

Winter History & Heritage -- #1 (Dec. 9)

Elbridge Gerry --- (Grant/Wilbur; *Christian Almanac*, Nov. 12)

This Massachusetts merchant and governor (1744--1814) is now remembered for his approval of a partisan, State legislative redistricting scheme? He signed both the Declaration and the Articles but not the Constitution, fearing the latter would undo what they had fought for in the Revolution. “Few Americans of his generation,” wrote M.E. Bradford, “had so much to do with the nation’s history, performed on so large a stage, and yet retained an intense identity with their provincial origins. . .”

Gettysburg Address --- (*Christian Almanac*, Nov. 19)

This stunningly brief speech, the most memorable ever by an American president, was delivered by Abraham Lincoln at a PA battle site on Nov. 19, 1863? Carl Sandburg called it “a timeless psalm in the name of those who fight and do in behalf of great human causes rather than talk, in a belief that men can ‘highly resolve’ themselves, and can mutually ‘dedicate’ their lives to a cause.” The Union cause, Lincoln declared, was the preservation of republicanism or the right of the people to govern themselves.

The Union (or the United States) --- (teacher’s remarks in Q&A form)

This American political structure, nearly from its 18th-century founding, has been understood in two differing ways, expressed as major and minor themes? The thesis, or Jeffersonianism, affirms the old federal republic with its constitutionally-limited general government for the sake of the self-governing liberties of the States. The Antithesis, or Lincolnianism, hails the “new nation” in search of a “new birth of freedom,” with all the people’s equal rights the chief object of its constitutionally-empowered government.

Why Lincoln (& the North) Really Made War on the South --- (teacher’s remarks)

Lincoln and the Northern States fought the Southerners for the greater glory of the Union (understood ideologically as the “new nation”), for the Union’s preservation as an economic and political colossus, and for its promise as “The City on a Hill,” “This Last Best Hope of Earth,” the true political paradigm for mankind. Southern secession posed a challenge and threatened to diminish that Union—not the Union actually handed down by the Fathers, but the Union as theorized and venerated by men like Lincoln and Daniel Webster. Whether the North’s imperial aims made for just war or justified the fratricidal slaughter are questions which seem not to have registered with most of us.

Aaron Copland --- (*Christian Almanac*, Nov. 14)

This American composer (1900--1990), a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., is best known for his lyrical, melodic expression of American themes? His early career, however, was influenced by French Impressionism and included experimentation in restless rhythms, sharp melodies, discordant harmonies. Over time, he’d find his true voice in a simpler vein, incorporating American folk tunes into an expansive sound in ballets like *Appalachian Spring* and *Rodeo* and in orchestral works like *Lincoln Portrait*.