

Summer History & Heritage -- #1 (July 1)

This one-page post, the first of six for the season, delves a bit into Civil War matters.

Mary Surratt --- (“Civil War Cinema”; C. Wilson; *Chronicles*, May 2013)

This Washington, D.C., boardinghouse keeper (1820?--1865) was hanged on insufficient evidence as a conspirator in connection with the assassination of Lincoln? A Marylander and a Catholic, her inn was used as a meeting place by John Wilkes Booth and his accomplices, who apparently included the innkeeper's son, John. However, the hurry and secrecy with which Sec. of War Edwin Stanton had several alleged perpetrators executed prevented the full story from ever surfacing.

13th Amendment --- (“Civil War Cinema”; C. Wilson; *Chronicles*, May 2013)

This amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the first of three post-Civil War additions in the late-1860s, emancipated the slaves? Congressional passage of the amendment (by two-thirds majority) was the focal point of Steven Spielberg's recent film *Lincoln*, although of itself Congress's vote changed the status of no bondsman. Three-fourths of the States must ratify amendments, and two-fifths of them were either fighting the Union or loyal only under the shadow of its army when Congress acted (early 1865).

The American System --- (Joseph E. Fallon; *Chronicles*; June 2013)

This national economic program, in the antebellum 1800s, used tariffs (taxes) from British imports to fund “internal improvements” like roads, railroads, canals, & harbors? The funds, paid to the U.S. disproportionately and liberally by the South, were disbursed to private firms who built an infrastructure of transportation and commerce. A boon to Northern industrialists & financiers and an occasion for fraud of all kinds, the program bred resentment below the Mason-Dixon Line and, eventually, secession and war.

Original 13th Amendment --- (Joseph E. Fallon; *Chronicles*, June 2013)

This act of Congress, passed in early 1861 as the Corwin Amendment, was aimed at luring Southern States back into the Union? It was never formally ratified and added to the Constitution, but if it had been, the U.S. would have been prevented, expressly in the “Supreme Law of the Land,” from interfering with or prohibiting slavery in the South. Most Southerners at the time, however, refused to take the bait, preferring to declare and establish their political and economic independence.

William Gilmore Simms --- (Robert Dean Lurie; *Chronicles*, June 2013)

This Southern scholar (1806--1870), master of Woodlands Plantation near Columbia, S.C., stood as the quintessence of the mind of the Old South? Poet, essayist, biographer, and historian, he made the case, publicly and fearlessly, for State secession and for race-based slavery as beneficent institution and civilizing influence. Like the South itself, he personally suffered great loss in the war, including family members, his Woodlands mansion, and the loyalty of several of his trusted slaves.