The idea of a Laffite Study Group evolved out of the voluminous and oftentimes eclectic correspondence between Jane Lucas DeGrummond, John L. Howells, Sue Thompson and Robert C. Vogel during the early 1970's. In the autumn of 1975 it was decided to proceed with plans for publication of a series of occasional papers focused on Jean Laffite's role in American history, folklore and literature. Entitled The Life and Times of Jean Laffite, the first installment saw the light of day early in 1976, in time for the Louisiana Historical Association meetings in Lafayette.

I have before me the original list of subscribers for the first number of The Life and Times of Jean Laffite. The charter members of the Laffite Study Group were: Dr. Jane Lucas DeGrummond, professor of history at Louisiana State University; Pamela Grunewald (Keyes), then a student at Northeastern A & M Junior College, Miami, Oklahoma; John L. Howells, well-known avocational historian from Houston; Frederick J. Stielow, then a graduate student in history at the University of Indiana; Betsy Swanson, photo-journalist, New Orleans; Ray and Sue Thompson, journalists, Gulfport, Mississippi; Robert C. Vogel, graduate student in geography at the University of Minnesota; Dr. Harris Gaylord Warren, historian, then resident in Santa Fe, New Mexico; and the Rosenberg Library (Larry Wygant, archivist) in Galveston.

Five years later, the membership rolls contain the names of two score individuals and a dozen institutions in several of the United States, Mexico, Panama and Great Britain. In 1980, as in 1975, the "hard core" members of the Laffite Study Group are mostly historians and folklorists, with a sprinkling of journalists, genealogists, literati and treasure hunters. As a group they account for a considerable portion of the historical literature on Laffite and his associates published in the last forty years -- The Baratarians and the Battle of New Orleans, The Sword Was Their Passport, Abordajes: Biografia Esquematica de Renato Beluche, The Land of Laffitte the Pirate, Los Piratas Lafitte, Historic Jefferson Parish: From Shore to Shore.

A number of prominent libraries, archives and learned societies are associates of the Laffite Study Group. These include: the Historic New Orleans Collection, the Louisiana State Museum, the Louisiana Folk-life Center and our old friend, the Rosenberg Library.

Current research interests among members of the study group include the Laffite Journals controversy, the impact of Baratarian smuggling on the Louisiana economy, privateersmen and filibusters at
Galveston, treasure lore and Jean Laffite as a major character in American fiction. A comprehensive bibliography of the brothers Laffite and their associates is in the works; also archaeological investigations in the Barataria Bay region.

A Laffite Study Group Research Collection, consisting of publications, research notes, documents and correspondence, is being assembled out of the private files of a number of Laffite aficionados. It is hoped that these materials will be deposited in a major research facility sometime in 1981.

The sixth installment of The Life and Times of Jean Laffite, planned for late 1980, will mark a milestone in the development of the Laffite Study Group. The entire bulletin will be devoted to the Laffite Journals controversy, offering both sides of that important dispute the opportunity to present their case. Individuals desiring to contribute papers, reports, documents or notes to this special LTJL are encouraged to submit their materials to the editors and the publications committee as soon as possible. All material published in the special issue will be copyrighted, with final drafts of papers and copies of all pertinent documents to be deposited in the Laffite Study Group Research Collection.

Finally, the reader will note that the present number of The Life and Times of Jean Laffite is dedicated to the memory of Ray M. Thompson. Mr. Thompson, author of The Land of Lafitte the Pirate and innumerable articles on Gulf Coast history and folklore, passed away after a lengthy illness at Christmastime, 1978. He is survived by his wife and colleague, Sue.