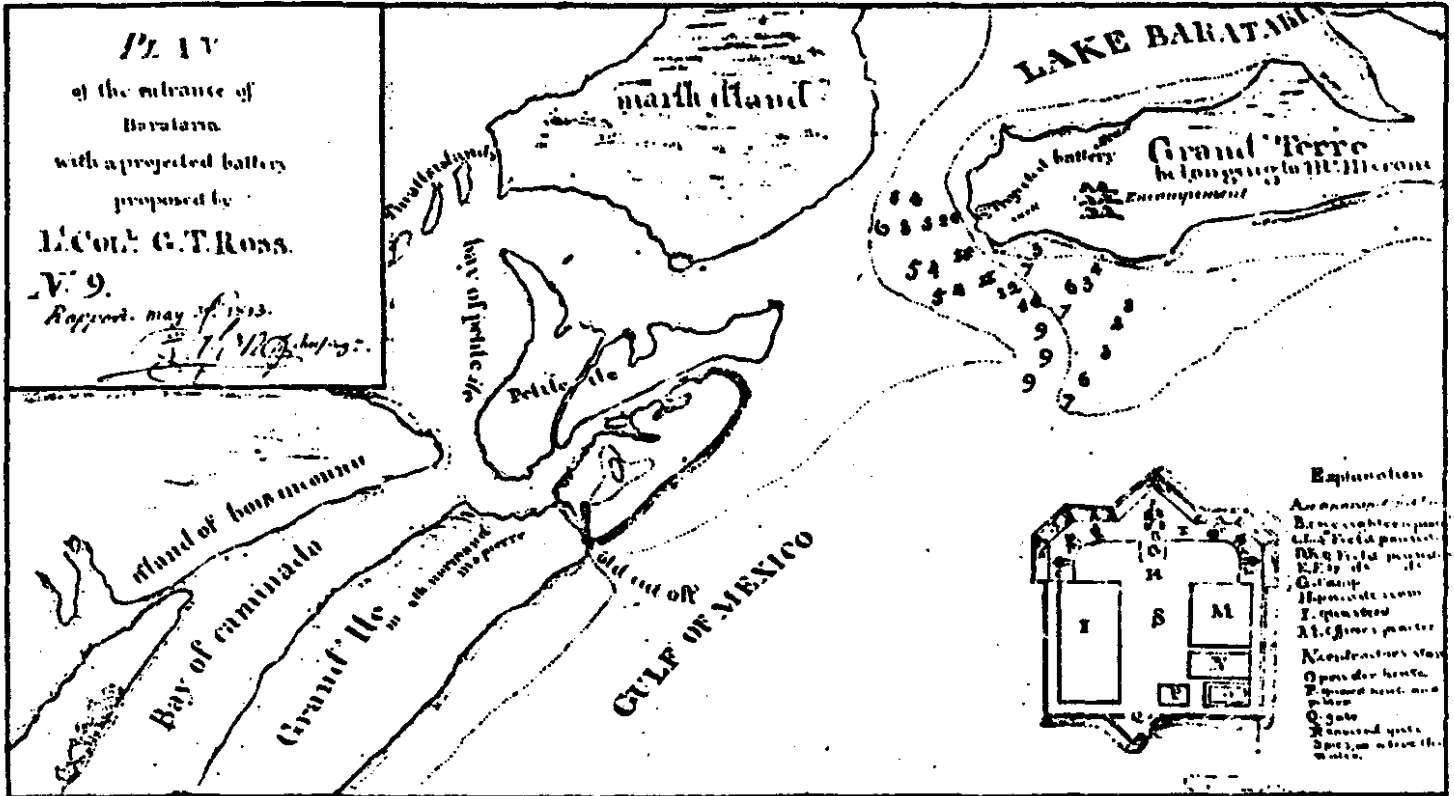


THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JEAN LAFFITE

Volume I

July, 1976

Number 2



Laffite Study Group

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The Laffite Study Group was established in 1975 to encourage and assist research concerning Jean Laffite's role in American history, folklore, and literature. Members and associates receive the Life and Times of Jean Laffite, the LSG newsletter published twice annually.

The Life and Times of Jean Laffite is devoted to articles, documents, and research notes. Abstracts of scholarly papers, reviews of books, and requests for information from individuals working in the field are also welcome.

Contributors are reminded that their material will be read by an audience of widely varied backgrounds. Manuscripts should be typewritten and double-spaced, with footnotes at the end and also double-spaced. The editors reserve the right to make minor corrections and adjustments in manuscripts accepted for publication. No payment will be made for any material published.

