

Lydia Hamilton Smith & her sons *William and Isaac*

*Compassionate, successful
woman of color &
dedicated mother in
19th century America*

Their lives in Gettysburg, Adams County, PA,
Harrisburg and Lancaster, PA & Washington, D.C.



**Prepared by LancasterHistory in connection with the conservation and interpretation
of their gravestones at Saint Mary Catholic Cemetery, Lancaster, PA. June 2023**

Gravestone conservation and dedication of historical marker, June 28, 2023

A project to preserve the legacy of the Smith family and provide a deeper understanding of their role in Lancaster County's history.

William & Isaac Smith and their mother, Lydia Hamilton Smith

1835-1861 **1837-1884** **1815-1884**

Their gravestone inscribed:
ISAAC—Died April 7, 1884,
In the 37th year of his age.
WILLIAM—Died May 10, 1860,
In the 25th year of his age.
SONS OF JACOB & LYDIA H. SMITH

Her gravestone inscribed:
LYDIA HAMILTON
Relict of JACOB SMITH
For many years the trusted
housekeeper of
HON. THADDEUS STEVENS.
Born at Gettysburg, Penna.,
on St. Valentine's Day, 1813.
Died at Washington, D.C.
on St. Valentine's Day, 1884.

*'...a remarkably intelligent woman,
of generous disposition, and was well
and favorably known.'*
Obituary, *Evening Star*, Washington D.C.- February 15, 1884

Gravestone conservation by Andre Dominguez
Research & Design by Randolph Harris

Their home in the City of Lancaster
45-47 South Queen Street

Sponsored by



LancasterHistory

Randy Harris, project manager and staff member at LancasterHistory. Andre Dominguez, historian and LancasterHistory volunteer created a conservation report for the gravestones which is appended to this report. He assisted Robert Mosko of Mosko Cemetery Monument Services from Hanover, PA, with the extensive work of resetting and stabilizing the gravestones. Marker fabricated by Pannier Corp. of Gibsonia, PA. Harris and Dominguez installed the commemorative marker with surrounding plant ground coverings installed by Paul Hubbs, groundskeeper at LancasterHistory. Unless otherwise shown, photography and design for this background report by Randy Harris.



“The restoration of the Smith family gravestones is an important part of LancasterHistory’s ongoing efforts to celebrate and preserve the diverse history of Lancaster County,

One’s gravestone serves as an enduring physical reminder of one’s life and helps sustain our communal memory.

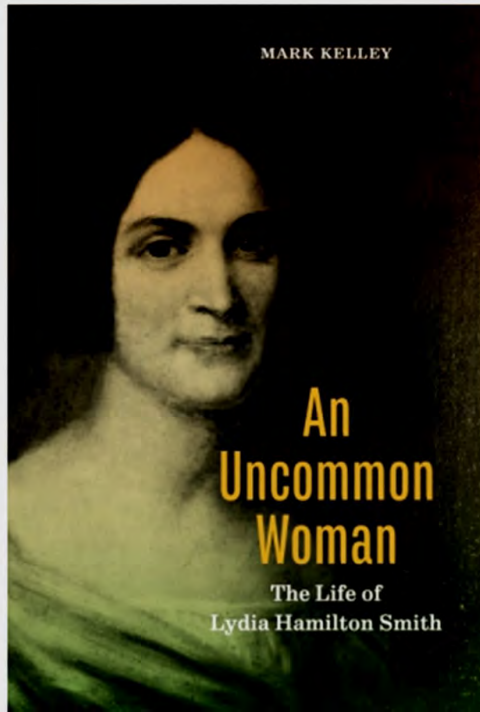
By restoring these gravestones and adding the historical marker, we honor Mrs. Smith and remember her sons as once-vital members of the Lancaster community.”

Dr. Thomas Ryan, President & CEO LancasterHistory



Biography available soon!

PENN STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS



COMING IN NOVEMBER

\$24.95 | Paperback Edition

ISBN: 978-0-271-09675-9

Coming in November

An Uncommon Woman

The Life of Lydia Hamilton Smith

Mark Kelley

"Mark Kelley presents valuable new information about Lydia Hamilton Smith, Congressman Thaddeus Stevens's mixed-race housekeeper and life companion, while providing refreshingly new perspectives on Stevens himself. The book offers important new information and insights by documenting how Smith managed Stevens's household, took care of him as his health failed, and used her relationship with him to accumulate property and cross racialized social boundaries. It also contributes to our understanding of Stevens's powerful political opposition to slavery and racial discrimination."

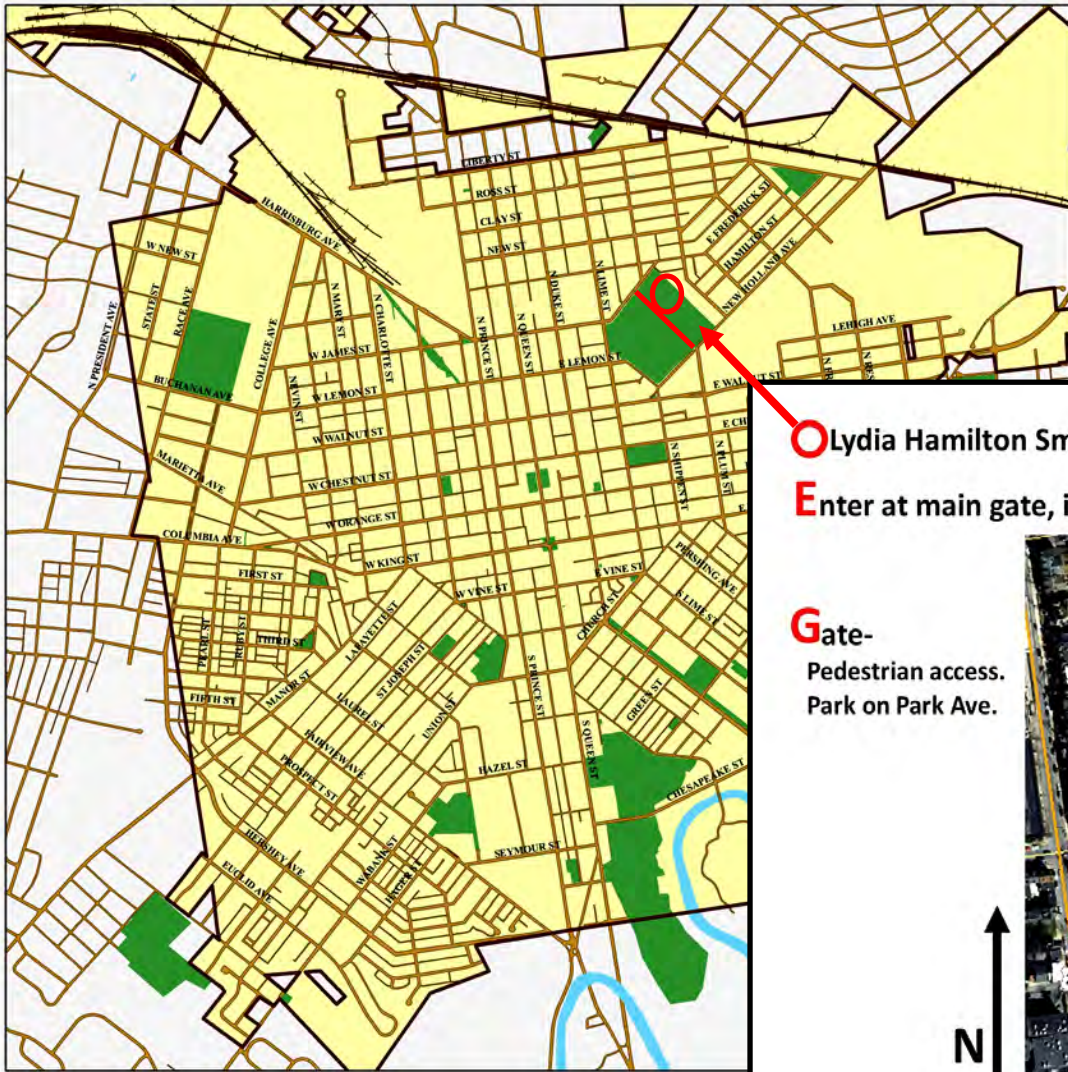
—Faith Mitchell, author of *Emma's Postcard Album: Black Lives in the Early Twentieth Century*

Description

Lydia Hamilton Smith (1813–1884) was a prominent African American businesswoman in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and the longtime housekeeper, life companion, and collaborator of the state's abolitionist congressman Thaddeus Stevens. In his biography of this remarkable woman, Mark Kelley reveals how Smith served the cause of abolition, managed Stevens's household, acquired property, and crossed racialized social boundaries.

For more information

<https://www.psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-09675-9.html>



Courtesy, City of Lancaster

O Lydia Hamilton Smith & Sons grave site, Saint Mary Cemetery, Lancaster, PA

E Enter at main gate, intersection of Plum St. & New Holland Ave.

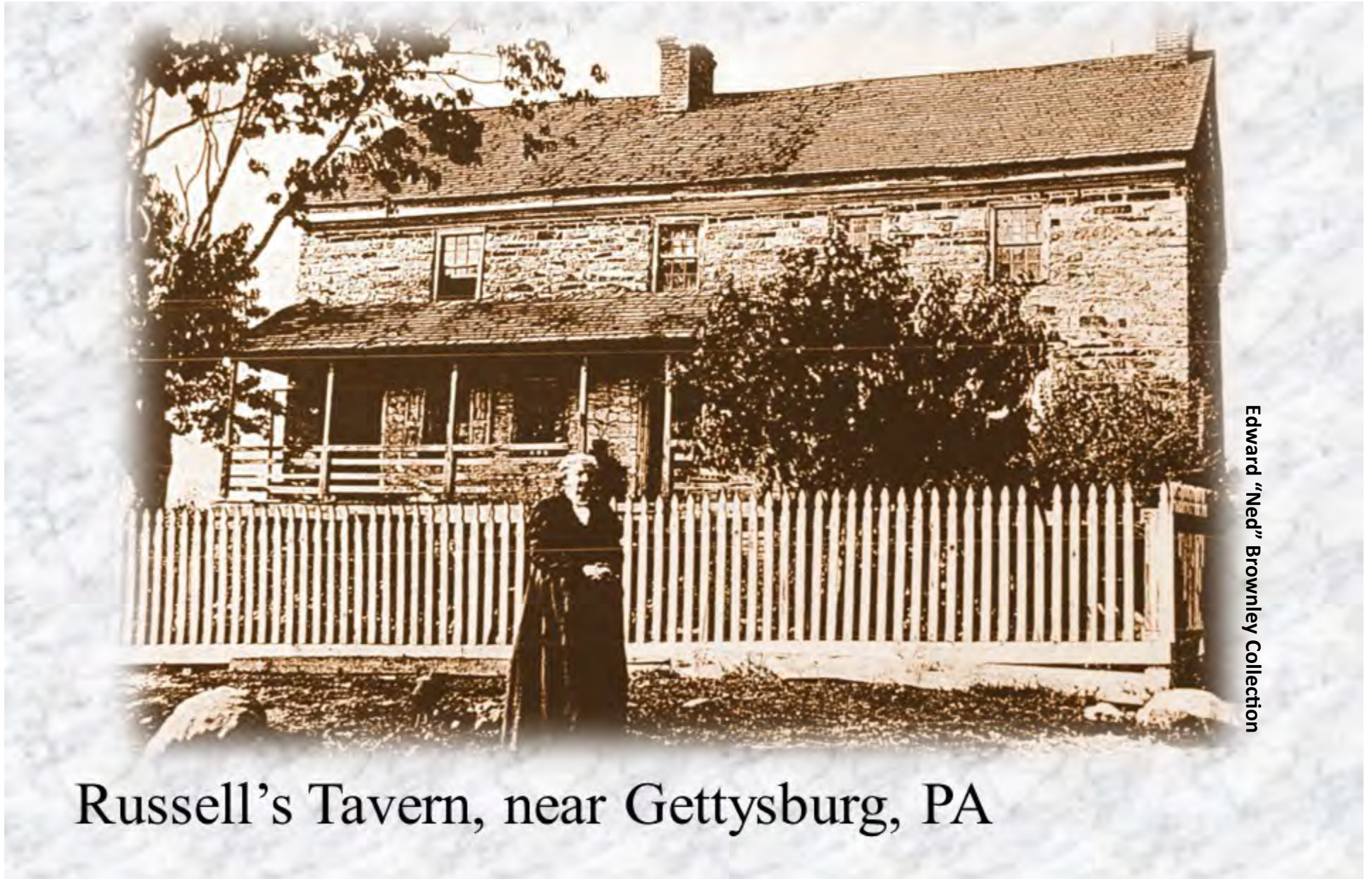
NO PARKING ON GRASS!
Park in lanes & leave space for cars to exit

G Gate-
Pedestrian access.
Park on Park Ave.



R. Harris 6-20-23

Lydia Hamilton Smith's birthplace



Edward "Ned" Brownley Collection

Russell's Tavern, near Gettysburg, PA

Russell Tavern Road, south of Goldenville Road, 4 miles north of Gettysburg

“Russell Tavern sheltered travelers along Black’s Gap Road, which ran through the South Mountain and connected York to the east with the Cumberland Valley to the west. Black’s Gap was only the second road in Adams County, constructed in spring of 1747. Enterprising citizens began operating taverns along these roads and towns sometimes grew up around them. Joshua Russell, an Irish immigrant, built a stone dwelling in 1777. In 1781 he obtained a license for operating a tavern and paid taxes on his revenue. Five years later, James Getty established Gettysburg four miles south along a third road. While engaged in confronting the Whiskey Rebellion in October 1794, George Washington dined and may have slept at Russell Tavern. Future president James Buchanan’s father was a nephew of Joshua Russell’s, and he lived with his uncle when he immigrated at age 24. When Russell died in 1805 his son Samuel inherited the business, but he died the next year. His widow Jane McClure Russell married Enoch Hamilton and they operated the tavern until her death in 1847. Members of the Russell family owned the property for seventy years. Russell Tavern stands in its original location not far from Biglerville. The current owners restored and expanded the original structure. It has been in their family more than fifty years.”

From Honoring Their Paths-The African American Experience in the Journey Through Hallowed Ground

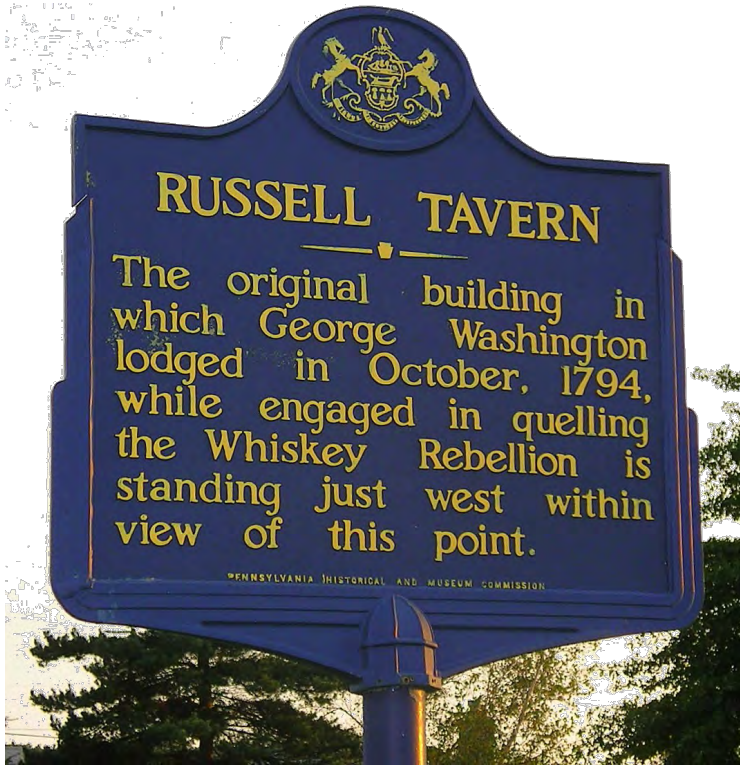
Adams County, PA Site Histories and Biographical Profiles By Deborah A. Lee, May 6, 2009

Russell Tavern Road, south of Goldenville Road, 4 miles north of Gettysburg

African American Presence

“In the early nineteenth century, one Mrs. O’Neill worked at Russell Tavern. She was likely of African and Irish descent. She once called at Thaddeus Stevens’s home and thwarted his housekeeper’s suicide attempt. In 1815, she gave birth at Russell Tavern to a girl she named Lydia. Because Lydia later used the surname Hamilton, some suspect that Enoch Hamilton, who operated the tavern with his wife Jane McClure Russell, fathered the child. As an adult the woman would become known nationally as Congressman Thaddeus Stevens’s housekeeper and confidante.”

