In 1841, the publishers, Harper and Brothers of New York, printed the first edition of what later became an essential reference for those having an interest in Mexican history, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, written by explorer John Lloyd Stephens. Stephens (1805-1852) was already famous for having written earlier, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia, Petrae, and the Holy Land*, and *Incidents of Travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia, and Poland*.

In 1839, Stephens made arrangements to travel to Mexico and Central America, and took with him illustrator Frederick Catherwood. It was Catherwood’s excellent artistic representation which greatly enhanced the written descriptions of Stephens, and whose works have long been reproduced in separate volumes.

During his travel in Yucatan, Stephens attempted to locate a gravesite purportedly holding the remains of Jean Laffite. Further, he located the individual referred to as Lucy Allen, who had accompanied Pierre Laffite and Canadian Privateer George Donald Schumph after a fierce battle at Isla Mujeres which resulted in the death of Pierre. Although he found Lucy years later, she was in such a perpetual state of inebriation that a personal interview was useless. So, in addition to his other myriad activities, Stephens disclosed an interest in the subject of the Laffites, and their activities in the Yucatan following their departure from Galveston.

The title of this writing has been chosen with respect to both Stephens and Catherwood and their contributions to the study of the Laffites. For learned travelers in the Yucatan, the works of both of these men continually hover over one’s shoulders. Today, the bookstores of Merida continue to display reprints of Stephens’ books and Catherwood’s drawings. Tour guides to the Mayan sites such as Chichen Itza and Uxmal often refer to both Stephens and Catherwood, although the names may have little relevance for most casual tourists.

Laffite Society President, Jim Nonus, announced a trip to Yucatan in January, 2007 at the Society’s annual Christmas party in December, 2006. So it was that seven members made plans to revisit Yucatan and many sites associated with the Laffites.

SUNDAY, 14 JANUARY 2007

On Sunday January 14, 2007, Jim Nonus and Secretary, Dorothy McDonald Karilanovich, arrived at the home of Diane and Dale Olson in the East End Historic District of Galveston. At 1:00 p.m., the four departed Galveston for Houston Intercontinental Airport.

Others in the group were Robert Vogel and Kathy Taylor of Minnesota, Ed Jamison and Sandra Rogers of Galveston.

DEPARTURE

Upon arrival at the Houston airport, an unexpected problem arose which prevented Dorothy from going. Changes in passport requirements were scheduled to become effect on 23 January, after the group's scheduled return to the United States. However, the Mexican government modified the effective date of their new requirements. Dorothy, traveling on an original birth certificate, had an expired passport. Continental Airlines would not allow Dorothy to board the plane, as it was expected that a) the Mexican government would not allow her entry into their country, or b) Dorothy would be detained in Mexico when attempting to leave days later. Neither set of circumstances were tolerable, and
Dorothy reluctantly, but wisely, returned to Galveston.

A severe blizzard was predicted to arrive in Houston Sunday evening, and Continental Airlines Flight Number 1842, carrying Jim Nonus and the Olsons, was scheduled to depart at 6:50 p.m. The flight, which was scheduled to only require two hours, was delayed one and one-half hours. Now, icy rain began to appear, which had the potential of canceling the flight. Finally, the plane departed at 8:00 p.m.

The itinerary for this trip was to differ from the previous trip to the same area taken by The Society in 2001. The Olsons and Vogels were the only ones to have been present on both field trips. In the earlier trip, the focus was on Merida, with a day trip to Dzilam de Bravo, Dzinzantun, Progresso, and other remote villages. Again, we plan to drive to Dzilam and Dzinzantun. But, this trip will include a more precise revisit to the route taken by Canadian privateer George Donald Schumph and Lucy Allen following their arrival in Dzilam de Bravo with the body of Pierre Laffite.

Additionally, the group plans to travel to the colonial city of Campeche on the Mexican Gulf Coast, a town rich in pirate lore and legend. Several members also plan to travel to the Maya Indian sites of Chichen Itza and Uxmal. All against a backdrop of education, investigation, and Kahula fortified coffee, Pina Colatas, and fine Mexican food!

