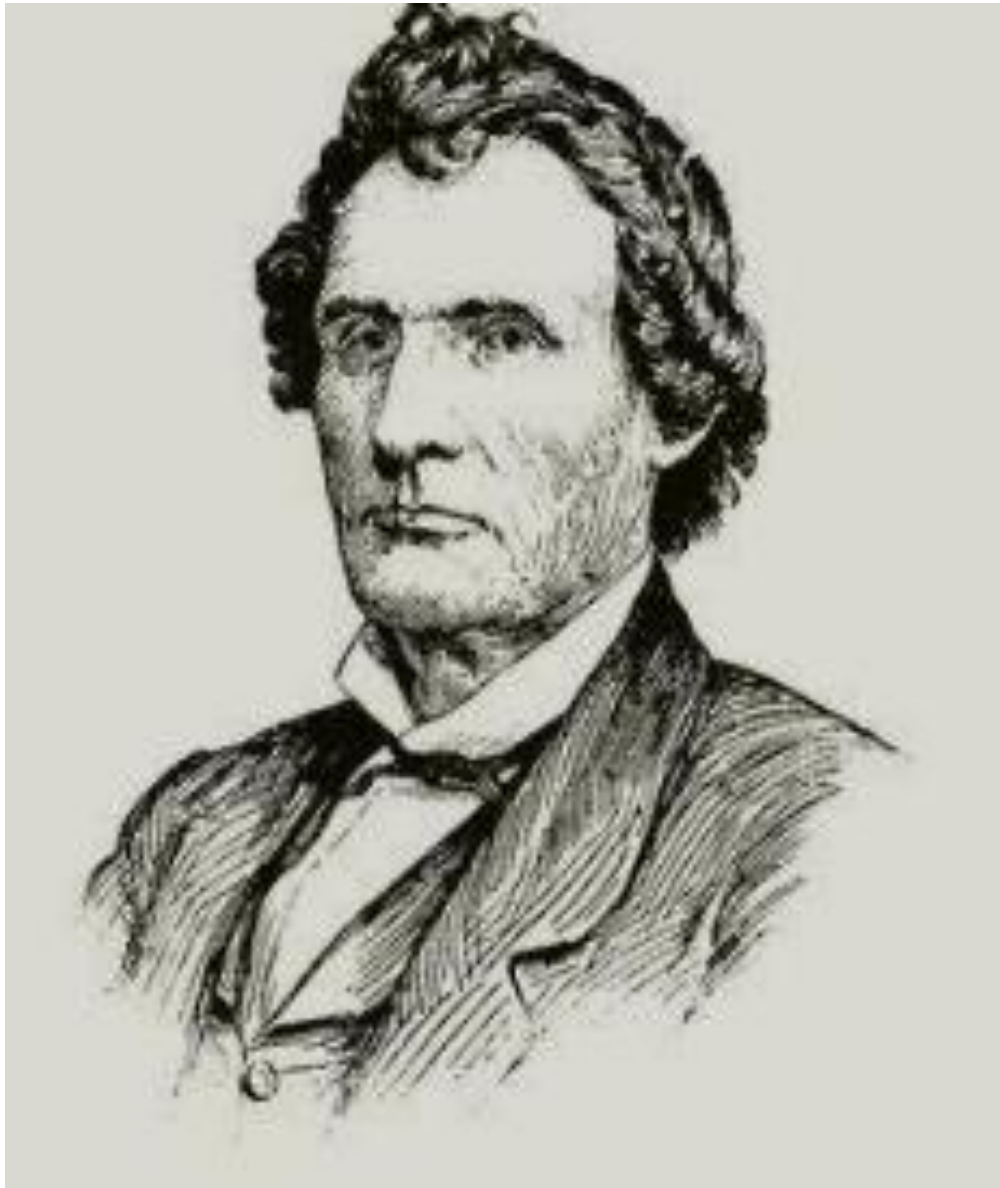


The Bugle



Quarterly Journal of the
Camp Curtin Historical Society
and Civil War Round Table, Inc.

Spring 2023
Volume 33, Number 1



Congressman Thaddeus Stevens

The field upon which we now stand will be known as classic ground, for here has been the great central point of the organization of our military forces. When my administration of public affairs will have been forgotten and the good and evil will be only known to the investigation of the antiquarian, Camp Curtin, with its memories and associations, will be immortal."