***From Honoring Their Paths-The African American Experience in the Journey Through Hallowed Ground
Adams County, PA Site Histories and Biographical Profiles By Deborah A. Lee, May 6, 2009***



“Married—May 11, 1808, Thursday last, Enoch Hamilton to Mrs. Jenny Russell by Rev. M’Conaughy”

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~paadams/nxpmar.htm>

Lydia Hamilton and her mother, Mrs. O’Neill, most likely attended Catholic services at Conewago Chapel

LYDIA HAMILTON SMITH

Married Jacob Smith, circa 1835
Sons: William (1835) & Isaac (1837)

Confidante & house manager for
Thaddeus Stevens 1844-1868

Acquired Lancaster home, 1860

D.C. boarding house, c. 1870

Died February 14, 1884

Buried. St. Mary Cemetery, Lancaster



"...a remarkably intelligent woman, of generous disposition, was well and favorably known."

**Obituary, *Evening Star*,
Washington, D.C.
15 February 1884**

Lydia Hamilton Smith was an extraordinary woman who played pivotal roles in the communities where she lived. Leaving her husband from their home in Harrisburg, she and her two sons arrived in Lancaster in the mid-1840s, seeking the position of house manager for Thaddeus Stevens, a prominent attorney who had relocated to the city two years prior.

Mrs. Smith was hired for the position and remained in that role for 24 years, diligently managing Stevens' household and affairs in Lancaster and Washington D.C., including his tenure in the U.S. Congress.

She provided essential healthcare to Mr. Stevens in the declining years of his life, enabling him to finish his Congressional work and the passage of the 13th and 14th Amendments to the US Constitution.

Before and after her time with Mr. Stevens, she acquired property in Lancaster, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. where she operated a boarding house at 515 14th NW, near the White House, from 1870 until 1884.



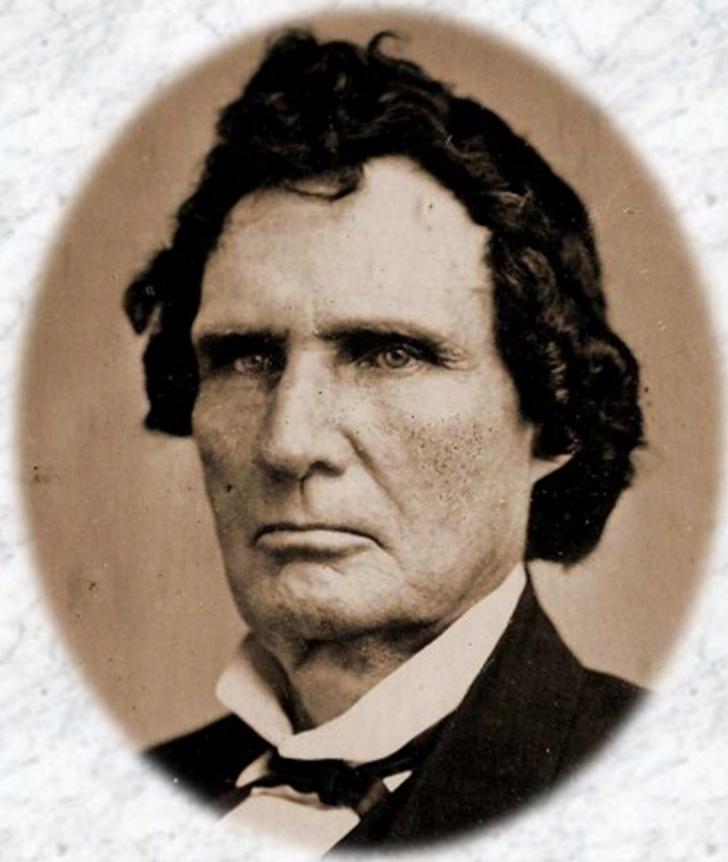
(1792-1868)

A relationship with
the powerful
Congressman
Thaddeus Stevens
1844-1868



1815-1884

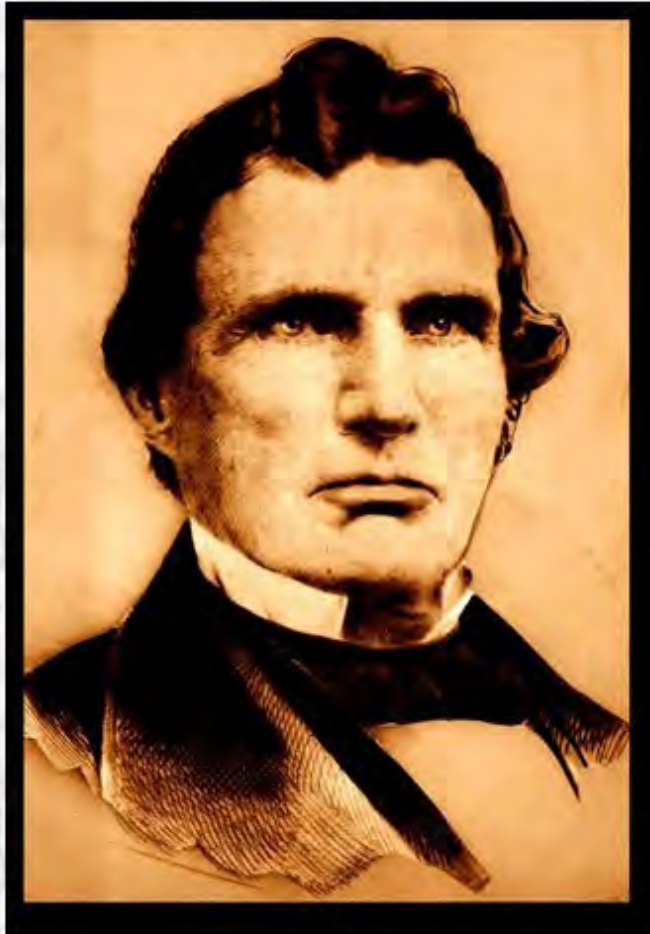
Who were they? What is her legacy?



1792-1868



1815-1884



THADDEUS STEVENS

'THE OLD COMMONER'

Born April 4, 1792-Danville, Vermont

Teacher, attorney, abolitionist

PA House of Representatives-

Champion of free public education

Industrialist, newspaper publisher

Civil rights leader/US Congress-

1840s, 50s, 60s

Underground Railroad activist

Died August 11, 1868, Washington DC

Buried, Shreiner-Concord Cemetery,

Lancaster

"Stevens in his prime"

c. 1850

Photographed from the Thomas Frederick Woodley Collection, Pennsylvania Archives, Harrisburg, PA—Manuscript Group 485 T. Fred Woodley Collection, 1830-1837



Free public
education
advocate as
Pennsylvania
legislator,
1835

Courtesy Franklin & Marshall College

Stevens & Smith in Southeastern Pennsylvania

THE
UNDERGROUND
RAIL ROAD.

"Chickies Rock," - F. DeBourg Richards,
1840," LancasterHistory

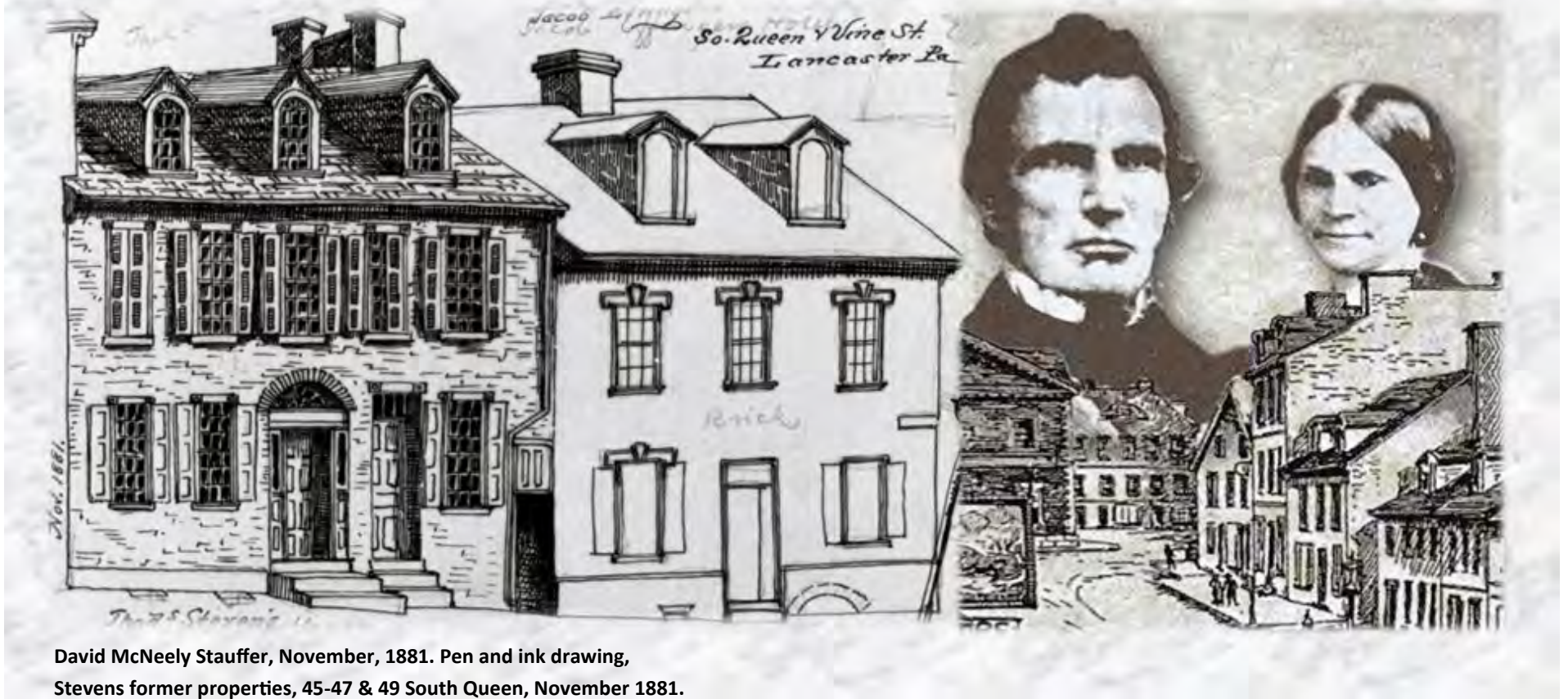
Major Underground Railroad pathways through Southeast Pennsylvania



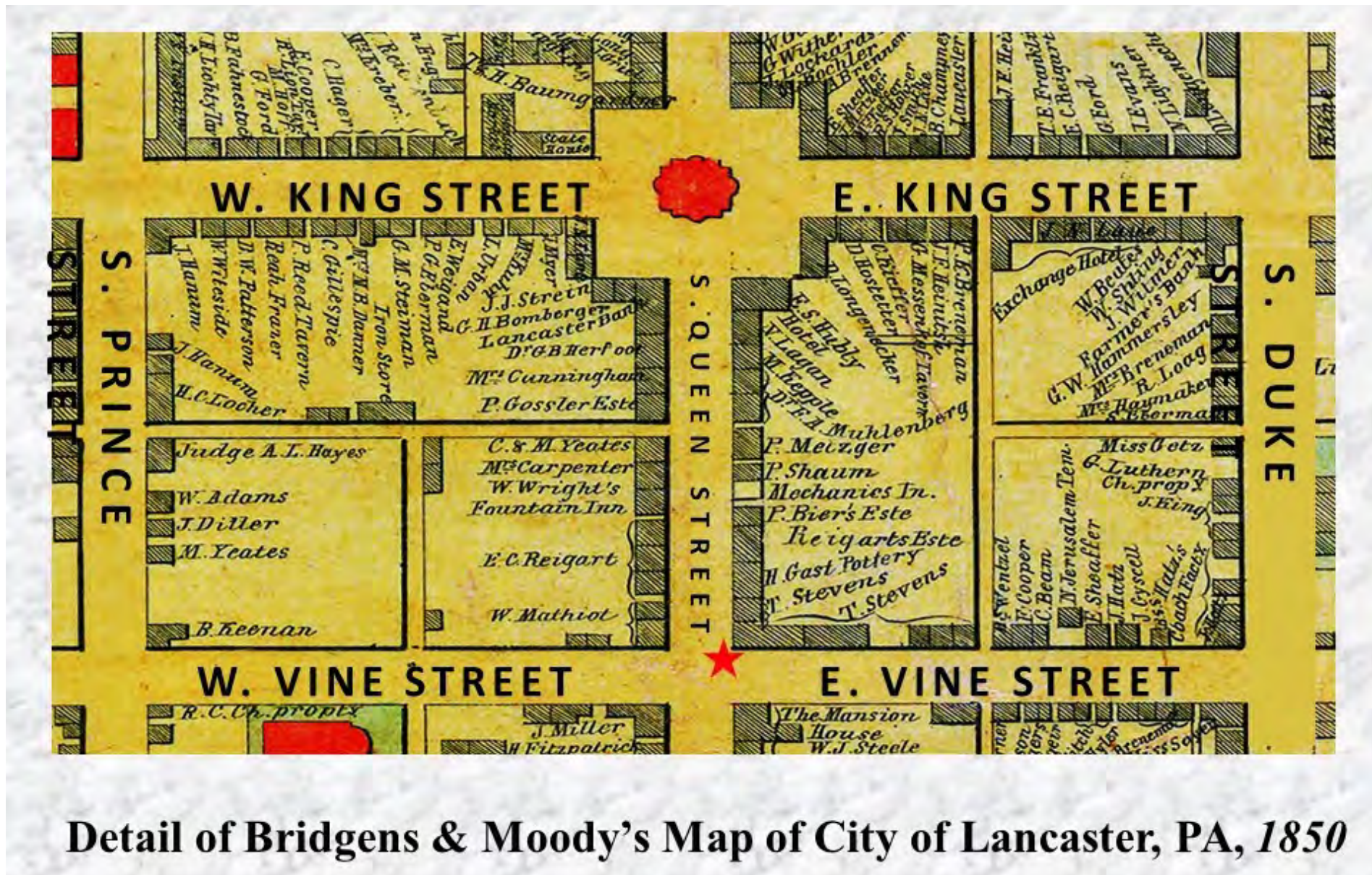
National Geographic, 1984. From the cover essay by the late Dr. Charles Blockson, Temple University

Oral tradition –

*Stevens & Smith were long believed to be
Underground Railroad agents in Lancaster*



David McNeely Stauffer, November, 1881. Pen and ink drawing,
Stevens former properties, 45-47 & 49 South Queen, November 1881.
LancasterHistory



★ Home of Stevens and Smith and Office, first block south of square



The Underground Railroad

Explorer's Map & Guide

The life of Mrs. Smith as described in this 2005 heritage tourism brochure, which was based mainly on oral tradition and some speculation.

“Lydia Smith, a mulatto woman, became Thaddeus Stevens’ housekeeper.

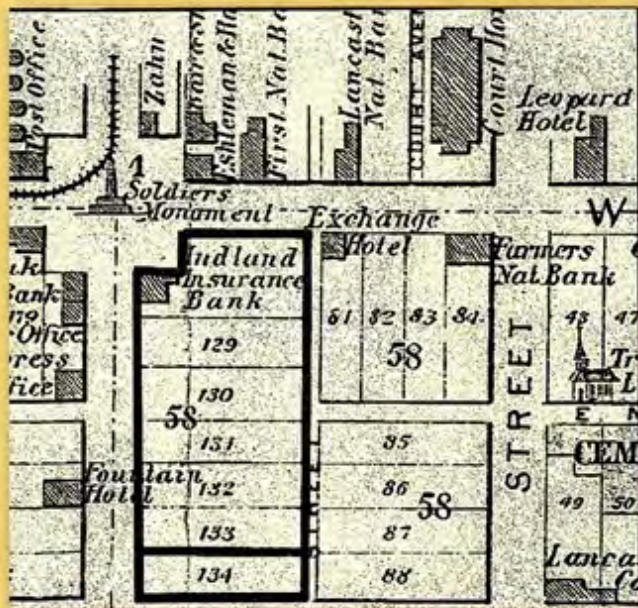
She lived in a small house at the rear of Stevens' property, where she worked as a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

After the Civil War, she continued her fight for equality by encouraging Stevens' efforts to ratify the 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution...”

