1st Annual Laffite Seminar
Larry Porter, President

Section I - Summary
On June 27th of 2012, the Laffite Society held the first board meeting of the newly elected officers for the Laffite Society 2012-2014 term. During that meeting, plans were discussed for the coming year and the idea of sponsoring a Laffite Seminar in the spring was raised as a possibility. Ideas flowed as freely as the wine and a rump committee was quickly formed to address the possibilities. And, the rest is history!
Seven months later, March 8th and 9th during spring break, the society sponsored the 1st Annual Laffite Seminar at Texas A&M Galveston, Pelican Island campus. During that time, hundreds of man-hours were spent in organizing, planning, scheduling, arranging, advertising, creating and rehearsing the myriads of activities that made up the seminar. It was a Cecil B. Demille Production- (to paraphrase) “a cast of thousands and years in the making”.
By any measure, the seminar was a tremendous success, especially as a first time affair. Over 70 people attended the seminar on Saturday, with around 50 present at the Friday welcoming party. All of this took place on a popular spring break weekend with record beach crowds and high hotel prices.
The purpose of this seminar was to promote and extend the Laffite story and its impact on Galveston and U.S. history. Very little history has been written on the Laffites, and few direct records, other than the dubious “Journals”, remain. This, in spite of the significant impact the Laffites had on the Battle of New Orleans and subsequent westward expansion. Undoubtedly, a British victory would have negated the treaty of Ghent and there might not have been an Adams-Onis Treaty.
The Laffite story is told by others. The brothers seemed to have a corporate policy of burning bridges when quitting a place. When told the U.S. Navy had been ordered to drive them out of Barateria, the Laffites offered no resistance and fixed their ships and warehouses for immediate destruction by explosion and fire to demonstrate their cooperation. Only the last minute heroic action of young Lieutenant Thomas catsby- Jones saved the bulk of the fleet and some warehouses. The brothers moved base operations to Galveston. And, a few short years later, the U.S. Navy again served notice for the brothers to leave. This time the Laffites did not wait to negotiate, but set fire to everything, including the village and most of the fleet. They sailed west to the Yucatan having destroyed all records.
Who then to tell the story?
The Laffite Society hopes to advance and clarify the story of these brothers, Jean and Pierre, in this time of history on Galveston, nee’, Campeche, and the surrounding gulf coast area.
This seminar will then be a yearly composition of the best and most interesting tales, presented and reenacted by a variety of lay and professional historians from around the country.
The outline schedule of our 1st Annual is shown below. Each year, we plan to have a similar format with 5-6 sessions, and 1-2 invited “key note” speakers. The 2013 Seminar was recorded in it’s entirety and will be available in our archives and perhaps on our website in the future. Our key note speaker, Dr. Gene Smith is featured here with a brief bio. And, the seminar and welcome party are shown in a series of photos.
The “cast” included eight speakers with five introductions. We had four infomercials to include GHF, GCHC, Rosenberg Library, and Texas A&M. Hospitality, food and services were provided at the Welcome Party by Ed Conner, Lynette Haage and Ginny Roberts. Texas A&M Food Service provided lunch and refreshments. Our board members, Dave & Ginny Roberts, Dale & Diane Olson, Jack Watson, Rob & Carolyn Peterson, Jeff & Kathy Modzelewski all did yeoman work in making this happen. Ed Jamison directed us.
Special thanks again to Dave Baca and Natalie Wiest for Texas A&M and Dale and Diane Olson for the Trolley Station.
Next year we chose April 25th and 26th for the 2nd Annual Laffite Seminar.
See you there!

**Section II – Greetings from Jack Davis**

When the committee first discussed the possibility of hosting a Laffite seminar, Jack Davis was the obvious choice for a "key note" speaker. Obvious, if one is lucky enough to fit into Jack’s busy schedule and also have a fat budget. Sadly, it turned out we had neither. I did contact Jack, and he was gracious enough to provide these greetings to our attendees which were transcribed by Dave Roberts to begin the program. Perhaps we will be able to have Jack down in the future.

