



# Stevens & Smith

## Center for History and Democracy

A Project of  LancasterHistory

### MISSION STATEMENT

Through the historic lives of Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith, we inspire people in the present to advance equality, freedom, and democracy in America today.

At the Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy, we chronicle, interpret, and advance the accomplishments of Thaddeus Stevens, Lydia Hamilton Smith, and others who fought for equality and championed citizenship in the United States. We promote democracy in action by connecting past and present freedom struggles—emboldening visitors to make positive change in their own communities.

### VALUES STATEMENT

At the Stevens & Smith Center for History and Democracy we draw inspiration and vitality from the lives of Thaddeus Stevens, Lydia Hamilton Smith, and their collaborators to:

- align our actions with all seekers of freedom,
- ensure equality of opportunity in all our endeavors,
- shoulder our responsibilities as citizens in a representative democracy, and
- foster positive change in our communities and our country.

As storytellers, we draw lessons from the past to animate communities around America's complex history. Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith, and their many collaborators were agents of Democracy. Their stories illuminate:

- the Quest for Human Freedom;
- Equality of All before the Law;
- The Responsibility of Citizens to Create a More Perfect Union; and
- A belief in the Power of the Individual to Make Change.

# NARRATIVE SUMMARY

LancasterHistory is honored to bring the stories of two remarkable Americans to life for our community and for the nation, and in the process reveal Lancaster, Pennsylvania's place as a pivotal intersection of American democracy.



***The Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy***, a new museum and learning center, will explore the profound effects that Thaddeus Stevens, Lydia Hamilton Smith, and their collaborators had on American democracy through their efforts to end slavery, support racial equality, and promote citizenship in mid-nineteenth century America.



***Thaddeus Stevens***, a white attorney and political leader overcame physical disability to become one of the most powerful men ever to serve in Congress. He used his power wisely—championing free public education, fighting for the abolition of slavery, promoting the guarantee of equal protection under the law, and securing the vote for Black men.



***Lydia Hamilton Smith***, a mixed-race woman noteworthy for her resilience, independence, and entrepreneurship, dedicated her life to business, church, family, and community work, all while supporting Stevens as his household manager, close companion, and caretaker during his failing health. Among her many accomplishments, she became a businesswoman and property owner, with successful boardinghouses in Lancaster, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC.

As its primary mission, the Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy will chronicle, interpret and advance the accomplishments of Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith, who together offer remarkable stories about how single individuals can bring about monumental change.

Programs and exhibitions at the Center will encourage visitors to investigate the historical ideals of freedom, equality, citizenship, democracy, and racial justice that still shape our nation today. The Stevens & Smith Center will connect past and present freedom struggles, will embolden visitors with the understanding that every individual has the power to make positive change, and inspire the public to participate in making America the “more perfect union” envisioned by its founders.

The Stevens & Smith Center will be a hub for community engagement, where local citizens and visitors gather for dialogue on current issues of democracy, gain access to relevant historical materials, and deepen their understanding of personal responsibility within our representative democracy. The center's activities will draw inspiration from the legacies of Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith to shed light on the challenges still facing our nation in these early years of America's fifth century.