Intense scholarly preparation is not typically a hallmark of Laffite Society field trips, but most members engage in often significant preplanning to enhance the trip. We recalled, as but a few examples, when visiting Fort Livingston on Grande Terre years ago, Robert Vogel had thoughtfully taken a set of original plans for the group to study while actually standing on the site. And, for the last trip to the Yucatan, the group printed and distributed the entire deposition by Schumph for all to study.

For this foray, members had again familiarized themselves with the Schumph deposition. Ed Jamison purchased the Saxon book and gallantly attempted a reading of the Spanish language “Las Piratas Campeche”. Greatly enhancing this trip was the very recently published English translation of “Las Piratas Laffite” by Jorge Rubio Mane, by Jeff Modzelewski. And, Dorothy McDonald Karilanovic engaged in electronic communication with Michel Antochiw and others at the General Archives in Merida.

At the elegant Christmas party in December, each member present received a copy of the now Mane-Modzelewski book. The Vogels, living in Minnesota, had not attended and Diane and Dale Olson hand-carried a copy to them from Jeff and Kathy Modzelewski. It was Robert who contributed a biography of Mane for the book.

ARRIVAL IN MERIDA

Proceeding through Mexican customs upon arrival in Merida was a smooth operation with only the checking of passports and the execution of a few short documents. By 10:20 p.m., Jim, Diane, and Dale were in a taxi traversing the route into the “Colonia Centro” of Merida. Before 11:00 p.m., they had joined the others, who had left earlier, in the beautiful atrium of Hotel Villa Maria, a renovated 17th century mansion. The standard late night cocktails and discussion of history, such a prominent part of Laffite Society field trips, was held in abeyance in deference to sleep and preparation for the next day’s activities.

Ed, Sandra, Robert, and Kathy had arrived the day previous. After exploring the weekly market in the “Zocalo” (the main square of Merida), Robert and Ed arranged for a driver and van for Monday’s day trip.

MONDAY, 15 JANUARY 2007

Promptly at 8:00 a.m., our driver “Raul,” a “specialist” in archaeology,
and highly knowledgeable concerning matters of Yucatecan history, appeared at the Villa Maria. During the exit from Merida, Raul slowly drove down Paseo de Montejo, a major street of Merida, which is the site of many huge, elegant 18th Century mansions previously occupied by merchants and wealthy dealers of "henequen" (fiber) in earlier days. This natural fiber was eventually replaced by synthetic fibers and the wealth of the henequen growers diminished. Many of these mansions easily rival the elegant larger homes in Europe.

Raul questioned our reasons for choosing the route we had given to him. None of the locations were typical choices of tourists. We explained, in general, the fact that we were traveling in reverse for convenience, the trail of George Schumph, which Robert had created.

By 9:15 a.m., we were on the road to Motul, a small village. Vogel explained that "this place has absolutely nothing to do with Laffite", but was included to visit the old church dating to 1651. This is a "sister" church to that of Dzidzantun, which we will later visit. Motul, now with a population of approximately 20,000 is a large city compared to others we visited during the day. Founded in the 11th Century, it was molded into a colonial city by the Spanish.

One hour later, at 10:15 a.m., the group departed Motul and arrived in Dzemul at 10:45. Dzemul, home to about 2800 individuals, is 27 miles northeast of Merida. Upon arrival, we immediately visited the huge 17th Century Santa Ana Cathedral of the Franciscans. Dzemul is the town where Lucy Allen was left when she became ill, possibly with malaria. The only Europeans in the area would have been the Franciscan monks, and it is presumed that Schumph and his guard would not have left Lucy with native Mexicans at the time, but chose to leave her at the Santa Ana Cathedral. Although conjecture, it may have taken Lucy several months to recover from the fever. In that she arrived in Dzemul in October, she possibly remained at the church until at least December, 1821.

No records of Lucy exist in Dzemul. It is interesting to note that Lucy was not taken to Merida to be deposed, and that there is no record of authorities sending an emissary to Dzemul to question her. In reality, her presence in the story of the Laffites is rather transitory.

