Spring History & Heritage -- #1 (March 5)

We begin our spring posts with entries (Q&A or summaries) based on readings in *The Christian Almanac* (Grant/Wilbur) and *America, Vol. 1* (Bennett).

Look for 8 or 9 posts for the months of March, April, and May, followed by our **Spring 2012 History & Heritage Test** at the end of May.

Mardi Gras -- (*Almanac*, Feb. 23)
Seemingly of Celtic Christian origin, **this festival** (meaning "Fat Tuesday" in English) was introduced to North America by the French in the early 1700s? Associated mostly with the Winter Carnival finale in New Orleans, the revelry is a lively component of culture in the entire Gulf Coast region. Author George Grant describes it as "a celebration of life's excesses before the austere self-sacrifices of the Christian season of Lent," traditionally a time of fasting commencing on Ash Wednesday.

Hudson Taylor -- (*Almanac*, March 1)
"My feelings on stepping ashore I cannot attempt to describe. My heart felt as though it had not room and must burst its bonds, while tears of gratitude. . .fell from my eyes." So wrote **this English missionary (1832--1905)**, a medical student of Methodist upbringing, when he first arrived on the streets of Shanghai in March 1854? Facing difficult cultural barriers, he adopted native dress and ways, founded an indigenous church, and evangelized far and wide through his China Inland Mission.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon -- (*Almanac*, March 6)
A Calvinist and a proponent of Puritan writings, **this English Baptist (1834--1892)** was so masterful in the pulpit that he was dubbed the "Prince of Preachers"? Under his leadership, London's Metropolitan Tabernacle became the largest single Christian congregation in the world. But however impressive his success as an orator, writer, and evangelist, he maintained his many charitable works (schools, orphanages, hospitals, and the like) were truly his most blessed endeavors.

From Whiskey Rebellion to Civil War? -- (*America, Vol. 1*, pp. 161-162)
Author William Bennett points out, rather approvingly, that President Washington's armed response to the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794 would be taken up by Abraham Lincoln as a precedent for his use of force against the secessionist South in 1861.

As Lincoln read the events of his day, the laws of the United States were once again being opposed (this time in several Southern states) "by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings," a phrase found in the Militia Act of 1792 under which Washington acted.

But were the two events so similar? Were they both instances of unlawful rebellion or insurrection on the part of delinquents or bands of protestors? The events in western Pennsylvania in the late 18th-century did seem to be of that variety. They were blamed

on Democratic-Republican clubs whose zealotry, including a threat to take over Pittsburgh, was stirred up in part by the French ambassador Citizen Genet. Neither the government of Pennsylvania nor the people of Pennsylvania gave any formal sanction to the protestors, and over half of Washington's militia consisted of Pennsylvanians.

19th-century secession, on the other hand, was carried out with scrupulous care for legality and republican liberty. In fact, the seceding states withdrew in precisely the same manner in which they entered the Union by ratifying the U.S. Constitution in the late-1780s. The legislatures of the Southern states, in both instances, provided for special state conventions in which representatives of the people took up the questions (whether to ratify the Constitution and embrace the Union, in the former instance, or whether to dissolve the bond with the United States and its Constitution in the latter). In other words, the same way the states entered the Union is the way they left it.

The acts of riotous mobs or powerful "combinations" of rebels? Hardly. Secession was an orderly act of the people of the seceding states in representative conventions under the sanction of their own legislatures. Its character was republican through and through. Identical, as noted above, to the process used in the several states to ratify the U.S. Constitution in the first place, and just as representative as what the colonies did in 1776 in their Continental Congress when they "[dissolved] the political bands" connecting them to Great Britain and declared themselves "free and independent states."

Lincoln's show of force to prevent Southern secession (and independence) only makes sense if you argue that states, acting communally as states under their own laws, cannot withdraw voluntarily from a political union they entered into voluntarily. That's a hard case to make (morally, legally, historically) no matter how you look at it.

The unpleasant, and deeply ironic, truth about the War Between the States may be this: In the name of republicanism or the consent of the governed, Lincoln made war against such consent; and in the name of saving the Union, he struck a mortal blow against it (at least in the sense of its character as a voluntary union of states).

"Forcing a state to remain in the union at gunpoint," as professor Thomas DiLorenzo pointed out, "renders that state a conquered province, not a genuine partner."