The Laffite Society generally publishes in The Laffite Chronicles abstracts of featured talks and papers presented at monthly meetings, when the nature and length of these featured presentations lend themselves to such inclusion, and when the speakers facilitate same. These abstracts might contain information which is in conflict with the opinions of others or with established documentation. The material contained in this section does not, therefore, necessarily reflect an official position of The Laffite Society. The Society does, however, encourage discourse regarding conflicting viewpoints, because it believes such discourse often leads to a broader and deeper understanding.

The Society recognizes that The The Laffite Chronicles is its primary link with those members who do not attend monthly meetings. Therefore, in an effort to impart some feeling for the meetings and their content, the topics therein discussed are presented in summary fashion.

Tuesday, January 11, 2000

Minutes of the October 12 were not read by the Secretary or approved due to time constraints. Minutes of Nov. 9, 1999 were approved as read to members by the Secretary.

Treasurer, Jeff Modzelewski, reported a balance of $1,962.00, less cost of postage (approximately $250.00) for latest issue of The Laffite Society Chronicles, Aug., '99.

Members were reminded that they could subscribe to Andy and Becki Hall's e-mail Listbot address, the purpose of which, according to Andy is to “share information of interest to Laffite Society members, such as meeting schedules, research techniques, and inquiries about source material.”

Secretary, Dorothy Karilanovic, read a list she had prepared of new acquisitions for The Laffite Society archives consisting of copies of thirteen documents from French archives, compiled and sent to The Laffite Society for its archive by French Member-at-Large Patrick Lafitte.

Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson reported that the President of the Contraband Days buccaneer group in Lake Charles, LA, Mr. Ben Zaleski, had confirmed that funds would be available for the Jean Laffite national marker to be erected in Lake Charles, research and inscription of which were undertaken by Ms. Epperson and submitted for approval Dec. 27 to the Division of Historical Preservation, Office of Cultural Development in Baton Rouge, LA.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that, during a recent telephone conversation with Mr. William Simpson, antiques and auction dealer of the Simpson Auction Gallery in Houston, the latter stated that he had no knowledge of an 1820 painting of Jean Laffite executed by an unknown painter in South Carolina, which is the object of a present search.

R. Dale Olson announced that he will be an invited speaker at the April meeting of the Louisiana Genealogical Society in Baton Rouge, LA, during which time a special event trip for members is planned to the St. Francisville, LA area.
Tuesday, February 8, 2000

The Minutes of January 11, 2000 were approved as read to members by the Secretary.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in the account of $1,918.00.

President Kathy Modzelewski reminded members to send in their dues.

R. Dale Olson mentioned two new titles & a postgraduate transcript he had purchased for his library, as follows: 1) *The Memoirs of Lafitte or the Baratarian Pirate*, a novel written in 1826 by Mortimer Wilson of Westchester, New York) 2) a publication on Luis Aury, written in 1965, entitled *La Presencia de Luis Aury en Centro América* by Hector Humberto Samayoa Guevara, and 3) a Ph.D. dissertation on Xavier Mina.

Discussion continued on the upcoming special event trip to St. Francisville and West Feliciana Parish, LA April 28–30, to include a visit to The Myrtles Plantation.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that Professor Gene Marshall's new translation of *The Journal of Jean Lafitte: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story* will be published in the following format: an introduction of 34 pp., followed by the translation of the text and three indices of persons, places, and the names of ships.

As a special presentation, Member-at-Large Stephen Broadstone presented a talk on his recent trip to West Feliciana Parish, LA with emphasis on his visits to 1) The Myrtles Plantation, one of the ten most “haunted” homes in the nation, according to the Smithsonian Institute, and 2) Rosedown Plantation where 85% of the original contents from the 1850s remain, and gardens are patterned after those Versailles, France. In support of his talk, Mr. Broadstone provided packets of xeroxed copies of interesting architectural details of the above homes, as well as maps and lists of hotels and restaurants in the St. Francisville area. Members were also treated to a view of personal photos of interiors of The Myrtles and to two texts entitled 1) *Ghosts Along the Mississippi* by Charles Loughlin (1948), now out of print, and 2) *Plantation Homes of Louisiana and the Natchez Area* by David King, Gleason Collection, 1982, Louisiana State University Press.

