

Spring History & Heritage -- #3 (March 26)

Our entries this week are based on *The Christian Almanac* (Grant/Wilbur); *America, Vol. 1* (Bennett); and *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*.

Zora Neale Hurston --- (Jack Trotter; *Chronicles, March 2012*)

A Floridian and a folklorist, **this African-American novelist (1903--1960)** is perhaps best known for her *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)? No friend of Jim Crow era segregation, she nonetheless decried the “race pride” and “black consciousness” of the African-American elite in her 1942 autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Her betrayal of her color, in liberal eyes, reached its nadir when she protested *Brown v. Board of Education* (the Supreme Court’s lauded school desegregation mandate, 1954).

Islamic Spain --- (Dario Fernandez-Morera; *Chronicles, March 2012*)

This medieval civilization (Al-Andalus), running roughly from the 700s to the 1400s, is more often than not hailed for its enlightened multiculturalism by modern scholars? The society supposedly rescued Europe from the “Dark Ages” by preserving Greek knowledge, and promoted peace between otherwise hostile ethnic and religious groups. For the record, Greek knowledge was preserved in the Greek (Eastern) Roman Empire, and tolerance of outsiders wasn’t one of Al-Andalus’s virtues.

Iceland --- (*Almanac, March 15*)

A legendary land discovered by Norsemen in the 800s, **this European country** teemed with fresh water, fish, forests, and pastureland despite its far north Atlantic location? The Vikings who settled it were known for their ferocity on the continent, though they were mostly Christians intent on building a society to the glory of their new-found Savior. The Althing, the first European parliament charged with settling disputes by law, was one of their sterling achievements.

Christ of the Andes --- (*Almanac, March 13*)

Located high in the mountains on the border of Chile and Argentina, **this 1904 statue** commemorates peace between the countries? It’s a tall bronze representation of Christ (holding out His right hand in blessing while clutching a cross with His left) standing in Uspallata Pass with Mt. Aconcagua towering in the background. Chile and Argentina had been warring in the Tierra del Fuego region, but they settled their differences with President Theodore Roosevelt and England’s King Edward VII acting as mediators.

Jefferson’s First Inaugural --- (*America, Vol. 1, pp. 175-176*)

In **this conciliatory address**, delivered in Washington City on March 4, 1801, President Jefferson endeavored to heal the divisive wounds of the contentious election of 1800? “We have called by different names,” he said, “brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists.” Jefferson also affirmed “the support of the State governments in all their rights, as the most competent administrations for our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies.”

“Letter to the Danbury Baptists” --- (America, Vol. 1, pp. 179-181)

In **this 1802 letter to a Connecticut religious society**, Jefferson noted the existence of “a wall of separation between Church & State” to restrain the conduct of the government of the U.S.? Oft-cited and controversial, Jefferson’s letter pointed to the First Amendment and the express powers of the president and Congress to cast doubt on the constitutionality even of national days of prayer. Curiously, Jefferson attended worship in the House of Representatives not long after he penned the letter.

Sally Hemings --- (America, Vol. 1, pp. 181-182)

In the 1802 midterm elections, the Federalists disgraced themselves further by alleging that Jefferson begot children by **this woman, one of his slaves?** Jefferson was stung by the accusation, but it did nothing to brighten his opponents’ prospects at the ballot box; Republicans (Jefferson’s party) won in a landslide. The dubious charge has resurfaced in our day with fanfare and supposed DNA confirmation, but it cannot be proven that Thomas Jefferson was the father of the children in question.

Stephen Decatur --- (America, Vol. 1, pp. 182-183)

“Our country: In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country right or wrong!” The sentiments were uttered in a toast by **this U.S. Navy Lieutenant**, hero of the War against the Barbary Pirates (1801--1805) off the northern coast of Africa? The Muslim states of that region (the Barbary coast) had made it a practice for centuries to seize and demand ransom for European (and also American) merchant ships, a practice Jefferson decided to challenge by force.

treaty-making power --- (America, Vol. 1, pp. 183-186)

When Napoleon offered to sell Louisiana to the U.S., President Jefferson wanted desperately to make the deal. For 12 million dollars or 4 cents an acre, the 1803 transaction would double the size of the country and, more importantly, secure the port city of New Orleans for American trade. Jefferson, however, had doubts about the constitutionality of the purchase, doubts resolved in the end by appeal to **this express presidential power** (exercised with “the advice and consent of the Senate”)?

“the Corps of Discovery” --- (America, Vol. 1, pp. 186-189)

What is known to history as the “Lewis and Clark Expedition” to explore the Louisiana Territory (1804--1806), President Jefferson called by **this name?** Led by Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, the party included the French trapper Toussaint Charbonneau and his Shoshone wife Sacagawea. They eventually made it all the way to the Pacific via the Columbia River, but the legendary dream of an all-water Northwest Passage to the Orient died with their intrepid mission.