Larry Porter

Dear Laffite Symposium Attendees

Let me welcome you to the first of what I hope may be many such gatherings over the years ahead. Laffite studies--it we can say there is such a thing--is more than a bit remarkable in the way it has for years brought people together informally, as well as formally in meetings and publications. For a couple of fellows who spent most of their lives on the wrong side of the law, Jean and brother Pierre seem to have an unshakable grip on our imaginations and curiosity. As I am sure you will discover at the symposium, that curiosity has resulted in some remarkable path-breaking study, and not just on the brothers themselves. Privateering and piracy in the Gulf and the Caribbean in the early 19th century as a field has been enormously advanced by the work of scholars and lay people who have diligently ferreted out the often elusive documents that widen our perspective and understanding. Living descendants of Pierre's who have been discovered in the last decade bring a dramatic sense of connection to their ancestors, while underwater archaeological work on vessels from the privateering era are adding to our knowledge of who these people were and how they lived. The Laffite Society of Galveston has been at the forefront of this effort for a generation now, and the body of its work is testimony to the dedication and ceaseless curiosity of people who want to know more. Some of those involved in the Society's work have brought you together for this symposium, and I regret that I cannot be with you, for even though my own work on the Laffites and their era has ceased, my interest has not. They have their grip on my curiosity, too. Why? Perhaps a mix of romantic interest, the lure of the raw Old Southwest, and a fascination with the ways society and cultures advanced in fits and starts in that murky netherworld of the frontier. These were very real people, of wonderfully mixed elements, men out for the main chance and yet not without some smattering of moral compass. They were the kind of men who took American culture to the outer extreme of our frontiers everywhere. Some became giants, statesmen, and mythic heroes. Others became outcasts and myths of another kind. Jean and Pierre inhabit a place in the middle, and I want to wish you all well as you start your voyages of discovery into the Laffite past and present, as you come to grips with where they fit in the American panorama. I can promise you they will never be dull.

Bon Voyage

William C. "Jack" Davis
Section III – Schedule of Events

1st Annual Laffite Seminar March 8 – 9, 2013
Texas A&M University at Galveston, Pelican Island Campus
Ocean and Coastal Sciences Building, Room 142

March 8th, Friday: Trolley Station, 2021 Strand, Galveston Island
6pm Welcome Party Refreshments and Entertainment. Celebrity bartender: Ed Conner

March 9th, Saturday: TAMUG Ocean and Coastal Sciences Building
8am-9am Registration Coffee & pastries, sponsor/partner display tables
Welcome: Larry Porter, President of The Laffite Society
Representative of Texas A&M University at Galveston
9am – 9:45am Session #1: Laffite 101, Jeff Modzelewski, introduced by Lynette Haaga
Greetings from Ed Jamison, Past President of The Laffite Society
10am -10:45am Session #2: The Raid on Barataria, Dr. Gene A. Smith, Professor and Director of
the Center for Texas Studies at Texas Christian University, introduced by Larry
Porter
Greetings from Dwayne Jones, Executive Director of Galveston Historical Foundation
11am – 11:45am Session #3: Laffite in Galveston, R. Dale Olson, introduced by Ginny Roberts
Greetings from Natalie West of TAMUG Library - Laffite Archives
12pm -1:30pm Buffet lunch, TAMUG library
1:45pm – 2:30pm Session #4: Women in Laffite’s Life - Betty Conner, Helen Mooty (as Jane
Long), introduced by Linda Kuhn
Greetings from Helen Mooty of Galveston County Historical Commission
2:45pm – 3:30pm Session #5: The Mysteries of Laffite- Ensemble, introduced by Kathy
Modzelewski
The Treasure- Jack Watson
The Journal- Rob Peterson
The Death- Jeff Modzelewski
Greetings from Casey Green, Department Head of Rosenberg Library’s Galveston & Texas History Center
4pm – 5:30pm Reception - Refreshments, book-signing, sponsor/partner display tables
7pm Dinner arranged for group in local restaurant; cost borne by each person.
Section IV - Dr. Gene Smith: Featured Speaker

One of the objectives of a seminar such as this is to track the lives and times of Laffites during the turbulent years in our U.S. expansionist history (1800-1840) from New Orleans, to Galveston and to the Yucatan. Some of this history is fact, and some conjecture based on second hand reporting, and some may have been based on story telling from the main player himself or herself. However, the more accuracy the history concerning what was going on in those days, perhaps the better we can judge the truth concerning the principles.

This, then, prompts us to go beyond the immediate resources of our own society and reach out to historians nationally recognized as authorities in this time period (1800-1840). In the westward expansion of the Gulf Coast and beyond, Filibustering and Privateering were the code of the day served up with an extra helping of smuggling, and slave trade.

Each year, the society will seek out one, or two, “outside” featured speakers: speakers who are not regular members but are well-published historians with a concentration of interest touching on activities of Laffite Inc.

This year, 2013, our search began looking for details on the “Raid on Baratia”. The obvious starting point was the US Navy. We contacted the Head of Department of History at the US Naval Academy, Craig L. Symonds and were referred to Dr. Gene Smith at T.C.U. (Dr. Symonds is retiring).