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Minutes of the February 8 general meeting were approved as read to members present.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Laffite Society account of $1,858.00.

Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson reported that the Contraband Days buccaneer group of Lake Charles, LA had approved her proposal for a joint effort to fund a Jean Lafitte national marker for the Lake Charles, LA area, costs to be divided as follows: $200.00 from The Laffite Society and $1,000.00 from the Contraband Days group. President Kathy Modzelewski read to members in attendance Ms. Epperson's inscription which she had researched and prepared for the marker, and extended thanks to her on behalf of The LS for the generosity of her efforts in creating this good will gesture.

Member-at-Large Stephen Broadstone volunteered to contact The Myrtles Plantation in St. Francisville, West Feliciana Parish, LA to arrange for dinner reservations at Kean's Carriage House Restaurant at The Myrtles, and a tour of the plantation house for the April 28-29 special event trip planned by Laffite Society members.

Continuing his on-going research to verify the authenticity of historical information given in *The Journal of Jean Lafitte: the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, alleged to have been written by Jean Lafitte, Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson reported he had received information on the family of Lucien Fontenelle who was, according to Jean Lafitte in *The Journal*, p. 98, "a commercial agent for the Indians." Dr. Wilson reported that Jean Lafitte's grandson, Leon, married Lucien
Fontenelle’s granddaughter, Mary Pauline Fontenelle. Dr. Wilson is in the process of gathering more information on the Fontenelle family history which he hopes to make public in due course, pending verification of reliable sources.

Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson read a paper she had prepared on the 36-ton schooner Pegasus, from information obtained from 1) The U.S. Federal Archives 2) the Ships’ Registry and Enrollments of New Orleans 3) The Louisiana Historical Quarterly and 4) New Orleans Ship Lists by M.P. Reider and N.G. Reider.

Secretary Dorothy Karilanovic reported she had recently translated a one-page document in French provided by Member-at-Large Patrick Laffite of Cornella del Vercol, France, which is an application for foreign travel for a certain Pierre Laffite, dated May 2, 1802, from Bordeaux, France to Louisiana, for the purpose stated: “... to join the rest of his brothers.” A copy of the translated document, which includes a brief physical description of Pierre Laffite, along with the original in French will be entered in The Laffite Society archive at the Eiband Gallery.

Tuesday, April 11, 2000

Guest speaker Carroll A Lewis, Jr. presented a discussion on the subject of “Treasure Legends Along the Gulf Coast.” Mr. Lewis, who is the author of Treasures of Galveston Bay, published by Texian Press initially in 1966, spoke on his experiences as a traveler to South America, to the islands of Providencia and Santa Catalina off the coast near Colombia, S.A., which were for generations the stronghold of pirates. According to Mr. Lewis, Pilgrims arrived at Providencia and Santa Catalina in 1620 on The Sea Flower, sister ship of The Mayflower, where four fortifications were erected.

Members were also presented with copies of historical information the author had written on the Texas Revolution for independence: 1) a 12 page booklet entitled Texana: Fort Anahuac: Birthplace of the Texas Revolution and 2) a legal-sized, one-page account of the view of Texas colonists at Anahuac 160 years ago of the initial causes of the revolutionary outbreak due to the tyranny and despotic acts on the part of Col. John Davis Bradburn, a Kentuckian, who had joined the Mexican army and who was commandant of the Mexican fort at Anahuac at that time in 1832.

Minutes of March 14, 2000 were not read or approved due to the Secretary’s early departure from the meeting. Notes for the remainder of the meeting were taken by Editor-of-Publications, Jeff Modzelewski.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in the account of $2,442.45, plus $65.00 undeposited funds, less costs of about $350.00 for printing the next issue of The Laffite Society Chronicles.

Editor-of-Publications Jeff Modzelewski reported that Prof. Gene Marshall’s new translation of the French document, The Journal of Jean Laffite: the Privateer-Patriot’s Own Story, would be available in the near future via the Internet under Xlibris publications.