Stevens supported spies to infiltrate efforts of bounty hunters here, 1840s - 50s

Rauch & Boston spy for Stevens

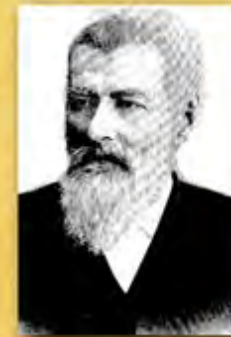
Where was office of "Notorious slave catcher George Hughes" on East King St., circa 1850?



City of Lancaster, detail of Brion Atlas, circa 1870



East King St., first block, south side, view west



Edward H. Rauch

1820-1902

Stevens in debate at Fulton Hall, Lancaster

**“Women should
be eligible
to civil office...
and have right to vote!”**

December 22, 1858

Stevens employs Lydia Hamilton Smith as housekeeper, 1844



Portrait attributed to Charles Bird King, circa 1850

Controversial Portrait Part Of 1986 Town Fair Exhibit

By Gracie Joanou
Intelligencer Journal Staff

A "mystery painting" will be on display today and Wednesday in the gallery at First Presbyterian Church, 140 E. Orange St., one of the seven locations of the 1986 Town Fair.

The painting is a portrait of Mrs. Lydia Smith, housekeeper and loyal friend to Thaddeus Stevens. The portrait, commissioned by Stevens, has been attributed to famed local artist Jacob Eichholtz, but there is much controversy about the art work.

Mrs. Smith, a mulatto, devoted her life to serving Stevens, a powerful Republican senator of the mid-19th century.

She had access to homes of many prominent people in Lancaster and Washington through her association with Stevens. A devout member of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, she was buried in 1884 in her church's graveyard. Stevens is buried in the Shreiner's Cemetery.

The famed portrait of Mrs. Smith was owned by Stevens and deeded to her at the time of his death, according to the present owner of the painting, who wishes

to remain anonymous.

William Early, who is in charge of the exhibit at First Presbyterian, said the deed is in the hands of the present owner.

The controversial painting has been the subject of much research, including work done by the Frick Gallery of New York and the Lancaster County Historical Society.

There is no signature on the painting and although it's thought to be an Eichholtz, some scholars say "no" because it is not in his style. Others think it might have been painted by another local artist of that time, Charles King Bird.

Mrs. Lydia Smith's picture and about 30 others, owned by members of the church, will be exhibited in the First Presbyterian gallery.

It, along with a painting by Hattie Brunner, will be kept in a vault until time of the exhibit each day. The Brunner painting is a primitive of a country auction. Also on display will be prints by Luigi Rist, well-known local print maker, several paintings by Robert Kumler, a student of artist Grant Wood, and work by Hubert Fitzgerald.

During Town Fair at First Presbyterian, there will also be demonstrations by William Early in block printing. Included will be a new limited edition print of First Presbyterian Church that will be for sale. Diana Reist will also demonstrate calligraphy.

The Town Fair will be held today and Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the following seven sites: First Reformed Church, 40 E. Orange St.; the Lancaster County Library, 125 N. Duke St.; St. James Episcopal Church, Duke and Orange streets; First Presbyterian Church; Temple Beth El, 25 N. Lime St., and the Community Gallery, 135 N. Lime St.



Local artist William Early stands beside a controversial portrait of Lydia Smith, which can be seen at the 1986 Town Fair.

Lynch & Smith

A literate woman, Mrs. Smith corresponded with his Stevens' relatives, here reporting his failing health.

The Congressman insisted all address her as "Mrs. Smith"

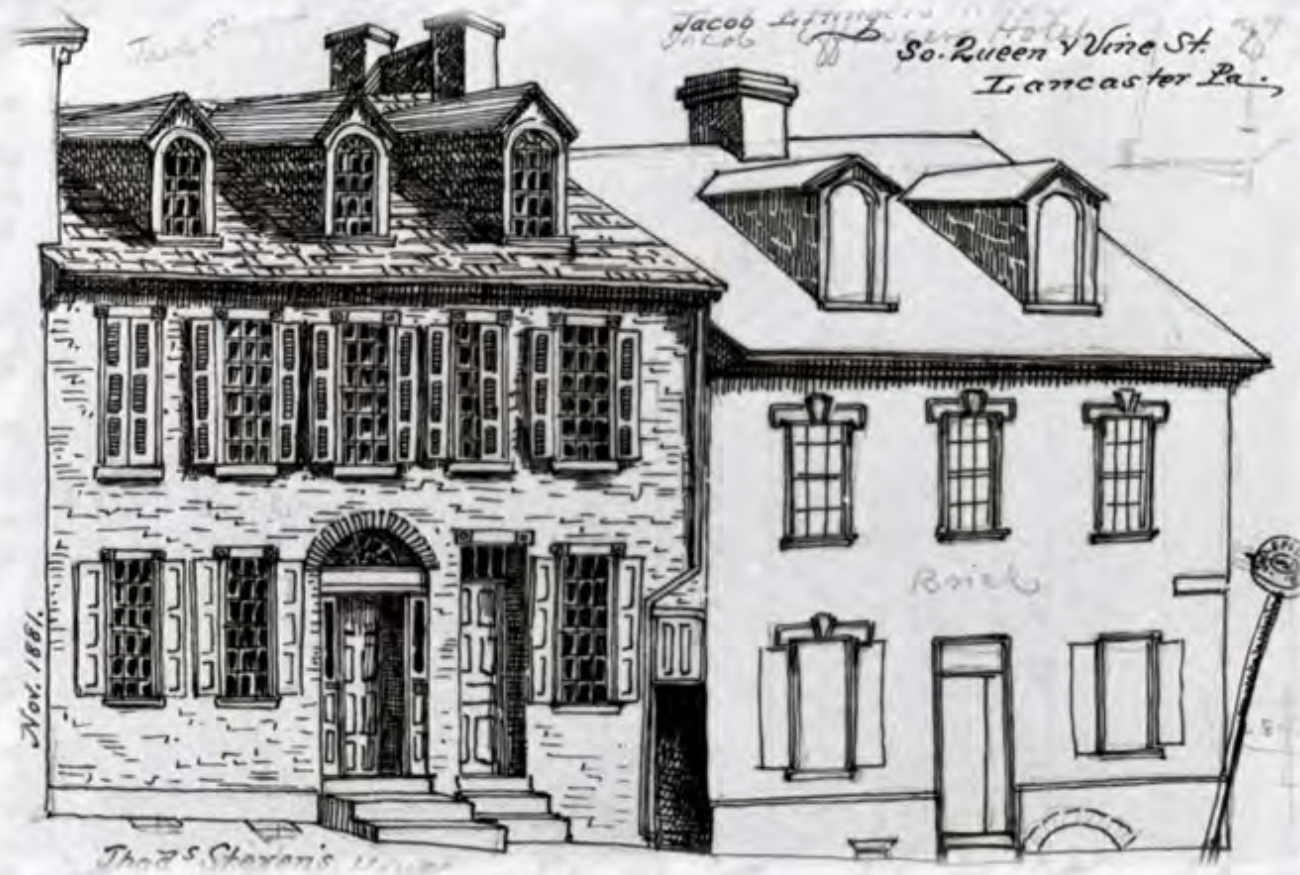
Washington Aug 7 18 68

Dear Thad
your need has been
quit low I had almost
given up but he is little
he has diarrhoea which
you know would not
hold on him he was so
well I will write to you
Every day and let you
know how he is

Yours

Lynch & Smith

Real estate dealings: 45-47 & 49 South Queen Street at Vine Street



Stevens acquired these properties, 1842

Property sale to Lydia Smith - her first home in Lancaster

Shaddew Stevens } This Indenture made the Day of April in the Year of Our Lord one
Lydia Smith } thousand Eight hundred and Sixty Between Shaddew Stevens, attorney at
law of Lancaster City Pennsylvania, of the One part, and Lydia Smith, widow
of the same place, of the Other part Witnesseth, that the said Shaddew Stevens for and in Consideration of
the sum of Five Hundred Dollars, in hand paid by the said Lydia Smith, at and before the Ensealing
Delivery hereof, the receipt and payment whereof he does hereby acknowledge and thereof do acquit and for ever
discharge the said Lydia Smith, her heirs, Executors and administrators by these presents, has granted, bargained

23 East Vine Street - \$500 April 1860



**23 East Vine Street (right) undergoing rehabilitation, 2006
After Stevens' death, she acquired adjoining land and built
21 East Vine Street (left).**

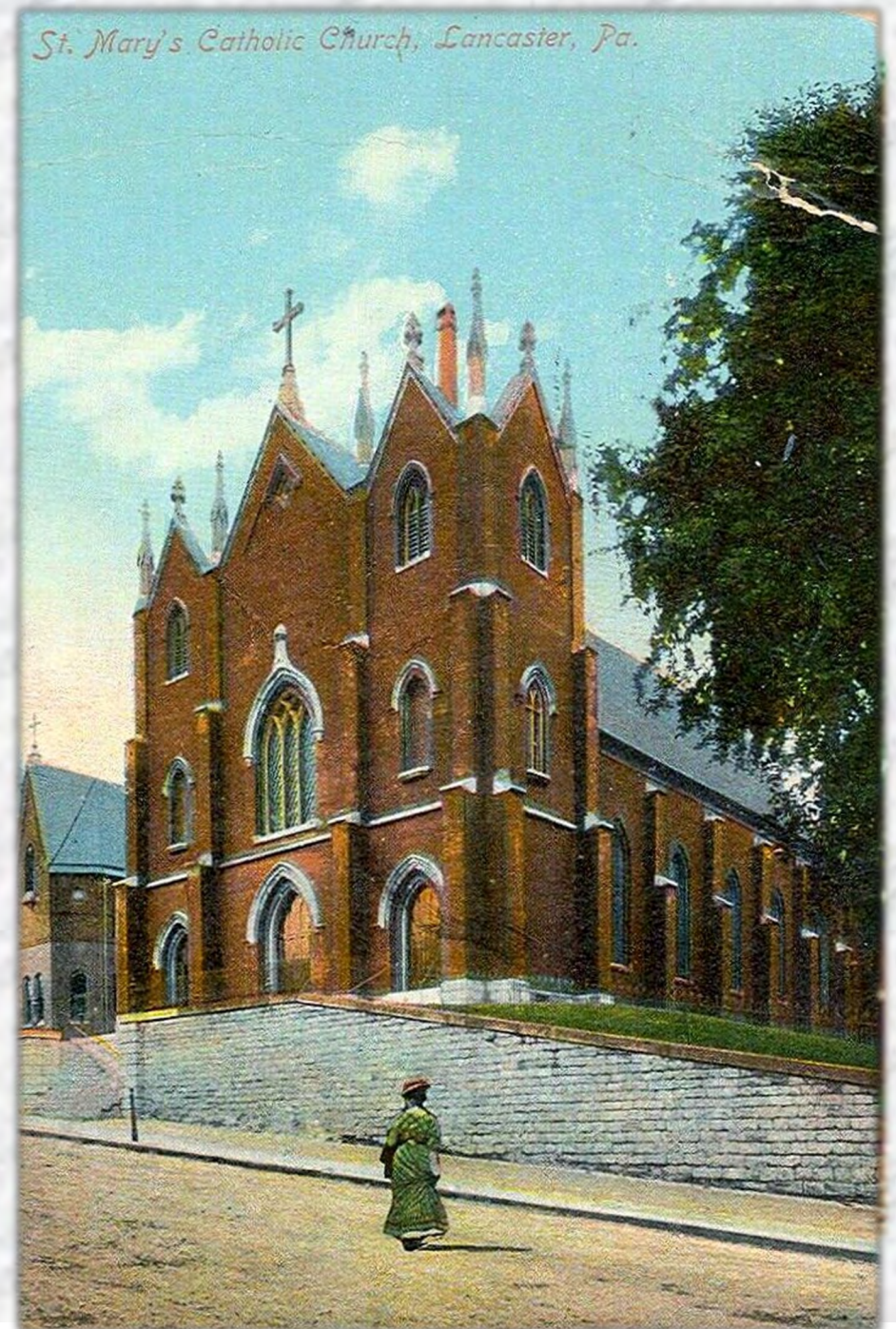


Photography by

21 & 23 East Vine Street, 2009

Saint Mary
Roman Catholic Church,
West Vine Street,
Lancaster

Lydia Smith's
home parish
1844-c. -1870



William and Isaac Smith

Lydia Smith's sons, William Smith (1835-1861) and Isaac Smith (1837-1884), were born in Gettysburg.

In Lancaster, 1852, William, Isaac, and their friends established the Shiffler Fire Company, a brigade of neighborhood volunteer firefighters. Thaddeus Stevens gave the brigade access to a building on his property where they gathered and stored their equipment.



William and Isaac Smith, *continued*

Tragically, William died at the age of 26 from a self-inflicted gunshot wound that occurred at Stevens' home. While different newspapers presented varying accounts, some referring to the incident as an accident and others claiming it was a case of suicide, the community mourned the loss of this young man.

DIED OF HIS INJURIES.—William Smith, the young colored man, who was injured week before last, at the residence of Hon. Thaddens Stevens, by the accidental discharge of a pistol, died on Tuesday last of his injuries.

Lancaster Intelligencer, Lancaster, PA April 16, 1861

William and Isaac, *continued*

Isaac, also known as “Little Ike,” followed in his father’s footsteps and became a barber and talented banjo player. Isaac later served as a private in the Union Army, Sixth Regiment, Company D, United States Colored Troops, from July 10, 1863, until December 15, 1864.

After the war, he operated a barber shop in what had been Congressman Stevens’ law office at 47 South Queen Street. Notably, Lydia acquired the property in 1871, purchasing it from Stevens’ estate.

Unfortunately, Isaac’s life was cut short, passing away in early April 1884, only two months after his mother’s death.

Isaac Smith dies

April 7, 1884

The Lancaster New

Era

April 8, 1884

Death of Isaac Smith.

Isaac Smith, more familiarly known as "Ike," died at his residence on North street, this city, on Monday evening about seven o'clock, after a short illness, aged 48 years. Deceased was the only surviving son—indeed, the only surviving child—of the late Mrs. Lydia Smith, who became famous as the colored housekeeper of Thaddeus Stevens, when the latter entertained the most distinguished men of the land; and Ike, who made his home for years in the house of Mr. Stevens, also knew many of the distinguished visitors, helped to wait on them and loved to talk about them. He was a barber by occupation, and was quite a good performer on the banjo. Indeed Ike and his banjo were almost inseparable. He inherited—in trust—the bulk of his mother's estate, but his enjoyment of it was very short-lived. A wife and one child survive. The funeral will take place on Wednesday afternoon at 1:30. Interment at St. Mary's Cemetery.

Death of "Little Ike" Smith.

Isaac Smith, colored, the well known barber, died last evening, at his home, on North street, of gastritis, after an illness of about two weeks. Deceased was 48 years old, and the only son of the late Lydia Smith, Thaddeus Stevens' house keeper, who died but a short time ago. He was known by almost every one as "Little Ike." Besides being a good barber, he was an excellent banjo player and whistler. For a number of years past he had a barber shop on South Queen street, near Vine.

Death of Little Ike Isaac Smith Lancaster Intelligencer, April 9, 1884

The Lancaster Intelligencer.

188

LANCASTER, PA., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 1884.

CLOTHING
M. THOMAS & SONS, PA.
MEDICAL
C. M. HERRICK, M.D.
PAUL VARGAS
A MISTERY IN MEDICINE.
SHERIFF'S REPORT.
Under date of May 14, 1883, Mr. Isaiah Cook, formerly sheriff of Showhogan, Pa., writes as follows: "I have been afflicted for over two years with a disease which was to the same end. I need not describe them, but something of their nature may be guessed at, when I say it was long before the time when I was conducting were to the same end."
D. H. COOK

Foul Play Uncharged.

Samuel Allen, Charles Lee, John Young, George Kirk and Peter Woods, all colored appeared before Alderman Fordney, Tuesday, and made affidavit that they believed "foul play had been perpetrated" with regard to the sudden death of Isaac Smith colored whose death took place Monday night, and that a post mortem examination ought to be held. The matter was referred to Coroner Shiffer, who called upon Dr. F. S. Musser, the attending physician, who convinced the coroner that there was no foundation for the suspicion, death having resulted from gastritis, brought on by long continued dissipation. The coroner declined to make a post mortem.