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Cover: "Plan of the entrance of Baratavia with a projected battery" by G. T. Ross (1813). (Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.)

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Laffite Study Group

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"Southern Barataria in the Era of Jean Laffite"

by Frederick J. Stielow

Accurate knowledge on the people and landscape of southern Barataria has been lacking or obfuscated during much of the region's history. Misconceptions on the area's geography were evident in all available colonial French and Spanish cartographic representations and it was not until Lafon's 1806 "Carte Generale du Territoire d'Orleans . . . ," that a map approximated its correct outlines. The availability of more accurate charts in the nineteenth century did little to prevent frequent confusion in newspapers of the day, which often interchanged Grand Terre or Grand Isle with each other or a long list of other locations. Such uncertainty even spread to Acadian settlers to the north and west of Barataria, who in the 1800s reportedly also feared these ever changing marshlands as the terre de lepraux, in reference to wandering bands of lepers who supposedly inhabited the region.(1) The following few pages attempt to correct a portion of this body of misinformation and to describe the inhabitants and conditions of the southern edge of Barataria, Cheniere Caminada, Grand Terre, and especially Grand Isle, from the late colonial era through the reign of Jean Laffite.

According to geologist William Conaster, the lands of southern Barataria were formed as recently as the fourteenth century A.D. and thus constitute one of the newest additions to the North American continent. European interests in the region date from French incursions into southern Louisiana at the close of the seventeenth century, which accelerated with the founding of New Orleans in 1718. By the 1720s, the French had found Barataria an excellent source of timber and food stuffs, which led to the construction of a canal into the region in 1736. Maps as early as 1729 reveal the use of the designation Barataria for the region and also French awareness of a water route through it from New Orleans to the coast. Yet, French cartographers and explorers failed to produce any really accurate picturizations of this territory or to even indicate with any accuracy the existence of Grand Isle and her neighbors along the coast to the west of the mouth of the Mississippi. Through most of the century, they were content to merely repeat the inaccuracies made in the Guillame Delisle drawings of 1703 and 1718.(2)

The Spanish, who took control of Louisiana in the 1760s, had a number of reasons to continue to promulgate French inaccuracies. On one hand, they were conforming to their long established pattern of creating buffer zones to protect vital inland interests and sought to further this protection by denying correct naval charts to potential

invaders. In addition to invasion fears, they were wary of the region's use by smugglers, as seen by use of frequent Spanish coastal patrols and a series of laws against contrabandiers, such as the 1796 enactment directing that cargo manifests and royal seals be given on landing at Balize specifically to avoid transshipment into the Crescent City by smugglers through Barataria.(3) The Spanish constructed a pilot station on Grand Terre and Spanish military leaders repeatedly sought the erection of a fortification at the southern entrance to Barataria Bay, recommending that Grand Terre be fitted "with a battery of 4 cannons of a calibre of 12."(4) Further, more property records and early nineteenth century maps reveal the presence of a Fort Blanc, perhaps a Spanish customs post, on Cheniere Caminada.(5)

There is evidence that Spanish officials had clear personal knowledge of the region along the mouth of Barataria Bay in the 1780s. During that decade, most of the Spanish land grants were issued and with them as a matter of course came a report of survey. The Spanish also sent survey teams to map the waterways along the lower coast. In 1785, Don Jose de Evia was dispatched to southern Barataria and remained in the region for several weeks gathering information, though his charts did not extend to mapping the interior of the bay. De Evia's representations contain a number of what were probably purposeful errors that would allow one to navigate along the coast but confuse one if he should try to penetrate inland, yet they remain as the first clear pictorial statements documenting the existence of many of the islands of the lower coast. His observations may also have overstated the dangers of travel on what is now a rather placid area for navigation.

The bar of Barataria is 13 leagues to the west of the mouth of the Mississippi. Its entrance runs east-southeast, west-northwest, and its shoals extend a league out to sea. They are covered by fourteen feet of water, but beyond it is three, four, and five fathoms deep. It communicates with New Orleans by way of narrow channels and estuaries, the said river discharging through them. On this bay, which is large, one always encounters a strong current. The land is very low and subject to overflow which permits no buildings other than two huts, which are on the eastern point of entrance. There is a harbor pilot, who has a flagstaff, and a cannon for signalling vessels which, falling to the leeward of the Mississippi because of its strong current or some other accident, frequently list into these waters, and in order to bring them inside, if necessary, where they can be aided with whatever they need.(6)

The Spanish navigator continued his less than attractive description.

