

Winter History & Heritage -- #1 (December 17)

Welcome to the first of our 8 winter posts; don't miss the earlier prose & poetry selection (R. L. Stevenson's tribute to Marianne Cope) which heads our offerings for the season.

John Philip Sousa -- (*Christian Almanac*; Grant/Wilbur; Nov. 6)

This quintessential American conductor (1854--1932), director of the Marine Band for a while before forming his own orchestra, was beloved on both sides of the Atlantic? He composed a wide variety of works (including comic operas) and invented a musical instrument (a type of tuba), but his reputation rests on his stirring marches such as "Semper Fidelis" & "Stars and Stripes Forever." Even the title of his autobiography, *Marching Along* (1928), underscores the grand theme of a colorful career.

Richard Bong -- (Roger McGrath; *Chronicles* magazine; Oct. 2012)

A Wisconsin native of Irish, Scottish, English & Swedish ancestry, **this WWII fighter pilot (1920--1945)** has no close peer as America's greatest combat ace? In his Lockheed P-38 Lightning, he downed a total of 40 Japanese planes breaking Eddie Rickenbacker's WWI record of 26 and earning the Medal of Honor. Late in the war he became a test pilot for Lockheed, but he died on August 6, 1945, shortly after takeoff when his plane's fuel pump failed and he was too low to parachute to safety.

Southwestern Humorists -- (Clyde Wilson; *Abbeville Institute Newsletter*)

True literary pioneers, **this group of non-professional writers** portrayed everyday folk facing the challenges of civilization on the frontier? Their ranks included Augustus Baldwin Longstreet & George Washington Harris, and their sketches appeared mostly in newspapers for their neighbors' pleasure beginning in the 1830s. Historian Clyde Wilson says they shared "high spirits, humour, vivid imagination, tough realism, and skillful portrayal of real American life outside the cities and below the genteel."

Henry Clay -- (*America, Vol. 1*; Bennett; pp. 272-273)

"I know no South, no North, no East, no West, to which I owe any allegiance. . . My allegiance is to the American Union and to my state." So said **this KY senator (1777--1852)**, the author of compromises between Northern & Southern interests in 1820 & 1833, in support of his "Great Compromise" of 1850? The compromise admitted California as a free state (without prior territorial organization) and promised more rigorous congressional action to return runaway slaves (Fugitive Slave Act).

Fugitive Slave Act -- (*America, Vol. 1*; Bennett; p. 275)

"This filthy enactment was made in the nineteenth century, by people who could read and write. I *will* not obey it, by God!" That was New England philosopher-poet Ralph Waldo Emerson's verdict on **this congressional act, one of several provisions of Henry Clay's Compromise of 1850?** Mass. Senator Daniel Webster's consent to the measure and the compromise package turned several prominent fellow Bay Staters, not just Emerson but poet John Greenleaf Whittier as well, against him.

Race Prejudice, North & South -- (Bennett, pp. 279-280; Tocqueville excerpt)

The incident in which orator Frederick Douglass (1817--1895) was forcibly removed from a train in Massachusetts, for his refusal to leave his first-class seat and head for the "Jim Crow" car in the back, reminds us that race relations were no better, and probably a good deal worse, in the North than in the South. French author Alexis de Tocqueville raised the issue in his celebrated *Democracy in America* (1835):

In that part of the Union where the Negroes are no longer slaves, have they become closer to the whites? Everyone who has lived in the United States will have noticed just the opposite. Race prejudice seems stronger in those states that have abolished slavery than in those where it still exists, and nowhere more intolerant than in those states where slavery was never known.

In the South, where slavery still exists, less trouble is taken to keep the Negro apart: they sometimes share the labors and the pleasures of the white men; people are prepared to mix with them to some extent; legislation is more harsh against them, but customs are more tolerant and gentle.

The Rise of the Railroads -- (Bennett, pp. 278-281; J.C. Ridpath excerpt)

As author William Bennett points out, railroad construction in the U.S. tripled between 1830 and 1860, dwarfing that in the rest of the world. Most of it, however, was in the North connecting the coastal Northeast to the interior Northwest. Politically speaking, that meant U.S. Government grants and favors associated with railroads went disproportionately to Northern states and interests (accompanied, of course, by corrupt bargains between politicians & business tycoons).

Thus, the rise of the railroads stimulated dramatically the growth of urban-industrial America, but did nothing to bridge the growing gap between the varying cultures of the North and the South. J.C. Ridpath, in his *History of the United States* (1888), believed this sad reality (regional alienation) was one of several complex reasons for the War Between the States.

Ridpath writes: "[One] general cause of the war was the want of intercourse between the people of the North and the South. The great railroads and thoroughfares ran east and west. Emigration flowed from the East to the West. Between the North and South there was little travel or interchange of opinion. From want of acquaintance the people, without intending it, became estranged, jealous, suspicious. They misjudged each other's motives. They misrepresented each other's beliefs and purposes. They suspected each other of dishonesty and ill-will. Before the outbreak of the war the people of the two sections looked upon each other almost in the light of different nationalities."