Leiderkrans Concert and Sociable.

Lancaster New Era April 9, 1884

THE LATE ISAAC SMITH.

Some of His Friends Suspect Foul Play—No Ground for the Suspicion.

On Tuesday afternoon Coroner Shiffer was handed a paper, of which the following is a copy.

"Personally appeared before me, W. J. Fordney, an alderman in and for the city of Lancaster, Samuel Allen, Charles H. Lee, John Young, George Kirk and Peter Woods, who, being duly sworn according to law, doth each and all of them depose and say that they believe that foul play has been perpetrated with regard to the sudden death of Isaac Smith, and they therefore ask and pray that a post mortem examination be held on the body of the said Isaac Smith."

The coroner at once called on Dr. F. M. Musser, the attending physician, and learned from him that death was caused by inflammation, brought on principally by an excessive use of liquors. The coroner also made inquiries from other sources and, having been satisfied that there was no foundation for the affidavit made, he declined to hold an inquest or have the post mortem examination made, as prayed for.

Coroner refuses request from Isaac Smith's friends to investigate circumstances of his death.

On to Washington...

Mrs. Smith joins the new Congressman in Capital, beginning in 1849

Stevens Richard M. carp, 362 Md av
Stevens R. J. clk com H Rep, 428 1st e
Stevens Roswell H. clk, 1st e bet C and D s
STEVENS THADDEUS; M C, 279
B south
Stevens Wm. helper, 532 7th e
Stevens Wm. [c] driver. Bate's al

Smith Lucy H, clk Int Rev, 6 4½ w
Smith L. W. clk, 94 7th w
Smith Lydia, wid Jacob, 279 B s
Smith M. Miss, clk Treas, 328 18th w
Smith Madison, [c] 17½ w nr M n

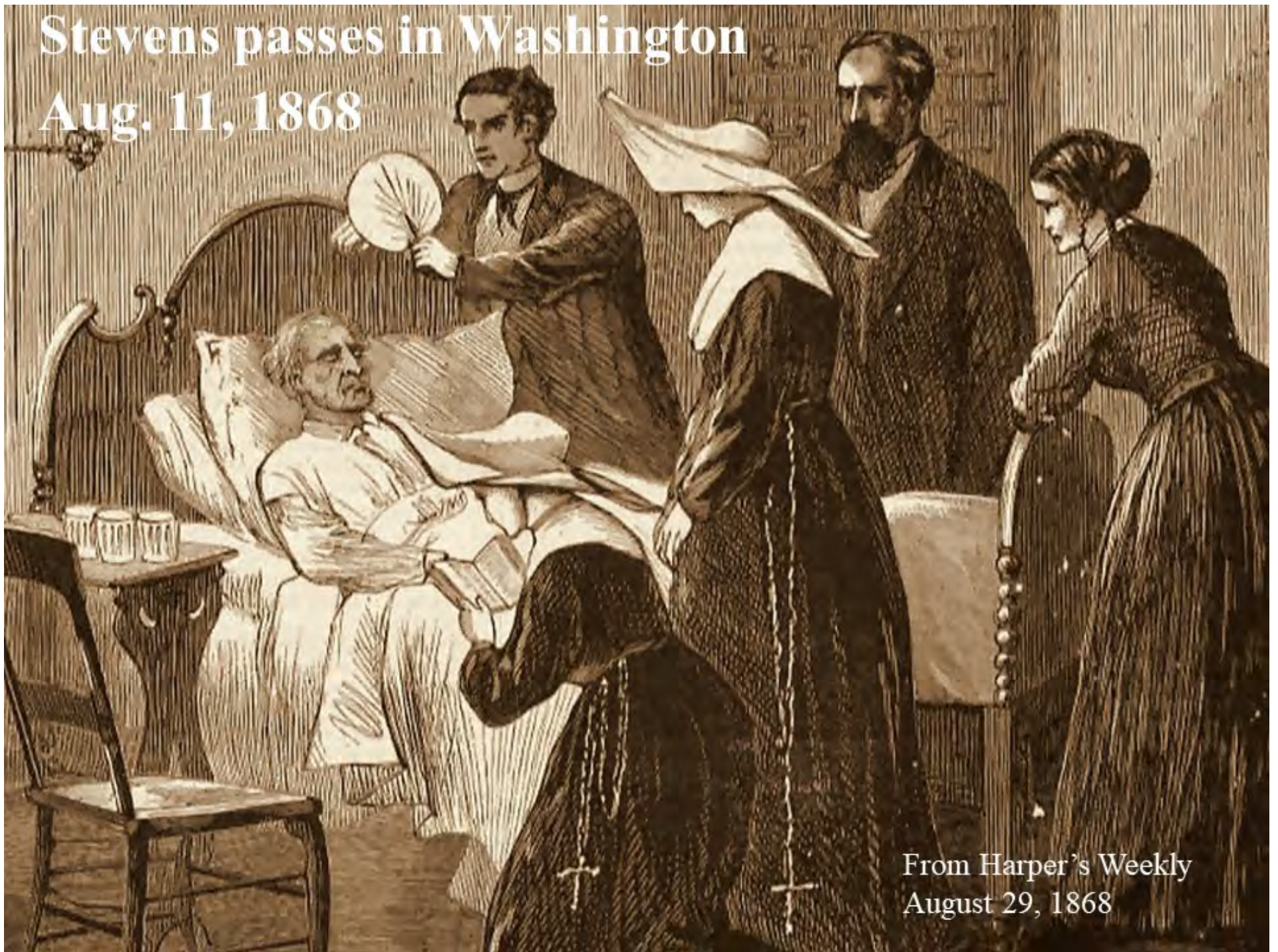
Washington City Directory, 1868

She provided intimate care to the gravely ill Stevens at their DC home, 1860s.

As Stevens nears death, Mrs. Smith asked nuns from nearby church to pray for him and administer baptism.



Stevens passes in Washington Aug. 11, 1868



From Harper's Weekly
August 29, 1868



**Stevens dies
August 11, 1868**

**Body lay in state,
Capitol Rotunda,
August 13, 1868**

Stevens' memorial service

FRANK LESLIE'S WEEKLY 19 AUGUST 1868

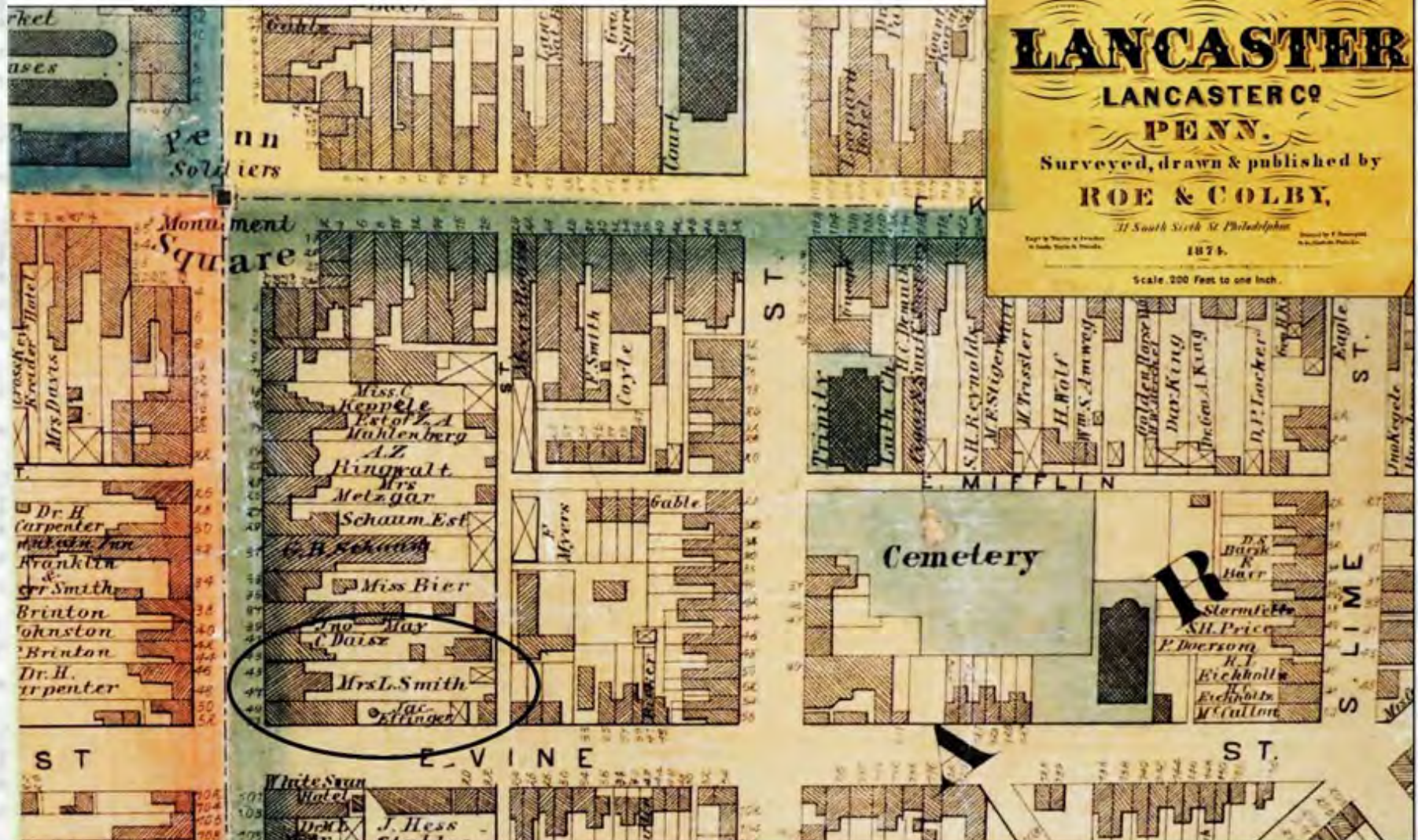


Detail of historical marker, Shriener-Concord Cemetery, Lancaster, PA

Mrs. Smith shown in mourning veil at the head of the casket,
Shreiner-Concord Cemetery, Lancaster, PA

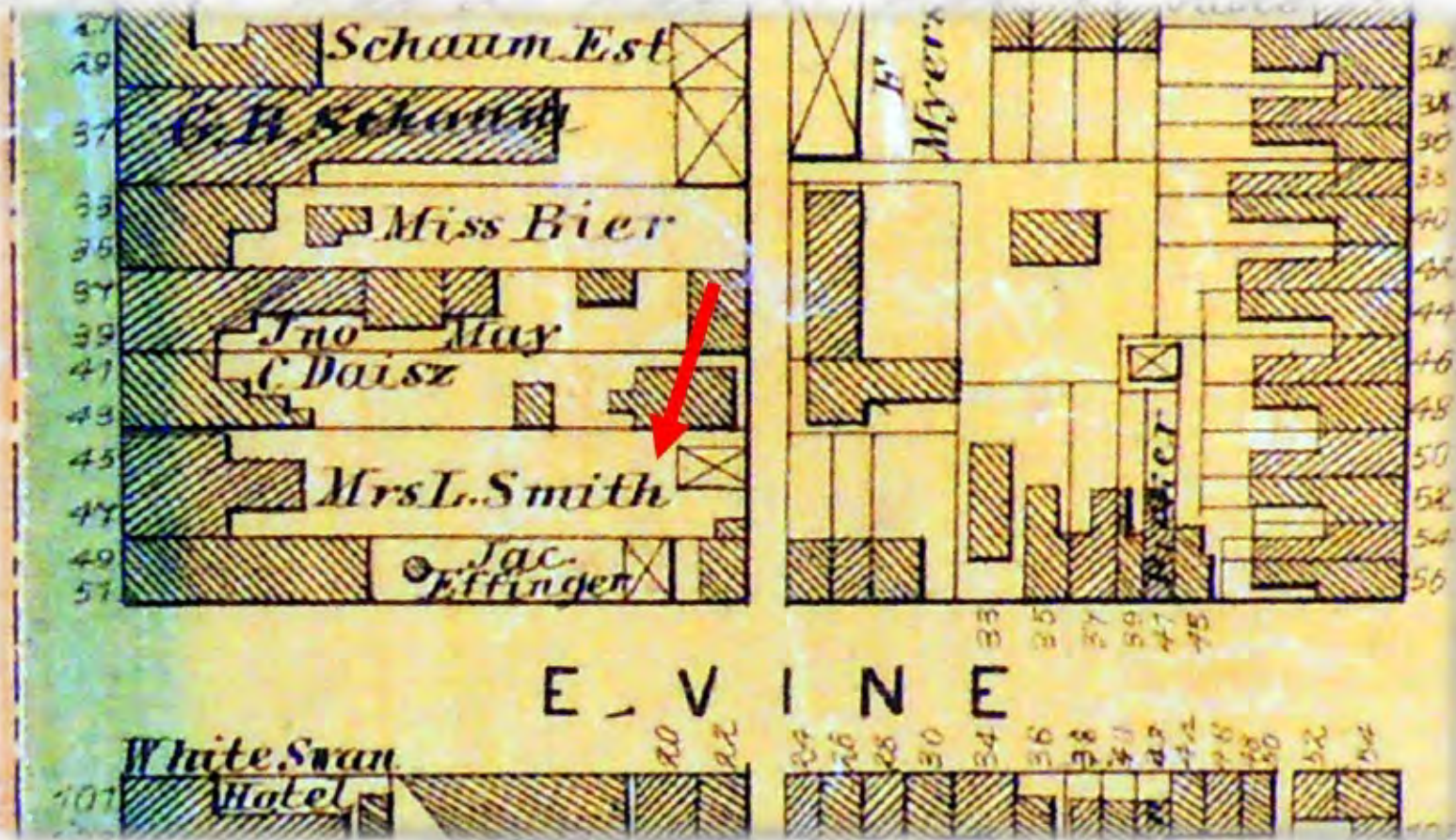
Properties of Lydia Hamilton Smith, Lancaster, PA

Map courtesy LancasterHistory.org

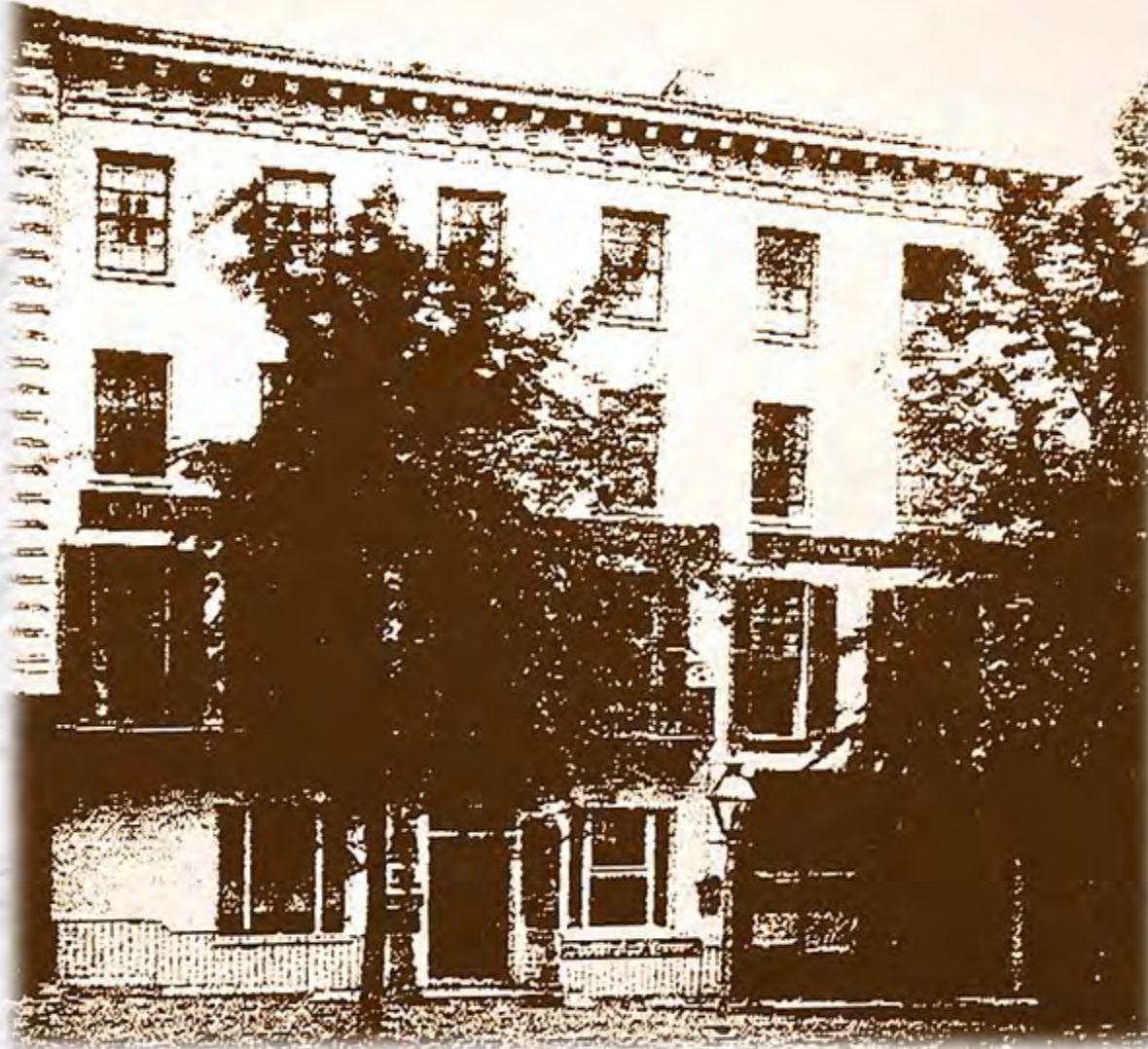


Stevens' \$5000 bequest to Mrs. Smith...

