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Today in History and the Power of Homeschooling

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I have never really identified much with my ancestry -- race and nationality are not things that matter much to me. I am proud of America, or more so its foundation of faith and history of sacrifice for liberty. (That's different than being proud to be an American, something which I did not choose, but nevertheless choose to remain.) However, these Ukrainian history markers catch my attention, perhaps because of my Ukrainian ancestry, but more likely because they are fascinating history. It is a region rich with history, but largely unknown in the west. Posted by Skanderbeg over on RedState: Today In History -- 6 December 1240 With all my travel to and around Ukraine, I have indeed made it to Kyiv (that's the Ukrainian version of "Kiev"). Kyiv is beyond beautiful. Kyiv is majestic. Kyiv began as a Norse outpost. As Viking traders began to make use of a fairly easy route to Constantinople (up the Narva River, a fairly easy portage across modest terrain, and then an easy journey down the Dniepro River to the Black Sea), around 800 they established a fortified post at about the only terrain feature along the Dniepro -- some high bluffs along the western bank. Thus was born the city of Kyiv. The local Slavs realized quickly that these Viking traders, whom they called Varangians or Rus, knew what they were doing. Lacking leadership themselves, they came to the traders and made an offer. They offered the lead guy kingship, and the choice of any one of their many excellent-looking princesses to be his queen. With good leadership and a good position along a major trade route, Kyiv grew rapidly in strength, wealth, and importance. In 988, the Kyivan leader Prince Vladimir accepted Christianity from Byzantine missionaries -- while one of those missionaries, Cyril, gave the Slavs a written alphabet for their language. Vladimir ordered all his subjects to convert with him; they were all herded along the main boulevard of Kyiv -- called to this day "Christening Boulevard" -- and into the shallows of the Dniepro for a mass baptism. Kyiv continued to grow and prosper as an eastern outpost of civilization. By the early 13th century, it was the second largest city in Europe -- second only to Paris -- with a population of 50,000. But all that came to an abrupt end on 6 December 1240. When dawn broke over Kyiv on 6 December 1240, the population was 50,000. By nightfall, the population had been effectively reduced to zero. After a brief siege, the Mongols, led by Genghis Khan's grandson Batu, broke into the city. The city was quickly pillaged, burned, and demolished. Gone were the 400 churches. Gone were the monasteries. Gone was the legendary "Zoloti Varota," the famous "Golden Gate" -- known musically as "The Great Gate of Kiev." And gone, mostly, were the 50,000 inhabitants -- slaughtered or, for the few survivors, dragged off into slavery. Think you're having a bad day? Methinks that 6 December 1240 qualifies as the ultimate "bad day." "OK, I am considering homeschooling... what does this have to do with homeschooling?" you ask. Well nothing, except... tell me if you learned any of this in public school?!? Oh, the history of the Mongols and Vikings goes much deeper and has far more impact upon what you might consider "relevant" history. The shape of Christian Europe, your church, and religious practices might be significantly different without these two powerful forces in history. It's not just Ukraine; try England, France, Germany, and Italy... getting more "relevant"? Dig a little deeper... no dumbed down, politically correct, and State approved textbook is needed. That's the power of homeschooling.

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