Advisory Board member Reginald Wilson stated that he is still searching out a lead on Lucien Fontenelle’s connection with the Jean Laffite family, and will report his findings if and when information becomes available (see March 14 Minutes).

President Kathy Modzelewski presented copies to members of a basic itinerary she had prepared for those planning to travel to St. Francisville, LA April 28-30. A brief discussion followed on sign-up for the trip, hotel locations available, and on plans for a wine and cheese gathering the day of arrival for which Mrs. Betty Wilson volunteered to provide refreshments.

Tuesday, May 9, 2000

Following serving of refreshments at 6:00 p.m., and in lieu of a special presentation for the evening, discussion continued on research in progress, prior to the general business meeting.
Through recent research, Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson presented startling new evidence from the Railroad Retirement Board and U.S. Census Records revealing that John A. Laffite/Laffite, long-alleged, self-proclaimed great-grandson of Jean Laffite, privateer-pirate, had been born in Omaha, Nebraska on June 4, 1893, the son of John and Mary Matejka, Bohemian emigrants. According to Ms. Epperson, while working as a lineman for the Missouri Pacific Railroad, John was noted to have used the name of Nafsinger in 1914, which he later stated was his step-father's name. Ms. Epperson further stated that, "For some mysterious and unknown reason, John filed a delayed birth certificate in April, 1947, claiming his name was JOHN ANDRECHYNE LAFFITE, and that his father was Leon Jean Laffite and his mother was Mary Pauline Fontenelle. Ms. Epperson made available for members' interest copies of a short biography on John A. Laffite and a tentative chronology of his life, spanning the years 1893 to 1970, from his birth to death.

Jean Epperson also donated to The Laffite Society archive a copy of a newspaper article from The Baytown Sun, Vol. 78: No. 161, Friday, May 5, 2000, entitled: "Pirate Still a Controversial Figure: Area Researcher Questions the Legitimacy of Pirate's Relatives," by staff writer Jeff Riggs. The article featured a photograph of Ms. Epperson in her library, and one of Direct Robert Schaadt of the Sam Houston Regional Library and Research Center at Liberty, Texas, where the controversial Journal and other Jean Laffite memorabilia are currently housed.

Advisory Board member Dr. Reginald Wilson presented further information on his research on correspondence between writer Audrey Lloyd and Lacey Seuratt Laffite, widow of John A. Laffite (a.k.a. as John Mytejka), and on Lucien Fontenelle family history and their association with Jean Laffite's grandson, Leon Jean Laffite. According to Dr. Wilson, from a recent telephone conversation he had had with a descendant of one of Lucien Fontenelle's sons, there is no evidence in their family history of a Mary Pauline Fontenelle being married to Leon, Jean Laffite's grandson.

Following the evening's series of discussion, the General Meeting resumed with an approval of the Minutes of March 14 and April 11, as read by the Secretary to members in attendance.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in The Laffite Society account of $2,777.45, less publication costs of the next issue of The Laffite Society Chronicles, now pending.

Laffite Society Archivist, Don Marler, reported on extensive organizational work he and his wife and Member Sybil Marler, had completed in collating and cataloging the contents of The Laffite Society archive over the past several months. Mr. Marler called for volunteers to continue with the collation, recording, and filing of documents, suggesting that they follow the procedures he had implemented for the sake of consistency and security of documents.

A recently received e-mail inquiry from a woman in Rockville Center, New York, representing a Brandeis Women's University organization, requested information on "Jewish origins of Jean Laffite," referred to in a book on Jewish frontier settlers by Harold Sharfman.
Archivist Don Marler reported that he was in the process of contacting a Jewish genealogical group in New Orleans to see if there is historical documentation to validate a claim for Jewish origins, made by Jean Laffite himself, in The Journal, alleged to have been written by Jean.

Advisory Board member Jean L. Epperson reported that a date for the dedication of the Jean Laffite National Marker in Lake Charles, LA, for which she had done the historical research and preparation of inscription, has not yet been decided upon. Discussions are under way between the Contraband Buccaneers group and city leaders as to the most appropriate location for the marker.
The President stated that The Galveston County Genealogical Society had made a request for a speaker from The Laffite Society to give a genealogical overview on the pirates Pierre and Jean Laffite.

