



LancasterHistory

For Immediate Release

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Stevens & Smith Center Joins National Park Service Reconstruction Era National Historic Network

LancasterHistory's newest museum to join well-known sites such as the International African American Museum, Whitney Plantation as part of network

LANCASTER, PA — **LancasterHistory** is proud to announce that the **Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy** has been accepted into the **National Park Service's Reconstruction Era Historic Network**. The national network connects organizations and sites throughout the United States that provide education, interpretation, and research related to the Reconstruction Era (1861-1900) in American history. The National Park Service made the public announcement on June 4.

The Reconstruction Era (1861-1900) was a period of significant transformation in American history that impacted social, political, and economic systems within the country as the United States grappled with the aftermath of the Civil War, especially the legacy of slavery. The Reconstruction Era Historic Network itself is a relatively new program, signed into law on March 12, 2019, and has since added over 100 sites and programs to its network, many of which are managed by the National Park Service, but not all. The Stevens & Smith Center is managed by

LancasterHistory and is set to tentatively open in spring 2026.

"We as a nation are still grappling with questions that arose out of the Reconstruction Era, such as definitions of freedom, equality, citizenship, and civil rights. **Thaddeus Stevens** was at the heart of the work of Reconstruction. His ardent advocacy for equality in our nation is a voice very much needed in our world today," said **Robin Sarratt**, LancasterHistory's President & CEO. "It's an honor to be admitted to the NPS Reconstruction Era Historic Network alongside so many remarkable peer organizations doing extraordinary work around the country. We're excited to open the Center next year and be a resource of critical information for the American public."

The Stevens & Smith Center joins several other sites admitted this quarter into the Network, including: The International African American Museum (Charleston, SC); Tolson's Chapel (Sharpsburg, MD); Bethune-Cookman University (Dayton Beach, FL); Oklahoma Indian Territory Museum of Black Creek Freeman History (Oklahoma City, OK); The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (Calabasas, CA); and Whitney Plantation (Wallace, LA). The Stevens & Smith Center is already a part of the National Park Service's **Underground Railroad Network to Freedom**.

To learn more about the Reconstruction Era National Historic Network, please visit <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/reconstruction/network.htm>.

About LancasterHistory

LancasterHistory is a community-based, not-for-profit organization established to educate the public on the history of Lancaster County and its place in the history of Pennsylvania and the United States, to advance the missions of regional historical organizations, and to promote the acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of resources representing the history of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania within the broader context of state and national history, including the homes of 15th US President James Buchanan and Congressman Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith.

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