jean Laffite died in a sea battle between his Colombian privateer *General Santander* and two Spanish ships in early February 1823 off the Triunfo de la Cruz point of Honduras.

The Cruise and Disaster of the *Revenge*

Lt. Uriah P. Levy, a hotheaded, previously court-martialed naval officer eager to restore his reputation, went after Laffite in the Caribbean in late January 1823 before Comm. David Porter's newly formed Anti-Piracy Squadron had even finished gathering at Norfolk, Va., to patrol Cuban waters.

The first Jewish-American US naval officer, Lt. Levy, 30, had been called back to service in late 1822 after President Monroe overturned his 1819 court-martial over a fight he had with another officer over an insult. He was given command of Gunboat No. 158, also called the *Revenge*, a 90-ton schooner whose normal duties were to provide protection to American merchantmen from pirates rampant in the Gulf of Mexico, particularly between Cuba and Florida.¹ Additionally, the *Revenge* transported and delivered gold and silver specie between Kingston, Jamaica, and American ports such as Savannah and Charleston. She often sailed in tandem with the US Schooner *Louisiana*, Capt. John Jackson.²

Levy had never been involved in a battle with a pirate vessel before, but he was keen to make his mark in the Gulf Coast waters off of Cuba and Florida, where pirates regularly terrorized merchantmen. When the captain and his small crew of 30 sailed from Charleston, S.C., on December 1, 1822,

they had no idea how ill-starred the last cruise of the *Revenge* would be.³ What started out as just another standard convoy mission to Havana turned into an obsessively driven quest for Jean Laffite that came perilously close to costing the lives of all aboard by misadventure off the Mosquito Coast.

The *Revenge* had convoyed two different batches of merchantmen (four ships and two brigs) through the Double Head Shot Keys to Havana by the end of December 1822, and then cruised around the Bahama area before anchoring at St. John's de Los Remedios, where a boat was sent ashore and the crew destroyed a line of what Lt. Levy called "piratical telegraphic stations." Just exactly what these "stations" were was not explained in Levy's account, but they were likely makeshift towers for semaphore communication by flag code.⁴

Once at Matanzas, Cuba, the *Revenge* proceeded to Barracoa in search of a pilot in order to go after two pirates who had just taken \$10,000 in specie from the unarmed Spanish schooner *Dolores* on its way from Vera Cruz to Havana.⁵

The *Revenge* officers were keeping a watchful eye for anything out of the ordinary when on the evening of January 6, near the Cayo Romano, they spotted a sail in the darkening fog but couldn't make out what the suspicious-looking ship was. Due to the dead calm, Lt. Levy ordered the sweeps out and pulled towards the stern of the ship to investigate. Once close enough, Lt. Levy hailed the Spanish vessel, getting no reply, but an immediate volley of grapeshot and canister, one of which narrowly missed striking Levy in the head as it lodged in the *Revenge's* foremast behind him. The Spanish captain, also on the lookout for pirates, had mistaken the *Revenge* for a

Colombian privateer. Holding his men back from returning fire, Levy sent over a boarding party that was detained for four hours, with the Spaniards intermittently sending warning shots overhead. Levy sent a crewman over with his US commission to show to the antsy Spaniards; whereupon the captain, Oligario de lo Cueto, finally hailed and said his ship was the *Voluntario*, from Old Spain bound to Havana, and armed with 18 long 12-pounder guns. The Spaniard said he and his officers had been sure due to her method of approach that the *Revenge* was a Patriot privateer, and because they did not like to trust a boat to go over, they had fired first. The *Revenge* had but one long 18-pounder, and several carronades, so any battle would have been seriously mismatched. De lo Cueto made a weak apology for the mistake of firing on an American naval ship, but Lt. Levy, still nettled from almost having his head blown off, declared to the Spaniard the apology was insufficient, that his conduct was base and cowardly in the extreme, and there would be some accounting made for the friendly fire with Spanish authorities once the *Revenge* arrived back at Havana. Fortunately, no one was injured in the fray, but the *Revenge* suffered some minor damage.⁶ Due to a heavy storm which soon kicked up, the *Revenge* proceeded to Barracoa and stayed at anchor there while replenishing their food and water until the weather cleared and they were finally able to sail for St. Jago de Cuba. They were still in search of the pirates who had robbed the *Dolores*.

According to a *Revenge* crewman's published letter of January 11, 1823, the inhabitants of Barracoa praised Lt. Levy for not firing on the *Voluntario* and saving lives on both sides. During the encounter, Levy had told the crew that nothing but his care for them prevented his returning the Spaniard's fire, but the inequality in point of size would have resulted in a dreadful slaughter, and he valued one of the Americans' lives above a dozen Spaniards.⁷ The crewman added that although the *Revenge* had cruised in every hiding spot possible to cloak a pirate around that area of Cuba, they

had found none, and no prizes. He expected to only go as far windward as Jamaica, but he would soon find out his captain had other plans.

After first tacking across to the Island Inagua, the *Revenge* sailed through the Windward Passage between Cuba and Haiti and arrived at Kingston, Jamaica, where repairs were made to the areas onboard damaged by the *Voluntario*, more provisions and water were obtained, and, most interestingly, the hold was loaded with \$50,000 in specie freight.⁸ On January 24, Levy and crew departed Kingston headed for Cape Antonio along with a convoy. Before the *Revenge* left, Kingston merchants had petitioned Levy to proceed to the Bay of Honduras to protect the commerce from piracy by Laffite in that quarter, especially as there were some American vessels at Balize "anxious for convoy."⁹ At Grand Cayman, the *Revenge* hove to from the Jamaican convoy, initially intending to check out the Isle of Pines area, but then the captain learned to his extreme interest "the celebrated Laffite," public enemy no. 1 for pirate hunters, had provisioned at Grand Cayman a few days past, and had sailed for the Mosquito Coast. Seizing the opportunity to possibly capture the notorious Laffite, Levy ordered all sails filled to run straight for Balize but was buffeted by a northern gale for four days of the journey.

On January 31, the *Revenge* arrived at the British trading port of Balize, where Lt. Levy was asked to convoy several American vessels preparing to leave within 7 or 8 days' time. What he heard from the local authorities only intensified his desire to immediately chase Laffite. The Governor and magistrates of that area said they would furnish him a locally experienced pilot at their own expense to navigate the coral reefs, atolls and low draft harbors if he would go after Laffite for them as he was harassing too many ships in the Gulf of Dulce area at the bottom of the Bay of Honduras. Again, the *Revenge* quickly weighed anchor and left to hunt after Laffite on February 2.

According to Lt. Levy's account, he scoured the coast inside the Reef through the Sapodilla Keys over to Omoa, where he learned Laffite's *General Santander* privateer had taken a sloop three days before, between the rivers Lieu and Port Sal to the east. Heading east closely following the shoreline and beating the ship against the ENE trade wind, the hopeful pirate hunter did not find Laffite anywhere around Port Sal, but was informed by an inhabitant that he had been at anchor at Triunfo de la Cruz two days earlier. Tacking slowly on to the Triunfo point of land near the present-day city of Tela, the captain was dismayed to discover he had just missed catching Laffite, who had sailed away the previous evening! Lt. Levy said his last hope was to find the "Pirate of the Gulf" at what the locals called his accustomed haunt, the island of Utila. Once there, the *Revenge* checked out both the east and west harbors "but (alas!) he was not there." It is notable to mark that not only did the *Revenge* not catch sight of the *General Santander*, but there also were no sightings of the two Spanish ships which supposedly were in the battle with Laffite off Triunfo de la Cruz on the night of February 4. The gold freight in the *Revenge* hold made her draw a deeper draft than normal, so it is possible some of the shallower inlets could not be explored sufficiently, but the schooner's sailors should have been able to catch sight of sails at a distance of around 8-10 miles.

