treasure is killed and buried with it. The second is that while a treasure is being dug up, silence cannot be broken or the treasure will sink back into the ground. Whitney Billiot related the following story concerning the first practice to me in a 1978 interview:

They buried money like that. When they came to bury money, they asked who wanted to take care of the money. Whoever said they wanted to take care of the money, they'd kill him and bury him with it. They would bury him there. That's why they say "a spirit has money" -- I don't know. That person knew that he was going to be killed, I guess. Laffite and his gang: it was them who buried the money. They stole and buried, is what I heard.

Many of the Houma claim to have participated in treasure hunts, almost all of which ended with the silence broken and the treasure returning to the earth. In one such instance, several people used a divining rod to locate a treasure. As they started to dig, they heard and felt a spirit move toward them through the tall grass as the wind fell silent. Soon their shovels struck something hard -- but fear overtook one of the party, who broke the silence, whereupon the treasure sank back into the ground and the spirit dissipated. They continued to dig several feet deeper, but found nothing.

These are but a sampling of the many kinds of Laffite treasure stories that are preserved in the folklore of the Houma, some of which are typical of the Gulf region and others with a unique Houma flavor.

COMMENT ON LAFFITE IN SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA
AND A RESPONSE TO JOHN HOWELLS
by Karin and Roger Kwiatkowski

On November 27th, the same day we received the Fall issue of the LSG newsletter, we talked with Mike LeBieu of Houston. Mike is a direct descendant of Arsene LeBieu of Lake Charles, one of the subjects of Robert Vogel's article about Laffite and Southwest Louisiana published in the Fall issue.

He said that he had been researching his family's oral history, but in the last year or so had stumbled over two seemingly illogical aspects of his family's tradition. These two stubborn traditions had frustrated him to the point of ignoring them altogether when he could not make sense out of them.

First, he could not explain why, if Arsene LeBieu had been so closely associated with Jean Laffite, there was no record of any LeBieus in New Orleans or among the Baratarians. Secondly, and most bizarre of all, he said, he could not comprehend his family's 170-year tradition that there had been two Laffites.
Mr. LeBleu said that he had been shocked to hear about our research in a television interview because suddenly these two points made perfect sense. If the man in Galveston had been a privateer using the name of Laffite as an alias, then, of course, Arsene LeBleu would not have been among the Baratarians. And Arsene LeBleu, as a close confidant of the Galveston Laffite, would most certainly have known that the privateer was using an alias, thus the family tradition of "two Laffites." Mr. LeBleu said we were the first he had ever heard, outside of his family, who referred to two separate Laffites.

In January, Mike is returning home to the LeBleu plantation, where he will tape record his family's oral history. He further reported that because his family still owns some of Arsene LeBleu's original furniture, he is hopeful he can find clear and definitive documentation among the family records of the "two Laffites." He is convinced that the Galveston privateer was using an alias, that Arsene LeBleu knew it very well and may have left some written record, not only of that fact, but perhaps of the privateer's real identity and origin as well. He has some hunches of his own which he is going to research through his family's records at the LeBleu plantation.

Of course, we were dismayed by the article about our research by John Howells ("Will the Real Jean Laffite Please Stand and Be Recognized?") in the Fall issue. Perhaps because he has never read our novel and apparently has read only parts of our bibliography, the article completely misconstrued our research. We, too, deplore historians who tripped over the different Laffites in the old French and Spanish colonial records of New Orleans. The father and son Laffite whom Howells refers to are recorded in the old Spanish colonial archives as "Juan Laffite, Sr. and Juan Laffite, Jr." Never at any time did we confuse these two "Laffites" with the Baratarian privateer. In fact, we wrote in our bibliography:

In the records at the Old Mint Building in New Orleans, we counted, from approximately 1750 to 1850, four different Jean Lafittes—none of whom were the pirate Jean Lafitte. [Juan, Sr. and Juan, Jr. are two of those four.] We also found a Pierre Laffitte who was a notary public and two Peter Lafittes from France. Likewise, none of these three was the pirate Pierre Laffitte. However, when checking the old city records, it is virtually impossible to tell which Pierre Laffitte bought a slave or which Jean Lafitte was married. Apparently, past historians tripped over these accounts and assumed that the brothers varied the spelling of their name. It would account for the wide variation of their ages in biographies as well. In the Old Mint records, one Peter "Laffite" was 50 in 1820 while a Peter "Lafitte" was 28 in that same year. We also found dozens of other Lafittes, Lafittes and Lafites for the same period. We stopped counting after three dozen. Obviously, the names Jean and Pierre and Lafitte were extremely common names. Perhaps
because of that, there has been a proliferation of families claiming to have descended from the notorious pirates and a confusion about the genuine activities of the brothers.

So we could not agree more when John Howells writes: "History is as interpreted by the historian," but it would help if the historians would at least keep their characters separate and distinct."

We were drawn to join the LSG because of its openness and by-laws which avowed that the study group's "principal function will be to encourage original research and facilitate greater communication among researchers."

Naturally, we are hopeful that Mike LeBleu can document that enormous amount of circumstantial evidence we have accumulated regarding the Laffites. However, such documentation would raise more questions than it would answer. Who was the Galveston privateer? Can the LeBleu family papers prove or disprove the authenticity of the Journal of Jean Laffite? The questions are endless.

Our belief that the Galveston privateer used an alias does not diminish his legendary status, but rather makes him all the more mysterious, enigmatic and elusive. It opens an entirely new avenue of Laffite research and will ultimately, we believe, yield the most exciting Laffite discoveries to be made.

NEWS & NOTES

Will you help us with an end-of-the-year gift? As 1989 draws to a close, the LSG is once again asking its friends for help. This year, we have expanded the new LTJL from four to eight pages and have also worked to increase our outreach activities so that others can become better acquainted with Jean Laffite’s role in history, folklore, and literature. We have great plans for 1990, but are strapped for funds. The Laffite Study Group appreciates receiving your annual contributions, which are essential for meeting operating costs, and encourages special gifts, which will be of great help in 1990 and beyond. Send your contributions to John L. Howells, LSG Secretary-Treasurer, 2570 Kevin Lane, Houston, Texas 77043.

A gentle suggestion. Membership dues in the LSG are for the calendar year, and 1990 dues are now due. $10 for individual and institutional memberships includes a subscription to the new expanded quarterly newsletter, The Life and Times of Jean Laffite. Members who haven't paid their dues (some of you are years in arrears) have continued to receive complimentary issues of the newsletter. This cannot continue. Writing out your check to the LSG might make a good New Year's resolution.