- Governor Andrew Curtin, 1865

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Weapons Display at GNMP May 29

CCHS Past President Larry Keener-Farley will display his collection of original Civil War weapons at the Gettysburg National Military Park Visitor Center 10AM to 4PM, Monday, May 29 (Memorial Day). These artifacts will be on tables, allowing close examination and photography. The display will include pre-war weapons that were issued to the first troops, various models of the U.S. Rifle Musket, cavalry carbines, revolvers and swords and sabers. Living historians will show how the weapons worked. The display will also include information on the women and girls who died in fires and explosions making ammunition for the North and South.



Harrisburg Cemetery Tours

This year's tour of the Harrisburg Cemetery will be held on Sunday, May 21. Information will be posted on our website and Facebook pages as well as emailed to members.

Dues Reminder

We recently mailed out 2023 dues notices. If you have not already "reenlisted," we hope you will. You can find the enlistment form on our website at www.campcurtin.org/enlistment-form.

Cover: Congressman Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania.

The Camp Curtin Historical Society and Civil War Round Table, Inc., is a non-profit corporation chartered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Contributions are tax deductible under IRC Section 501(c)(3). The Society is properly registered with the Pennsylvania Department of State as a charitable organization. A copy of the registration and financial information may be obtained by telephoning toll free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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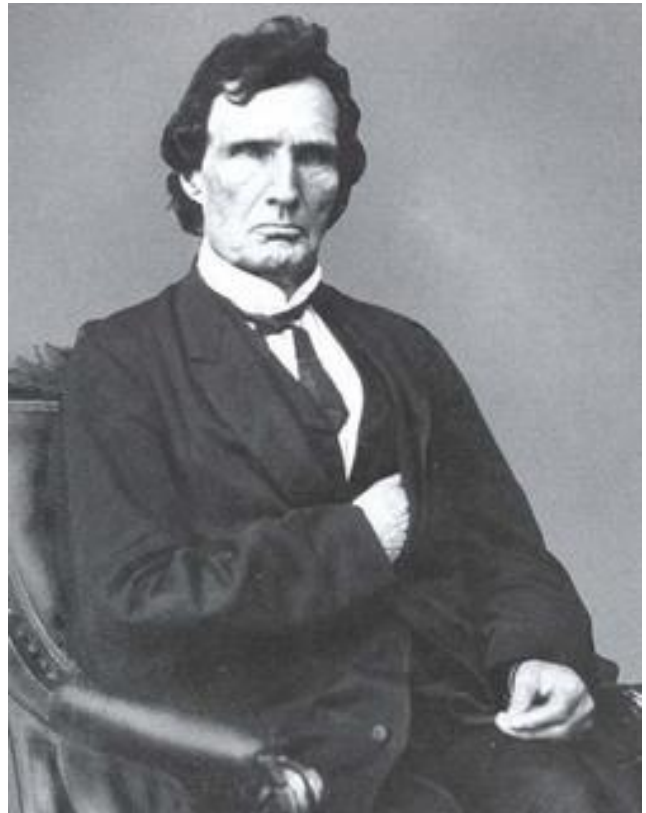
Congressman Thaddeus Stevens

By Scott Hetrick, President of the Thaddeus Stevens Society

Thaddeus Stevens, the most powerful congressman during and after the Civil War, changed the fabric of the United States government, helping to push it towards the promise of equality for all. Immortalized in the movie *Lincoln*, by Steven Spielberg, Stevens was a fearless champion of freedom and equality. During his lifetime, Stevens's fame rivaled that of Abraham Lincoln and when he died in 1868, his body lay in the Capitol Rotunda -- an honor previously given only to Lincoln and Sen. Henry Clay. 20,000 people attended Stevens's funeral in Lancaster, PA. He was the Father of the 14th Amendment, the single most important amendment to the Constitution, and Savior of Public Education in Pennsylvania. He also helped pressure Lincoln into freeing the slaves, developed Reconstruction policies, spearheaded the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson, and participated in the Underground Railroad.