Lt. Levy reluctantly had to break off the chase after the elusive Laffite because he was overdue back at Balize to convoy the ships to the US.

Setting sails to take advantage of the prevailing wind, the *Revenge* was at Glover's Reef late the next afternoon, anxious to return to Balize even as darkness fell as they navigated the treacherous reef area with its tricky currents. Suddenly, the supposedly experienced pilot made a grievous error, and on February 12 the ship struck the breakers on Main Reef. According to the *Revenge* logbook, the captain immediately ordered the helm to put aport, but the helmsman yelled back that the rudder had gone. The ship

was fast among the rocks. All attempts were made to pry her free by lightening her load: guns and ballast were thrown overboard, plus the yards and masts were struck and sent on deck, but the ship would not budge. From midnight to 4 a.m., the crew dumped bread from the lockers and everything else that could be removed as the sea was breaching over the deck. Lt. Levy later said he believed any minute all would be lost (including the gold specie) as the rising waves would pound the ship to pieces. Frantically, they fixed makeshift rafts to save the goods and crew. Even the small cutter could not possibly pass over the reef at the time. With first light, the sailors discovered to their consternation that their ship was on the reef about 40 miles to the south of Balize. Even worse, the ship's bilge had filled and rocks were penetrating through the steerage on her bottom. The captain's quarters were awash, his library and possessions lost, along with those of the other officers. By 6 a.m., the stores and saved provisions were moved to the forecastle area, and Midshipman Harby managed to make it over the reef in the *Revenge's* cutter to seek help at Balize. Later that morning, Lt. Levy saw a pilot-boat schooner well back from the reef. That ship's crew could not assist them least their vessel be dashed on the rocks too. The rafts were completed to carry the rigging and stores over the reef, and by early afternoon of the second day, one raft succeeded in passing over the Reef. Lt. Levy was worried for his crew, however, as storm clouds were brewing and the weather was taking on a "very wild appearance." He urged part of the crew and officers to leave him on the ship and pass over on the cutter to the schooner on the other side of the Reef, as he thought the *Revenge* would surely sink that night. Some of the crew refused to do so and stayed with him, no doubt thinking any moment might be their last as the storm-whipped sea continually swept over them throughout that night.

The third day of the *Revenge* wreck, Midshipman Harby and men arrived with two schooners from the Balize to help remove all the rigging and anything else salvageable from the

wreck. Lt. Levy still wanted to try to heave the ship off the rocks, so he obtained a chain and blocks to do so but had to leave the wreck for one day after a heavy gale made such a salvage effort impossible. On February 17, five days after the *Revenge* had crashed into the rocks, the captain was finally able to make an attempt to haul her off, but then discovered from a diving inspection that every timber was loose off the ship's keel so it was entirely gone and too costly to repair. The reef water having cleared, Lt. Levy abandoned his ship salvage efforts to retrieve the guns cast away earlier since they were found on the sandy bottom. By February 19, everything still of any value had been removed from the *Revenge*, and Lt. Levy and crew took their leave of the pitiful sight and the reef where they had nearly met their doom. On February 20, the *Revenge* captain, officers and crew along with their ship's guns, spars, sails and rigging plus the \$50,000 in specie left Balize aboard the American schooner *Little Sarah*.¹⁰ They arrived safely back at their homeport of Charleston on March 17.¹¹

Lt. Levy was greatly chagrined at having lost his first command, stating in his account, "Thus terminates a cruise of 72 days, 59 of which the *Revenge*...was under weigh. During this time, she sailed 3,393 miles; boarded 17 vessels; spoke 11; took charge of 4 separate convoys; assisted one vessel in distress, but captured no pirates."¹² The US Navy conducted a court of inquiry over the loss of the *Revenge* in June 1823. Levy was exonerated with no action taken.¹³

An Interpretation of Why Lt. Levy's Mission to Find Laffite Failed

In the April 20, 1823, *Gaceta de Colombia*, the article about Jean Laffite's death states that his Colombian corsair *General Santander* had chased a Spanish brig and a Spanish schooner from the area off Omoa around the Honduran coastline 20 leagues to just off the Triumph of the Cross (Triunfo de la Cruz) over a period of 17 hours on February 4, 1823, before the schooner turned on him and the battle began in

which Laffite and his first mate were both supposedly fatally wounded. Francis Similien, officer in charge, turned the ship away from the battle after an hour and later brought the damaged *General Santander* to Porto Bello, Panama, on March 10.

The *Revenge* was patrolling from Balize to Omoa on Feb. 2-3, and from Omoa to Port Sal on February 3-4. The next day, February 5, (when Laffite supposedly died of his wound onboard the *General Santander*) the American schooner would have arrived at Triumph of the Cross, and at Utila by February 6. Since they navigated all the way around the little island of Utila, checking the bays, the *Revenge* probably was there most of February 7 and 8, before leaving to head back to Balize. Yet the American ship never saw either the *Santander* or the Spanish brig and schooner. This could have been because at their nearest, the *Revenge* and *Santander* and Spanish ships may each have been about 19 miles apart, too far for Lt. Levy to spot. Or there may be another reason altogether--the whole sea battle story could have been a conveniently concocted fabrication by Laffite.

To begin with, it is not credible that the *Santander* could have chased the Spanish ships from Omoa to the Triumph of the Cross area in just 17 hours' time: the ENE trade wind along that coastal region forced sailing vessels to close haul and beat their way slowly. George Coggeshall, an experienced American merchantmen and privateer during the War of 1812, states in his *Thirty-Six Voyages to Various Parts of the World Made Between the Years 1799 and 1841* book that during a February 1821 voyage from Omoa to Truxillo Honduras, following the same course, it took him two whole days in a schooner to maneuver a short distance from Omoa eastward, fighting that opposing wind.¹⁴ Thus it would have been impossible for the *Santander* to have made an even farther voyage in less than one day on the same heading.

Additionally, both Spanish vessels and the *General Santander* were damaged in the battle, so logically none of the ships could have escaped quickly very

far after their encounter. By the time the *Revenge* showed up at Triumph of the Cross on February 5, the tops of some sails should have been spotted in the distance at the very least, considering any ship heading east into that wind would be slow even if undamaged, and any ship going with the wind and heading west would have met the *Revenge* at some point.

Consider, too, the information Lt. Levy was given by the coastal inhabitants in reverse order: Laffite was said to have sailed from Triumph of the Cross on the "evening" of February 4, presumably for Utila. At Port Sal on February 4, Levy was told Laffite was anchored at the Cross point "two days before" which would have been February 2. At Omoa on February 3, Levy was told Laffite had taken a sloop near Port Sal "three days past", or around February 1.

The question is, where was the *General Santander* on February 5, when the *Revenge* was at Triumph of the Cross? The only likely answer is that Laffite's ship was hiding at Roatan Island, east of Utila, and quite possibly Laffite was not dying from any wound because no battle had occurred!

