



The Laffite Study Group Newsletter



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Editor

Mystery of LYNX' Visit

One of the most widely quoted eye-witness accounts of Jean Laffite at Galveston is thought to be a diary entry written by Lt. James M. McIntosh and subsequently published in the Knickerbocker Magazine in March, 1847.

According to Lyle Saxon's Lafitte the Pirate, Lt. McIntosh visited Galveston in Nov., 1819, as first lieutenant of the USS LYNX and stayed with the younger Laffite for several days.

Mention of Lt. McIntosh's visit also is made in The Journal of Jean Laffite, in which Laffite says he helped Lt. McIntosh capture some slave-stealers. The USS LYNX also is mentioned in connection with the incident.

However, according to research conducted by the Laffite Study Group's Robert Vogel, there is some degree of doubt about whether or not Lt. McIntosh ever served on board the LYNX.

According to Vogel's findings, the United States Schooner LYNX was built at Baltimore, Md., in 1814, and joined the U.S. Navy squadron in the Gulf of Mexico in 1818. She cruised against pirates for two years. On Oct. 24, 1819, with Lt. J.R. Madison, USN, in command, LYNX captured two pirate schooners and two boats in the Gulf of Mexico, and 11 days later, on Nov. 9, another pirate boat was captured in Galveston Bay.

Following a return to her base at St. Mary's, Ga., LYNX left for Kingston, Jamaica, on Jan. 11, 1820. She was never seen again, and a search by USS NONSUCH found no trace of the schooner or

her crew of approximately 50 men.

If Lt. McIntosh had been assigned to USS Lynx, it would seem probable to infer that he shared her crew's mysterious fate, but in point of fact he did not. Lt. McIntosh did not die until 1860.

Service records for Lt. McIntosh show that on August 28, 1819, he wrote the Secretary of the Navy and reported that he was unable to find an assignment on another ship. On Oct. 11, 1819, Lt. McIntosh was detached from the New Orleans Naval Station and was given a six month long furlough. On Jan. 31, 1820, he wrote from Sunbury, Ga., requesting immediate assignment, and on June 6, 1820, Lt. McIntosh was assigned to USS ENTERPRISE, then at the Charleston Naval Base.

Vogel says that neither the National Archives and Records Service nor the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations at the Navy Department in Washington, D.C., have any records indicating that any officer named McIntosh ever served on USS LYNX. Since the log book of LYNX was lost, the matter must remain unresolved.

**JOIN
THE LSG!**
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For Details**

PARK OFFICE RELOCATES

Formerly in Room 200 of 400 Royal Street in New Orleans, the office of the Jean Laffite National Historical Park will move to a new location at Louis Armstrong Park near Rampart Street by March 1.

Despite federal budget cuts, JLNHP Chief Historian Lionel Bienvenu reports that only secretarial personnel have been cut back. Park programs, such as the free tours of the French Quarter, are still offered by National Park Service Rangers at the Lower Pontalba Building, 527 St. Ann Street.

UNIVERSITY OFFERS GENEALOGY CONFERENCE

A conference for genealogists and family historians called "Genealogical Research in the South - Disciplines and Directions," will be offered by the University of South Alabama's School of Continuing Education March 12-13 at the University's Brookley Center in Mobile, Ala.

Co-chairmen for the event are Winston De Ville and Richard S. Lackey, both Fellows of the American Society of Genealogists and internationally recognized authorities of genealogical research.

Also featured will be John Frederick Dorman, also a Fellow of the A.S.G. and editor of "The Virginia Genealogist."

De Ville will discuss French and Spanish colonial periods in the south; Lackey, land records and

their importance to genealogical research, and Dorman, various southern research topics.

Beginning and advanced genealogists are invited to attend. Advance registration is advised. For further information, send an SASE to Judith K. Campbell, Conference Co-ordinator, Brookley Center, University of South Alabama, 254 Old Bay Front Drive, Mobile, Ala. 36615.

AM 1820 TREASURE

Jean Laffite's name was mentioned in OMNI magazine's January, 1982, issue in connection with the Thomas Jefferson Beale treasure story. Although the opinion was expressed that Beale was a pirate with Laffite at New Orleans, members of the Beale Cypher Association doubt the Gulf Coast privateer had anything to do with the massive gold, silver and jewelry treasure trove Beale buried in Virginia in 1820.

Beale left behind three ciphers regarding the treasure before he disappeared in 1822, but only one has been cracked in 160 year's time. Keyed to the first letters of words in the Declaration of Independence, the cipher describes the treasure in detail. The other two codes tell the booty's exact location and owners and have thus far resisted being solved by either computers or advanced cryptanalysts.