Born in Danville, Vermont in 1792, his father left his family when Stevens was a child, leaving his upbringing to his mother, Sarah Stevens, who made sure he received a good education. After graduating from Dartmouth College, Stevens moved to Pennsylvania in 1814 where he was a teacher for a short time in York before passing the bar and becoming a lawyer.

He moved to Gettysburg in 1816 where he was elected to the state legislature in



1833. Yet, he latched onto the most improbable of causes, the Anti-Mason party, a movement that blamed most of the problems of the country on the old fraternal order of the Masons. But because of his political skills, Stevens was able to make the Anti-Masons a force in Pennsylvania and kept it alive long after it had died elsewhere in the country.

One of his most famous acts in the legislature was a speech he gave on April 11, 1835, which is credited with turning back a repeal effort of the state's fledgling public school system. He urged his fellow legislators to "build not your monuments of brass or marble, but to make them of ever living mind." For that speech, he is

called the Savior of Public Education in Pennsylvania.

During his time in Gettysburg, he was a large property owner, started two iron mills, including one in Caledonia near Chambersburg, PA, and helped establish Gettysburg College by getting it a state grant of \$18,000 in 1834. He served on the college's board for 34 years and prevented it from moving from Gettysburg in 1854.

He had his share of fiascoes. In 1838, Stevens and his political allies tried to steal a state election, but the plan backfired when the Democrats brought in mobs from Philadelphia that took over the capitol building in Harrisburg by force. During the so-called Buckshot War, Stevens and others had to jump out a window to escape the mob. There was also Stevens's "Tapeworm Railroad" through the mountains of Pennsylvania, named because of its zig-zag course. After the state pumped hundreds of thousands of dollars into the project, it was abandoned uncompleted after Stevens lost political power in the Buckshot War.

Stevens's Caledonia iron works also lost money and by 1842 he was more than \$200,000 in debt, forcing him to leave Gettysburg and move to Lancaster, PA, where he could make more money as an attorney. In his new home, Stevens was elected to Congress as a Whig from 1849 to 1853 and then again as a Republican from 1859 until his death in 1868. It was during these last 10 years of his life, which were plagued by health and

financial problems, that he did his greatest work.

As chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Stevens guided through measures that were essential to finance the war. He was unrelenting in his pressure on Lincoln to free the slaves and to use them as soldiers. As the undisputed master of the House of Representatives, he was a key mover of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which abolished slavery, and he was the Father of the 14th Amendment, which requires equal treatment under the law and extends civil liberties to the state level. Because of these actions, some historians suggest Stevens deserves the title of the Great Emancipator as much as Lincoln. The Civil War also brought financial disaster to Stevens. Confederate General Jubal Early burned Stevens's Caledonia iron works to the ground in June 1863, costing Stevens \$75,000. But Stevens took it philosophically: "If finally, the government shall be reestablished over our whole territory and not a vestige of slavery left, I shall deem it a cheap purchase."

In a crucial, yet little known episode, Stevens and Edward McPherson, the clerk of the House of Representatives and a Stevens protégé, were able to prevent the takeover of Congress by southern and northern Democrats immediately after the war. By the end of 1865, President Andrew Johnson had issued pardons wholesale to Confederate leaders, who were then elected to Congress. On December 4, the unrepentant secessionists showed up to take their seats, and take

over the government. This would have caused dire consequences, such as allowing the South to reinstate slavery through the use of the newly enacted Black Codes.

But Stevens had instructed McPherson, a former Gettysburg congressman, not to call the names of the southerners during the roll call. This was met by howls of indignation, but Stevens called for order until the roll was finished. This barred the southerners from Congress and allowed the Republicans to pursue their Reconstruction plans.

Stevens was unsuccessful in his most ambitious plan to confiscated land from rich Confederates and redistribute it to freed slaves. Called the “forty-acres and mule” plan, Stevens hoped to provide economic opportunity to the penniless freed slaves. But it is doubtful that the freedmen would have been able to keep the land after Reconstruction ended in 1877, considering the wave of violence against blacks and their disenfranchisement. Stevens also failed to remove President Johnson from office for obstructing Reconstruction efforts.