Between Chica [Cheniere Caminada] and Larga Island [Grand Isle] there is another very narrow bar with five feet. There are two houses on these islands, which are kept only for hunting and fishing, which abounds. . . . All these lands are flat and subject to overflow, with no trees except myrtles, and full of drift logs that come down the Mississippi. These the storms and

currents cause to be beached. They are only encountered on the shores, on some beaches of oyster shells about two feet high. Therefore the navigation is very hazardous in the months of August, September, and October, in which storms are frequent from the southeast and east-southeast which inundate them. All may be coasted in three fathoms as a distance of one league, but being in six to eight fathoms, they are not visible. Between the islands and the peninsula there is no passage except for pirogues as is shown on the chart. A more thorough examination was not possible, because of the land being very low and devoid of timber, except that from the front of Larga Island to that of Timbalie, where a chain of small oaks will be found. The rest is of marsh grass. (7)

In spite of these negative statements, Spanish colonial policy in the late eighteenth century favored the dispersment of settlers in Louisiana in order to help establish an economically and militarily self-providing colony. Thus in the 1780s they began to open the lands of southern Barataria for settlement. The first recorded donation, however, was a French one that took place in 1763 and gave Cheniere Caminada, then called the Isle of the Chitimachas, to a Monsieur DuRoullin, who apparently made little use of his new lands. Active settlement dates from a July 2, 1781 land grant to Jacques Rigaud of the eastern end of Grand Isle. (8) That island by virtue of its stand of scrub oaks was the only section of southern Barataria suitable for habitation, though early residents on initially viewing the island from its beach probably concurred with Father Charlevoix's description of Dauphin Island in 1721:

It is continually exposed to a burning sun, and the soil is so poor that it is hard to raise even salads and other vegetables. It is indeed almost nothing but sand, which, on the sea-shore, is so white, that when the sun shines on it the reflection is very bad for the eyes. (9)

Rigaud's donation on Grand Isle was followed by ones to Joseph Caillet in 1782, to Francois Anfrey in 1785, and finally to Charles Dufresne in 1787. The last Spanish grant in the region came with transfer of Grand Terre to Joseph Andoeza in 1794, but in contrast to his neighbors on Grand Isle, Andoeza did not develop his properties. (10) Colonization was slow in this part of the lower coast, and Lewis DuMain in his reports to the United States Senate in 1807 noted the sparse settlement there, even though the "Bay of Barataria is the best harbor on all the coast from the Mississippi to the Sabine." (11) As late as the summer of 1810, the only significant population concentration was reported by the United States census taker as -

A Grand Isle out to the sea attached to the Interior of Lafourche & Called by the French Grand Isle. The island is about 17 leagues from the closest settlement on the Bayou Lafourche. The people here raise corn to eat and live by catching fish & oysters, and making fish oil. They live poor. The island is not situated to receive large vessels being surrounded by marsh. Grapes grow natural & well here. (12)

Available evidence indicates that the first generation on the island took a rather barren and unpromising section of earth and slowly converted it into an attractive and productive setting. The February 11, 1811, will of Jacques Rigaud revealed that he had been able to construct a home with native materials, using local shell deposits for the bousillage, or daubing, and probably initially roofing it with palmetto fronds. Rigaud and Francois Anfrey had also succeeded in raising cattle on the marsh grasses of the island, which was reportedly dried in salt water and transported for sale in New Orleans along with oysters, fish, and game. Farmers slowly built up the weak, sandy soils by applications of fish and shrimp remains into lands, which in the 1820s were capable of supporting large scale sugar plantations.(13) By the 1880s, continued efforts had produced a transformation, so that "with its imposing groves of oaks, its golden wealth of orange-trees, its odorous lanes of oleander, its broad grazing meadows yellow-starred with wild camomile, Grand Isle, remains the prettiest island of the Gulf; and its loveliness is exceptional."(14)

In June of 1810, there were only inchoate dreams of "the prettiest island of the Gulf," for most of the fewer than one-hundred slaves and free residents of southern Barataria "live poor." A few may have augmented their incomes by aiding in the illegal transfer of undeclared cargoes into the interior, but most were apparently more concerned with retaining their privacy and the mundane matters of survival in a frontier area. But later in that same year the pioneers of Barataria found their ranks and economic possibilities increased by the appearance of the smuggling, privateering, and filibustering crews, who were soon to be led by the romantic and enigmatic Jean Laffite. Some chroniclers have suggested that this influx of undesirables met with strong opposition from earlier residents, but no corroborating evidence of any altercations has been uncovered.(15)