LAFFITE's 200th NEAR

As the news media and the U.S. Postal Service focuses attention toward the birthday anniversaries of George Washington and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, let's not forget the 200th birthday of Jean Laffite on April 22, 1982. It's doubtful any notice of it will appear outside this newsletter.

One of the main reasons Laffite's birthday will not be honored is the doubt cast on the date, which comes from The Journal of Jean Laffite. Although the journal is regarded as fiction by some historians, there are other historians and laymen alike who believe it is genuine.

According to the Laffite papers connected with the journal, the corsair was born April 22, 1782, to Marcus Laffite and Maria Zora Nadrimal Laffite at Port-au-Prince, San Domingo (now Haiti).



Memberships, Etc.

Are you interested in privateers, smugglers and spies of the old South? Those subjects and much more, including the historical wealth of the Battle of New Orleans, are all being studied by members of the Laffite Study Group. Interested persons are encouraged to join the LSG.

Founded in 1975 by Robert C. Vogel, the Laffite Study Group is devoted to the study of privateer-patriot Jean Laffite's role in American history, folklore and literature.

As a member, you will receive the quarterly Laffite Study Group Newsletter and the irregularly published Life and Times of Jean Laffite, a journal of notes and longer papers.

Dues for the LSG are: \$6 for individuals and institutions; \$20 for sustaining, and \$100 for life memberships. Dues should be sent to John Howells, LSG treasurer, 2570 Kevin Lane, Houston, Texas 77043.

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LSG officers for 1982-83 are:
 President: Sir Jack D.L. Holmes,
 Ph.D., O.I.C.
 Vice President: Dr. Jane L. de
 Grunmond
 Secretary-Treasurer: John Howells

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Letters of comment or criticism are eagerly sought for the LSG Newsletter in addition to articles on any subject touching the study of Laffite or his activities. Due to space limitations, letters or articles should be no longer than 700 words and should be sent to Pam Keyes, Editor, LSG Newsletter, 320 "I" N.W., Miami, Okla., 74354.

Longer items, such as papers, may be used in the Life and Times of Jean Laffite. Such items should be sent to Robert C. Vogel, 6971 Homestead Ave. So., Cottage Grove, Minn., 55016.



***** Books *****

Among books offered for sale by Polyanthos, P.O. Drawer 51359, New Orleans, La., 70151, are:

Winston De Ville's Louisiana Recruits: 1752-1758, which contains ship passenger lists of military men destined for service on the Gulf Coast during the subject period. Personal data on each man are given. 100 pages, index, wrappers, \$12.50.

Alice Forsyth's Louisiana Marriages: 1784-1806, contains abstracts of records from the St. Louis Cathedral of New Orleans. 198 pages, index, wrappers, \$20.

Stanley Arthur's Index to the Archives of Spanish West-Florida: 1782-1810, a W.P.A. project, guides researchers to the most important group of original papers for this subject area. 370 pages, wrappers, \$17.50.

LHA Meets March 6

"Jean Laffite and Contraband Days: Southwestern Louisiana Folklore" is the title of the Laffite session at the Louisiana Historical Association's meeting on Saturday, March 6, at Lake Charles, La.

Papers to be presented will include Sir Jack D.L. Holmes' "Contraband Days: A Lake Charles Tradition" and Robert Vogel's "The Laffite Journals: History or Hoax?"

Robert B. Coleman, president of Lake Charles' Contraband Days in 1982, will be chairman. Gerard Sellers of the "Les Cheniers" Exhibit will be commentator.

Laffite at Galveston



Snake Island, or Galveston as it is more commonly known, was Jean Laffite's second base of opera-

tions. Much of what is known about Laffite's communal settlement there comes from Col. J.S. Thrasher's "Early History of Galveston" from the Galveston City Directory, 1866-67.

Thrasher says Laffite took over Galveston Island on April 15, 1817, during the absence of Com. Aury, who had previously settled the area in 1816. Disgruntled upon finding the new situation at hand when he returned, Aury abandoned Galveston altogether.

A description of Laffite's establishment found in Thrasher's account says the town consisted of rather primitive one story buildings constructed by sinking posts into the ground. Most of the residences had no sills or floors. However, there were a few good frame buildings, Laffite's home among them. Called the Maison Rouge, Laffite's residence was two stories high, well built and painted red. Two or three boarding houses were kept in town in addition to numerous drinking establishments and two billard tables.