Even in death, his commitment to equality continued. Buried in the only integrated cemetery in Lancaster, his epitaph reads: “I repose in this quiet and secluded spot, not from any natural preference for solitude, but finding other cemeteries limited as to race by charter rules, I have

chosen this that I might illustrate in my death the principles which I advocated through a long life. Equality of Man Before His Creator.”



Thaddeus Stevens statue erected by the Thaddeus Stevens Society in front of the Adams County Court House in Gettysburg.

Special thanks to the Thaddeus Stevens Society for providing this biography of Stevens. For more information on the Society, visit www.thaddeusstevenssociety.com.

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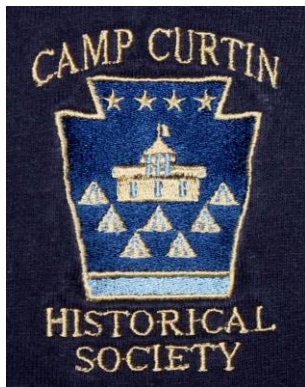
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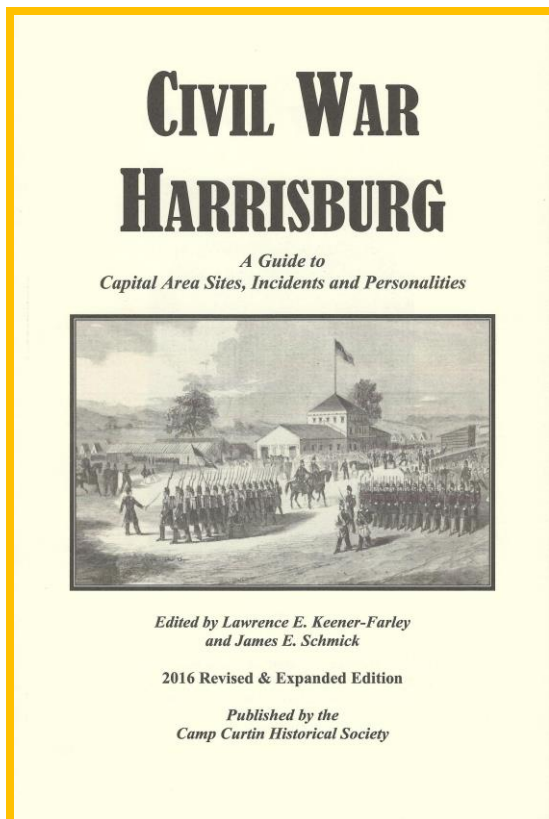
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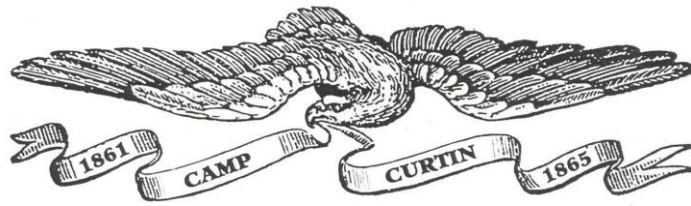
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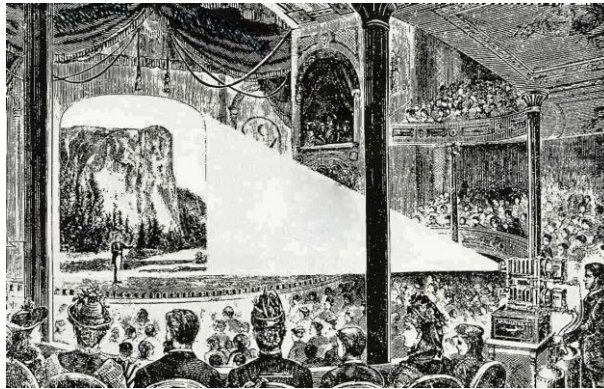
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*The Camp Curtin Historical Society
presents*

In Camp and Field 1861 – 1865: The Civil War Through the Lens of the Stereopticon

Presented by Tyrone and Sue Cornbower



**2:00PM, Sunday, March 5th
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This presentation, based on an original program from an 1894 exhibition, will feature a stereopticon, also known as a magic lantern, and slides from the Cornbowers' collection along with music from a portable parlor organ from the 1880's. Please join us as we step back in time for an audio-visual historical experience.

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