Members, with Raul driving, departed Dzemul at 11:00 a.m. again on the road traversed by Schumph, but in reverse.

Dzidzantun was the next stop, arriving at 11:40 a.m. This little town of 7100 people is 40 miles east northeast of Merida. During the Society's visit in 2001, the church was closed, and the group agonized over poor fortune when it was again found to be locked. Diligence was rewarded when we met several young school children who showed how to enter from a side door. The huge roof of this old church had collapsed circa 1923, and destroyed much of the floor. According to Robert, who had studied the history of this old structure, congregants had just left Mass when the roof collapsed, and no one was killed or injured. The roof, made of cement or plaster, appears to have been at least two feet thick and the combined weight of the massive collapse could have approximated hundreds of tons of materials falling some 50 feet onto the floor of the sanctuary.

This church, and the town of Dzidzantun, were the subjects of raids by pirates operating long before the Laffites. One story recounted by Vogel, as originally told to him during a tour of the facility years earlier, recalled how pirates hung the supervising monk upside down by his heels until he admitted the location of money. Afterward, heavy fortifications were constructed around the church to save it, and the monks, from future attacks.

Hundreds of people would have lived in Dzidzantun in 1821 when Lucy Allen was there. One marker in the church disclosed the identity of one parishioner who would have lived there at that time:
Eusubio Coral Y’Ferraz  
Born 15 December 1769  
Died December, 1846  
Age 77.

Eusubio would have been 52 years of age in 1821.

By 12:25 p.m., the group departed Dzinzantun and headed for one of the most famous names in the story of the Laffites, Dzilam de Bravo, on the Gulf Coast of the Yucatan.

At 12:50 p.m., the van stopped at a Mexican military checkpoint, where armed police typically search vehicles for drugs, or contraband. Upon stopping, Dale quickly jumped out of the van to take a photograph. The action was upsetting to the guards who appeared to immediately go on alert. The incident was quickly resolved when the Mexican police realized that Dale was simply taking photographs. They smiled and waved as the van drove away.

Five minutes later the group entered the village of Dzilam de Bravo and quickly congregated for lunch at El Pescador Restaurant on the town square. With a driver, Society members were able to enjoy a Mexican beer, or “Cerveza” (“Sol”, “Modelo Negra”, or the standard “Corona”) with lunch and at breaks in the drive. Raul politely abstained.

Dzilam, an ancient Maya settlement has a population of approximately 1900 inhabitants. Its primary industry today, as in pre-Spanish days, is salt.

According to the Schumph deposition, Pierre was buried at the Campo Santo of the church at Dzilam. This site has long been taken away by the encroaching Gulf of Mexico and no longer exists. Little exists today in Dzilam which is related to the Laffite story, except for a monument on the beach dedicated to Jean Laffite, under the erroneous assumption that it was Jean, not Pierre, who was buried at the place. All gathered at the monument, took photographs, and spent a few minutes walking the beach. Diane and Jim picked up sea shells and conch shells to place in their collection in Galveston.

The Alcocer family is prominent in Dzilam, and many are of the belief that they are related to Jean Laffite. This has a very, very low level of probability. If there are any relationships to the Laffites at all, it would be to Pierre, not Jean.

Raul took the only available road from Dzilam to the port of Progresso, driving along the Gulf. At 4:10 p.m., members reached Progresso and stopped for drinks and guacamole at an open, outside bar appropriately named “Laffites”. In 2001 Progresso was a small village with few distinctions. Today, in 2007, it has one of the longest piers in Mexico stretching out into the Gulf of Mexico to accommodate the many cruise ships which visit. New hotels, bars, restaurants, and souvenir shops have blossomed as a result of the new tourists which visit the place from the cruise ships.

By 5:00 p.m., the group departed Progresso, and the weather turned cold and overcast. Less than one hour later, all were again at the Villa Maria and gathered in Ed and Sandra’s room for Kahula, wine, and conversation. Later, all except for Jim (who had returned to his hotel for the evening), had dinner in an elegant private dining room at the hotel. Jim later advised that, while we were traveling, Dr. Michel Antochiw visited his Maison Laffite and left a photocopy of the original Schumph deposition, the first ever seen by any Society members. It remains unclear where the original copy resides, but it has been reported to be in a “private collection”. It would be two days before the group attempted to contact Dr. Antochiw for a personal visit.

