Monthly Programs 2010-2011

Jack Watson, Program Chairman
jack watson <cherylgwatson@comcast.net>

As program chairman of The Laffite Society my job is to ensure you have an interesting, entertaining, and educational experience each month at our meetings. In order to grow membership we must ensure that each visitor from the general public that attends our meetings is impressed with the quality of the program. Quality programs will also encourage regular attendance by current members of the Society. Our programs should have speakers from both within and outside our organization. I would like to ask each of our members to help me in the coming months. You might have an idea or know an acquaintance that you feel can bring a meaningful presentation to our group concerning the history of the Laffite brothers and their times. Or better yet, you might take a subject you like, research it, prepare a paper on it, and give a half hour presentation to the group as a program. It can be a lot of fun. There is no end to subjects to research and tales to tell, so just ask. If you think you would like to do this, or have any ideas on programs please contact me. I keep programs scheduled three to four months in advance. Right now I have openings from June to December 2011.

Here’s a brief description of programs from the last part of 2010 and those on our schedule for the first part of 2011.

July 2010—Tom Ortling, professor of Marine Archaeology at Texas A & M Galveston campus, a former member of the Laffite Society, made a presentation on vessels that sailed the Gulf of Mexico in the early nineteenth century. This was a well received event with plenty of audience participation. Tom knows his stuff when it comes to maritime knowledge and we look forward to hearing from him again.

August 2010—I presented a program for the second part of my story on James and Mary Crow Campbell. James Campbell was one of Jean Laffite’s top lieutenants during his stay on Galveston Island. He is one on Laffite’s men that chose to stay on the island when Laffite left in 1820. I guess he was one of the first IBCs (islander by choice). As interesting as his story is, Mary’s is even more interesting. That program is printed in this edition of the Laffite Chronicles.

September 2010—Kirk Clark, an avid historian and cartographer with concentrated interests in geography of Texas and Louisiana was the speaker for Sept. Kirk is a board member and official historian with Friends of Galveston Island State Park, and has a collection of maps that he brought along for his presentation. His talk concerned the topological changes to Galveston Island and bay system over the last two or three hundred years. His program brought many favorable comments. I don’t know about you but I would like to see his maps again. I like maps.

October 2010—Rob Peterson, Technical Director for the Society, researched and made a presentation on the location of The Temple. The Temple is mentioned many times in Laffite related documents, but it seems no one today really knows exactly where it was. And it appears there was a Little Temple to boot. The Temple was used as Laffite’s retail outlet for illegal contraband sales. Rob had excellent research for the subject and some of it was obtained on the ground in Louisiana driving around looking for the place! It was a great program and we look forward to more.

November 2010—The last program of the year was a presentation by Jodi-Wright-Gidley. Jodi is not only the director of the Galveston County Museum, she also co-authored the book Galveston a City on Stilts. She brought the Laffite Society up to date on the status of the museum after Ike, and a description of some of the museum artifacts

January 2011—Jean Epperson presented her new book to the group. Jean, a long time member
and former officer of the Laffite Society has recently had published her new historical research Filibusters, Pirates and Privateers of the Early Texas Coast. A panel of our members consisting of Dale Olsen, Rob Peterson, and Mike Riley made comments about their favorite subject in the book and peppered Jean with questions. Jean answered them all of course. It seems like there's not much Jean Epperson doesn't know about our favorite history subject.

Here's what we can look forward to for the first part of 2011.

February 2011—Laffite Society member Helen Mooty will present a program on the mother of Texas Jane Long. Jane Long was the wife of Dr. James Long the charismatic filibuster who made military camp at Bolivar during the time Laffite was in Campeche. Mrs. Long dinned with Jean Laffite on Galveston Island and provides one of the few eyewitness descriptions of the Privateer Laffite. I’m looking forward to Helen’s talk and hearing more about this famous woman’s life.

March 2011—Larry Porter, Archivist for the Society, will present a program on the history of privateering. It will be interesting to hear the story on this controversial and internationally accepted form of apparent theft on the open seas. Oh well, all’s fair in love and war.

April 2011—The Laffite Society has the opportunity in April to host a talk by Bill Kroger. Bill Kroger is a trial partner at the law firm of Baker Botts, LLP. He and Mark Lambert of the General Land Office are co-chairs of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Records Task Force. This task force was created by the Texas Supreme Court in 2009 and charged with studying the conditions of the Texas state court archives and recommending how the state can better preserve and protect these records. I have informed Bill that the Laffite Society is very interested in preservation of historical records and what can be done to enhance it. Galveston County District Court is a participant in the task force and has had favorable local publicity on the subject. They will all be invited.

May 2011—Former officer and current member of the Laffite Society Don Marler will make a presentation. Don is also former editor of the Laffite Chronicles and has written numerous books and articles on Texas and Louisiana history. Don’s talk will be on Aaron Burr one of the most famous yet controversial persons in American history. His story is fascinating and once you hear it you will not wonder why he controversial.

A quality historical research group like the Laffite Society needs dependable quality programs every month. I look forward to hearing from each of you on your ideas and how you can participate.