There is a significant clue to solving the mystery of the missing *General Santander* in Levy's logbook account, right at the first: he had found off the coast of Florida among the little islands a series of "piratical telegraphs" which he had destroyed. An early warning system like a telegraph would be handy for pirates to know when authorities were sent after them, and it also would be handy to learn about Spanish merchant ships. The Spanish authorities, however, were not utilizing telegraphic communication in the early 1820s; the French in France were. The *General Santander* had cruised heavily in the Florida waters in late 1822. Newspapers of that time told about the French system of semaphore coastal communication, using towers and flag codes. Napoleon had even carried a portable semaphore system earlier during his campaigns. Jean Laffite was well versed from his days at Barataria and Galveston on how to mastermind a system of intelligence gathering, and no doubt picked up the semaphore method

readily. Quite simply, he must have known at some point that an American naval ship was after him and also that the Honduran and British authorities were not friendly to Patriot privateers anymore. It was time to fake a death and go incognito somewhere else.

Coggeshall in 1821 had stopped at the Port Sal area and noted that he saw "no inhabitants at this place except about half a dozen villainous-looking fellows, each armed with long knife (sic) and machetes." He said they were rumored to be ex-convicts from the Castle of Omoa. Laffite had experience with dealing with similar types of rough individuals, so perhaps he had confederates all along the Honduran coast to tip him off in 1823.

Further underlining the extreme danger of even being suspected of being a pirate in the Caribbean at the time were the fates of 10 condemned pirates who were executed by the British at Kingston, Jamaica, on February 7, 1823, in a merciless multiple hanging without even the presence of a priest for final confession. One of the doomed, a large Spaniard, broke the noose and had to be hung twice, all the while screaming his innocence.¹⁵ By mid February 1823, both the Americans and British had stepped up patrols for pirates in the Cuban waters once Porter's Anti-Piracy Squadron had arrived and set up base at Key West, Florida.

Finally, consider how even Lt. Levy and the *Revenge* were involved with a fake newspaper story: several American newspapers reprinted a dramatic story from a Captain Ross of Havana of how Levy and the *Revenge* had captured a pirate vessel named the *Hebe* after a four-hour battle in the Isle of Pines area during which the pirate captain, with one arm shot off, and seven of his men, took to a boat and escaped to Havana.¹⁶ The story was totally false: the *Revenge* had not encountered a pirate in the whole time of her last cruise, and Lt. Levy set the record straight when he arrived back in Charleston.¹⁷ So the old saying held true, in that case at least: don't believe everything you read in the newspapers.

Endnotes:

1. Guide to the Uriah P. Levy Collection American Jewish Historical Society, processed by Rachel Pollock. <http://www.ajhs.org>.

Uriah Phillips Levy was born April 22, 1792, in Philadelphia, and ran away from home to become a cabin boy in 1802, when he was 10, on a small merchantman ship. In 1812, Levy volunteered to serve with the *US Argus* and was appointed acting lieutenant, rising from the ranks. The ship was captured by the British, and Levy and the rest of the crew were kept at Dartmoor prison until the close of the war. In 1816, when he was sailing master onboard the *Franklin*, Levy was insulted by a drunken officer over his Jewish heritage. He challenged the man to a duel and killed him, but was found not guilty by a grand jury. Commissioned as a lieutenant in 1819 in the United States, Levy got into a fight with the ship's lieutenant and was court-martialed and dismissed from the Navy. President Monroe later reversed the court martial and gave Levy command of the *Revenge*. Overall, Lt. Levy experienced six court-martials in his life but overcame them all to finally earn the rank of commodore in the Navy. A great admirer of President Thomas Jefferson, Levy bought Monticello in 1834 when it was in a state of disrepair and preserved and renovated the estate. Members of his family owned Jefferson's home until 1923. Levy later was known in the Navy for having authored a successful bill for the abolition of flogging in the US Navy, a punishment that he believed to be inhumane. He died in 1862.

2. *Baltimore Patriot*, Jan. 24, 1823. Discovered via NewsBank and/or the American Antiquarian Society, 2004.

The other newspaper citations also were found via NewsBank's wonderful and history-rich genealogy research archives, which may be accessed online by subscription at www.GenealogyBank.com.

3. *Providence Patriot*, Jan. 11, 1823.

4. "Loss of the U.S. Schooner *Revenge*," *Baltimore Patriot*, March 24, 1823.

5. *Charleston City Gazette*, Jan 26, 1823.

6. "The *Revenge*," *Baltimore Patriot* Feb. 3, 1823.

7. "To the Editor of the *Southern Patriot*," *Richmond Enquirer*, March 28, 1823.

8. *Portsmouth Journal*, April 5, 1823.

9. *Providence Patriot*, March 26, 1823.

10. *Connecticut Courant*, April 1, 1823.

11. *Essex Register*, March 27, 1823.

12. *Connecticut Courant*, April 1, 1823.

13. *United States Jewry 1776-1985*, Jacob Rader Marcus, Wayne State University Press, 1989.

14. *Thirty-Six Voyages to Various Parts of the World Made Between the Years 1799 and 1841*, George Coggeshall, Putnam, New York, 1858.

15. "Execution of Pirates," *Richmond Enquirer*, March 11, 1823.

16. *Baltimore Patriot*, March 17, 1823.

17. *Baltimore Patriot*, March 24, 1823.

The Burning of the *Vengeance* and *Franchise* at Savannah in 1811

Pam Keyes

Two French privateer ships from Baratavia, *La Franchise* and *La Vengeance*, blazed near the wharf at Savannah, Ga., on the night of November 15, 1811. The privateers were victims of an unruly mob who had savagely fought their crews before torching both ships.

Tempers had flared first in a brawl two nights earlier between American and French sailors at a Savannah brothel when one American was killed and one French privateer mortally wounded. The next day, there was another fight on a street in which two Americans were killed. Simmering resentment among the factions involved had sparked the townspeople's and American seamen's wharf attack on the French privateers on the afternoon of November 15.¹

According to a report to the French Consul by *La Franchise's* Capt. Jean Chevalier and *La Vengeance's* Capt. Charles Lomine, the two ships had been waiting for some French sailors to come from Charleston before the *Franchise* could leave on a cruise and the *Vengeance* on a voyage to France, when "five or six French sailors had a fracas with some American and English sailors at a brothel, one American was killed in the fight, and a French sailor stabbed to death." Officers sent an armed force on board the *Vengeance* and *Franchise* and carried off 34 crewmen to jail to be interrogated about the fight. The next morning, the crew was found innocent with the exception of seven men, who were held for further questioning while the rest were released that afternoon. "They (the authorities) only arrested the French and set at liberty the American and English seamen who were equally culpable," complained Chevalier.²

Accounts about what happened next to spark the riot's emotional powder keg differ widely according to the French

and American viewpoints. All that can be agreed upon was that some sailors were killed near the brothel, some were killed at the wharf in the riot, and both ships were destroyed.

