New Orleans Field Trip

Jim Nonus

The September 19, 2006 Laffite Society Meeting was held at Napoleon House in New Orleans.

In attendance:

Jim Nonus, Clifford Johnson
Diane Olson, Dale Olson
Lizette Gaudm, George Najarian
Don Marler, Sybil Marler
Tom Shehan, Claudette Braly
Rob Peterson, Carolyn Peterson
Cindy Nobles, Pam Gilbert,
Jean Epperson
Jonathan Deiss, Charles Duhley

The Guest Speaker was Betje Black Klier PhD.

The Laffite Society Meeting was well attended and offered out-of-state members a better opportunity to attend a monthly meeting. It is our hope to have a meeting once a year in New Orleans, the city whose name is synonymous with that of Jean Laffite. It was a pleasure to wine and dine in the historic city with the Spanish-French colonial charm that hasn't changed in hundreds of years despite storms of savage intensity. A presence still exist there that no wind can blow away and no tide can wash away. If there is anything missing in New Orleans today it is your presence. The sooner the tourist return to the Crescent City the sooner the Vieux Carrie will began to bloom with the scent of magnolia and bougainvillea.

Laffite Society members and guests visited our old and favorite haunts such as Cafe du Monde, Irene's, Galatois, Petunias, The Gumbo Shoppe and Laffite's Blacksmith Shop. Napoleon House rolled out the red carpet and gave us the velvet glove treatment and a warm welcome that made us feel as if we had just returned home from a long journey. A similar sentiment was felt through out the trip. We felt as if we had returned to our roots and maybe we had.

Betje made an interesting presentation on Champ d' Asile, and an old Laffite acquaintance, General Lallemand, one of Napoleon's generals. Many new details emerge from her research, the most interesting of which is Jean Laffite's strategy for maintaining control over the intrepid general. We look forward to the publication of her book on Champ d'Asile.

For sometime now I have been collecting old newspapers from the Laffite era. What follows are samples of references to Lallemand as he appeared in the news during the time he was in the Gulf Coast area.

The American Daily Advertiser

...PHILADELPHIA...

Monday Morning, June 8, 1818.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman of respectability residing at Nashitches to his friend in Washington City dated NASHITCHESES, May 6, 1818.

"The want of society makes this place by no means pleasant; but we may look forward to a rapid change, as the Red River Country is daily increasing its population. Emigrants are settling on its banks, above and below us; they are generally from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. It certainly is a delightful country; the lands are fertile; the climate equal to that of Maryland. I sincerely wish the government would take possession of all to the westward of this part of time we shall have some fighting near us. Three Frenchmen, late officers under Bonaparte, arrived in this town from Galvestown. I sent for them, and, on examination, they stated that Gen. Lallemand, and Gen. Grego, with 92 officers, had erected a fort in that neighbourhood; that Gen. L. had observed, that he expected a larger force; that he held out the idea of settling a colony, but that there was more attention paid to military discipline than clearing lands. These men, it appears, fell in with Lallemand in Philadelphia, who promised to take them to the Tombigby to settle lands. They state, that the General has usurped such strict military power that they were compelled to abandon him. They leave this to-day for Orleans. Laffite (they say) has from eight to ten vessels in the bay of Galvestown. This is carrying on pirating in a bold manner."

New Orleans Field Trip

Jim Nonus

The September 19, 2006 Laffite Society Meeting was held at Napoleon House in New Orleans.

In attendance:

Jim Nonus, Clifford Johnson
Diane Olson, Dale Olson
Lizette Gaudm, George Najarian
Don Marler, Sybil Marler
Tom Shehan, Claudette Braly
Rob Peterson, Carolyn Peterson
Cindy Nobles, Pam Gilbert,
Jean Epperson
Jonathan Deiss, Charles Duhley

The Guest Speaker was Betje Black Klier PhD.

The Laffite Society Meeting was well attended and offered out-of-state members a better opportunity to attend a monthly meeting. It is our hope to have a meeting once a year in New Orleans, the city whose name is synonymous with that of Jean Laffite. It was a pleasure to wine and dine in the historic city with the Spanish-French colonial charm that hasn't changed in hundreds of years despite storms of savage intensity. A presence still exist there that no wind can blow away and no tide can wash away. If there is anything missing in New Orleans today it is your presence. The sooner the tourist return to the Crescent City the sooner the Vieux Carrie will began to bloom with the scent of magnolia and bougainvillea.

Laffite Society members and guests visited our old and favorite haunts such as Cafe du Monde, Irene's, Galatois, Petunias, The Gumbo Shoppe and Laffite's Blacksmith Shop. Napoleon House rolled out the red carpet and gave us the velvet glove treatment and a warm welcome that made us feel as if we had just returned home from a long journey. A similar sentiment was felt through out the trip. We felt as if we had returned to our roots and maybe we had.

Betje made an interesting presentation on Champ d' Asile, and an old Laffite acquaintance, General Lallemand, one of Napoleon's generals. Many new details emerge from her research, the most interesting of which is Jean Laffite's strategy for maintaining control over the intrepid general. We look forward to the publication of her book on Champ d'Asile.