She acquires their shared residence, c. 1871



Roe Colby Map, City of Lancaster, PA, 1874

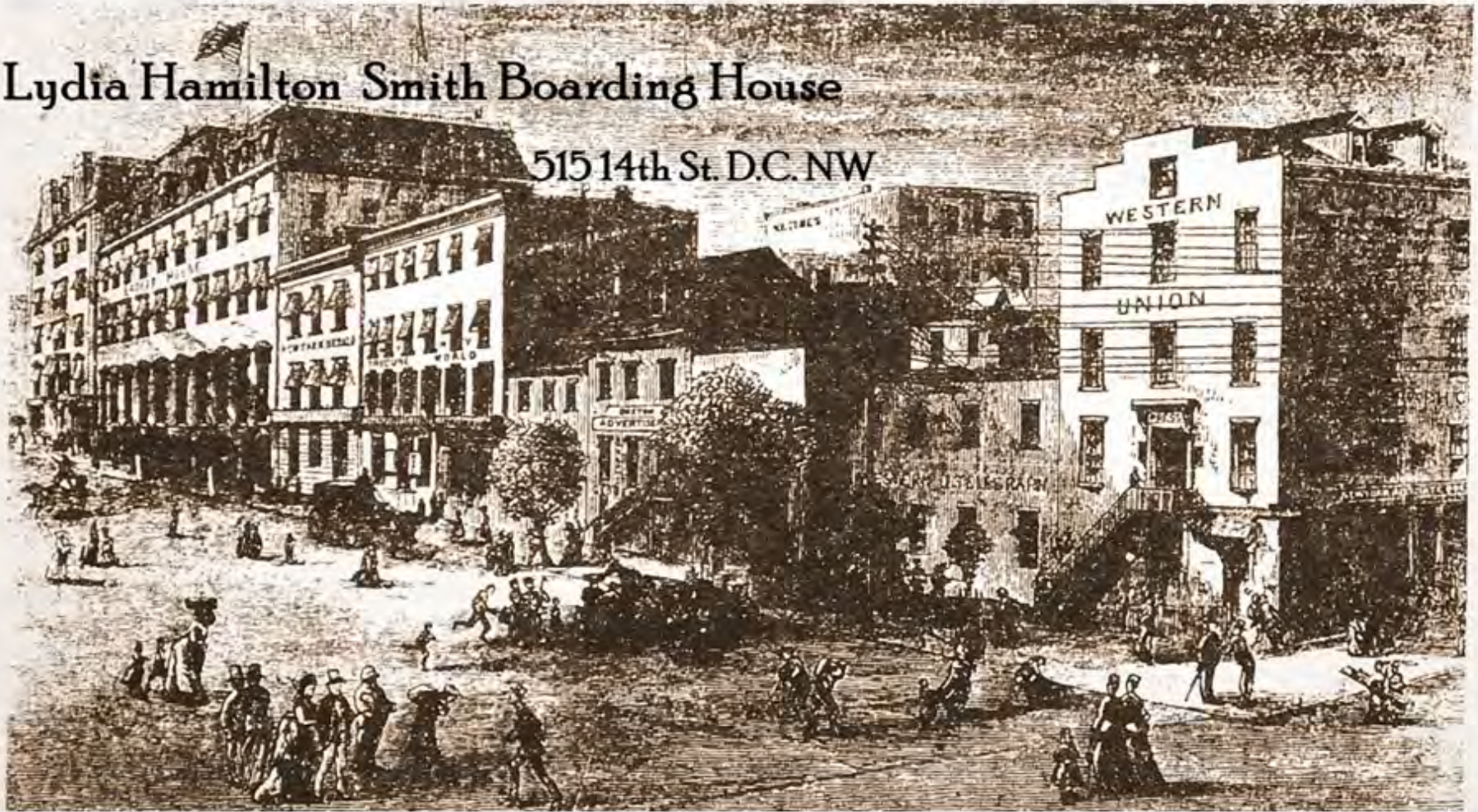


**Lives here &
manages a
boarding
house,
c. 1870-1884**

Home & business of Henry Augustus Willard
515 Fourteenth Street, Washington, D.C. - 1858-1861

Lydia Hamilton Smith Boarding House

515 14th St. D.C. NW



Courtesy of National Press Club Archives, Washington DC

Newspaper Row

Saint Augustine Catholic Church

Oldest Black Catholic Church
in the Nation's Capital

15th Street NW between M & L

Dedicated June 11, 1876

Mrs. Smith was a member
here.

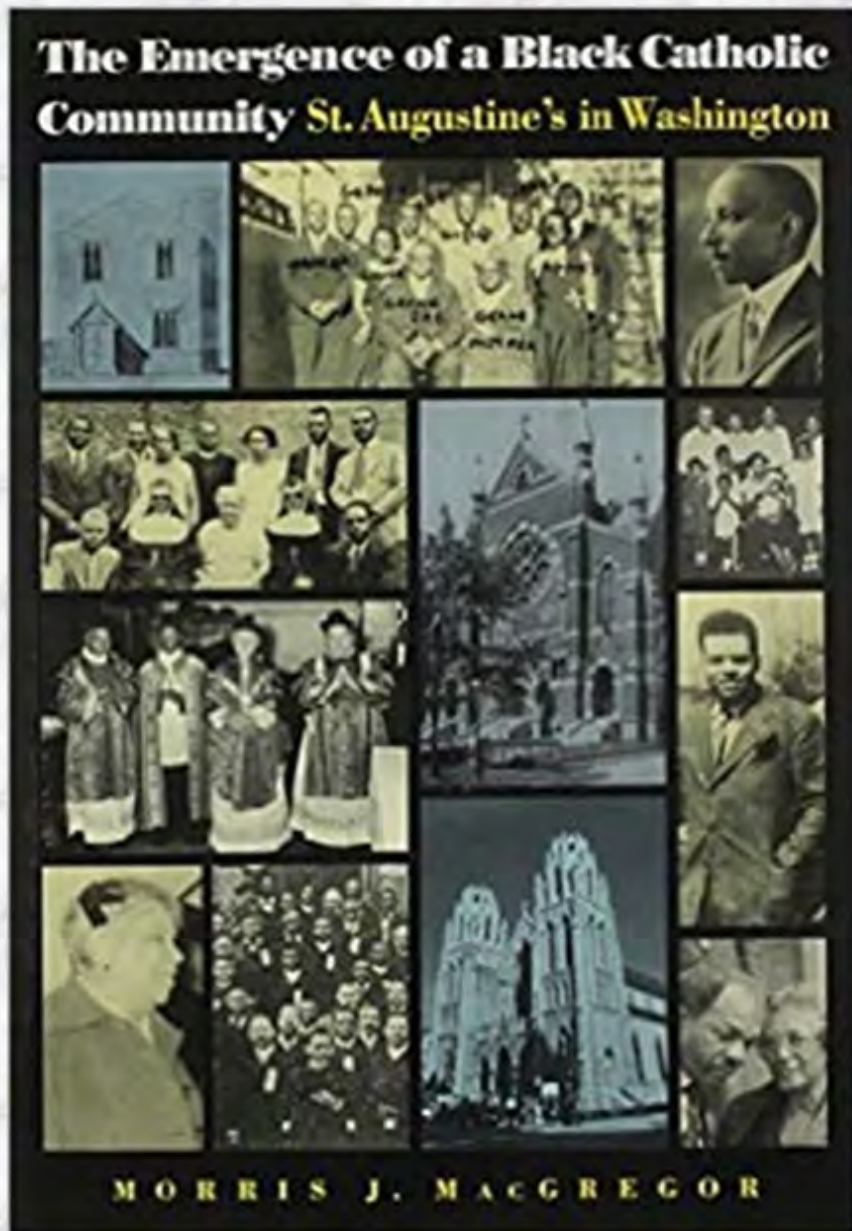
Demolished 1947.

Present church

15th and V Streets, NW



From Saint August historical marker — <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=154001>



Overlooked
The Emergence of a
Black Catholic
Community:

St. Augustine's in Washington

Morris J. MacGregor

1999

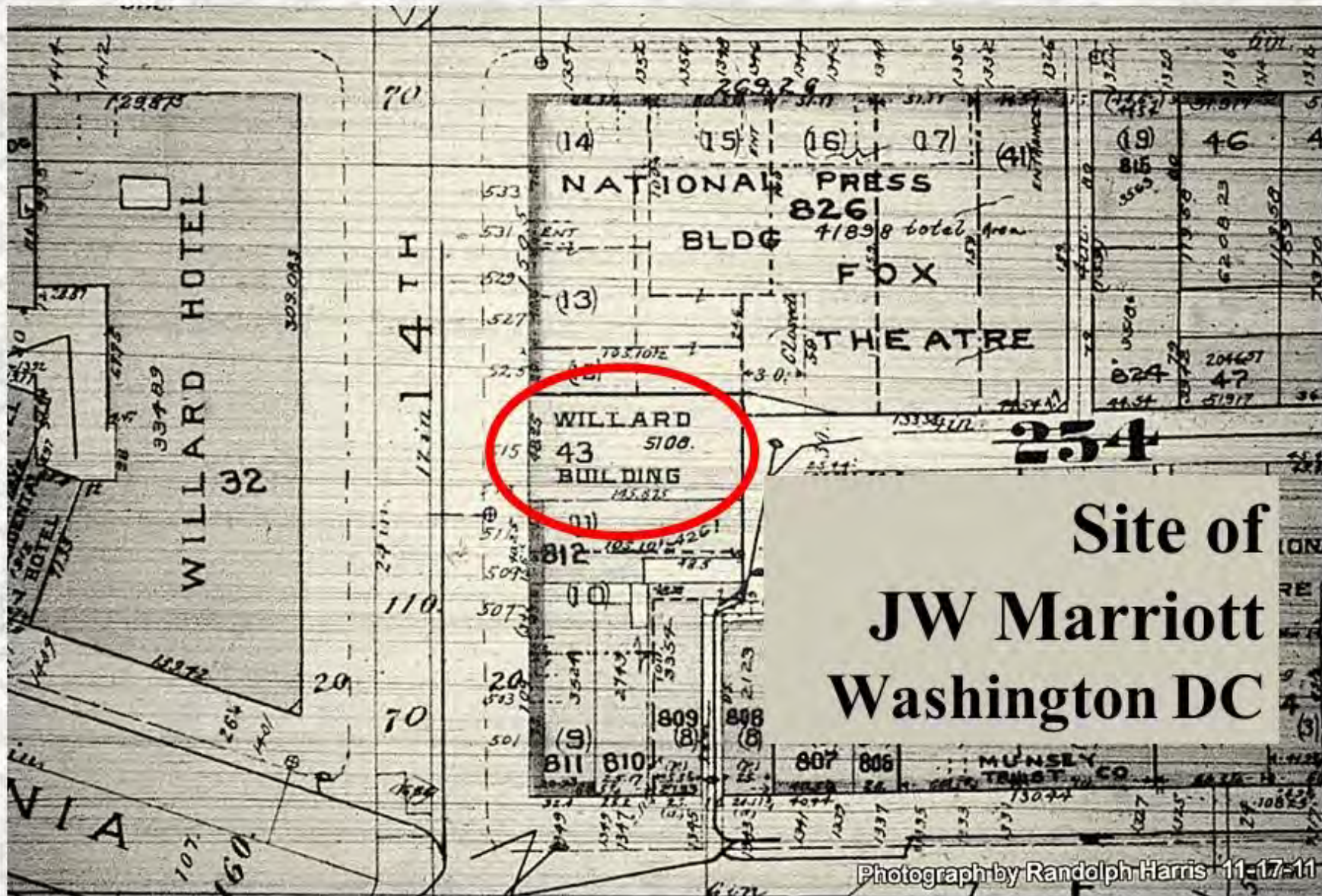
300 pages

No mention of
Lydia Hamilton Smith

30 years after her spouse's death...
did she choose to be known as a widow?

Smith Lucy, servt, 415 6th nw
Smith Lucy, servt, 258 Schott al ne
Smith Lucy, sewing, Murray ct ne
Smith Lucy, wid Peter, 1406 Riggs nw
Smith Lucy E, teacher, 903 16th nw
Smith Lula, washing, 484 School sw
Smith Lydia, wid Jacob, 515 14th nw
Smith Lydia F, 1111 8th nw
Smith Lynden A, clk bu ed, 1413 N n
Smith Madison, shoemkr, 2513 M nw
H av

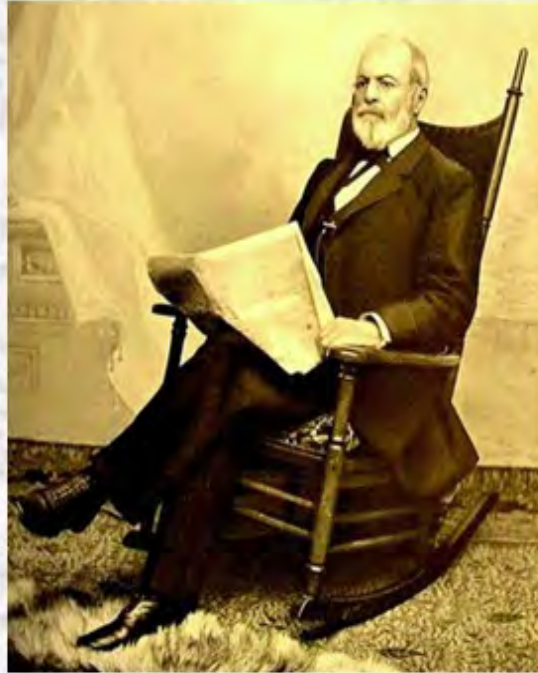
D.C. Directory, 1883



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1892

The Griest – Smith Interview, 1883

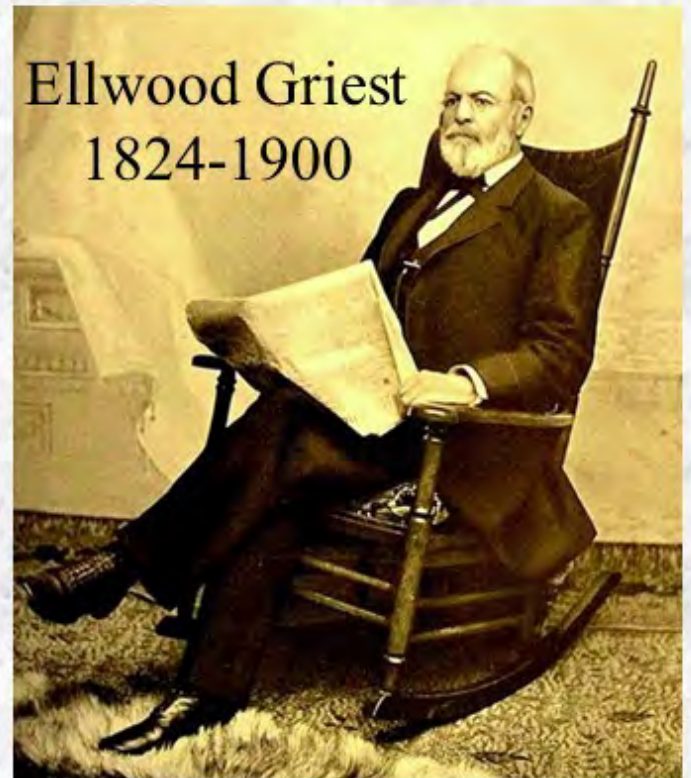
A story of friendship, politics & public relations



LancasterHistory



Mrs. Smith's anecdotes
in two weekly columns in
Griest's *Lancaster Inquirer*



burnished Stevens' legacy, October, 1883,
just a few months before her passing

Ellwood Griest interview with Lydia Smith, excerpt *Lancaster Inquirer*, Oct. 6, 1883

THIS AND THAT.