One witness who was likely the most accurate observer said the deaths of the two Americans in the fight "threw the whole city into a ferment...a party of the Americans resolved to destroy the privateers." They planned to march in a body from the dead men's funeral, board the privateers, carry them into the stream and torch them. "But while proceeding with the funeral, information came that the privateers were hauling from the wharf. It was determined to attack them immediately and about 50 men armed with clubs, hatchets, axes, cleavers, muskets and pistols, and a few swords...boarded the *Franchise*, driving the privateers into the water, but not until several were wounded on both sides and about a dozen guns fired by the two parties." Two of the wounded Americans later died, and one (Capt. Miller) had a blinding shot through both eyes and the bridge of his nose, yet survived.³

Sifting through the reports shows how variable the viewpoints could be: a Savannah newspaper writer says after the French crewmen were released from the jail, they "had hardly reached the wharf before they assaulted two sailors who called for help. Capt. Miller and Capt. Pierce, with four or five others, 100 yards off, came, Capt. Miller with a saber, the others unarmed. They had proceeded but a few paces before Miller received a musket ball in his face from a window of the second story of a warehouse on Anceaux' wharf, then five or six muskets fired from the same window by which one Negro was killed, and a seaman shot in the foot. The Americans rushed on board the privateer (*Franchise*) and into the house. Two of

the crew (of the privateer) were killed, seven wounded, and the remainder made prisoner." Seventy-nine privateers, mostly French, but also some Italian and Portuguese, were lodged in the jail.⁴

In another account by an American, the French privateers were heading back to their ships and had a scuffle with some other sailors, soon to be followed by a "large number of captains and mates of vessels and seamen... proceeding in a body with the American flag towards the wharf where the *Franchise* was lying. As soon as they appeared, they were ambushed and fired upon by the privateers from a loft on the wharf, while one or two shots were fired from the privateer. Capt. Miller of the brig *Champlin* received a shot through his head, and a seaman belonging to Capt. Howland's vessel was killed." ⁵

Chevalier's letter to the consul contains a vastly different version of what happened, designed to inflame French sentiment:

"A most detestable plan was hatched to assassinate them (the French privateers who were jailed and released) unarmed and defenseless. At 4 p.m., a troop of American and English sailors armed with sticks, firelocks and pistols raised themselves under orders of W. Fountain, captain of the brig *Hetty* of Philadelphia, and Miller, captain of the brig *Champlin*, N.Y. These were abetted by principal leaders in Savannah also armed with bludgeons and pistols. All rushed in with horrid yells on the *Franchise* and assassinated seven or eight seamen on deck."⁶

"The *La Franchise* was in the power of the rioters, the French flag was torn down and trampled and replaced by the American. The ship was drawn out from the wharf and set on fire."⁷

Perhaps the reason the French flag was trampled was that the sailor who had

been carrying the American flag up the wharf was struck by three shots from the privateers and killed, according to an eyewitness letter writer who called it the "greatest scene of bloodshed and murder that has happened in this place since the war."⁸

Another witness said shortly before the riot occurred, Capt. Lomine struck an unarmed youth with his saber, supposedly unprovoked, on the wharf side as he was attempting to board the *Vengeance*.⁹

By this time, a call to arms had been sounded in the city, with a drum roll alert, bringing the Savannah Volunteer Guards and the Republican Blues militia units.¹⁰ Other rioters were battling French sailors desperately trying to get the *Vengeance* underway. Savannah Mayor William Bullock arrived at the scene with the Savannah Volunteer Guard and pleaded with the agitated mob to keep the peace, committing the *Vengeance* to the protection of the militia corps, who had boarded her to protect the French and escort them to the jail for their own protection. By then, the rioters had successfully cut away the *Vengeance's* anchors and destroyed almost all her rigging so the ship could not escape. The Republican Blues conducted the *Vengeance* and *Franchise* crews to the jail while the Savannah Volunteer Guard stayed to defend the slowly drifting *Vengeance*, the *Franchise* burning a few hundred yards away. Some of the militia tried to approach the *Franchise* before she became engulfed by flames, but reversed course quickly when they realized the powder magazine could blow up and kill everyone close by.¹¹

The town guardsmen onboard the *Vengeance* stayed for nearly eight hours, repelling a number of boat crews determined to board her at point of bayonet, until 11:30 p.m. The remaining French crewmen were placed in the hold for their own safety. Frustrated in their boarding efforts, the assailants prepared a flat boat covered with tar and set it afire within 20 yards of the privateer. The *Vengeance* could not be maneuvered out of the fire's

way due to being unable to pass by, plus the guardsmen were too exhausted to do anymore after defending the vessel for several hours in the cold wind and light rain, especially when they saw it was inevitable the ship would catch fire. They disembarked with the French crew, and the *Vengeance*, like the *Franchise* before it, burnt to the water's edge.¹²

One witness later dramatically wrote that the guards actually had "resolved that the graves then open to receive the still bleeding bodies of their murdered comrades, should not be closed until they had been illuminated by the flames of the privateers."¹³ However, the leader of the guards later denied that intent, stating his men would not have fought for eight hours to delay the satisfaction of seeing her burn, if that was what they had truly wished.¹⁴

Another writer said he thought the city's militia had saved the French privateers from certain death: "Taking all circumstances in view, it is very astonishing that the crews of the privateers were not all murdered on the spot. The civil authority, particularly the mayor of the city, used every possible means of having the vessel (*Vengeance*) saved from destruction, and the crews carried to prison to save them from being massacred."¹⁵

Lomine claimed that some of the French sailors who were at areas across town rushed to the scene when they heard the drum call to arms only to be waylaid by the mob. He said the captain of arms and second master of the *Franchise* were "felled by cudgels, then stabbed with swords or bayonets." He also said after the ships were burned, "murderous gangs went to houses of naturalized Frenchmen" and that both he and Chevalier had to conceal themselves for a few days before reporting the attack to the consul.¹⁶

Chevalier attested to his consul that during the three to four months his *Franchise* sailors had been at Savannah before the riot, the police had not been

called on them for the slightest complaint. He said the "outrage" was "shocking" proof that English visitors had spread their hatred for the French to the Americans. He also theorized that one of the reasons for the privateers' destruction was the fear by English smugglers on Amelia Island that the French would seize their ships on their way to sell contraband at Savannah and Charleston unless the threat to safe passage was removed.¹⁷

Unacknowledged by Chevalier and Lomine was the anti-French sentiment that had been smoldering among the Savannah citizens for several months prior to the riot, since the *Vengeance* had first arrived in port to refit, on July 5, 1811.¹⁸ As the ship fired a salute upon sailing up the river that day, it was returned in acknowledgement by the Revenue Cutter, *James Madison*, with the *Vengeance* crew giving three cheers which were immediately returned by the friendly cutter's crew. Savannah residents were critical of the US cutter's amiable response to the French privateer.¹⁹

Fitted out at Charleston, the *Vengeance* had just returned from a cruise to South America, where Capt. Lomine said a battle had been fought between 10,000 native Mexicanos and 5,000 European Spaniards in which the former were vanquished with many killed and wounded, besides losing two cannons.²⁰

The *Vengeance* bore a large, rich cargo of specie, cochineal and dry goods. She was admitted to the port as a "merchant vessel" rather than a privateer, and allowed to dispose of her cargo in order to repair her damages and re-fit, to the amount of \$17,000. An anti-French Savannah editor snidely remarked that the amount was "moderate enough, considering that the principal injury she had sustained was that of having been *chased* by a British frigate!"²¹ Giving vent to the townspeople's resentment, the editor said, "Is it not remarkable...whenever a French privateer is under the necessity of putting into one of our ports in distress, she always happens to have a

valuable cargo on board? How many American vessels has this privateer *La Vengeance* "plundered, burnt and sunk," during her last cruise?"²²

