1816 MAPS of GALVESTON BAY
Jean L. Epperson

The Rosenberg Library in Galveston has two unsigned maps, in Spanish, apparently drawn in the year 1816. The first is listed as a photostatic copy of a map in the National Archives in Mexico City. It was donated to the Rosenberg by Regan Brown. The second map is a photostatic copy of a manuscript map copied from an uncited volume in Bogata, Columbia. It was donated to the Rosenberg in 1954 by Carlos Fallon.

The first map was the subject of much interest and work in 1995 by three members of the Laffite Society, Tom Oertling, Dorothy Karilanovic and Jeff Modzelewski. The map in the Rosenberg is very dim and hard to read and the first order of inquiry was to translate the Spanish. Dorothy and Jeff worked diligently, with much eye strain, on the translation. Then Tom crafted an article entitled "Historical Comments and Observations on the Map "Bahia de Galveston". The article and translation was published in the January 1996 edition of the Laffite Society Chronicles. Tom's astute conclusion was that the 1810 date on the map was wrong and that the last digit on the date was actually a "6" and not a zero. The upper part of the six had been obliterated. He also related that General Humbert, whose camp was depicted on Bolivar, did not arrive there until 1815. It is likely that this map was drawn by some one in the company of Colonel Henry Perry and General Jean Joseph Humbert whose group arrived on Bolivar in 1815. The group meeting with misfortune and being unable to be re-supplied joined Commodore Louis Aury, who arrived on Galveston Island in July 1816. [author's note: Mina arrived Nov 1816 — Jean Laffite arrived March 23, 1817 *LHQ 21/20]

The intriguing thing about this map is the three casas (houses) shown where Aury's fort is depicted on the second map. This location was supposedly the highest point on the east end of the Island and the ultimate location of Jean Laffite's fort and house.

A surprising find, to the author, was a second clear copy in English of this map in the Rosenberg. The translations were not exactly the same as Jeff and Dorothy published in the Laffite Chronicles, but very similar. Did Jeff and Dorothy donate a revised copy of the translations to the Rosenberg?

The second 1816 map in the Rosenberg is primarily of the entrance to Galveston Bay and is entitled "Entrada de la Bahia de Galveston, 1816. This map was reproduced in an article entitled, "The Three Pirates Lafon" published in The Laffite Society Chronicles in February 2005. Printed on Point Bolivar is the camp of Colonel Perry, and on the east end of Galveston Island (Isla Serpiente) is a fort. This map is extremely well done and it is speculated that it was crafted by Bartholome Lafon a well known engineer and cartographer of the time. Lafon was known to have sent a map to Governor Antonio Martinez in 1817. The title of the map was not specified but it was more than likely the entrance to Galveston Bay. It has been informative and a pleasure to have reviewed these maps and the participation of the members of the Laffite Society in studying and translating the maps.
ENDNOTES


4. Louisiana Historical Quarterly