All retired to their respective rooms at the Villa Maria, having completed the first full day of activities, and planning for the trip on Tuesday to Campeche.

TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2007

The city of Galveston, or at least the portion of that Island occupied by Jean Laffite, was, according to some reports, at one time referred to as “Campeche”. Today, the Laffite Society was going to the original Campeche. Jim joined the
others at the Villa Maria at 8:15 a.m.
for breakfast at the hotel prior to
departing.

Today, all took a public bus, the ADO
to Campeche, while others
planned to remain overnight. Ed,
Sandra and Jim left on a bus at 11:00
a.m. Tickets were sold out, so Robert,
Kathy, Diane, and Dale departed at
11:30 a.m.

The 102 mile distance between Merida
and Campeche, took approximately two
hours, and provided a most interesting
trip in that the terrain near Campeche
was very hilly, whereas that near
Dzilam, experienced the day before,
was completely flat. Arriving at 11:45
a.m., the Vogels and the Olsons took a
taxi to the Francis Drake, a hotel
investigated using the Internet prior to
departure on Sunday. By 2:15 p.m.,
both couples had checked into the hotel,
and left on a walking tour of the
historic downtown section. Shortly
thereafter, about 3:00 p.m, the Olsons
and Vogels met up with Ed, Sandra, and
Jim for lunch at Casa de las Arcas, on a
beautiful second floor exterior balcony.
Following lunch, all again walked
Campeche, shopping and visiting the
small museum. Again, the group
stopped at 6:45 p.m. for coffee and
treats on the downtown square.

Several hours later, Jim, Ed, and Sandra
departed by bus for Merida, while the
Vogels and Olsons attended the pirate
show, “Espectaculo de Luz Sonide” held
at one of the old fortifications
protecting Campeche from attacks by
pirates long ago. The show was
excellent. After an introduction by
actors dressed in pirate garb, the tour
group of approximately 40 to 45 guests
climbed to the top of the huge concrete
fortification, and heard more of the
history of Campeche. This was
followed by a movie in Spanish with
English sub-titles moving quickly across
the screen.

Later, all descended the steep, small
stone stairs, across a large grassy area,
to bleachers where the show is recorded
in several different languages. Actors,
on top of the fortifications portrayed the
history of Campeche, with emphasis on
the pirate theme. Action included the
shooting of flaming arrows with a bow,
and the standard sword fight.

After the show, the Vogels and Olsons
walked the six or eight blocks back to
the Hotel Francis Drake for the night.

Day three had come to a conclusion.

WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY 2007

Six years ago this date, members of the
Laffite Society departed for Yucatan, a
diary of which appeared in the Laffite
Chronicles in the same year.

Having remained in Campeche for the
night, the Vogels and Olsons were
planning to return to Merida and rejoin
Ed, Sandra, and Jim. By 9:00 a.m. the
two couples had breakfast at he dining
room of the Hotel Francis Drake (the
Balandra Restaurant) and by 10:00 a.m.
separated and went into different
directions to shop and further explore
Campeche.

Although the city of Campeche strongly
promotes the theme of piracy, the local
bookstores were devoid of any books
regarding pirates. Not even the small
Campeche” by Miguel Angel Tenorio,
published in five editions between 1999
and 2005, was available.

Shortly after noon, all met at the Hotel
and took a taxi to the ADO bus
terminal, and by 1:30 p.m. all had
departed for Merida. Arriving at the
Hotel Caribe in Merida at 4:15 p.m., the
Vogels and Olsons soon joined the
others who had returned the day prior.
Robert and Dale enjoyed a cerveza
while Kathy and Diane shopped. By
7:30 p.m., all met for dinner at an
Italian restaurant nearby, the Il Coffee.
Following dinner, all bade farewell to
Ed and Sandra, who were leaving early
the next morning.