The British ship of war *Halifax* had unsuccessfully pursued the *Vengeance* in mid April through early May, following her departure from Charleston for points southward.²³ Earlier in February, 1811, on her regular route to Barataria and the Balize below New Orleans, the *Vengeance* had taken among several prizes a Spanish brig from London bound to Pensacola. The brig's dry goods were brought to Charleston. At that time, the schooner *Vengeance* was said to have one nine pounder gun and one six pounder barbet, with a crew of 48 men.²⁴

Capt. George Sheriff, of the Balize pilot boat, said he had often seen *La Vengeance* with prizes. In early January 1811, Sheriff was trying to salvage a Spanish brig that had gone on shore following its capture by *La Vengeance*. He said the *Vengeance* captain told him her commission had only 30 or 40 days to run, which was too short a time for them to proceed to France, so they needed to get rid of the brig. He did not see the *Vengeance* again until May 20, when she had another commander. Sheriff commented in his report he suspected the privateer to be furnished with a set of false papers.²⁵

After the *Vengeance* had been at Savannah for nearly a month, on July 31, 1811, Capt. Lomine and some of his officers narrowly missed getting captured by a British sloop of war when they were on their way in the smack *Defiance* to Charleston to have new sails made for the *Vengeance*. The French privateers had the old sails of the *Vengeance* on board in order to get a new set, using them for a pattern, to enable the privateer to "continue her labours in her vocation." One day out from Savannah, the smack was brought to by the British sloop of war *Emulous*, with her prize, the French brig *Adele*, in company. The *Defiance* was allowed to pass without suspicion, as the *Vengeance* officers kept

themselves out of sight.²⁶

More trouble loomed for Capt. Lomine and company at Charleston. On September 2, 1811, grocery store operator, William Chambers, was stabbed in the heart by Jean Chocolate, a crewman with the *Vengeance*. Chambers had quarreled with a few privateers the day before at his grocery and forced them to retreat with a cudgel. The next night, they "increased their numbers and armed with knives and clubs attacked Chambers at his home." Four were arrested, but Chocolate escaped temporarily. He was later found hiding under a bed at a boarding house, his clothes still soaked in his victim's blood.²⁷ The *Vengeance* crewmen had worn out their welcome in Charleston. Lomine and the rest quickly returned to Savannah. There they would learn their notoriety as murdering ruffians would be most unwelcome and would ultimately result in the loss of their ships.

Following the destruction of the *Franchise* and *Vengeance*, a New Orleans letter writer gave some interesting history about their Baratarian connections. He said the *Vengeance*, earlier known as the Danish merchantman *Christianstadt*, had sailed a couple of years at New Orleans and was equipped as a freebooter after her name change. The *Franchise*, earlier called *L'Agile*, had cruised off New Orleans "for a long time, and Chevalier, her captain, sent more than one cargo by the Bayou of Barataria, and Mons. Maronne's Mill Race to this city." The letter writer went on to say "we have either a manufacture of commissions, or the remains of a shipment from Gen. Ernouf before the fall of Guadeloupe, which are disposed of in blank at a low rate; and when at sea the cruiser is then described as a vessel fitted out at a French port, according to the laws of France."²⁸ The *Franchise* also had been the subject of an official complaint from Luis Onis to the American State Department in early 1810 over her captures of Spanish ships in the Gulf Coast off New Orleans. The department referred Onis back to the New Orleans courts, which had

already decided in favor of Chevalier and the *Franchise* as being a legal French privateer.²⁹

Lomine and Chevalier had operated their privateers from a Baratarian base at the same time as Renato Beluche, who under his alias Pierre Brugman, was captain of a French privateer schooner, *Jenny*, for New Orleans banker and powerful politico Jean Blaque. Beluche earlier had unloaded cargos from captured prizes at both Cat Island and Grande Terre, to be smuggled inland to New Orleans.

Due to this association among French privateers in 1810-1811, it seems likely Jean and Pierre Laffite had become leaders of the smuggling ring out of Grande Terre by this time, although their names were not yet tied to the place in the contemporary newspapers.

In later times, Lomine would be associated with both Louis Aury and the Laffites briefly before re-joining his apparent friend Beluche in the Venezuelan Navy.³⁰ Lomine returned to New Orleans, at least briefly, in late December, 1822, and early January, 1823, to sell some slaves to a free woman of color, Oursine St. Ours.³¹ He later retired in New Orleans, where he was listed as residing at 340 Burgundy Street in the French Quarter from 1842 to as late as 1850.³²

Chevalier does not show back up in the archives until 1814, when he apparently decided to turn respectable and became captain of the merchantman sloop *Dosoris*, operating out of Savannah. Apparently the townspeople had forgiven his earlier days as a French privateer.³³ In 1818, he was captain and owner of the sloop *John Chevalier*, based at St. Mary's, Ga., and running from Key West to Charleston. By 1819, he was back at Savannah, operating a wrecking business with the *John Chevalier*, salvaging ships lost in the breakers around Key West and the Tortugas.³⁴ The last notice of him sailing his self-named sloop occurred in 1822.³⁵

Endnotes:

1. *New England Palladium*, Boston, Mass., Dec. 6, 1811.
2. *Weekly Aurora*, Philadelphia, Penn., Dec. 10, 1811.
3. *Trenton Federalist*, Trenton, N.Y., Dec. 2, 1811.
4. *Savannah Republican*, Savannah, Ga., Nov. 19, 1811.
5. *New England Palladium*, Dec. 6, 1811.
6. *Weekly Aurora*, Dec. 10, 1811.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Connecticut Journal*, Conn., Dec. 5, 1811.
9. *Savannah Evening Ledger*, Savannah, Ga., Jan. 16, 1812.
10. *Savannah Evening Ledger*, Jan. 18, 1812.
11. *New England Palladium*, Dec. 6, 1811.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Savannah Evening Ledger*, Jan. 16, 1812.
14. *Savannah Evening Ledger*, Dec. 26, 1811.
15. *Savannah Republican*, Nov. 19, 1811.
16. *Weekly Aurora*, Dec. 10, 1811.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *New York Commercial Advertiser*, N.Y., July 20, 1811.
19. *Alexandria Daily Gazette*, Alexandria, Va., August 13, 1811.
20. *New York Commercial Advertiser*, July 20, 1811.
21. *Alexandria Daily Gazette*, August 13, 1811.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, April 15, 1811.
24. *New York Commercial Advertiser*, Feb. 18, 1811.
25. *Alexandria Gazette*, Feb. 21, 1812.
26. *Mercantile Advertiser*, New York, N.Y., August 12, 1811.
27. *Orange County Patriot*, N.Y., Sept. 24, 1811.
28. *The Repertory and General Advertiser*, Mass., March 3, 1812.
29. *Privateers of the Gulf*, Stanley Faye, Dogwood Press, 2001, pg. 39
30. (Lomine had commanded the Cartagena privateer *Pinerez* for Beluche in 1813 and 1814, *Renato Beluche, Smuggler, Privateer, and Patriot, 1780-1860*, Jane Lucas de Grummond, Louisiana State University

Press, 1983, pgs. 73, 79. Lomine fought for Bolivar. The *Pinerez* became the *Jupiter* in 1816, with Lomine listed as the owner, Renato, p. 147)

31. Charles Lomine to Oursine St. Ours, Notarial Records of Philippe Pedesclaux, 1819-1830 Roll #16, Notarial Act #112, Dec. 12, 1822, New Orleans Notarial Archives; Charles Lomine to Oursine St. Ours, NRPP, Roll #17,

Notarial Act #26, Jan. 10, 1823, NONA. 32. *New Orleans City Directories*, 1842 and 1851.