For sometime now I have been collecting old newspapers from the Laffite era. What follows are samples of references to Lallemand as he appeared in the news during the time he was in the Gulf Coast area.

The American Daily Advertiser

...PHILADELPHIA...

Monday Morning, June 8, 1818.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman of respectability residing at Nashitches to his friend in Washington City dated NASHITCHESES, May 6, 1818.

"The want of society makes this place by no means pleasant; but we may look forward to a rapid change, as the Red River Country is daily increasing its population. Emigrants are settling on its banks, above and below us; they are generally from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia. It certainly is a delightful country; the lands are fertile; the climate equal to that of Maryland. I sincerely wish the government would take possession of all to the westward of this part of time we shall have some fighting near us. Three Frenchmen, late officers under Bonaparte, arrived in this town from Galvestown. I sent for them, and, on examination, they stated that Gen. Lallemand, and Gen. Grego, with 92 officers, had erected a fort in that neighbourhood; that Gen. L. had observed, that he expected a larger force; that he held out the idea of settling a colony, but that there was more attention paid to military discipline than clearing lands. These men, it appears, fell in with Lallemand in Philadelphia, who promised to take them to the Tombigby to settle lands. They state, that the General has usurped such strict military power that they were compelled to abandon him. They leave this to-day for Orleans. Laffite (they say) has from eight to ten vessels in the bay of Galvestown. This is carrying on pirating in a bold manner."

23
French Colony near Mexico.

Extract of a letter from a French settler which was communicated for the June No. of the L’Abbe American.

We are established at the mouth of the River Trinity, on the Orcoquinis bluff, twenty feet above the level of the river at high water; upon this is a fine wood covered with timber; adjoining to this is the Grand Prairie, or Prairie of Tolotaisa, which is, at least, fifteen miles from north to south, and which extends eastward to a gap that communicates with Lake Santeaux; the land is of the first quality, easily cultivated; we have around us an immense tract, which promises the richest productions to those willing to labor a little. The game course the country in flocks; there is abundance of cows, of bulls, and wild horses may be got with ease. The waters are full of fish; and our inhabitants who have surveyed east of the river say the country is still superior; it is interspersed with most beautiful lakes, watering the most magnificent hills, where there are also many animals, particularly wild goats; all this land is in sugar, cotton, and indigo.

We have already seen the chiefs of the Indian nations, we have smoked the large Indian pipe of peace; we have reciprocally made slight feasts; they come every day with provisions; we are abundantly supplied with fresh meat, and have also sufficient salt and smoked.

Our colony is established in a spacious fertile country, abundant in resources, at the mouth of a river which empties into a fine bay, where the settlement of all people might prosper as quickly as in any country in the world. We have no occasion to form any encroachments on territories, nor to commit hostility against those who have; we make no other use of our arms than to repulse any aggressions, but we are resolved to defend the lands we have cultivated. Victims of events, none can deny us the right of our existence, the reward of our labor, our industry, and attention to social order. All is here that nature can desire, in a land abounding with every production that can be wished; we open an asylum to those men who find themselves in the same situation with us. If success crowns our efforts we shall have rendered an important service to our unhappy countrymen; if, on the contrary, we should not succeed, we shall at least have the satisfaction of attempting. We have no fear of fatigue or privations in the beginning; our aim is laudable, our intentions pure and honorable, and we devoutly hope in this event we obtain the wishes and approbation of honest men, of good faith and judgment.

French Exiles.

A number of exiled French officers, to whom Congress, feeling for their misfortunes, lately made a grant of land in the Alabama territory, which they no sooner got possession of, than they sold it to speculators, and moved off further south, on other lands being given to the United States, have, at once, taken it into their hands to set up an independent military government for themselves, and pledged their lives to defend it by force of arms against all the world. The bill of rights of these patriots, and their form of government, will be found below.

Champ D’Aile, Province of Texas.

May 11th, 1818.

We united by a series of such calamities which have torn us from our homes, and scattered us suddenly in different countries, have resolved to seek an asylum, where we may be able to recall our misfortunes, that we may draw from them useful lessons.

A vast country presents itself to us: a country abandoned by civilized men, where is only to be seen, some points occupied, or traversed by Indian tribes, who contented with the chase, leave without cultivation a territory as fertile as extended. In this wilderness, from its habitat spirit, we exercise the first right granted to man, by the author of nature, in establishing ourselves on this land, to fertilize it by our labors, and to demand from it the produce it never refuses to perseverance.

We strike no one; we have no hostile intentions. We ask peace and friendship with all who surround us; and will be grateful for the kindness, which will be extended to us. We will respect the religion, the laws, the manners, and the usages of civilised nations. We will respect the independence, the customs, the laws of life, of the Indian nations, whom we will not restrain, either in their hunting, or in any other point of their existence.