Thrasher cites a Colonel Hall's description of Laffite at Galveston. Hall found the corsair "one of the most prepossessing men he had ever met with, both in personal appearance and address. He was six feet, two inches high and his figure was one of remarkable symmetry, with feet and hands so small, compared with his large stature, as to attract attention...he was remarkably bland, dignified and social toward inferiors, of those under his command. He received visitors with an easy air of welcome and profuse hospitality. He wore no uniform, but dressed

fashionably and was remarkably neat in his appearance...He spoke English with a marked French accent that at once indicated his nativity, though it perhaps imparted additional interest to his conversation. He possessed superior conversational powers and entertained his guests with the rehearsal of many original and amusing anecdotes. He had a remarkable habit of closing one eye while in conversation and keeping it closed so much that many who had but a slight acquaintance with him were firmly impressed with the belief that he had the use of but one eye."

Laffite left Galveston on May 12, 1820, sailing into the veils of mystery. Thrasher says it was claimed Laffite cruised for several years in the Caribbean Sea before dying in Yucatan in 1826.

SHELL BEACH AREA BELIEVED 'HIDEOUT' FOR PRIVATEER

According to an entry in Louisiana, a Guide to the State, Writers Project of WPA, tradition holds that Laffite had a two room log hut near the Barbe House, 2709 Shell Beach Drive, Lake Charles, La. An embankment thought to have been constructed by Laffite as protection against government boats stands before the house, on Shell Beach. The mound is about 100 feet long, 25 feet high and equally wide; cannon were at one time mounted behind it.

On one occasion, so the story goes, Laffite sank a schooner with shots from the cannon, after having removed gold and other loot from it in the dark. As late as the early 1900s, the remains of the schooner were visible. To the south is Contraband Bayou, whose banks have been searched many times, without result, for the buried treasure of Laffite and his men.

PRIVATEERS AND THEIR CAPTAINS 1810-1819

- 1810 - "Three Friends" - Capt. Dominique Diron (or Deshon)
- "Vengeance" - Capt. Dominique Deshon (or Diron)
- "Intrepide" - Capt. Pierre Brugman (or Brookman) Owner Joseph Sauvinet
- 1811 - "Vengeance" - Capt. Charles Lomine, master Dominique You
- 1812 - "Diligent" - Capt. Bernard Lafon (listed as French)
- "Comet" - Capt. Bernard Lafon (listed as U.S.)
- "Dorado" - No captain named, listed as Laffites.
- "Sarpis" - Capt. Marcos, listed as Laffites.
- "General Morlot" - Capt. Pierre Brugman (or Brookman)
- 1813 - "Dulce Nombre" - Capt. Antonio Jiron
- "Luisa Antonia" - No captain listed.
- 1814 - "Flor Americana" - Capt. Bernard Lafon
- "Tigre" - Capt. Dominique You
- "Legislateur" - Capt. Pierre Cadet, listed as Laffites.
- "Petit Milan" - Renamed "Philanthrope" Capt. Vincent Gambi; renamed
 "President" owned by John K. West; secret name
 "Aquila" in 1815, Capt. Julius Caesar Amigoni,
 Gambi as sailing master.
- "Felix" - Capt. Charles Lomine
- "Pinerez" - Capt. Charles Lomine (listed Cartagena)
- "Nuestra Senora de la Popa" - Capt. Pierry
- 1815 - "Jupiter" - Capt. Charles Lomine (listed Venezuela)
- "Presidente" - Capt. Pierre La Maison
- "La Popa" - Capt. John Devers (also called Deverge, Duverg, Davit,
 Deveze, Davis, Drouet and Droet)
- "Constitution" - Capt. Jean Monier (sunk in 1817)
- "Republicano" - Capt. Johnny
- 1816 - "Victorio" - Capt. Vincent Gambi, listed as Laffites.
- "Intrepido" - Capt. Rene Beluche; called "General Arismendi" in
 1817; in 1818 Capt. Charles Lomine sailed it for
 Beluche.
- "Belona" - Capt. Jean Devers
- "Culebra" - Capt. Jean Devers
- "Creole" - Capt. Bellegarde (or Joseph Battigne, Rastigue,
 Rostique, Rustique) Known as "Guerrera" in 1817,
 as "Belona" in 1818.
- "Independence" - Capt. Job Northrup (listed Mexican, owner Aury)
- "General Jackson" - Capt. John Northrup (also sailed as "General
 Bolivar," "Patriota Mexicano" and "Tarantula."
- 1817 - "La Popa" - Capt. Neps
- "Victoria or Victoire" - Capt. John Deveze, owner Aury
- 1818 - "General Victoria" - Capt. John Deviers
- "Cometa" - Capt. William Mitchell
- "Fortuna" - Capt. Northrup.
- "Incroyable" - Capt. Johnny (formerly "Republicano")
- 1819 - "Caroni" - Capt. Charles Lomine
- "Constantia" - No captain listed.
- "Lady Artigas" - Capt. Northrup
- "Esperanza" - Capt. Samuel Pilot