33. *The Enquirer*, Virginia, August 31, 1814.

34. *New York Gazette*, New York, N.Y., Nov. 23, 1818; *Franklin Gazette*, Philadelphia, Penn., July 27, 1819.

35. *Baltimore Patriot*, Baltimore, Md., August 7, 1822.

MAN IN A BOX

R. Dale Olson

An atypical weekday field trip on Monday 14, April, featured a drive to Angleton and the Brazoria County Historical Museum, at which Laffite Society member, Michael Bailey, serves as curator.

Members in attendance were: Ed Jamison, Kathy Modzelwski, Jeff Modzelwski, George Najarian, Lizette Gaudin, Jim Nonus, Diane Olson, R. Dale Olson, Dave Roberts, Bill Haaga and Lynette Haaga.

The title of the talk by Michael, "Man in a Box", was sufficiently intriguing to encourage 15 members to attend the 10:30 a.m. talk at the museum. The topic related to the situation existing in hundreds of museums in the United States in which non-monetary donations exceed the museums capacity to catalog, title and display. This backlog of material simply rests in a box.

The "Man in a Box" in this situation was Joseph P. Underwood, (1845-1925. He left numerous documents, items and memorabilia that his family later donated to the Brazoria County Historical Museum. The "box" was a carton of these items that museum staff analyzed, cataloged and presented on display for members of the Laffite Society.

In addition to an explanation of the items in the box, Michael led members through several storerooms where as-

yet un-cataloged items ranging from Conquistadore stirrups to felt hats, firearms, cash registers, and thousands of other items are stored, awaiting the attention of museum staff.

The box also contained the following song:

In Brazoria County I was raised,
I feared neither death nor danger,
Until Captain Perkins enlisted me
To be a Texas Ranger

CHORUS

If ever I do get through this war
And Lincoln boys don't bind me,
I'll make my way safe back again,
To the girl I left behind me.

He dressed me up in and [sic] old blue shirt
And used me very kindly,
But still I thought my heart would break
For the girl I left behind me.

CHORUS

He took me down to guard the coast
From the infernal Yankees,
And fed me on some tough bull beef
And never gave me thankee.

CHORUS

B.O.B.

West Columbia, April 8, 1913



Joseph P. Underwood

MICHAEL BAILEY AND HIS MUSEUM

R. Dale Olson

Casual visitors to museums throughout the world often stroll the halls, simply glancing at displays, artifacts, and documents with little thought as to the process through which their presence in the structure was facilitated. The paths of historically significant items on their way to display is often tortuous, convoluted, time-consuming, and unappreciated. But, for the minority who appreciate museums, the behind-the-scenes diligence is understood and respected.

Few individuals have demonstrated a more dedicated passion for salvaging, researching, and ultimately displaying historical articles than Laffite Society member Michael Bailey, Curator of the Brazoria County Historical Museum in Angleton, Texas.

To Angleton and the Brazoria County Historical Museum, Michael brings a rich academic background including the University of Maryland, Central Texas College, and Fort Stellicom Community College. He holds the B.A. in Anthropology and a B.A. in History from Indiana State University, a Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies from George Washington University, and attended the Preservation Management Institute, Graduate Studies at Rutgers University.

Michael has taken his professional experience to the Cunningham Memorial Library, Terre Haute, Indiana, the Indiana State University Archaeology Laboratory, the Rare Books and Special Collection at the Cunningham, the Eugene V. Debs Museum, the City Library of Pembina, North Dakota, and finally to the Brazoria County Historical Museum.

To the great envy of other Society members who recently visited the museum on a field trip, Michael is a

member of the Texas Army, and an Admiral of the Texas Navy!

In 2001 Michael began his work in Angleton. In that small Texas town he found a museum whose primary purpose is to act as the historical resource center for Brazoria County. The primary focus is collecting, organizing, and preserving information relating to the events, people, and places in Brazoria County, and to assist researchers in locating this material.

To Texans, Brazoria County is of vital importance. Anglo-Texas has its very beginnings in this area. The first of Stephen F. Austin's authorized 300 Anglo settlers in what was then the State of Coahuila, Mexico, arrived at the mouth of the Brazos River in 1821. Many of the events leading to the Texas Revolution occurred or developed here. Santa Anna signed the famous Treaties of Velasco that effectively granted Texas its independence and led directly to the consolidation of the United States continental empire, where those first settlers arrived in 1821.

This all occurred in the year following the Laffite Brother's departure from Galveston Island, about 60 miles away.

The Museum is home to the long term Austin Colony Exhibit, which opened in October, 1993. Sixty-eight panels displayed over 2400 feet provide a clear and concise chronology of the chain of events from the earliest Anglo-American penetration to full Texas Independence.

To the Museum, Michael Bailey has brought a wealth of expertise and professionalism. To The Laffite Society, he has encouraged a new, higher level of monthly presentations by his carefully prepared and documented lectures.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN JERUSALEM

R. Dale Olson

Saturday, June 14, 2008, found fifteen members of The Laffite Society at the home of Don and Sybil Marler in Montgomery, Texas for a field trip. Montgomery is adjacent to Conroe, Texas, north of Houston, and is approximately 100 miles from Galveston Island. Members drove their own cars and most arrived at the Marler home at 11:30 a.m.

Don, and his brother, Troy Marler, had taken part in an archaeological excavation on Mt. Zion in the city of Jerusalem, and this field trip was devoted to a presentation by the brothers describing their experience. The site is reported at Dig Mt. Zion.com.

Members in attendance were:

Jean Epperson, Sheldon Kindall, Lou MacBeth and her new husband, David Olsen (no relation to Diane and Dale), Don Marler, Sybil Marler, Troy Marler,

Jeff Modzelewski, Kathy Modzelewski, Walter Modzelewski, Diane Olson, R. Dale Olson, Rob Peterson, Carolyn Peterson, and Carmen Wainwright.

Troy created a Power Point presentation showing many of the photographs taken during the trip. Following the presentation related to the excavation in Jerusalem, Troy gave a shorter presentation on a recent W.W.II reenactment that occurred several weeks before in Texas.

Don and Sybil prepared lunch for all in attendance. Following the mid-day presentation, members remained to discuss their current research activities. Later, the Marlers served dinner!

Although most field trips of The Society are related to the activities of the Laffites, this was an exception, but one which held the attention of all members.

DOROTHY McDONALD KARILANOVICH SECRETARY EMERITUS

Hurricane "Ike", which devastated much of Galveston Island on 13 September 2008, has resulted in profound losses to the Laffite Society. One significant loss is that our Secretary, Dorothy McDonald Karilanovaich, who made the decision to move to the state of Florida rather than returning to her ancestral home of Galveston following the storm.

Dorothy was, until September, 2008, the only Secretary of the Society. She was a founding member of our group, and contributed immensely to the maturation of the Society. Dorothy not only took meticulous minutes of nearly 150 meetings, but engaged in voluminous correspondence with other Laffite scholars throughout the world. Her knowledge of languages resulted in many translations of Spanish and French materials. Other researchers turned to Dorothy for advise and consultation of translated materials.

The level of scholarship and precision within the Society was assuredly elevated by Dorothy's influence.

At the Holiday Banquet of December 11, 2008, Dorothy was presented with a plaque commemorating her huge contributions not only to The Laffite Society, but to the study of Gulf Coast and Galveston history, and the study of piracy, and privateering ...

