

Fall History & Heritage -- PS (postscript)

Preparations are now in full swing for the **Fall 2011 History & Heritage Test** to be unveiled to students on Friday, December 2. Till then, there are no further blog posts. Below are a few of the items that did not make it to the previous nine fall posts:

African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) -- (*Almanac*, Nov. 8)

This Christian denomination came into being in the early 1800s, its first bishop the former slave Richard Allen from Delaware who cast his lot with Wesley's Methodists? The largely African-American church was a response to a persistent pattern of racial discrimination found everywhere in America, North and South. Offenses included instances when black children were denied baptism, and when even free blacks (never mind slaves) had to wait to receive the Lord's Supper until whites were served first.

St. Patrick -- (*Almanac*, Nov. 10)

As tradition would have it, the 5th-century British monk St. Patrick returned to Ireland as a missionary in 432 AD, preached and baptized there in the presence of his former captors and slave masters for over fifty years, and assisted in the Christian conversion of over a hundred thousand souls.

Legends about him abound, of course. But as one respected Irish church historian (William Dool Killen) observed, "There can be no reasonable doubt that Patrick preached the gospel, that he was a most zealous and efficient evangelist, and that he is entitled to be called the Apostle of Ireland."

Impressive to say the least was Patrick's sense of his utter dependence on the triune God for his own conversion (not to mention that of others) and for his ongoing quest for true spirituality. He said of his first stay in Ireland as a youth in captivity, "Even when I was staying out in the woods or on the mountain, I used to rise before dawn for prayer, in snow and frost and rain, and I felt no ill effect and there was no slackness in me. As I now realize, it was because the Spirit was glowing in me."

Quebec City -- (*America*, Vol.1, pp. 58-59)

This venerable North American city served New France as its "Rock of Gibraltar" in the 17th and 18th-centuries (1600s & 1700s)? Its sense of secure impregnability, both physical and spiritual, was so acute, in fact, that its cathedral was named Notre Dame des Victoires (Our Lady of Victories). All that would change, however, in the late 1750s, when the more aggressive strategy of English Prime Minister William Pitt the Elder would bring the French citadel to its knees.

William Pitt the Elder -- (*America*, Vol.1, pp. 58-61)

The maker and builder of the British Empire, **this prime minister** ("the Great Commoner") led his country to victory over France in the Seven Years War (1756--1763)? His vigorous strategy beat back his foreign rivals on the seas, in Europe, in India, in Africa, and of course in North America where the conflict was called the

French and Indian War. Eventually made 1st Earl of Chatham, he was especially popular in America for opposing the imposition of fresh taxes on the colonies.

Britain's Stamp Tax Rationale -- (*America, Vol. 1, pp. 63-64*)

On the surface, Britain's 1760s Stamp Tax rationale seems reasonable enough.

Bennett writes: "The tax was intended to raise revenue in the colonies to cover the huge debts Britain had incurred during the French and Indian War. . . After all, the costs of maintaining military defense and civilian administration in the colonies had jumped [fivefold from about 1750 to 1765]. Under the Stamp Act, colonists would pay a tax on almost anything written or printed. . ."

Undoubtedly cut and dried from the Brits' point of view. However, Britain's unbearable burden of debt was not merely the result of increased activity in North America. It had much to do with imperial ambition, rivalry, and war worldwide.

"A Wise and Salutary Neglect" -- (*America, Vol.1, p. 67*)

"A wise and salutary neglect" was 18th-century parliamentarian Edmund Burke's way of describing the policies of Britain toward her Atlantic seaboard possessions from roughly 1607 to 1760. Simply put, Crown and Parliament left the colonies alone. From New Hampshire to Georgia, the colonists developed their own representative assemblies through which they governed themselves.

In 1760, George III takes the throne; not long afterward George Grenville would take over the British treasury (chancellor of the exchequer) and prime ministership. From that point on Britain, reeling from debt, would try to squeeze more money out of America, in the process applying direct pressure on the colonies in the form of fresh taxes and regulations by decree of Parliament across the sea.

So much for Burke's "salutary neglect." The vital law-making role of the colonial assemblies was now in jeopardy, and with it the self-governing rights or political liberties of colonial Englishmen. As the popular saying of the day insisted, "No taxation without representation."

This was the crisis of liberty which finally culminated in a unified colonial secession from the British Empire, and a forceful assertion of the sovereign rights of thirteen "free and independent states" (see the Declaration of Independence). What was at stake was not so much the theoretical rights (natural or otherwise) of theoretical individuals. Rather, the time-tested and customary rights of Englishmen to govern themselves through their own republican institutions (assemblies and bodies that were homegrown, local, communal, and colonial in size and scope).