Mrs. Lydia Smith, Thaddens Stevens' housekeeper for twenty-four years, who was in Lancaster last week attending the wedding of Dr. Henry Carpenter's daughter, told me that she was born in Adams county in the very house to which James Buchanan's father first went when he landed in this country. There he found the friend of his boyhood, Joshua Russell, who had preceeded him in the search for home and fortune in the new world. The report that she was born in slavery and rescued therefrom by Mr. Stevens, Mrs. Smith attributes to the fact that Mr. Stevens' first housekeeper, Keziah Shannon, was at one time the chattel of a Carlisle, Pa., man named Shannon. From him she ran off and found her way to Gettysburg. Mr. Stevens ascertained that by the law of 1780 she was entitled to her freedom. She obtained it after a legal contest with her former master. Keziah removed with the family of John McCleery, who kept hotel in Gettysburg, to Westminster, Md., where she married a mulatto named Ephraim Wolrich.

Soon afterwards he was offered for sale. Twice Keziah walked from Westminster to Gettysburg and begged Mr. Stevens to buy her husband. She did not supplicate vainly; but within a year's time her recreant husband behaved so badly that Stevens was compelled to turn him out of the situation he had given him in his own Gettysburg home. This so distressed the poor woman that she hanged herself in the chimney corner on the evening before the day fixed for their departure from the house of their benefactor. Here Mrs. Smith's mother, who dropped in to make a call, found her. Prompt medical aid restored the poor woman to consciousness. The very next night in their new home near the Gettysburg poor-house, Dr. David Horner was instrumental in again frustrating her determination to die. "Ah," said Mrs. Smith, "I have heard Mr. Stevens say she was the handsomest woman that he had ever seen." But consumption and a brutal husband soon accomplished what she had twice vainly endeavored; and, in the first six months of 1837, Mrs. Smith, then Miss O'Neill, standing at the window of her Gettysburg home, saw carried to the little Catholic church-yard near by wife, husband and little boy. Long years after, Bill, the only surviving issue of this unfortunate and unhappy alliance came to Lancaster and sought aid from Mr. Stevens, and by him was helped to New York city, where he engaged as a waiter on the great ship Central America that sailed away and never reached port again. Such is the story of Thaddens Stevens' first housekeeper as it was told to me by the last woman who presided over his domestic affairs. Mrs. Smith now lives in Washington; she keeps a boarding house at 515 Fourteenth street, adjoining the Ebbitt House.

THE "GREAT COMMONER."

Mrs. Lydia Smith, Thaddeus Stevens' House-keeper for Twenty-Four Years, Relates Some Anecdotes.

Lancaster Letter in the Phila. Times.

"Upon that very table upon which you are now taking notes Mr. Stevens wrote his last will," said Mrs. Lydia Smith to the writer, as we sat to-day in the library room of Thaddeus Stevens' old Lancaster home, No. 45 South Queen street. The appearance of both house and housekeeper evince the flight of time, and, while a barber's pole now stands sentinel at the entrance of the old Commoner's law office and a wooden Indian dressed in war-paint and decorated with tobacco leaves tells the story of the bachelor-statesman's parlor, advancing age has wrinkled the face and whitened the hair of the once handsome and yet prepossessing quadroon woman who for twenty-four years managed the domestic affairs of Thaddeus Stevens. She now owns this place, as well as two other dwelling houses in this city and some property in Washington, where she lives and keeps a boarding-house, adjoining the Eblitt House. She pays frequent visits to this city and has two rooms—the library and the bed room of Mr. Stevens—reserved for her own use.

Excerpt, interview with Lydia Hamilton Smith

The Lancaster Inquirer, October 20, 1883

STEVENS BAPTIZED A CATHOLIC.

"Mrs. Smith, it is both affirmed and denied that Stevens, just prior to his death, was baptized in the Catholic faith. What are the facts?"

"Out of those very windows," was the emphatic reply, as she pointed to the street, "Mr. Stevens once looked across to yonder pump and said that he would rather go a hundred miles to be administered to by one of those pure, tender Sisters whom he had seen in Washington, than to send across the street there for all the clergymen in the country. On the afternoon of the day of his death, 11th August, 1868, I said to him: 'Would you have any objections to being baptized?' 'No,' was his reply, and just after two colored men, many of whom from all parts of the country came to the house to pray for his recovery, had left, two hours before his death, Sister Laretta O'Reilly, of Washington city, baptized him. And," continued Mrs. Smith, whom it must be remembered is a devout Catholic and herself claims to have induced Stevens to this step, "I believe that he is safe in heaven to-day."

Stevens
baptized
near death
by Roman
Catholic
nuns at
Lydia's
behest at
D.C. home

Weekly Examiner, Lancaster, PA, Feb. 20, 1884

A NOTED WOMAN GONE.

SUDDEN DEATH OF MRS. LYDIA SMITH.

**The Faithful Housekeeper of Hon. Thaddeus
Stevens Stricken With Apoplexy.**

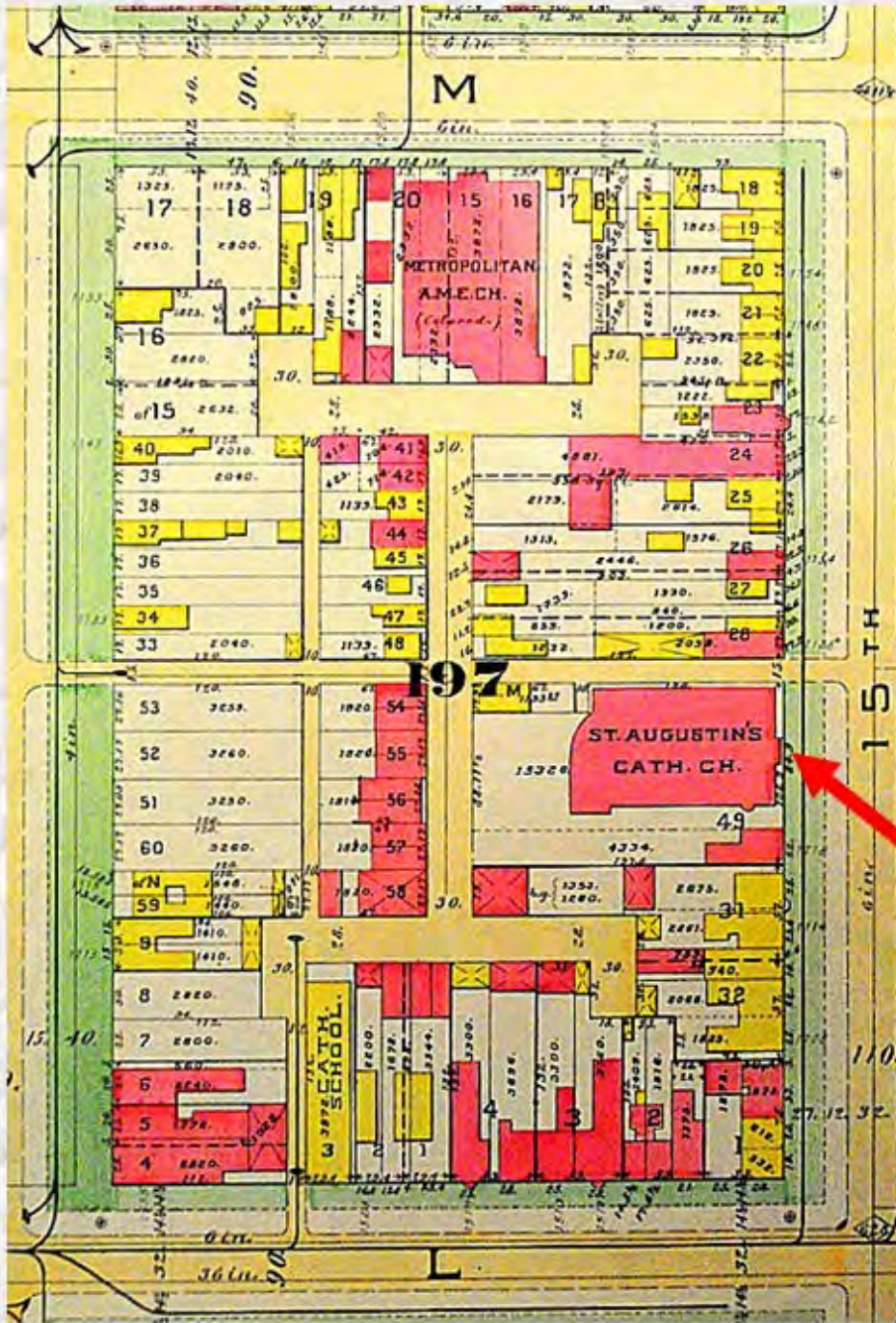
***‘She was generous to a fault,
never being able to resist an
appeal for help...many were the
deeds of kindness she performed
during her life.’***

Funeral of Mrs. Lydia Smith

"...among the people of Washington, white and colored, she was respected highly, a fact which was attested by the large number who attended the funeral services at Saint Augustine's Catholic Church this morning. Rev. Father Walsh conducted."

**Obituary, Evening Star,
Washington, D.C.
15 February 1884**

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Washington DC, 1890



Death certificate,
Lydia Hamilton Smith
Washington D.C.
February 14, 1884

She died at 69 years,
no months, no days--
the anniversary of her
birth in 1815

The Special Attention of Physicians is respectfully invited to the Remarks below, and to the Mode of Disease on the face of this Certificate.

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH.

TO THE HEALTH OFFICER, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

Permit No. *40890*

Date of Death *February 14th* 188*4*

Full Name of Deceased *Lydia A. Smith*

Sex *Female*

Age *69* Years _____ Months _____ Days _____

Color *Petechial*

Married, Single, Widow, or Widower, [Cross out the words not required in this case.] _____

Occupation *Housekeeper*

Birthplace *Edinburgh, Pa.*

Nativity of Father *Ireland* Nativity of Mother *Pa.*

Duration of Residence in the District of Columbia *Twenty eight (28) years*

Place of Death, [Give Street and Number.] *14th St. No. 555 - Washington D.C.*

Cause of Death. First, (Primary) *Calcification of Cerebral Arteries,*
Duration *not known*

Second, (Immediate) *Cerebral Hemorrhage.*

Duration of Last Sickness *Five days*

The above information should be furnished by the Physician. In case of death by zymotic disease, please state what, if any, local cause existed to produce the same.

Place of Burial *Leicester Pa.*

Date of Burial _____

Undertaker *W. B. B. Co. 316*

Place *Pa. No. 1333 7th St.*

I CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF THE ORIGINAL CERTIFICATE FILED WITH THE VITAL RECORDS DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

WARNING: IT IS UNLAWFUL TO MAKE COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT AND PRESENT THEM AS AN ORIGINAL CERTIFICATE COPY OR COPY OF A VITAL RECORD.

Carl W. Wilson

March 29, 2001
DATE ISSUED. CARL W. WILSON, REGISTRAR

Permit No. 40090
 Date of Death February 14th 1884
 Full Name of Deceased Lydia A. Smith
 Sex Female
 Age 69. Years _____ Months _____ Days.
 Color ~~Black~~ ? ~~White~~
 Married, Single, Widow, or Widower, [Cross out the words not required in this line.] (b)
 Occupation Housekeeper
 Birthplace Galveston Texas
 Nativity of Father Ireland Nativity of Mother _____
 Duration of Residence in the District of Columbia Twenty eight (28) years
 1856 1884

Her mixed race ancestry confuses the staff
 of the D.C. Coroner's Office.
 Note ancestry of her father: *Ireland*

The Death of Lydia Smith.

A COLORED WOMAN WHO BECAME FAMOUS AS THADDEUS STEVENS' HOUSEKEEPER.

Mrs. Lydia Smith, a colored woman, who obtained a national reputation through her connection with the late Thaddeus Stevens, "the great commoner," died early yesterday morning at her home on 14th street, opposite Willard's, aged sixty-nine years. When Mr. Stevens was elected to Congress, Mrs. Smith, who was a native of Lancaster, Pa., came with him to this city as his housekeeper. Up to the day of Mr. Stevens' death—the 5th of August, 1868—Mrs. Smith, in whom he placed implicit confidence, directed the affairs of his bachelor establishment and ministered to his wants. She was remembered in his will with a bequest of \$5,000 in cash and property in Lancaster and in this city. Mrs. Smith while in Justice Walter's office, near the court house, last Friday, attending to some legal business, was stricken with paralysis and was removed to her home. She never afterwards recovered her speech or consciousness. She was a native of Pennsylvania, and resided many years at Lancaster, where her only son is living and where she has some property. She also left some property in this city, and altogether an estate amounting, it is thought, to more than \$10,000. She was a remarkably intelligent woman, of generous disposition, and was well and favorably known. Among the people of Washington, white and colored, she was respected highly, a fact which was attested by the large number who attended the funeral services at St. Augustine's Catholic church at 8:30 o'clock this morning. The services were conducted by Rev. Father Walsh. The remains were taken by Mr. Burgdorf, the undertaker, to the Baltimore and Potomac depot and placed on the 9:30 o'clock train for Lancaster, Pa., where the interment will take place.

...a remarkably intelligent woman, of generous disposition, was well and favorably known.'

*Obituary, Evening Star,
Washington D.C.*

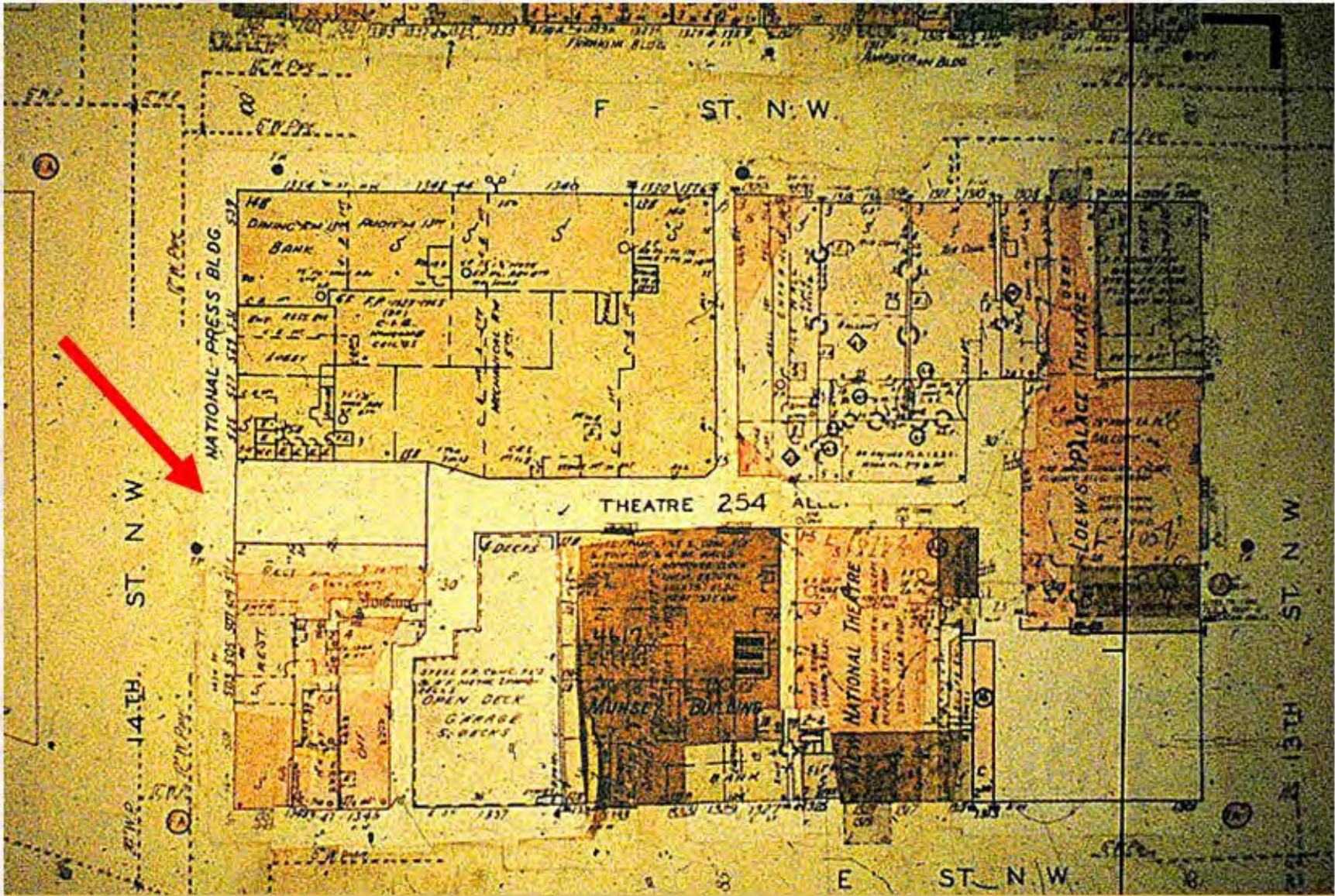
February 15, 1884

The Evening Star, Washington, D.C. Feb. 25, 1884

Attorney Sydney A. Fitch of Washington. D.C. appointed estate “collector” - Co-administrator