Past President, and Editor of Publications, Jeff Modzelewski will assume duties of Secretary.

ADDENDA

**MINUTES
THE LAFFITE SOCIETY
May 13, 2008
SIMPSON'S GALLERIES
2413 Strand
GALVESTON, TX. 77550**

BOARD PRESENT: President, Jim Nonus; First Vice-President, Lou Graves Olson (formerly MacBeth); Second Vice-President, Wil Zapalac; Secretary, Dorothy McD. Karilanic; Archivist, Ed Jamison; Press Director, Dave Roberts; Parliamentarian, Diane Olson

BOARD ABSENT: Treasurer, Nancy Beaman; Third Vice-President, Lizette Gaudin; Editor of Publications, Don C. Marler; Coordinator of Research, Pam Keyes; Coordinator of Research, Gary Fretz; Historian (office vacant)

ADVISORY BOARD PRESENT: Jean L. Epperson; Jeffrey P. Modzelewski; R. Dale Olson

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Frank & Connie Dryden; Lady Elizabeth Galloway; Bill & Lynette Haaga; Clifford Johnson; Sheldon Kindall; Ondree Kuhn; Linda Kuhn; Kathy Modzelewski; Walter Modzelewski; Don and B.J. Peak; Jan Porter; Sandy Yearout

VISITOR: Al King

CALL TO ORDER: President Jim Nonus called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m. following the customary social gathering for refreshments at 6:00 p.m. Reading of Minutes and Treasurer's Report waived.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: "ASSOCIATES OF LAFFITE"

Ex-Officio President, current Advisory Board Member and speaker of the evening R. Dale Olson talked about a number of contemporaries of the Laffites associated with their activities while they were on Galveston Island from ca. 1817-1820, some of which are as follows:

- 1) Bartolomey LaFon, well-known New Orleans architect and engineer, thought to have designed and built Jean Laffite's island house, Maison Rouge.
- 2) James Campbell, of Irish descent, described as Laffite's "right-hand lieutenant", settled on Virginia Point on Galveston Bay as a farmer after Laffite left Galveston. Was said to have been buried there after his death in 1854.
- 3) Stephen Churchill, a pilot who guided ships into the channel at the island's east end in 1840; first individual to obtain land on the island as a settlement following the departure of the Laffites.
- 4) Charles Cronea, alleged to have been a cabin boy on a Laffite ship; lived on Bolivar Peninsula, died in 1893 and is buried in High Island where was established a few years ago an historical marker at his grave site, created by former Laffite Society member Joel Kirkpatrick, a *Galveston Daily News* reporter.
- 5) Benjamin Doliver (also known as "Crazy Ben"); colorful island character known to have casually displayed quantities of doubloons - died in the early 1850s.
- 6) Burrell Franks, a hunter, whose wife maintained a boarding house on the island during the Laffite era, and who died in 1885.
- 7) John Lambert, described as a Laffite "lieutenant" - was in the butcher's trade in 1842.

Others mentioned in Dale's talk: Andrew Roach; William Snyder; Anson Taylor (after whom Taylor Lake in the Clear Lake, Houston area is named); an individual with the surname of Blanchard; J.O. Dyer, well known Galveston writer who collected numerous stories, many undocumented, about persons said to have known the Laffites and their contemporaries (info on file in the Rosenberg Library at Galveston); Luis de Aury and Francisco Mina, filibusterers and revolutionaries who occupied briefly the isle before the arrival of the Laffites; two persons known as Lacassinier and "Nick the Greek" about whom to date nothing much is known.

In closing, Dale urged members having an interest to take up further study on these historical persons as a new research direction that could yield valuable results for the Society's archive.

JERUSALEM TALK JUNE 14: Editor of Publications of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*, Don C. Marler, will give a talk and video presentation on a recent archeological dig in which he participated in Jerusalem, Saturday, June 14, in Montgomery, TX. E-mail directions for the special event trip, as well van transportation info will be provided. The event will supercede the Society's regular monthly meeting.

CUBAN TRAVEL: Results on application for travel to Cuba deferred.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Thanks and appreciation are gratefully extended to Jim Nonus, Lynette Haaga, and Lady Elizabeth Galloway for tonight's buffet and beverages, and to Simpson's Galleries for allowing use of its premises for the meeting.

MEETING ADJOURNED: There being no further business, meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by,

Dorothy McDonald Karilanovic
Recording/Corresponding Secretary
THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

\dmk:6-2-2008

**SPECIAL EVENT TRAVEL
THE LAFFITE SOCIETY
Saturday, June 14, 2008
MONTGOMERY, TX**

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jean L. Epperson; Sheldon Kindall; Don and Sybil Marler; Jeff and Kathy Modzelewski; Walter Modzelewski; David and Lou Graves Olsen; Dale and Diane Olson; Robert and Carolyn Peterson

GUESTS: Troy Marler, brother and co-presenter of the event and Troy's wife Carmen Marler.

OBSERVATIONS ON ISRAEL

***A Presentation by
DON C. MARLER
& TROY MARLER***

A video/talk was held at the home of Laffite Society Editor-of-Publications Don C. Marler and his wife Sybil on Saturday, June 14, in place of the regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

Don's talk was based on observations made during his first trip to Israel from February to March 9, 2008, with additional information included based on "fact checking." According to Don's write up of the trip, copies which members in attendance received, the purpose of the travel was "to participate in an archaeological dig with James Tabor and Shimon Gibson on Mount Zion." The trip grew out of Don's interest in Dr. Tabor's book, *The Jesus Dynasty*

Don stated that in the dig he, himself, found "many pieces of broken pottery and mosaic tile, several jug handles, and the bowl of a 15th century pipe used to smoke opium. Also discovered by others were "several coins going back at least to the 6th century." Don's dig partner also found a "widow's mite - a very small coin."

Following the talk, members enjoyed a sumptuous buffet hosted by the Marlers at their Montgomery, TX home.

A special report and photos of the trip prepared by Dale and Diane Olson will appear in an upcoming issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles*.

Corrected version 7-19-2008/\d.Karilanovic:7-6-2008

MINUTES
July 8, 2008
THE LAFFITE SOCIETY
The Panama Lofts (Lobby)
25th and Strand
GALVESTON, TX 2008

BOARD PRESENT: Jim Nonus, President; First Vice-President, Lou Graves Olsen; Third Vice-President, Lizette Gaudin; Secretary, Dorothy McDonald Karilanovic; Treasurer, Nancy Beaman; Archivist, Ed Jamison; Press Director, Dave Roberts; Parliamentarian, Diane Olson

BOARD ABSENT: Second Vice-President, Wil Zapalac; Editor of Publications, Don C. Marler; Coordinator of Research, Pam Keyes; Coordinator of Research, Gary Fretz; Historian (office vacant)/

ADVISORY BOARD PRESENT: R. Dale Olson; Jeffrey P. Modzelewski

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Dan Cote; George Dersheimer; Frank & Connie Dryden; Harry & Anne Forester; Bill and Lynette Haaga; Clifford Johnson; Kathy Modzelewski; Walter Modzelewski; Ginny Roberts; Tom Shehan

VISITORS: Wayne Cox; Doris Dodson; Al King; Josie Soto

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Ex-officio President/Editor of Publications/current Advisory Board Member, and newly elected Archivist Jeff Modzelewski presented an overview on Laffite history intended as a "synthesized, coherent introduction" or as a "primer" for new members and others needing familiarity with the Society's research.

