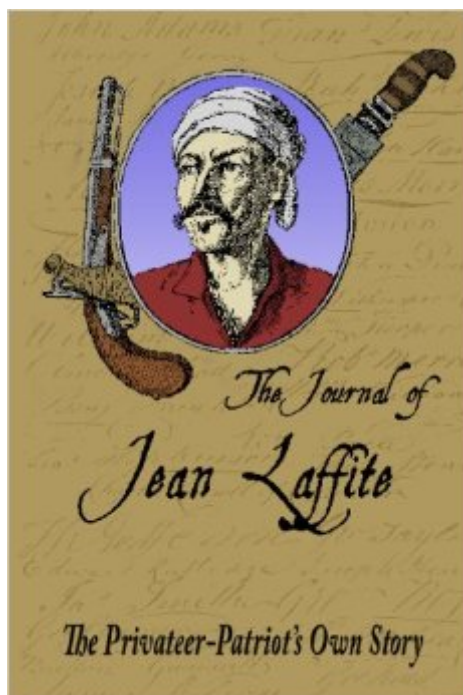


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The Journal Of Jean Laffite: The Privateer-Patriot's Own Story



Synopsis

The Battle of New Orleans: Dec., 1814 British troops were preparing to land in force when a harried Andrew Jackson, charged with mounting an urgent defence of the critical port city, was confronted by the leader of the notorious Baratarian pirates. Jackson had already refused to collaborate with these "hellish banditti," but the charismatic smuggler would not be deterred. "You want flints?" he offered, "I have 7,500 flints available at a snap of my fingers. You want powder? I have kegs-full. You want rifles, axes, men? They're yours. I have a thousand fighting men, eighty of which are now rotting in the Cabildo. Jackson," he addressed the General flamboyantly, "I and my followers want to fight for America..." This was Jean Laffite, a 19th century Han Solo at war with the British Empire. His men, supplies, and counsel proved instrumental to winning the final battle of the War of 1812 for the fledgling American republic.

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Customer Reviews

If only this were an authentic journal, but it's obvious from the style that it was not written by Lafitte himself. Yet it's a colorful journey into the marshes, bayous, and Gulf Coast waters that make the mouth of the Mississippi one of the most uniquely intriguing places in the world.

I tried to get into the Sam Houston Library to read Jean Lafitte's actual diary and could not get a response. But this book, in Lafitte's own words is extremely important to those of us who are descendants of Portuguese and Spanish outcasts from the Spanish Inquisition. The book is clear containing details of his work as a privateer. We are rendered a critical understanding of the

privateers and the misnomer of pirates oft applied to them. Lafitte makes a clear distinction between himself and pirates emphasizing his work as a privateer -- a contractor for the governments doing business in the Caribbean in the 19th century. The distinction between privateer and pirate is important lending heroic individuals like Lafitte simple human dignity. Although some may argue that his taking of ships constituted piracy, they were oft ships which had been engaged in damnin enterprise at some point. The a priori poaching of Spanish vessels made amends for the ruthless, bloody activities of Spain that transcended the bound of Europe and the Caribbean is understandable in Lafitte's pen. Phillip struck the Azores, the Philippines and elsewhere around the world to seize the outcasts and those who had escaped from their vicious talons. One judges in full light not in the tiny slice of not understanding the single act. Excellent for his detailing of the activities as a privateer. He also gives us a priceless portrait of Andrew Jackson & the theft of honor that ought to have gone to those on the front lines of the battle and as successful strategists in the Battle of New Orleans. His relationship to Marx & Engels is fascinating as is some other historical activities in which he stood in the background as a supporter of. He hints at his aid to Napoleon in planning & executing Napoleon's escape. There is persuasive logic there although one can argue against his claims. Thank-you, Jean Lafitte, for leaving a written version of your legacy. I don't, of course.

I had read a little about the controversy behind this "Journal" and the doubts about its authenticity before ordering a copy. After reading it, and reading elsewhere that the original manuscript had indeed been authenticated to be of 19th century origin, I have to say that I am at least 80% convinced this is the real deal. First and maybe foremost, if this was a fake then I'm sure the account of the Battle of New Orleans would include Jean Laffite in the thick of the action, waving his sword and shouting commands to his gunners. But no, the account in the journal of the major battle on Jan.8, 1815 places him too far south as the action begins and describes him hurrying to the sound of the distant thunder of the artillery. He arrives on the battlefield just as the last shots are fired and the surviving British are in retreat. Of course many of his men, including Pierre Laffite and Dominique Youx were indeed in the thick of it and their service was complimented by Gen. Jackson. All of this fits well with what modern day historians believe actually occurred. Further evidence that this journal is authentic is that most of it is actually a mundane rant against the British, French, and political foes of Laffite (not an adventure story). He lists names, lots of them! A truly good historian could verify if most were actually men who did exist during the time period. Of course there are a few easily recognizable historical figures, but most are obscure names, unknown to amateur

historians like myself. There is only one slightly thrilling account of naval combat during his privateer career and Laffite mentions his many sword duels but gives no exciting details like a fictional work would. I have rated this little, fascinating book only 4 stars instead of 5 only because of the many typos. I believe these errors are most likely by the one who transcribed the original manuscript and/or the publisher. A good editor could correct these.

A few words of caution are in order here:1) The validity and authenticity of this "journal" as actually written by Jean Lafitte has been widely debated, There's no room to put the details here, but it is worth investigating before putting too much faith and belief in this.2) There is no verified and proven picture of Jean Lafitte known. Therefore the cover should be regarded as suspect.3) Jean and Pierre were not known for truthfulness, stable ethics, and strong alliances. They constantly changed their stories, directions, and allegiances to keep a step ahead of pursuers and/or get out of sticky situations. Even if this truly is a journal from Jean, it would be hard to expect it to be accurate and dependable.4) There is no doubt that the brothers dealt heavily in slave trade over most of their lives. I'm not sure if those details are left out in the journal, but these guys were no honorable citizens.5) Other than for a few short periods of time, the brothers mostly lived as smugglers and pirates. They only had official blessing as privateers over a couple of brief periods of time. "Patriot" is also a stretch, as even their minor role in the Battle of New Orleans - probably seen as their patriotic move - was just a way of getting pardon for previous convictions on grounds of privacy.If looked at as the fiction it likely is, this can be an enjoyable book. Just don't get caught up in legend and be taken for a ride. A lot of people want to see Jean (and Pierre) as something exciting and relatable, and perpetuate the myth, rather than deal in reality.

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