After several discussions, Dr. Smith agreed to accept out invitation and prepared the “key note” session, “The Raid on Baratia”

Born and raised in Alabama, Gene grew up on a small farm that raised cattle, and grew corn and soybeans. With such a background it was no surprise that he wanted to be a veterinarian. Fortunately a college course in chemistry put him on the path to becoming a historian. Gene completed both his undergraduate (BA 1984) and graduate training (MA 1987, PhD 1991) in history at Auburn University Auburn. Studying early American history, he wrote a dissertation on the politics of the Jeffersonian gunboat program and then spent three years teaching at Montana State University-Billings. Since arriving at TCU during the fall of 1994, Gene has been teaching U.S. survey history and undergraduate and graduate level courses on early American history. He is currently serving as the Director of the Center for Texas Studies, and holds a joint appointment with the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History as the Curator of History. During the 2013-14 academic-years, Gene will be the Class of 1957 Distinguished Chair in Naval Heritage at the United States Naval Academy.

Gene's major publications include the following books: The Slaves’ Gamble: Choosing Sides in the War of 1812(Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Nexus of Empire: Negotiating Loyalty and Identity in the Revolutionary Borderlands, 1760s-1820s(University Press of Florida, 2010); A British Eyewitness at the Battle of New Orleans: The Memoir of Royal Navy Admiral Robert Aitcheson, 1808-1827(Historic New Orleans Collection, 2004); Thomas Catesby Jones: Commodore of Manifest Destiny(Naval Institute Press, 2000); a revised and updated edition of Latour's, Historical Memoir of the War in West Florida and Louisiana, 1814-15: With an Atlas(The Historic New Orleans Collection and the University Press of Florida, 1999); Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821, with Frank L. Owsley, Jr., (University of Alabama Press, 1997); Iron and Heavy Guns: Duel Between the "Monitor" and "Merrimac", (McWhiney Press, 1996); and, "For the Purpose of Defense": The Politics of the Jeffersonian Gunboat Program (University of Delaware Press, 1995). He is presently working on a study of the Battle of New Orleans, as well as an American military history textbook. Additionally, Gene has received internal research awards from Montana State University-Billings and TCU, as well as fellowships from the Henry E. Huntington Library, the Virginia Historical Society, the U.S. Department
of the Navy, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Gene is an active member of several organizations, most notably the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic-currently acting as the organization's Treasurer-and the North American Society for Oceanic History. He is also the co-editor of the Naval Institute Press' book series "New Perspective on Maritime History and Nautical Archaeology," and editor of the University Press of Florida book series "Contested Boundaries"
Section V – Party Photos

SEMINAR RECEPTION PARTY AT THE TROLLEY STATION

WELCOME TO THE LAFFITE ROOM

OUR CELEBRITY BARTENDER, ED CONNER, AT HIS TRADE

ED JAMISON, HOST DALE OLSON & LARRY PORTER

Ginny Roberts & Lynette Haaga with the terrific bounty they provided
OUR FEATURED GUEST, DAVE BACA AND WIFE PRICILLA Files. DAVE WAS KEY TO THE ARRANGEMENTS AT TEXAS A&M.

ANOTHER KEY A&M ORGANIZER, AND FEATURED GUEST, NATALIE WIEST, AND OUR ARCHIVIST, DOROTHY KARIjANOVIC

And there was music

Betty Conner sings a few pirate songs

The ever versatile, Mike Wonio, plays and sings seafaring ditties

Brenda & Jim Atchley at reception.

Jim Milligan, David & Lou Olson
Gene Bindheimer & Jan Johnson

Jan Porter, Kathy Modzelewski, Ann Boyd and Sandra Rodgers at Welcome Reception

Helen Mooty, Lou Olson and Betty Conner

Bill & Lynette Haaga, Marty Cogwin and Barbara Greb enjoying the reception on the Strand

Jim Nonus and Janet Wagner

Founders row! Reginald and Betty Wilson, Pam Keys and past president, Ed Jamison Laffite

JACK REALLY HAD A GOOD TIME
Section VI - Seminar Photos

WELCOME SCREEN AT TAMUG

PRESIDENT PORTER OPENS THE SEMINAR

DAVE BACA GREETINGS FROM A&M

PORTER BRINGS GREETINGS FROM JACK

OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ED JAMISON, OUTLINES THE PROGRAM FOR THE DAY

JEFF MODZELEWSKI PRESENTS LAFFITE 101
The Raid on Barataria: Thomas Cathey Jones, the U.S. Navy and the War Deepwater in the Gulf

Dr. Gene Smith and the Raid on Barataria

Thomas Catsby U.S. Navy

The crowd

Dale Olson Discusses the Laffite Brothers in Galveston

And, the brothers had many interesting associates

The Laffites and Associates were game changers in the Westward Expansion of the U.S.
LOU OLSON INTRODUCES LAFFITES WOMEN

BETTY CONNER AS LAFFITE'S WOMAN

BETTY CONNER AS THE WOMAN WHO BANISHES JEAN

HELEN MOOTY AS JANE LONG MOTHER OF TEXAS AND JEAN'S DINING GUEST

KATHY MODZELEWSKI INTRODUCES THE THREE MYSTERIES

JACK WATSON AND MYSTERY #1 THE TREASURE