Tomorrow will be the first, and only,
day of the trip which will not involve
driving or traveling from one place to
another.
Ed and Sandra departed at 6:55 a.m. on a flight from Merida to Houston, bringing to an end the portion of the trip which involved all members. Jim will leave early tomorrow, and the Vogels and Olsons early on Sunday. No one understood Continental Airlines scheduling which had the sole flight of the day departing at 6:55 a.m.!

By 8:15 a.m., Jim, Robert, Kathy, Diane, and Dale met in the restaurant at the Hotel Caribe for breakfast, sitting in the open air atrium with lush tropical foliage and caged tropical birds. One hour later began the search for a peripheral figure in the study of the Laffites, the thus far elusive Dr. Michel Antochi.

In the 1990s, Dr. Antochi, former Director of the Center for Support of Historical Research in Yucatan, had produced a pamphlet in Spanish based upon a transcription of the deposition of Canadian privateer, George Schumph.

George Donald Schumph was a young man who had purportedly been with Jean Laffite on Galveston Island, and later followed the Laffites to Isla Mujeres, an island near Cancun, Mexico. It was on Isla Mujeres that Mexican authorities, lead by Miguel Molas, attacked the pirates, severely wounding Pierre. Schumph, Pierre, Pierre’s probable consort, Lucy Allen, and perhaps a Mexican guard quickly departed Isla Mujeres in a small boat. They landed near Dzilam de Bravo, and Pierre died at “Los Bocas”, near Dzilam. After Pierre’s burial in Dzilam, the remaining members of the party traveled inland, headed for Merida. Lucy became ill and was left at Dzemul. Upon arriving in Merida, Mexican authorities took a deposition from Schumph. This document remained unknown for over a century, until the late 1930s.

In 1937, Mexican historian J. Ignacio Rubio Mane based four chapters of his work, Los Piratas Laffite on this deposition. Jeff Modzelewski, in 2006, completed an English translation of Mane’s work. During the translation process, Dorothy McDonald Karilanovich and Jeff Modzelewski, had corresponded with Dr. Antochi, discussing various aspects of his work with the Schumph deposition. This trip to Merida provided an excellent opportunity for some of the group to personally meet Dr. Antochi.

Dorothy had communicated with Antochi, advising that Jim Nonus would be staying at the Maison Laffite, and could be reached at that locale. Jim was not, however, at the hotel the entire day, and Dr. Antochi visited during one of Jim’s absences, and left a photocopy of the original Schumph deposition. No one in the group had yet had the opportunity to meet Antochi. Today may be the day!

The entire group began the search for Michel Antochi by going to several libraries and federal institutes asking for the location of the “Cultural Archives of the Yucatan”. The place and location was unknown to all. A search of the Merida telephone directory disclosed no “Cultural Archives ...”.

Finally we visited a bookstore, “Dante” on the main square of Merida and inquired if any clerks spoke English. One young college student, Ana Herrera Pareja came forth and immediately began to offer assistance. She knew nothing of Antochi or the Cultural Archives. Again, the telephone directory was consulted and the name “Antochi” was searched, successfully. Obtaining the telephone number of Mr. Antochi, Dale and Ana went to an adjoining office with a public telephone where Ana called and asked for “Mr. Antochi”. “He is not in Merida today”, his wife advised. Ana explained the reason for wishing to meet with Antochi, and his wife provided their home address.

Jim had brought a copy of Profiles of Pillage by Bill Doree (with a photograph of a pirate-costumed Jim Nonus on the cover), and Robert had donated his copy of Jeff Modzelewski’s The Pirates Laffite to give to Michel Antochi. We arranged for Ana to deliver the two
books to the Antochiw home after work. Ana is a college student in Merida studying tourism.

So, no one in the Laffite Society met with Dr. Antochiw, but a great effort was made, and our search ended about noon. A gift of two books eventually reached the elusive Dr. through the generosity and cooperation of Ana.

Afterward, the Vogels strolled the streets of Merida taking photographs of historic buildings. The Olsons and Nonus went shopping! An hour later all were back at the Hotel Caribe in the restaurant for drinks and relaxation.