We will maintain with all those to whom it will be expedient, social relation and good neighborhood, as well as commercial pursuits. Our department will be peaceful, active and industrious; we will be useful to the extent of our power, and will render good for good. But if it be possible, that our situation be not respected, and that persecution may follow us to the deserts where we have sought a retreat, we ask it of all reasonable men, what defense would have been more legitimate than ours? It will be that of the most exalted. Our resolution is taken before hand. We have arms. The care of our preservation has forced it on us, to furnish ourselves with them, as men in our situation always have done. The land on which we have placed ourselves, will behold us prosper or bravely die. There we will live honora-
bly and free, or will find our tomb; and just men will grant a testimony of esteem to our memory. But we have a right to look for a more happy result, and our first care ought to be to merit the general esteem, in tracing the simple regulations, which will be a guarantee of our dispositions.

We will name the place, where our colony is situated, Champ d'Azile.

This denomination, in recalling to us our reverses, will also recall the necessity of fixing our destiny; of setting up anew our house- hold gods, in a word of creating a new country.

The Colony, essentially agricultural and commercial, will be military for its preservation.

It will be divided into cohorts:

Each cohort will have a chief, who will be required to keep a register of the persons who compose it, and to preserve it in order.

A general register formed from that of the colony, will be kept by the direction of the Colony.

The cohorts will be collected in the same place, that they may be the better protected from insult, and that each one may live tranquilly under the protection of all.

A Colonial Code shall forthwith be made to guarantee safety and property; to prevent and repress wrongs; to secure the peace of just men, and to erase all intentions of the wicked.

FROM THE NEW YORK DAILY ADVERTISER.

It is somewhat amusing to find such a degree of uselessness among certain description of politicians, in various parts of the country, at the recent intelligence of the establishment and views of the French colony, in the province of Texas. As this colony was made up of Frenchmen who are the descendants of Bonaparte, many of them officers of distinction, there seems now to be some additional fear of its consequences, amounting to a very fact. It is curious, in that a circumstance which was, of itself, the source of a great part if not the whole of the sympathy, which our government experienced towards these people, and which induced them to make them the liberal sale of land in our Southern territory, should now prove the cause amounting to the opposite of all. Yet these leaders were in a great measure destitute of means to carry on their undertaking, or talents and character to wait the expectation of success. But the principal officers in the French colony are men of high military character, of long experience, of tried bravery, and splendid talents. Unless the attempt to dislodge them shall be made in season, we very much believe it will be made in vain.

It must be a satisfying reflection to the government, that they suffered their old yearning for revolutionary France to lead them into the bubble in which they now find themselves. We do not believe that any other act of emigrants than French, could have obtained a tract of territory from government, with such ease and promptitude. Last winter an attempt was made by Congress to purchase from the Frenchman, who flock in great numbers to the United States, but without success. Now there is no distinguished military character among the Irishmen, to render them formidable upon our frontiers; still Congress would not listen to their application. But Frenchmen, made up of military characters alone, and above all other people restless and ambitious, fond of war, and added with the idea of conquest and military renown, as soon as asked, and to their gratification. Such blind and inconsiderate policy always leads to mischief.

Foulson's American Daily Advertiser

Tuesday Morning, August 18, 1818

Philadelphia

French Colony in Texas.

Pittsburg, (Penn.) August 11.

Le Champs d'Azile! how romantic, how innocent, how unsophisticated are these modern French. Le Champs d'Azile! The fields of Refuge, words worthy of Chateau briand, in his happiest moments, when Atala, Chactas and the bermit, in the bosom of an American forest, breathe around the primitive characteristics of sublimity and of love.—Such is the name given by a certain French colony to a military establishment in the province of Texas, which will probably exceed our boundaries. The members of this colony will make a great noise about fifteen months ago; they had, in fancy, formed a perfect Euploia, and built their capital, which, under the influence of that kind of wild republican spirit which has more than once disfigured France, they called Demopolis. Their plan was most fascinating; their constitution most liberal, and their colony was to surpass every thing that has been thought of since the days of Plato, the systems of Sir Thomas Moore, the Reverend Peter Pindar, and the eccentric Lee inclusive. The vine, the fig tree, and the olive, were to bloom beside the orange, and the laughing scenes of the vintage were to be translated in the fields of Euploia, and the plains of Alabama. These delusive dreams have vanished, and our Arcadian colony has suddenly been metamorphosed into a band of land-jobbers. We regret that Congress had not made the grant a conditional one. For our part, we have never entertained much confidence in these associations, where general officers and men of science are the pioneers. Government ought to encourage the emigration of this last class as much as possible; but we doubt whether giving them wild lands be the proper plan. We should prefer offering this kind of property to the laboring classes of Irish and Germans who may emigrate to our shores. This population would suit our frontiers much better than the cohorts and military establishments of miracles. L'allemand & Co. This colony since their arrival in Texas, have published a kind of constitution, or expose of their system of government. Among other things, they promise to respect religion. As to this article, we are a little sceptical. We had the honor of an acquaintance with many of these gentlemen, on their way to Orleans; said although their science, fondness for literature, and po-
Photos from the New Orleans meeting  
** Courtesy of Jean Epperson.  

(L) Diane Burkett, direct descendent of Pierre Laffite,  
and Betje Klier