Islander involvement with Laffite seems clearly established in all published sources. The controversial Journal of Jean Laffite insists that certain settlers from Grand Isle were active members of the Baratarian brotherhood, though one of those named, Louis Chighizola, certainly came to the region at roughly the same time as Laffite himself. On the other hand, Manuel Perrin and Francois Rigaud, the son of the island's first resident, had lived in the area for some time and may well have "helped us design on maps commercial bases along the swampy bayous in the South of Louisiana," and also "enlisted as guardians of strong boxes and police constables."(16) Islanders also helped provide the buccaneers with badly needed stores. Proof for this has been reported in the case of two hunters who followed Laffite lieutenant Barthelemy Lafon to Grand Isle, where they recorded his transactions with a Monsieur Nicolle, a stockraiser.(17) Further documentation was included within a September 12, 1812 prize list of Frederick Youx, who listed payments totalling \$544.00 to a M. Henri "a Grand Isle" for horse fodder, vegetables, meat, and "bread made by the inhabitants."(18)

Yet the role of earlier residents in Laffite's activities has probably been expanded out of proportion by a number of journalists,

who travelled to "The Ancient Haunt of the Pirates" after Lafitte's departure for colorful stories.(19) A key example of this is in the writings of George Washington Cable, who had vacationed on Grand Isle when it was a Gilded Age resort of sufficient beauty to inspire Kate Chopin's The Awakening and Lafcadio Hearn's Chita: A Memory of Last Island. Cable, while reasonably accurate in many of his statements, seriously overstated the role of his vacation island in privateering ventures, suggesting:

On the beautiful, wooded, grassy, and fertile "Grand Isle" lying just west of their stronghold on "Grand Terre," and separated from it only by the narrow pass that led out to sea, storehouses and dwellings were built, farms and orangeries yielded harvests and green meadows dotted with wax myrtles, casinos and storm dwarfed oaks rose from the marshy inland side where children and women plied their shrimp and crab nets, running down the surf-beach on the southern side, looked across the boundless open Gulf toward the Spanish Main.(20)

Physical factors and common logic mitigated against any extensive utilization of Grand Isle by Laffite and his cohorts. For that island lacked a harbor and because of sandbars on the Gulf side and marshes to the rear could only be approached in shallow draft vessels. As late as the 1910s, goods were commonly transferred to the island in small horse-drawn carts, which drove out into the water to meet incoming vessels so that they would not become stuck in the bay.(21) Similarly, Cheniere Caminada has only shallow approaches that called for a large expenditure of energies before landing any sizeable cargo, such as the 1883 landing of supplies for the construction of a church there that saw the supply boat become enmired two miles offshore and a "veritable horde of humanity hitch themselves to the boat"(22) though still requiring four full days to empty it. Such a waste of labor for the transportation of cargoes would not have entranced the freebooters on Grand Terre, with its excellent harbor, sufficient lands for storage, and an accommodating landowner, Francois Mayronne, who had purchased the island in 1795 and appears to have actively participated in privateering ventures. The erection of storehouses on Grand Isle also would have clashed with the privateer's tactical pattern of maintaining diverse and widely scattered retreats in case of attack. In addition, the Laffite lieutenant and at the same time surveyor for the Territory, Bartelemy Lafon, in his May 1813 map of proposed American fortifications on Grand Terre showed no evidence of storehouses or other facilities on the eastern half of Grand Isle. Interestingly, Lafon's map was made under the supervision of Colonel Ross, the future leader of the ground forces against Lafitte's establishment, and did show an encampment and house on Grand Terre - but no fortification.(23)

The oral traditions maintained among longtime area residents also deny a large role for Grand Isle and her residents in privateering ventures. The Rigaud family has consistently repudiated any statements on the active involvement on the part of Francois Rigaud with the Lafittes, only allowing for his incidental participation as an affable and realistic neighbor, who was willing to give information or recommend

prospective buyers for the privateers' goods. In support of these defences they offer the story of "Marie Rigaud and the Pirate's Card Game," which Lyle Saxon also collected for his Lafitte the Pirate. Essentially, this is an account of an unusual, late-night visit to the Rigaud home on Grand Isle by some of Grand Terre's new residents. The buccaneers requested the services of young Marie, as the most innocent inhabitant of the region, to make a crucial and honest cut in a deck of cards in an extremely high stake game of chance. Marie's family allowed her to comply with the demand and the privateers soon returned her in perfect health. Soon thereafter, Jean Laffite appeared at the Rigaud's door bearing gifts and thanks for Marie's aid. This tale makes it clear that Laffite was actually a stranger up to the time that he went to repay his debt to the Rigaud's and stresses his unfamiliarity with the island. And this story is but one section of a body of folklore that sees very limited interaction between the settlements on Grand Terre and Grand Isle at the time of Laffite's hegemony.

