

## Fall History & Heritage -- #8 (November 19)

This is the 8th of 9 posts prior to the **Fall 2012 History & Heritage Test**. As usual, the following summaries are the teacher's, based on the readings indicated.

### **"Fifty-four Forty or Fight" -- (America, Vol. 1; Bennett; pp. 260-262)**

**This slogan** was used by expansion-minded Americans in the 1840s to rally for possession of the Pacific Northwest up to a certain measure of north latitude? Many, including John O' Sullivan of the *New York Morning News*, believed the U.S. was poised, for the sake of liberty & with the blessing of heaven, to spread her wings from sea to shining sea. O' Sullivan wrote of "our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us. . ."

### **Mexican War -- (America, Vol. 1; Bennett; p. 264)**

Although fairly popular in the Mississippi valley and in the South generally, **this mid-19th-century war (1846--1848)** was strongly condemned in New England? Seen as a shameless effort to grab land in the southwest and convert it into slave states, the war was denounced formally by the Massachusetts legislature (the Bay State's General Court). Among the war's famous dissenters were poet James Russell Lowell (1819--1891) and essayist Henry David Thoreau (1817--1862).

### **Frederick Douglass -- (America, Vol. 1; Bennett; pp. 264-265)**

One of the finest orators of the 19th-century, **this African-American abolitionist (1817--1895)** escaped slavery in Maryland in 1838 by disguising himself as a free black sailor traveling by train? When William Lloyd Garrison, founder of *The Liberator*, heard him speak, he hired him as official orator of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. His writings, especially the autobiographical narrative of his life (1845), were as polished and potent as his speeches.

(A convert to Christianity in his later years, Douglass earlier had offered a scathing critique of the religion of the slaveholding South. He weighed that region's Christianity in the balance and found it wanting, in contrast to what he called the pure faith authored by Christ.)

### **Battle of Chapultepec -- (America, Vol. 1; Bennett; p. 265)**

The U.S. Marines earned their familiar "blood stripe," their trouser leg's red stripe, in **this battle** waged in September 1847 on a rocky mount just outside Mexico City? A contingent of the Corps had marched westward from the Gulf Coast at Vera Cruz to the capital, suffering many casualties before finally making it to the "Halls of Montezuma." Mexican resistance was fierce and praiseworthy, particularly the sacrifices made by *los Niños* (the boys), teenaged cadets of the Mexican Military Academy.

**Wilmot Proviso -- (America, Vol. 1; Bennett; p. 267)**

Named after a Democratic congressional sponsor from Pennsylvania, **this bill** sought to curb the so-called Slave Power's covetous scheme to gobble up the great Southwest? The bill dealt with any land the U.S. might gain as a result of the Mexican War, stipulating that no form of slavery or involuntary servitude would be tolerated there. It passed the House on more than one occasion (1846/47) but never got through the Senate, an indication of how divisive the war and western expansion had become.

**Free-Soil Party -- (America, Vol. 1; Bennett; pp. 270-271)**

**This new political party**, mostly former Democrats, entered the 1848 presidential contest with the goal of preventing the spread of slavery into the western territories? The party's candidates, Martin Van Buren & Charles Francis Adams, made gains in N.Y. & New England that cost the Democrats dearly, handing the contest to the Whig's General Zachary Taylor. Bitter Democrats decried Van Buren for being a "barn burner," an allusion to a Dutch tale about a farmer too zealous to exterminate the rats.

**Calhoun, Mexico, & Manifest Destiny -- (Chronicles, Oct. 2012; C. Williamson, Jr.)**

Not everyone in the South was enthused about war in the 1840s. John C. Calhoun (1782--1850) opposed any invasion or occupation of Mexico and, speaking to the larger issue of expansionist fever, dismissed the notion of "manifest destiny." Here's a portion of what Calhoun said on this score (words, it seems, we still do not heed):

"We make a great mistake in supposing all people are capable of self-government. Acting under that impression, many are anxious to force free governments on all the peoples of this continent, and over the world, if they had the power. It has been lately urged in a very respectable quarter, that it is the mission of this country to spread civil and religious liberty over the globe, and especially over this continent—even by force if necessary. It is a sad delusion. . .

"Our people have undergone a great change. Their inclination is for conquest & empire, regardless of their institutions & liberty; or rather, they think they hold their liberty by a devine [sic] tenure, which no imprudence, or folly on their part, can defeat."

**William H. Seward -- (America, Vol. 1; Bennett; p. 272)**

**This N.Y. Whig senator (1801--1872)**, addressing in 1850 slavery's potential spread westward, said the final triumph of the free states was "irresistible"? He responded to Calhoun's demand for equal representation of Southern interests by affirming the clear constitutional authority of Congress to deal with slavery however it wishes *in the territories*. Moreover, he appealed above the Constitution to a "higher law" (natural law) to suggest Congress could, at any time, abolish slavery in all the states.