

Spring History & Heritage -- #2 (March 12)

Our entries this week are based on our usual sources with an assist from Forrest McDonald's *States' Rights and the Union: Imperium in Imperio (1776--1876)*.

Cornelius Jansen -- (Almanac, March 6)

This Flemish theologian (1585-1636) was censured by the papacy (Urban VIII) and the Jesuits for his *Augustinus*, a book about the teachings of the famous church father? A Catholic professor at Louvain in today's Belgium, his writings influenced profoundly the French clergy, of whom about a fifth conceded agreement with his theses. In his feud with the Jesuits, he accused them of relying too much upon man's unaided reason and his good works as opposed to a truly Christian trust in Scripture and grace.

secularism -- (Almanac, March 8)

This modern ideology, prominent in the wake of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, requires what it regards as strict religious neutrality in political matters? It allows for nearly any input in the public square---reason, science, business, labor, race, gender, party---except the voice of the church or a traditional religion like Christianity. Curiously, the ideology has triumphed both in communist countries, where overt persecution is the norm, and democratic ones where propaganda holds sway.

Washington's Farewell -- (America, Vol. 1, p. 164)

With assistance from Alexander Hamilton, Washington's wise and carefully crafted *Farewell Address* was first published in a Philadelphia newspaper in 1796. It was never delivered publicly as a speech.

The main thrust of the message was to warn of what author William Bennett called "twin evils": a divisive spirit of party and longterm commitment to the interests of foreign powers by means of entangling alliances. This was good counsel in the era of the Founders and, frankly, good counsel for any era. By Washington's second term (1793--1797), Federalists and Republicans were often at each other's throats and the influence of foreign nations and their agents (France, England, Spain) made the political divide even wider.

Lastly, Washington's eloquent reminder about the importance of Christianity, and the manners and mores derived therefrom, to the cause of ordered liberty merits attention in all ages, particularly our own with its secular zeitgeist ("spirit of the times" in German). The Father of our Country wrote (in part): "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and citizens. . ."

Alien and Sedition Acts -- (*America, Vol. 1, pp. 167-168*)

President John Adams may have won a second term had he not agreed to **these contentious bills (1798)**, supported strongly by the Federalist majority in Congress? One act made immigrants wait longer to become naturalized citizens, while the other sanctioned prosecution for publishing “defamatory” lies about U.S. officials. Aside from holding on to power, Federalist motives for the measures included fear of revolutionary unrest as well as the possibility (however remote) of invasion by France.

Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions -- (*America, Vol. 1, pp. 168-169*)

These resolutions (1798) censured the “Alien & Sedition Acts” and affirmed the general consensus of the Union as a compact of free and sovereign states? Madison and, particularly, Jefferson argued that states may judge the constitutionality of U.S. laws and nullify them within their jurisdictions if found wanting. Logically, such an argument implied state secession as a last resort, if the constitutional crisis provoked by nullification could not be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

Peace with France in the Year 1800 -- (*America, Vol. 1, pp. 169-170*)

Undertaken for **this purpose in U.S. foreign relations**, John Adams, reflecting back on his presidential administration, said he would “defend [his] missions as long as I have an eye to direct my hand, or a finger to hold my pen”? Adams called the missions in question “the most disinterested and meritorious actions of my life.” He had resisted the war-cries coming from Hamilton and many Federalists, thus preparing the ground, unwittingly, for an astounding U.S. real estate acquisition three years later (1803).

Alexander Hamilton and the Election of 1800 -- (*America, Vol. 1, pp. 171-176*)

Federalist titan Alexander Hamilton could hardly have played a more decisive role than he did in the election of his arch-rival, Republican Thomas Jefferson, to the presidency in 1800.

For starters, Hamilton denounced fellow-Federalist, sitting-President, and reelection candidate John Adams in a stinging 54-page letter. And in the end, his power to persuade Federalists in the House of Representatives swung the tie-breaking vote to Jefferson over the ambitious and crafty New York Republican Aaron Burr.

The House had the final say because Jefferson and Burr each garnered seventy-three electoral college votes in the election. Although it was abundantly clear to all that the Republicans had intended Jefferson to be president and Burr vice president, Burr was ambiguous on the matter publicly, and it took 36 ballots for the House of Representatives to decide in favor of Jefferson.