Some reports exist which indicate that Jean Laffite returned to use Grand Isle as an isolated meeting place for his filibustering activities after his ouster from Baratavia in 1814. Yet, again these were only rare occurrences.(24)

The bulk of a counter body of tales on Grand Isle's activity with the privateers may well have emanated from the Laffite lieutenant and later island resident Louis "Nez Coupe" Chighizola and other amused inhabitants, who have long enjoyed tricking gullible tourists and treasure hunters. Chighizola was apparently an excellent raconteur, who was capable of creating a number of stories to explain how he received the noseless visage that earned him the sobriquet Nez Coupe. These tales ranged from the result of a crooked card game, to a bloody sword fight over the prize of a chained maiden, to his shortest rejoinder, that a dog had bitten it. From his son, Louis Jr., probably came fanciful creations that a home built in the 1860s had been used as a meeting place and message drop for the privateers on Grand Isle. Such misconceptions were fostered by the willing acceptance of reporters, who came to the region in search of material on Laffite's band and in many cases refused to believe islander disavowal of their ancestors' involvement with the privateers. Instead, they looked for and perhaps invented tales to satisfy a curious readership.(25)

The available information on southern Baratavia and Laffite shows rather strongly that the privateer leader came to what had been a very recently and sparsely settled section of America. The original settlers of the land benefitted financially from his presence, but in general concentrated on the difficult task of creating a liveable environment in this harsh and isolated section of America. Laffite was well received by area pioneers, both for the economic possibilities he brought and his own heroic nature. In addition, he was responsible for publicizing the existence of Baratavia and as a major agent in populating the region, for with his withdrawal from Louisiana in 1815 many of his former compatriots decided to remain as settlers. Though

his tenure as the "Bos of Barataria" was only four years, Jean Laffite's reign was of crucial importance for the identification and history of southern Barataria.

-Notes-

(1) William Cumming, The Southeast in Early Maps (Princeton, 1958), plates no. 43, 47, 48, 55, 59; Vincent Casado, Primero Anos De Domacion Espanola en Luisiana (Madrid, 1942), pp. 16, 122; Bartelemy Lafon, "Carte Gernerale du Terriroire d'Orleans . . ." Map section, Historic New Orleans Collection; Charles D. Warren, "The Acadian Land," Harper's, 74 (1887): 352-54.

(2) William Conaster, "The Grand Isle Barrier Island Complex" (unpub. Tualne diss., 1969), pp. 8, 42, 109, 122-32; Betsy Swanson, Historic Jefferson Parish (Gretna, La., 1975), pp. 85-90; James Robertson, Louisiana under the Rule of Spain, France and The United States (Baton Rouge, 1902), I, p. 119; Cumming, op. cite.; Casado, op. cite.

(3) Herbert Bolton, The Spanish Borderlands (New Haven, 1921); Robertson, Louisiana, pp. 119, 332; Charles Hackett ed. Pirchardos Treatise on the Limits of the United States (Austin, 1931), I, pp. 23-25.

(4) Robertson, Louisiana, pp. 331-32.

(5) Conveyance records for Jefferson Parish, located at Gretna Louisiana; Lafon, "Carte Generale."

(6) Jose de Evia, Y Sus Reconocimientos Del Golfo de Mexico, 1783-1796 (Madrid, 1958), pp. 87-122; translation taken from Hackett, Pichardos Treatise, p. 356.

(7) Ibid., pp. 357-58.

(8) American State Papers: Land Series (Washington D.C.), VI, p. 671, III, p. 597.

(9) Quoted in B. F. French, Historical Collections of Louisiana (New York, 1856), III, p. 199.

(10) American State Papers: Public Lands, III, 558, VI, p. 673.

(11) Lewis DuMain, "Report of Survey of the Coast . . .," in Territorial Papers, 1789-1873, Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives.

(12) United States Manuscript Census Returns, Jefferson Parish, 1810. (The only readable copy of the actual enumeration is located in the National Archives.)

(13) Jacques Rigaud Will, Feb. 11, 1811, in Wills and Succession, 1807-46, Orleans District Court, New Orleans; Sally Evans, Fred Stielow, Betsy Swanson, An Early History of Grand Isle (Gretna, 1976), pp. 10-45.

(14) Lafcadio Hearn, Chita: A Memory of Last Island (New York, 1389), p. 7.