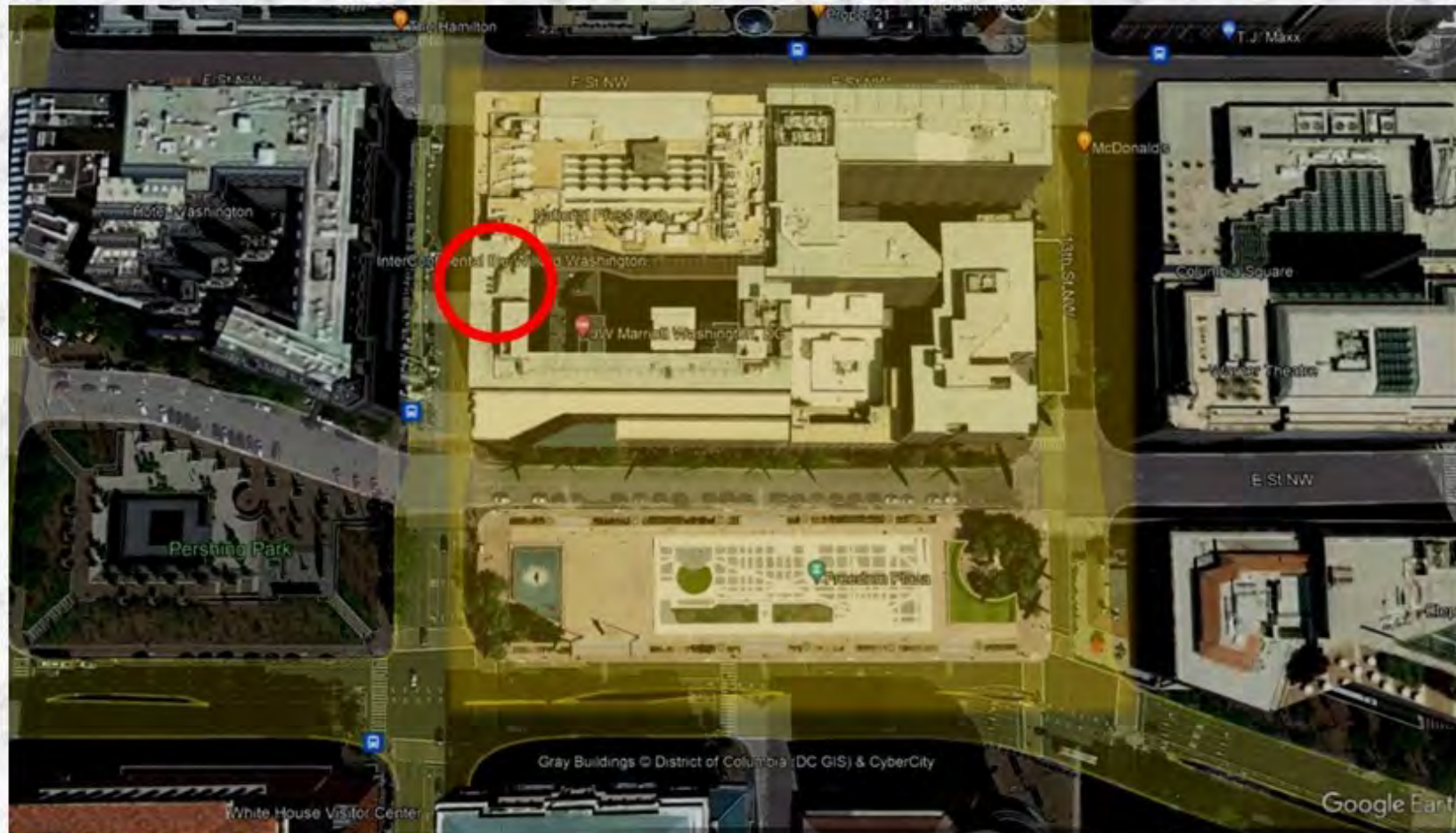
PROBATE COURT—Judge MacArthur.
Saturday, estate of Dr. J. S. Beale; order appointing Fanny M. Beale administratrix and guardian on bond aggregating \$11,000. Will of Edward Simms; filed and citation issued. Will of Lydia A. Smith; order appointing Sidney A. Fitch collector and placing bond at \$5,000. In re Betsey Smith; order of publication issued. Estate of Augustus S. French; order appointing Caroline M. French administratrix; bond, \$150. In re guardian-

Lydia’s estate was probated partly in Washington. In Lancaster, her estate was not probated until 1916, at which time there was little cash left to distribute, according to contemporary news articles.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1960, updated to 1974 – MLK Public Library

J.W. Marriot, Freedom Plaza and National Theater

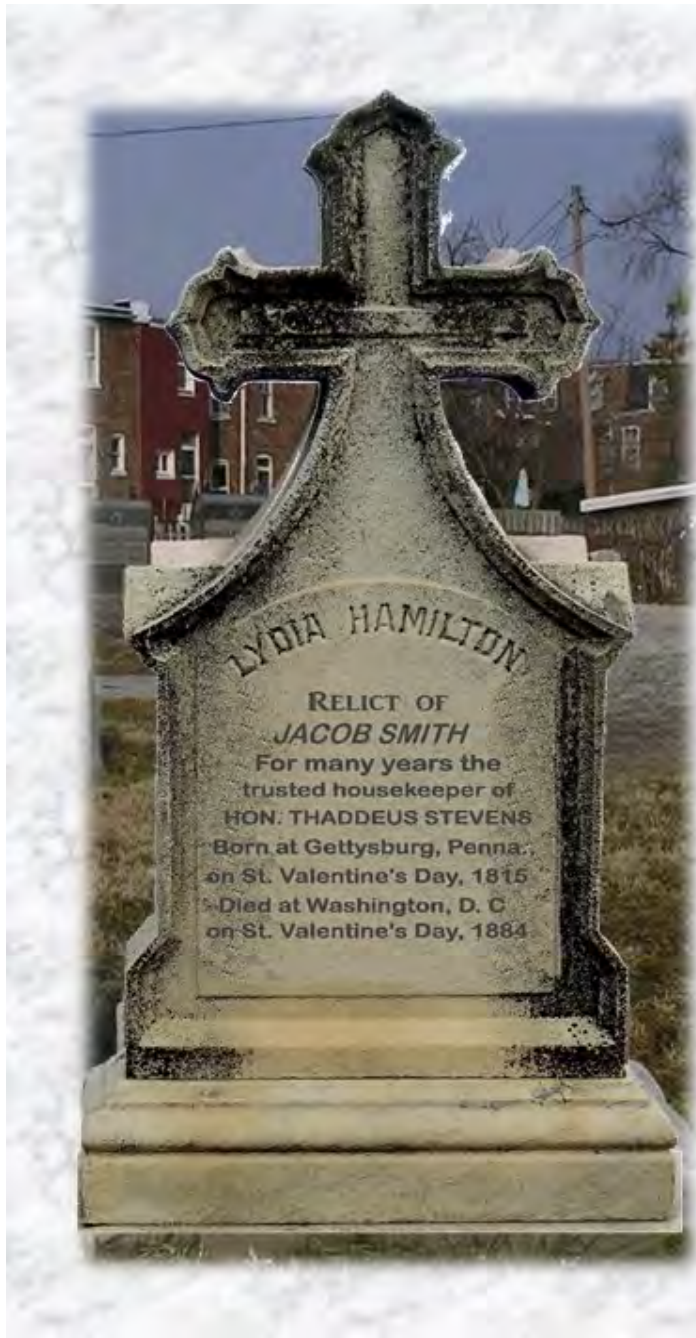


Approximate location of Mrs. Smith's boarding home, 515 14th St. NW



JW Marriott, 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Once the location of Mrs. Smith, four-story boarding house, which she purchased from the Willard Family, noted hoteliers. Her property stood here until the 1970s when this development was constructed on the site.



LYDIA HAMILTON

Relict of

JACOB SMITH

For many years the

trusted housekeeper of

HON. THADDEUS STEVENS.

Born at Gettysburg, Penna.,

on St. Valentine's Day, 1813.

Died at Washington, D. C.,

on St. Valentine's Day, 1884

The inscriptions on the gravestones of all three Smith family members have led to questions about their birth and death years.

Lydia's gravestone states that she was born on the feast day of Saint Valentine in 1813, while her death certificate and multiple obituaries suggest her birth year as 1815.

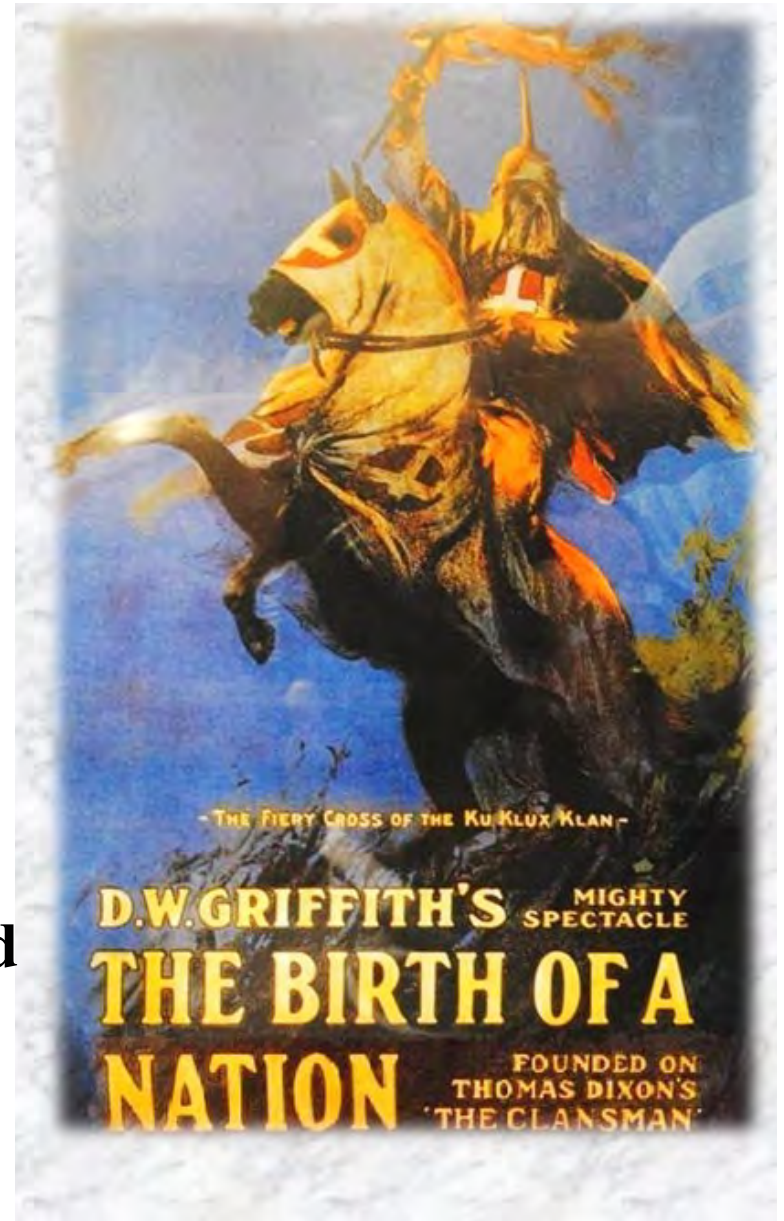
Similarly, Isaac's gravestone claims that he died "in his 37th year," yet obituaries from Lancaster newspapers report his age at 48.

Finally, year of William's death is 1861, according to newspaper accounts, not 1860, as shown on his gravestone.

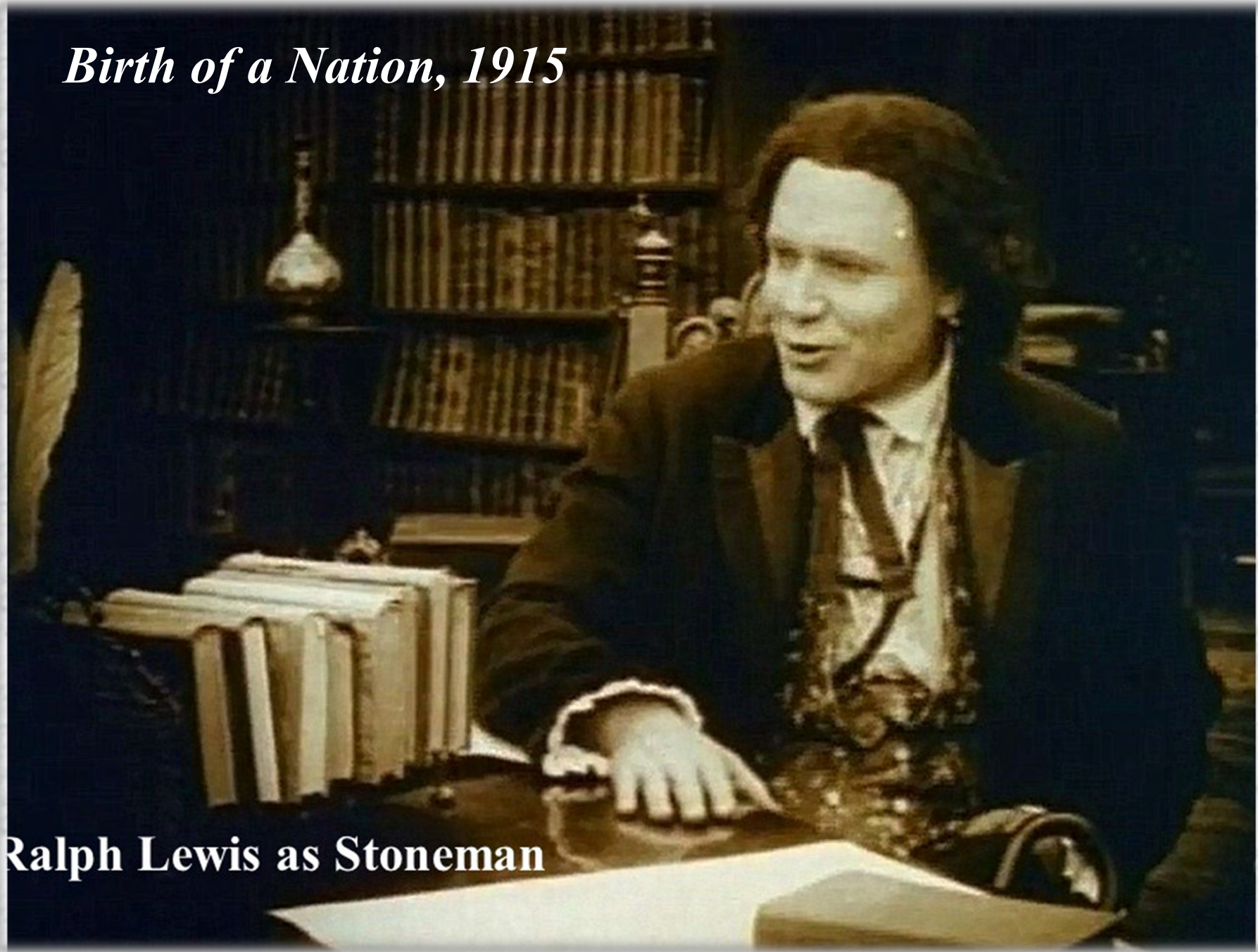
Stevens' & Smith's reputations were maligned in the nation's first major motion picture, 1916.

