Michael Bailey and His Museum

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Casual visitors to museums throughout the world often stroll the halls, simply glancing at displays, artifacts, and documents with little thought as to the process through which their presence in the structure was facilitated. The paths of historically significant items on their way to display is often tortuous, convoluted, time-consuming, and unappreciated. But, for the minority who appreciate museums, the behind-the-scenes diligence is understood and respected.

Few individuals have demonstrated a more dedicated passion for salvaging, researching, and ultimately displaying historical articles than Laffite Society member Michael Bailey, Curator of the Brazoria County Historical Museum in Angleton, Texas.

To Angleton and the Brazoria County Historical Museum, Michael brings a rich academic background including the University of Maryland, Central Texas College, and Fort Stellaicom Community College. He holds the B.A. in Anthropology and a B.A. in History from Indiana State University, a Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies from George Washington University, and attended the Preservation Management Institute, Graduate Studies at Rutgers University.

Michael has taken his professional experience to the Cunningham Memorial Library, Terre Haute, Indiana, the Indiana State University Archaeology Laboratory, the Rare Books and Special Collection at the Cunningham, the Eugene V. Debs Museum, the City Library of Pembina, North Dakota, and finally to the Brazoria County Historical Museum.

To the great envy of other Society members who recently visited the museum on a field trip, Michael is a member of the Texas Army, and an Admiral of the Texas Navy!

In 2001 Michael began his work in Angleton. In that small Texas town he found a museum whose primary purpose is to act as the historical resource center for Brazoria County. The primary focus is collecting, organizing, and preserving information relating to the events, people, and places in Brazoria County, and to assist researchers in locating this material.

To Texans, Brazoria County is of vital importance. Anglo-Texas has its very beginnings in this area. The first of Stephen F. Austin's authorized 300 Anglo settlers in what was then the State of Coahuila, Mexico, arrived at the mouth of the Brazos River in 1821. Many of the events leading to the Texas Revolution occurred or developed here. Santa Anna signed the famous Treaties of Velasco that effectively granted Texas its independence and led directly to the consolidation of the United States continental empire, where those first settlers arrived in 1821.

This all occurred in the year following the Laffite Brothers' departure from Galveston Island, about 60 miles away.

The Museum is home to the long term Austin Colony Exhibit, which opened in October, 1993. Sixty-eight panels displayed over 2400 feet provide a clear and concise chronology of the chain of events from the earliest Anglo-American penetration to full Texas Independence.

To the Museum, Michael Bailey has brought a wealth of expertise and professionalism. To The Laffite Society, he has encouraged a new, higher level of monthly presentations by his carefully prepared and documented lectures.