(15) Olin Dee Morison, Life and Labor in the Old South (Athens, Ohio, 1972), p. 28; Stanley Faye, "Commodore Aury," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 24 (1941): 613-97.

(16) Jean Lafitte, The Journal of Jean Lafitte (New York, 1958), pp. 37-40.

(17) Stanley Faye, "The Privateers of Guadeloupe," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, 23 (1940): 432.

(18) Prize List of Fredrick Youx, in Papers of Privateers and Pirates, Historic New Orleans Collection.

(19) For example, Nicholas Hubbard, "Barataria, The Ruins of a Pirate Kingdom," Atlantic Monthly, 91 (1903): 806-14; Frank Schoonover, "In the Haunts of Jean Lafitte," Harper's, (1911); Eugene Smalley, "Barataria: An Ancient Haunt of the Pirates," St. Nicholas, 15 (1888).

(20) George W. Cable, The Creoles of Louisiana (New York, 1884), p. 165.

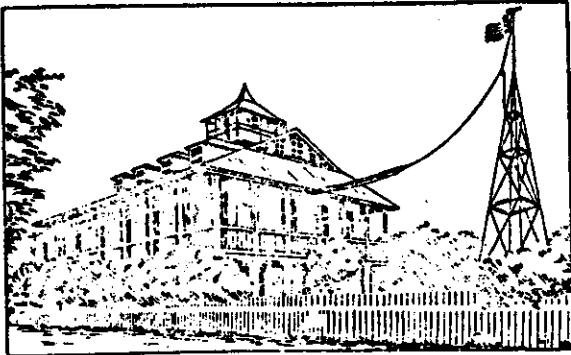
(21) Interviews on Grand Isle from January to March 1975, with Nolte Ludwig, Innocent Terrebonne, and Arthur Rigaud.

(22) Missions de Louisiane, Cheniere Caminada, in Papers, Circulars, and Documents: Orleans, in the Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

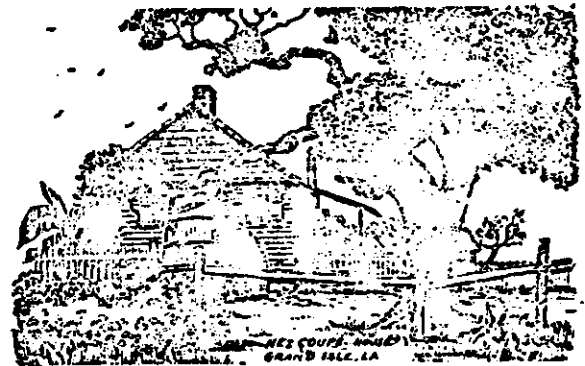
(23) Swanson, Historic, 88, 89, 152; B. Lafon, "Plan of the Entrance of Barataria with a projected Battery Proposed by Lt. Col. George Ross," Maps Division, National Archives.

(24) "Bab" Rigaud, "Gone With the Tide," (unpublished folk memoirs of the Rigaud family and early life in Grand Isle).

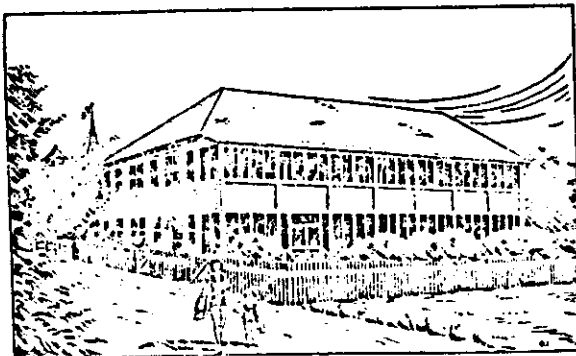
(25) Ibid.; Nolte Ludwig, interviews; Alexander Walker, Jackson and New Orleans (New York, 1856), p. 35; Evans, Stielow, Swanson, Grand Isle, pp. 10-19.



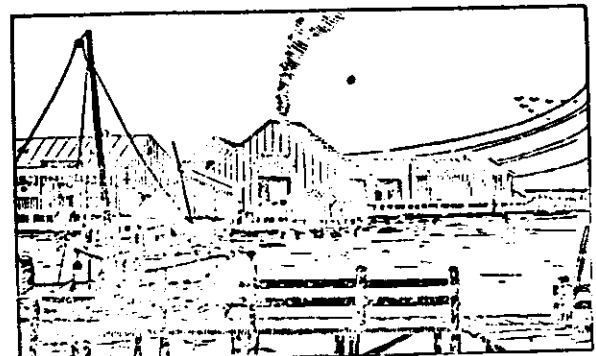
U.S. COAST GUARD STATION, GRAND ISLE, LA.