Besides *Birth of a Nation*, Lydia's relationship to Stevens was also impugned in *The Clansman*, the 1905 novel on which the racist film was based. Thomas Dixon was the author of both works.

Black clergymen in Lancaster protested a scheduled performance of the Clansman as a live play in 1906. They convinced Mayor J.P. McCaskey to ban it.

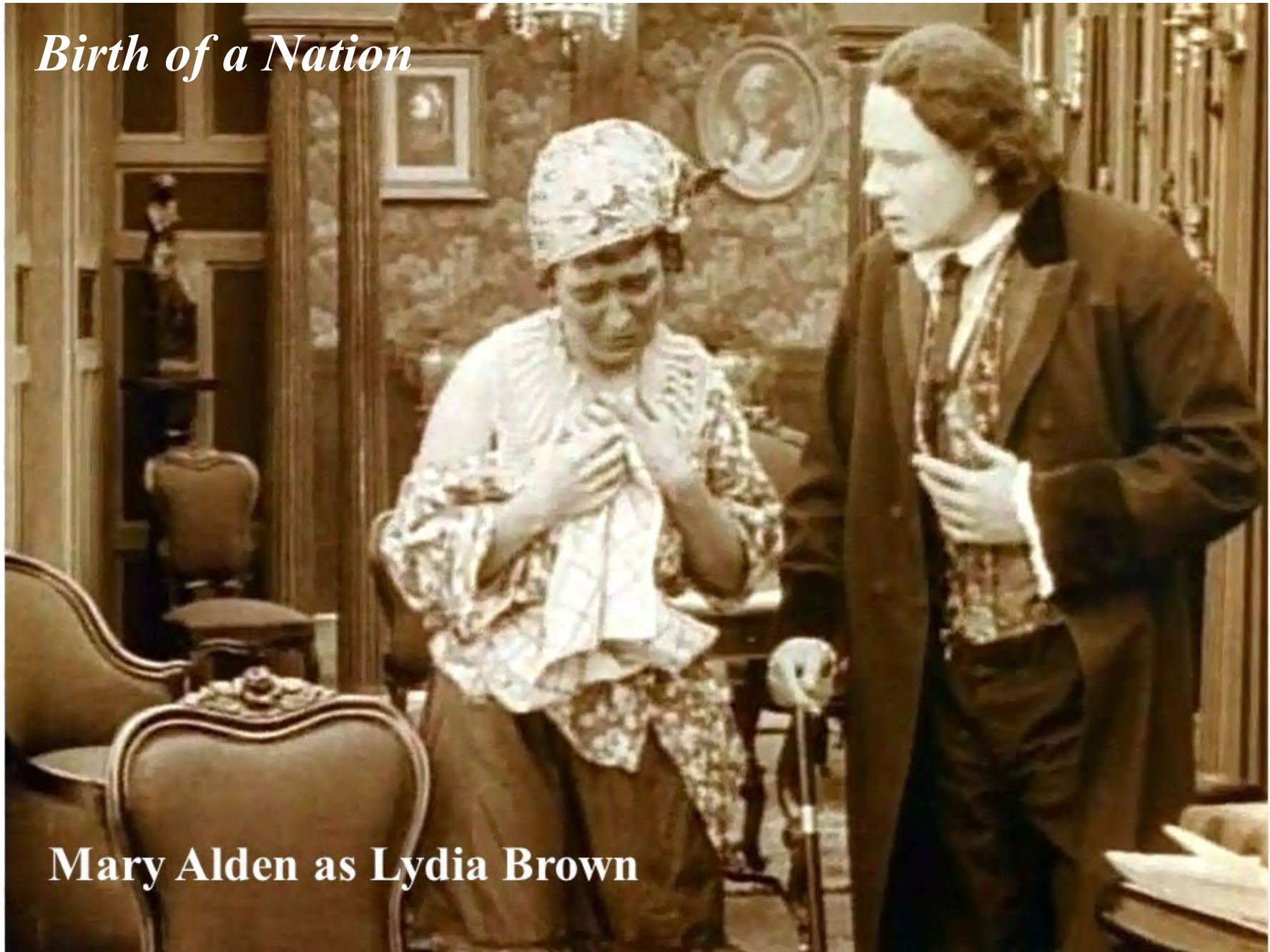


Birth of a Nation, 1915



Ralph Lewis as Stoneman

Birth of a Nation



Mary Alden as Lydia Brown

They learn of Lincoln's death.....



“You are now the greatest power in America.”

Preservation efforts

Current planning

Future perspectives

August 2001

Philadelphia

TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2001

www.ph

Piece of abolitionist's past is being saved in Pa.

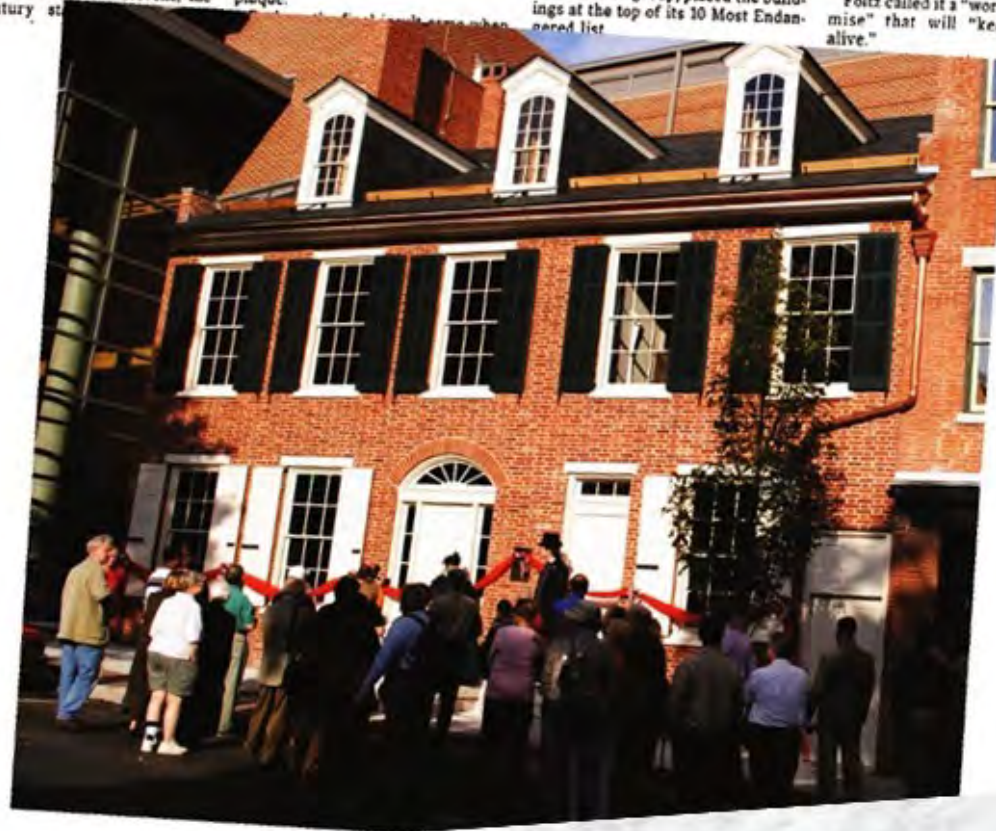
The home of Thaddeus Stevens, civil rights crusader, won't be torn down for a convention center.

By Amy Worden
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER
LANCASTER — History has not been kind to Thaddeus Stevens, the 19th-century st

here were his weed-choked grave and his badly altered Federal-style house, marked by an inaccurate historical plaque.

ward and Preservation Pennsylvania, a statewide nonprofit historic preservation group, placed the buildings at the top of its 10 Most Endangered list.

1842, not the 1843 mentioned on plaque.)
Foltz called it a "workable compromise" that will "keep the streets alive."





Stevens & Smith Site Phase 1- Oct. 2009

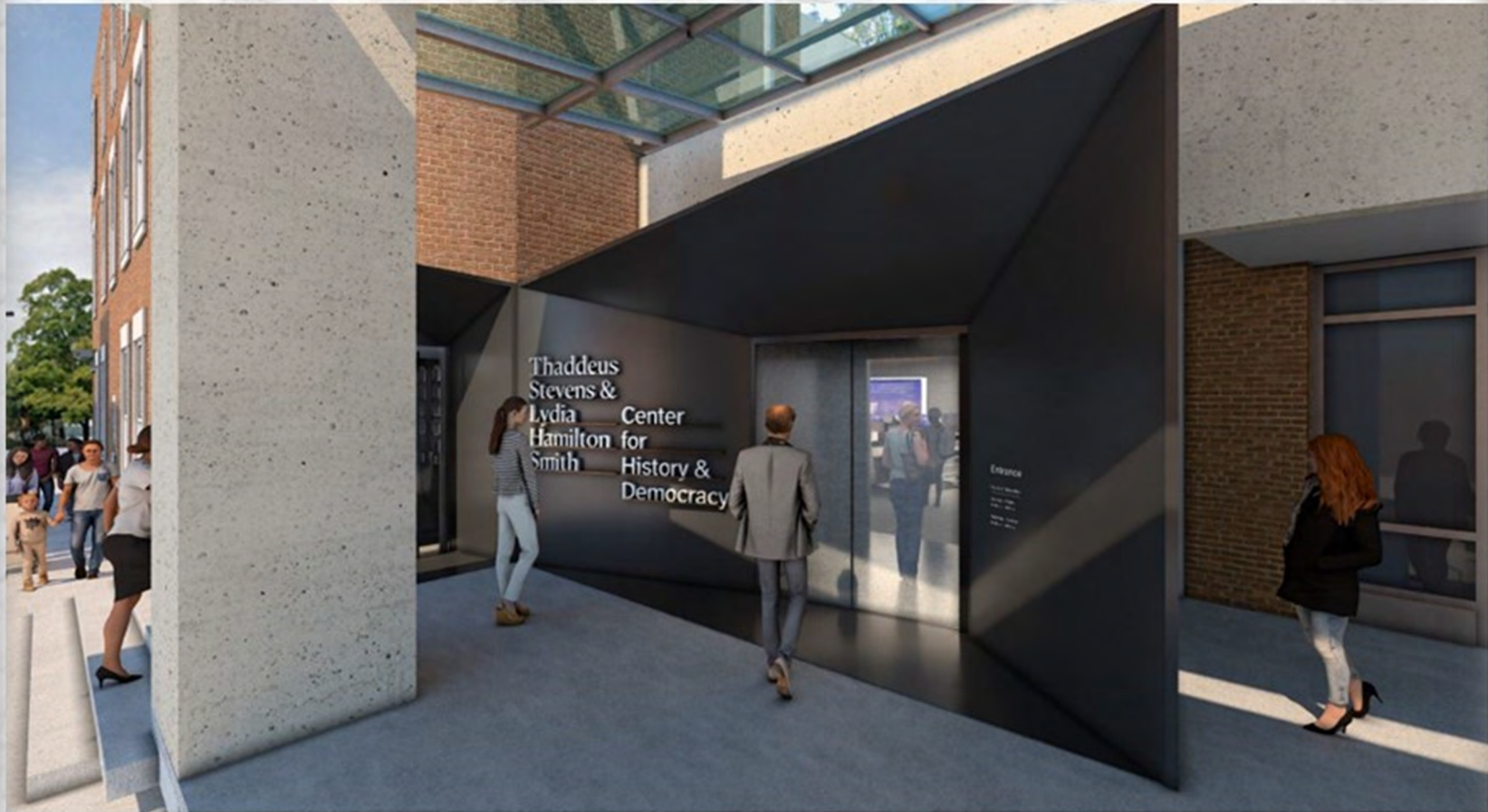


Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith
Center for History and Democracy



Opening Spring 2025

Ralph Applebaum Associates, New York



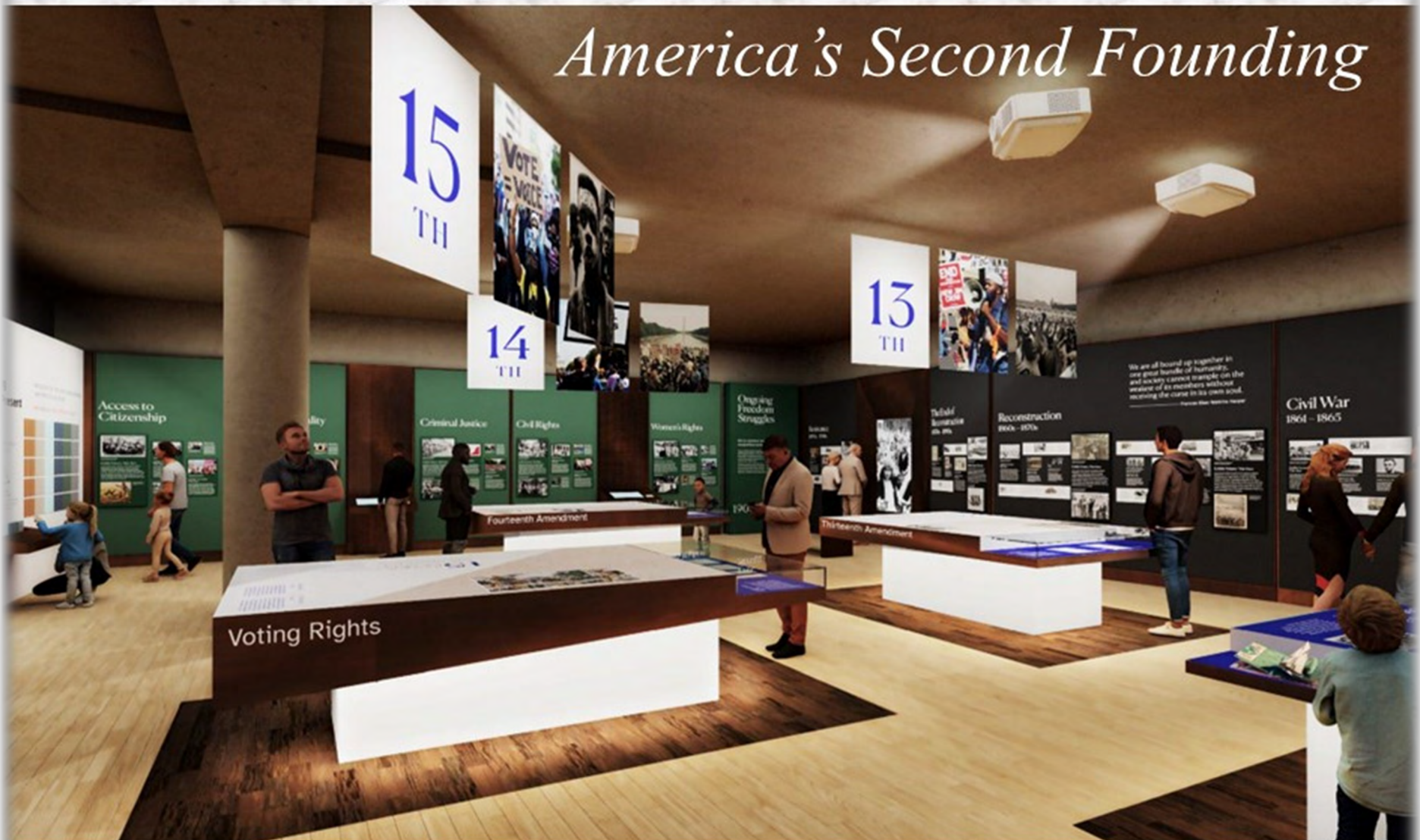
Historians and interpretive planners working with LancasterHistory

Main entry, from East Vine Street



The Center will illuminate, commemorate & animate

America's Second Founding



13th Amendment, 1865

Abolished slavery

14th Amendment, 1868

*Equal protection under law. Birthright citizenship.
Punish insurrectionists. No question national debt.*

15th Amendment, 1870

*Voting rights for men, regardless of servitude,
Enacted after Stevens' death in 1868...*



Middle School students – School District of Lancaster–2019

For more information

<https://www.lancasterhistory.org/about-sschd/>





THE HERITAGE OF THE PAST
IS THE SEED THAT BRINGS FORTH
THE HARVEST OF THE FUTURE

Prepared by Randolph Harris on behalf of LancasterHistory
June, 2023