The trip was essentially without adverse incident, except for what we began to refer to as “The Great Guacamole Controversy”, instigated by no less than President Jim Nonus. A connoisseur of this green colored dip made from avocados, Jim promised, before leaving Galveston, to sample guacamole from as many restaurants as possible. At a restaurant adjacent to the Hotel Caribe, “Main Street”, Jim ordered guacamole. Immediately, he sensed that the chef had used excessive amounts of lime, and so advised the waiter. Demonstrating great diplomacy and candor, Jim explained that “the guacamole in the bar across the street is much better”, and that perhaps the chef from Main Street should go across the street as an educational venture after work some day. Jim did not, however, ever complain about the quality of the myriad Margaritaas inhaled during the trip.

By 5:30 Diane and Jim strolled across the street to the bar which boasted the fine guacamole and confirmed Jim’s pronouncement and evaluation, supported of course, with an equally fine Margarita or two.

The Vogels and Dale walked one block to the Zocalo to observe the flag lowering ceremony, held daily by the Mexican military. Each day at 6:00 p.m., a drum and bugle corps plays on one side of the square. It is soon joined by six “goose-stepping” Mexican military personnel who march to the flag in the center of the square, lower it slowly, and carry it, waving in the wind, across the street to a federal building, where it is folded and stored for the night. Each morning one may observe the same ceremony when the flag is raised.

Thousands upon thousands of birds occupied every square inch of the large trees surrounding the square, but made the decision to leave when the bugle corps began playing.

By 7:30 p.m., the Vogels and Dale joined Diane and Jim, and all walked to El Greco Café, a Cuban restaurant, for dinner.

The end of another great day in Yucatan, and the end of the search for Michel Antochiw.

Jim leaves tomorrow morning at 6:55 a.m., leaving only the Vogels and the Olsons to complete the trip.

FRIDAY 19 JANUARY 2007

At this point in the trip most Laffite related activities have ended. Today, the Vogels and the Olsons traveled to the Maya site of Chichen Itza, about a two hour drive from Merida. Tomorrow, Saturday, the Vogels plan to remain in Merida, while the Olsons plan to visit the Maya site of Uxmal, a one hour drive from Merida.

Details of both of these sites are readily available and have no particular relevance to the study of the Laffites. For this reason, descriptions of these truly impressive locales are not provided.

Today, Jim Nonus arose very early and departed on Continental Flight #1843 at 6:55 a.m. for Houston. The Vogels and Olsons had breakfast at the Hotel Caribe and departed at 9:15 a.m. in a van with a total of ten guests for Chichen Itza. Although Robert and Kathy are very experienced Yucatan travelers, neither had ever visited this most famous Maya site. The Olsons had visited neither Chichen Itza nor Uxmal.

During the drive out of Merida, the driver again drove slowly by some of
the great mansions of Merida. By 10:50 a.m., all arrived at Chichen Itza. The guided portion of the tour was completed by about 12:30 p.m., and all participants had until 2:00 p.m. to stroll the site independently. Dozens of vendors were in evidence selling numerous Maya themed items.

By 2:15 the group had returned to the van and had lunch at a nearby restaurant, “Xaybe”. This was a beautiful, relatively new, “hacienda”, patterned after the original haciendas several hundreds of years old. The grounds and the structure were in immaculate condition, demonstrating a rather unexpected level of maintenance. Food at Xaybe was tolerable, but the restaurant is designed to accommodate very large numbers of tourists, usually arriving by bus. The operation was very smooth, with highly attentive waiters, although guests traversed a buffet bar. Local dancers performed during the meal on a large stage in the restaurant.

Leaving at 3:15, the Vogels and Olsons were back at Hotel Caribe by 5:00 p.m., where Robert and Dale enjoyed cervezas at the Main Street restaurant. Kathy and Diane joined the men and all walked to the Zocalo shopping and viewing the very busy square on Friday night.