GRAND ISLE, LA.



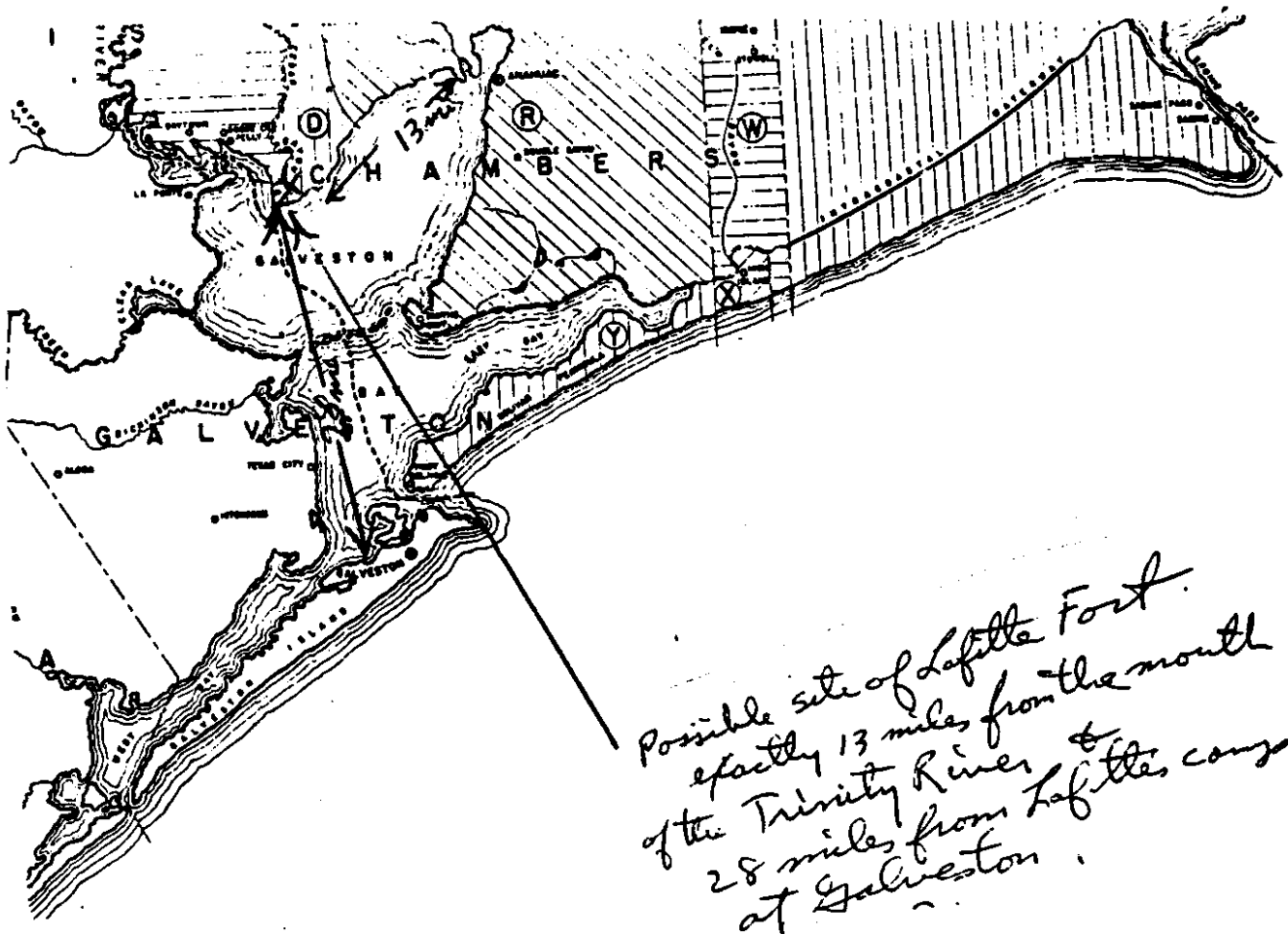
CLEAVER HOTEL, GRAND ISLE, LA.



GRAND ISLE LANDING & BAYOU FIGAUD.

