[Editor's note: perhaps the single most debated subject in Laffite lore is the question of the veracity of *The Journal of Jean Laffite*. Some learned and noted historians believe it is a forgery and its contents thus fiction. Other researchers with significant credentials regard it as a genuine document and just what it is purported to be: a journal kept by Jean Laffite and detailing his post-privateering days in the American mid-West until his death there near the middle of the nineteenth century. One's opinion of the genuineness of *The Journal* will determine one's creedence in the following narrative.]

According to *The Journal of Jean Laffite*, privateer Jean Alexis Laffite died May 5, 1854, in Alton, Illinois. He was buried several days later in the Culp Cemetery located six miles northwest of Alton. The funeral was reportedly attended only by his immediate family and a few close friends.

In November, 1966, the city of Galveston, Texas, held a three-day celebration recognizing Laffite's arrival at Galveston 150 years earlier. Attending that celebration as the guest of honor was an individual named John Andrechyne Lafflin, the purported great-grandson of Jean Laffite. [Editor's note: in his latter years, John A. Laflin went by the name of "John A. Laffite." Within this article, he will be referred to by the name "Lafflin," to avoid confusion with others herein with the surname of "Laffite."]

Following the three-day celebration in Galveston, John A. Laflin accompanied author Audrey Lloyd to her home in Midland, Texas. Audrey Lloyd had begun a large work, *Jean Laffite, The True Story*, and employed much information for the book from Lafflin. On the return trip to Midland, Laflin related the following story to Ms. Lloyd concerning his visit long before to the grave site of his great-grandfather, the privateer Jean Laffite, accompanied by his grandfather, Jules.

Jules was, according to *The Journal of Jean Laffite*, twenty years of age when his father, Jean Laffite, died. Sixty-eight years passed before he returned to the grave site, this time accompanied by John A. Laflin.

"My grandfather took me to visit Jean Laffite's grave July 9, 1922. We left St. Louis on the train for Alton, Illinois, where 'the old man' died May 5, 1854. His grave was on the 180-acre farm of Frank Culp, six miles north of Alton and 4 miles southeast of Bethalto, Illinois. Grandfather had not told me whose grave we were going to visit.

"Reaching Alton, we walked six miles to the farm. Grandfather liked to walk. I did not. It was a hot July Sunday afternoon. Perspiration ran down our faces and we were very thirsty.

"The cemetery was an old one, about one hundred yards long and eighty yards wide, about half a mile east of the Culp farm. It was without a fence and covered with bushes, vines, and tall trees. The last burial there was a soldier killed in the Spanish-American War, July, 1898.

"We reached the grave of my grandfather, Jean Laffite, in the northwest corner of the cemetery. A large tree had grown, spreading roots to heave up the ornamental iron fence around the grave. The fence had disintegrated with rust. I touched the fence. It was burning hot from the July sun. As we stood there, my grandfather finally spoke. 'This is where the old man is buried but no one knows.' The grave was covered with weeds.

"Grandfather stood in silence. I asked him if he cried when his father was lowered into the grave. He said he did not shed a tear but his mother, Emma, did cry very much. So did the others: grandchildren from his first marriage, and also my grandmother, Carmen Ernestina Andrechyne, cried. She was a young girl then, before marrying grandfather Jules.

"Hundreds of people have asked me if there was a marker on the grave. If there was one I did not see it. A tombstone with the name Jean Laffite would not last one week. Look what tourists did to the Bienvineau Plantation brick mansion which Dominique You shelled in New Orleans to rout the British housed there in the War of 1812. They had to put up an iron fence around the old brick wall to keep the bricks from being taken as souvenirs, just as plaques on the Laffite blacksmith shop were taken. The first plaques were bronze. Where these were taken, time after time, wooden plaques were put up. These were also taken.

"That day at the Culp Farm my grandfather introduced us under assumed names. Frank Culp told us about his barn, which he said was built in the spring of 1852 under
supervision of an old gray-haired man who walked with a limp in his right foot and who directed the carpenters how to assemble the heavy cottonwood beams without nails—only wooden pegs. He was very quiet, never talking, and said his name was Richard Leon, Mr. Culp told us. That was a name that ancestor sometimes used.

"Mr. Culp and his wife invited us in for lunch, never knowing who we were. We left at six o’clock in the evening, thanking Mr. Culp and his wife and their twenty-one year old daughter, Edith, for their kindness.

"After the funeral of Jean Laffite," John continued, "grandfather said, ‘I felt very strongly that the old man was happy in death, that he had lived a sad and lonely life after he ceased his privateering and piracy, and although he had accomplished what he set out to do, to look back on it did not give him much pleasure. For he tried to do charitable work and he was afraid, always, that someone would recognize him and shout ‘pirate’ at him.’

"Emma Hortense Laffite did not remarry. She remained a widow for thirty-one years and died in Philadelphia, December 17, 1885.

"My grandfather cared for his mother always. Nine years after his father’s death, when he was twenty-nine, he married Carmen Ernestina Andrechyne, in Carondolet, Missouri, June 10, 1863.

"My grandfather died in 1924 at the age of ninety. He and my grandmother were very good to me after my father was killed. My mother, Mary Pauline Fontenella Laffite, remarried and left me with my grandparents.”

Audrey Lloyd provided the following comment on John A. Laflin’s recall.

"On the whole, John [Laflin] Laffite’s visit was a memorable one which provided a harvest of emotions. I learned one thing: never underestimate the awesomeness nor the courage of inherited pirate blood.”

John A. Laflin died in Columbia, South Carolina, February 20, 1970, and is buried in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Notes
The first date given for this visit to the grave is July 9, 1922. Later John Laflin said it was a "Sunday." Several years ago I checked in an encyclopedia and found that July 9 was either a Wednesday or Thursday (I no longer remember which), not a Sunday. More than likely, the visit did occur on a Sunday and John Laflin just confused the date.

2. Audrey Lloyd, "The Audrey Lloyd Collection,” Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center, Liberty, Texas.