**Tuesday, June 13, 2000**

The Minutes of the May 9th General Meeting, as read to the assembly by the Secretary, were approved with a motion by Jeff Modzelewski, seconded by John Hunger.

Treasurer Jeff Modzelewski reported a balance in the account of $2,666.25.

Editor-of-Publications Jeff Modzelewski announced that the upcoming issue of *The Laffite Society Chronicles* will be the last publication under his editorship. Publisher and current Archivist for The Laffite Society, Don Marler, has offered to accept a nomination for this important office.

The President suggested that members submit names of those whom they would like to see nominated for the new Board, for a slate to be presented at the July meeting.

President Kathy Modzelewski expressed thanks to Dr. Reginald Wilson for his gift of the "Jolly Roger" flag to be displayed in The Laffite Society archive.

Jeff Modzelewski reported that Island Books will have available for sale at cost for members Professor Gene Marshall's new translation of *The Journal of Jean Laffite; the Privateer-Patriot's Own Story*, hard copies for $21.00; soft, $12.00. Professor Marshall will be available at a future meeting to sign copies as desired.

Secretary Dorothy Karilanovic spoke briefly about a book written in French and published in France in 1998 by French author Louis-Jean Calvet. Her comments focused on the final chapter entitled "The Laffite Dossier," in which the author recaps the principal genealogical "trails" of research concerning the origins of the Laffite brothers and their possible fates. According to the Secretary, the author also offers opinions based on his research regarding the authenticity of the controversial *Journal*, his conclusion being that the document was probably written by an English-speaking person who then translated his thoughts into French. He cites several instances of so-called anglicized French, the incorrect use of French words based on what the typical English-speaking person might choose to express himself. He further states that the fact that most of the current researchers working on the document in this country have themselves been English-speaking natives may contribute to the belief that the document was written by a native French-speaking person, such as Laffite.

The Secretary reported she had had no further correspondence since January of this year from Mr. Richard B. Smith and The Company, a small West Yorkshire, England research group, regarding their decision as to whether or not to announce their completion of the decipherment of the Thomas Beale codices. Until further notice from this group, the file of correspondence on this research will be considered closed and will eventually be included in The Laffite Society archive.

In continuance of his search for the "lost 1820 painting of Jean Laffite," Dr. Reginald Wilson reported that he had located information in correspondence of writer Audrey Lloyd that John Matejka (a.k.a. John A.Lafflin/Laffite) had, in fact, himself created the painting of Jean Laffite, formerly attributed to an "unknown painter" in South Carolina in the 1820s.

A letter arrived from French member Patrick Laffite saying that he will send to The Laffite Society a “dossier” concerning Chevalier Anne Louis de Tousard from French Archives, along with an analysis of *The Journal* by a "premiere handwriting expert in France."

Dr. Reginald Wilson spoke on his observations of information obtained in Professor Gene Marshall's recent translation of *The Journal* that was not in the original document, first published in English in 1958 by Vantage Press. He also briefly
mentioned that John Matejka (a.k.a. John A. Lafflin/Laffite) was known to have “retraced” letters alleged to have been written by Jean Laffite.

Dr. Wilson also stated that his cousin and researcher Paul Gardiner plans to look for burial records in St. Louis of Jules Laffite, grandson of Jean Laffite. Further, he also reported he had written to a church in Le Sieur, Minnesota to see if they had records on Mary Matejka, sister of John Matejka, who had resided there as a nun. To date he has not received a response. He also stated he had tried to locate on the Internet persons in several states with the surname of Nafsinger who might have been descended from the Nafsinger who was John Matejka’s step-father.

Following up on his search for information on Lucien Fontenelle, Indian courier mentioned in The Journal, Dr. Wilson brought for members’ interest a genealogical list of Lucien Fontenelle, showing no evidence of a Mary Pauline Fontenelle as a descendant, alleged to have been Lucien’s great-granddaughter and to have married Jean Laffite’s grandson, Leon.