In his speaker's role on behalf of the Society, Jeff stated he has so far presented the information to several other organizations - the Daughters of the Republic of Texas-Sidney Sherman Chapter, and to two Rotary groups.

ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS: On motions approved by acclamation, the following persons were elected to the Board for 2008-2010; President, Ed Jamison; First VP, Jim Nonus (Programs); Second VP, Kathy Modzelewski (Membership); Third VP (Hospitality), Lynette Haaga; Secretary, Dorothy McD. Karilanovic; Treasurer, Nancy Beaman; Editor of Publications, Don C. Marler; Archivist, Jeff Modzelewski; Press Director, Dave Roberts; Coordinator of Research, Pam Keyes (consent pending); Coordinator of Research, Gary Fretz (consent pending); Parliamentarian, Diane Olson; Historian, Ginny Roberts; Privateer-at-Arms (nominal); Wil Zapalac

NEW ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS: Ex-officio President Kathy Modzelewski and current Editor of Publications, Don C. Marler, were added to the Advisory Board, also including Jean L. Epperson, Pam Keyes, Jeff Modzelewski, Gene Marshall, R. Dale Olson, Robert Vogel, and Dr. Reginald Wilson

E-MAIL ADDRESSES: A list was circulated at the meeting for members to add and update e-mail addresses.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW PRESIDENT: Following remarks of thanks and appreciation for the opportunity to have served as first officer of the Society, exiting President Jim Nonus introduced new Board President Ed Jamison. In his acceptance comments, Ed offered as one of his goals the

suggestion to try and attract the interest of younger members in consideration of eventual attrition of the Society's founders, some having served now for several decades. Ed stated he would call a meeting of new officers in the near future.

JANUARY, '09 FIELD TRIP TO NEW ORLEANS: Second Vice-President Kathy Modzelewski stated she is researching information for members to attend the annual meeting of The Louisiana Historical Society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Thanks and appreciation extended to out-going Third VP Lizette Gaudin for her contributions as Hospitality Chair, and for tonight's refreshments, and also to new Third VP Lynette Haaga, George Najarian and Jim Nonus.

MEETING ADJOURNED: There being no further business of the general meeting of July 8, 2008, meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by,

DOROTHY MCDONALD KARILANOVIC
Recording/Corresp. Secretary,
THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

\dk:7/23/08

**MINUTES
THE LAFFITE SOCIETY
AUGUST 12, 2008
SIMPSON'S GALLERIES
2413 Strand
GALVESTON, TX 77550**

BOARD PRESENT: President, Ed Jamison; First Vice-President, Jim Nonus; Third Vice-President, Lynette Haaga; Secretary, Dorothy McDonald Karilanovic; Treasurer, Nancy Beaman; Press Director, Dave Roberts; Historian, Ginny Roberts; Parliamentarian, Diane Olson

BOARD ABSENT: Second Vice-President, Kathy Modzelewski; Editor of Publications, Don C. Marler; Archivist, Jeffrey P. Modzelewski; Coordinator of Research, Pam Keyes; Coordinator of Research, Gary Fretz; Privateer at Arms, Wil Zapalac

ADVISORY BOARD PRESENT: R. Dale Olson

VISITORS: Wayne Cox; O'Hara Creager (Olsons' granddaughter); Al King

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting came to order at 6:31 p.m. following the customary social gathering for refreshments at 6:00 p.m. Program Chairman Jim Nonus introduced the speaker for the evening, John Trojanowski, President of the Galveston Fencing Club, who has an interest in the history of fencing and dueling along the Texas Gulf Coast.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: *FENCING FROM SURVIVAL SKILLS TO SPORT*

The speaker gave a general talk on the development of the art of fencing from the Middle Ages to the 19th Century, touching on the fascinating social and cultural customs associated with the skill particularly in the 19th Century and including dueling, military applications and the beginnings of fencing as a sport. He accompanied his talk with an interesting array of weapons, and with a few antiques he owns (small sword *ca.* 1790; a *colichemard* *ca.* 172; a saber *ca.* 1840, as well as a few replicas (rapier, broadsword), antique fencing equipment (foils) and examples of modern sport fencing. To heighten the interest of his audience, John allowed members to handle the various weapons exhibited.

NEW BUSINESS

MINUTES: The Minutes of July 8 were read and approved by members present.

TREASURY REPORT: No report was available due to records still pending.

ANNUAL BANQUET DATE: Members in attendance decided to keep the week day of the annual holiday social in 2008 as a Sunday rather than change it to Saturday, which may be a future option.

ENTERTAINMENT AT HOLIDAY SOCIAL: First Vice-President and Progr4am Chairman Jim Nonus reported that a group of professional entertainers will present a sing-through under his direction and others of some 15 songs currently being developed for a musical stage production on French and Laffite era themes.

ARCHIVES: President Ed Jamison spoke on the need for members to keep in mind the goal of seeking a new location to store and preserve the Society's Archives.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The President extended thanks to Third Vice-President/Hospitality Chairman Lynette Haaga, to Bill Haaga, Jim Nonus, Lady Elizabeth Galloway, and to various members in attendance for set-up and provision of tonight's refreshments and beverages. Members are reminded to contribute to the refreshment fund at each meeting. Those who wish to bring food items may contact Lynette prior to the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

CUBAN TRAVEL: Member at Large and Attorney Linda Kuhn reported on her on-line research on U.S. Government regulations for application to travel to Cuba. Her search focused on visas for historical research and educational purposes which would require probably as a minimum submittal of an itinerary; a stated number of persons on travel, a well detailed agenda of goals intended with an outline of associated scholarly activities planned on a daily basis, as well as the name, title, etc. of an academic contact in Cuba.

Linda suggested that members form a committee to draw up an agenda.

Once this is done, she can then proceed to apply for visas.

MEETING ADJOURNED: There being no further business of the day, the meeting of August 12th, 2008 was adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by,

Dorothy McDonald Karilanovic
Recording/Corresp. Secretary
THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

\dk:8/20/2008

THE LAFFITE SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AUGUST 2008 –JULY 2009

PRESIDENT.....	Ed. Jamison
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT.....	Jim Nonus
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT.....	Kathy Modzelewski
THIRD VICE PRESIDENT.....	Lynette Haaga
SECRETARY/CORRESPONDING SECRETARY.....	Dorothy McD. Karilanovic
TREASURER.....	Nancy Beaman
ARCHIVIST.....	Jeff Modzelewski
PARLIAMENTARIAN.....	Diane Olsen
COORDINATOR OF RESEARCH.....	Gary Fritz
HISTORIAN.....	Ginny Roberts
EDITOR OF PUBLICATIONS.....	Don C. Marler
PRESS DIRECTOR.....	Dave Roberts
Privateer-at-Arms.....	Wil Zapalac

ADVISORY BOARD

Kathy Modzelewski
Pam Keyes
R. Dale Olson

Don C. Marler
Jeff Modzelewski
Robert Vogel

Jean L. Epperson
Gene Marshall
Reginald Wilson

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

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

Annual dues are as follows:

Student.....	\$15.00
Senior (Over 65)	15.00
Institution.....	15.00
Individual.....	30.00
Family.....	35.00
Sustaining Member.....	100.00
LifeMembership (One payment)	350.00