SHIP’S Histories: USS LYNX

USS Lynx, a six-gun Baltimore Clipper rigged schooner of 150 tons, was built for the Navy by James Owner of Georgetown, Washington, D.C., in 1814, intended for service as a commerce raider. The War of 1812 ended before the schooner was commissioned, however Lynx was placed in service and sailed with Commodore William Bainbridge's squadron in the Mediterranean. Arriving too late to see action in the war against the Barbary pirates, Lynx returned to American waters and conducted a survey of the northeastern coast in 1817. Following this duty, Lynx joined the West Indies squadron and patrolled against pirates. In the fall of 1819, under the command of Lieutenant J. R. Madison, Lynx cruised off the Texas coast, making prizes of several "pirates" based at Galveston. The schooner put in at Galveston Island and her captain was briefly in contact with Jean Laffite, who was making preparations to abandon the Texas coast. At the end of the year Lynx returned to St. Mary's, Georgia, from which port she departed on 11 January 1820 bound for Kingston, Jamaica. She was never seen or heard from again.

(This article was compiled from records in the Naval History Center and the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.)

THE LAFFITE NETWORK
Compiled by Robert C. Vogel

"The pirates followed the usual routine," reported the naval officer. "They came up over the fantail, moved up through the superstructure holding anyone they found at knifepoint until they came to the master's cabin, rifled the ship's safe, tied the master up and left." A vignette from the West Indies, ca. 1810? Try the Straight of Malacca in the year 1985. The vessel in question was the SS Falcon Countess, a cargo ship under contract to the U.S. Navy, carrying jet fuel and diesel oil from Bahrain to Guam. No one was hurt and the pirates' booty amounted to something less than $20,000. The Navy now instructs its ships to post a guard when traversing the Strait of Malacca, which separates Singapore and Indonesia. (From an Associated Press wire story.)

A request for information re: Christian Getzendanner:

In a paper on the early German settlements in Maryland presented to the Frederick County Historical Society in 1896,
Edward P. Schultz noted that one of the grandsons of early settler Geztendanner (also spelled Giezendanner, Goetzendanner, Gitzdanner) "was a captain in the Lafitte fleet...but his offence was wiped out by his gallant conduct at the battle of New Orleans." Was their a "Captain Getzendanner" among the Lafitte associates at New Orleans or Galveston? If anyone has come across a reference to this individual, please write to: Mrs. Martha Schunke Lynch, 7516 Stewart Road, Galveston, TX 77551.

I recently ran across two interesting testimonials to Jean Lafitte's contribution to the American victory at the Battle of New Orleans:

"Lafete [sic] has joined the American army at Orleans, for which gen. Jackson is to obtain forgiveness for him from the government...for all his misconduct. He furnished 800 muskets and 3 or 400 soldiers;; it is said they are very brave men." Letter from Mr. Maclot, a St. Louis resident writing from New Orleans, in the St. Louis Missouri Gazette & Illinois Advertiser of 4 February 1815.

"I [have] informed you of Lafitte, the famous smuggler and pirate, having joined our forces. They have been of great value, and distinguished themselves; as did the free people of colour. Indeed, it has proven fortunate circumstances that they were enrolled in our army." Anonymous letter from New Orleans in the Charleston Courier of 20 February 1915.

The Louisiana Historical Association's annual meeting will be held in Shreveport in March of 1986. The program committee is now receiving proposals for papers and sessions. Is anyone interested in a Lafitte session, or some kind of informal meeting of Lafitte aficionados concurrent with the LHA meeting?

Pam Keyes has resigned as editor of the LSG Newsletter. Robert C. Vogel, managing editor of The Life and Times of Jean Lafitte, will assume editorial responsibility for the Newsletter ad interim. Please address all manuscripts, reviews, queries, etc., to:

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