NEWS AND NOTES

John Howells of Houston, Tex., reports that a search is currently underway for what is thought to have been a fort built by Jean Laffite and his compatriots on upper Galveston Bay. On page 102 of the published Journal of Jean Laffite (New York; Vantage Press, 1958), the memoirist refers to a fortification situated "21 kilometers from the River Trinity" (that is, Trinity River) and "45 kilometers from Galveston." Ruins of an undetermined age, consisting of walls eight feet thick made of logs, mud, and shell, have been found on Cedar Point, thirteen miles west of the mouth of the Trinity and about twenty-eight miles north of Galveston. A persistent local tradition has it that the privateersmen careened their ships in the mouths of the rivers flowing into Galveston Bay, presumably under the guns of temporary forts. On page 51 of Miriam Partlow's Liberty, Liberty County and the Atascosito District (Austin, 1974), there is a reference to a 75-foot vessel, allegedly associated with Laffite, sunk in Lake Miller near Wallisville in Chambers County. Supposed Laffite-era artifacts have been found throughout the area.



From Sue Thompson's scrapbook--"Lafitte's Scuttled Ship Said in Sabine River" by Dorothy Seals, originally published in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, November 13, 1960.

"Nobody actually knows all of Jean Lafitte's escapades, that pirate of French descent who lived during the years 1780-1826.

"However, folklore in Southwest Louisiana has it that Lafitte scuttled one of his ships in this area.

"Holden Granger, 63, who lives at Starks and who has lived on the Sabine River all his life, can take the curious up-river via motor boat and point to an area where an old ship now lies under the silt. Granger said the bow of the old ship used to protrude from the water near the river bank and 'as a boy I've fished from the bow many a time.'

"He said that about 50 years ago some men 'fenced the area of the bow off by driving boards into the soft mud so they could some day come back to the spot and try to extricate the old vessel.' Old, rotted boards still stand in slime not too far from the river bank. The men have not come back.

"Granger said his grandmother, Mrs. Mary Ann Granger, told him she was told by her parents that the old boat belonged to Lafitte. Legend has it that Lafitte was being chased (probably for smuggling) and that he ran his boat up the Sabine and purposely scuttled it. Mrs. Granger told her grandson of a great amount of gold which was supposedly on the ship. Lafitte's men buried it somewhere in the big swamp, she said.

"The fenced off area would have been in the main river. However, the Sabine changed its course and afterwards the bow of the ship was visible. Nibbling waters and caving banks finally covered their secret again, but the old board fence still stands.

"Granger estimates the old ship to measure '60 or 80 feet long.' Asked if anyone has ever dived down into deep water where the stern should be under mud and debris, he answered, 'Not to my knowledge.'

"The Sabine River, which is the border between Louisiana and Texas, is a large, swift and deep river. Riverboats used to traverse the stream, carrying cargo and passengers from Logansport to Orange, Tex.

"The legend of Lafitte's boat is known only by word-of-mouth and was told by a man who was making his way across the swamp into Texas many years ago. He told the Grangers that as he neared the Sabine he saw a commotion on the river, saw a boat go down and saw seamen leaping for shore. It was a dark night and the man was frightened; so he hid behind a big tree.

"As bearded, wet seamen gained firm ground, they built a small fire and began digging a hole. There was a lot of cursing and swearing as 'something' was buried. The frightened man eased away in the darkness, knowing if he was discovered he was dead where he stood.

"He circled around, came to the Granger farm and told his story. The area at that time was even more sparsely settled than it is now. After telling his story, he fled across the Sabine into Texas and never returned to Louisiana. He died in Texas.

"If anyone ever tried to find the loot, no one living near Starks now seems to know about it. They do know, though, that the old ship which they believe to be Lafitte's is imprisoned in that remote and dismal area known as Sabine swamp."

* * * * *

The following news item appeared in the Dallas, Tex., Morning News, June 10, 1976:

"AUSTIN (UPI)--[Texas] Supreme Court Justice Price Daniel said Wednesday he has purchased the handwritten 257-page journal of Jean Lafitte and a rare collection of Bibles, albums and other documents of the pirate and explorer.

"The Lafitte journal and collection was handed down to his grandson, John A. Lafitte, who sold it to Texas dealers in 1969.

"Daniel said he purchased the collection for a future gift to the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center in Liberty, Texas, after authenticating the handwriting, date of the linen paper and more than 20 signatures.

"Lafitte explored the Southwest Texas region, especially on the Trinity, Neches and Sabine Rivers and in Galveston, Trinity, and Sabine Bays.

"The Lafitte journal is not a diary, but a record book of memoirs by Lafitte written from 1845 to 1850.

"Since my retirement some years ago, many people have repeatedly urged me to write my memoirs, documenting the recital of the events of my life with complete and authentic records so that I might have a true account to my descendants, with the understanding that they would not release it until one hundred and seven years from this date. This I decided to do, although previously I had always refused to reveal my past."

* * * * *