SATURDAY 20 JANUARY 2007

Today was Dale’s birthday and he and Diane celebrated by traveling to Uxmal, a truly impressive Maya site one hour from Merida by van. The Vogels spent the final day of the trip strolling Merida and taking photographs of numerous historic buildings and examples of architecture.

By 1:00 p.m., Diane and Dale left for Uxmal. The driver took extra time leaving Merida to drive through an ancient cemetery, very reminiscent of those found in New Orleans where the graves were above-ground. Highly decorated and often painted white, the graves were densely packed, an obvious reminder of the very large number of people interred within the grounds.

Prior to arrival at Uxmal, the driver again took a slight detour and drove the grounds of an abandoned hacienda, Yaxcopoil, a 17th Century structure of bygone magnificence. Upon returning to Texas, the Olsons viewed real estate sites associated with the Yucatan, and found that some of the old haciendas were for sale in the very broad range of $1,000,000 to $2,000,000 American dollars. Often, this price included very large acreage, and buildings requiring extensive repairs. Small houses in Centro Merida were listed in the $30,000 range, with larger, older, more historic homes upward to the $500,000 range.

Arriving at Uxmal at 2:30 p.m., the Olsons learned that they were the only English speaking members on their van of ten people, and, as such, were given a private tour by the English speaking, and highly knowledgeable driver. Uxmal was a sharp contrast to Chichen Itza. Few people were in evidence, and long range photographs could easily be taken without including visitors. Chichen Itza is the most famous Maya site in Yucatan and, due to its relatively close proximity to both Merida and the popular tourist city of Cancun, thousands of visitors are often present.

On 21 September each year, a “magic” number in Maya culture it was reported that 65,000 would descend upon Chichen Itza in a single day.

The “cenote”, or sacrificial well at Chichen Itza was explored by Edward Thompson in the early part of the 20th Century, and was described by John Lloyd Stephens much earlier. This is a very large “sink hole” with dark green water standing far below the lip of the well. Human sacrifices were common at the cenote. Uxmal had no cenote, but probably practiced human sacrifices at some of the temples and other structures on the site.

The Olsons ate dinner on the grounds of Uxmal and attended a light and sound show at 7:00 p.m., describing the history of the place.

By 9:00 p.m., Diane and Dale had returned to Merida and the Hotel
Caribe. Robert and Kathy had experienced Merida for one final day, and all were preparing to depart early the next day, bringing to an end the Laffite Society field trip.

SUNDAY 21 JANUARY 2007

Robert, Kathy, Diane, and Dale arose at 4:00 a.m., departed in a taxi from Hotel Caribe by 5:00, drove through the near empty streets of Merida and reached the airport by 5:15 a.m. All moved through Mexican customs and departed on the same Continental Flight #1843 at 6:55 a.m.

The Olsons, who have a home in Galveston, processed through one line at Houston Intercontinental, while the Vogels, who live in Minnesota and were awaiting a continuing flight, were separated and moved through a different line. No time for “good-byes”. The field trip to Merida exemplified many of the elements common to twelve years of previous trips; scholarship, camaraderie, enjoyment of life, and the study of history.

The Society has traveled many times to New Orleans, took a “plantation tour” of Southern Louisiana, visited Grand Isle, and waded through the swamps of Grande Terre. They have participated in archaeological digs at the Maison Rouge in Galveston, visited the Sam Houston Regional Library and Museum in Liberty, and made dozens of trips of shorter duration than the one week spent in Merida. These trips are a fundamental aspect of The Society. Although only a small percentage of members go on these field trips, typically between 10 and 25, full reports are carried back to the general membership at monthly meetings, and are reported in The Laffite Society Chronicles.

FORTIFICATIONS, CAMPECHE, MEXICO
BELL TOWER AT FORTIFICATIONS
CAMPECHE, MEXICO
FEDERAL BUILDING, MERIDA, MEXICO

Possibly the site of the deposition of George Schumpf in 1821.
LAFFITE MEMORIAL
DZILAM de BRAVO, MEXICO

l. to r. Robert Vogel, R. Dale Olson, Sandra Rogers, Diane Olson, Kathleen Taylor, Jim Nonus, and Ed. Jamison.