



# LancasterHistory

**For Immediate Release**

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## LancasterHistory to welcome Local Author for February lecture on Lydia Hamilton Smith

*"An Uncommon Woman" Now Available at LancasterHistory*

**LANCASTER, PA** — On Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024, LancasterHistory will host a lecture featuring author **Dr. Mark Kelley** discussing his new book, *An Uncommon Woman*, which is co-published with LancasterHistory. *An Uncommon Woman* is Kelley's compelling biography of **Lydia Hamilton Smith** (1813-1884), a prominent mixed-race businesswoman who lived in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in the 1800s.

Ever since Lydia Hamilton Smith arrived in Lancaster to serve as **Thaddeus Stevens'** housekeeper 184 years ago, people have been trying to define her. Stevens' biographers have noted her importance to the radical congressman. Racists have attacked her. Defenders have celebrated her. Dr. Mark Kelley, author of *An Uncommon Woman*, will join LancasterHistory to discuss this remarkable woman, what we know about her, and why her story matters.

*An Uncommon Woman*, co-published by Penn State University Press and LancasterHistory in November 2023, explores the life of Lydia Hamilton Smith. A figure of resilience and progressive action, Smith was instrumental to Thaddeus Stevens' success as he led the drive to end slavery, impeach Andrew Johnson, and push for the ratification of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the US Constitution. After combing through hundreds of pages of previously unexplored archival material, *An Uncommon Woman* paints a compelling portrait of a remarkable woman who served the cause of abolition, managed Stevens' household, acquired property, and crossed racialized social boundaries

Mark Kelley holds a Ph.D. in journalism from Syracuse University. He worked for twenty-five years as a broadcast journalist and has taught journalism and mass communications at Goshen College, Syracuse University, the University of Maine, and the New England School of Communications. *An Uncommon Woman* is his fourth book. Kelley currently serves on the Scholarly Advisory Committee for the Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy, a museum under development by LancasterHistory. He resides in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Marty.

This event will be held in person at LancasterHistory, with doors opening at 5 p.m. for a light pre-lecture reception and the main presentation commencing at 5:30 p.m. A simultaneous live stream will also be available on Zoom for virtual attendees. This program is free to the public, but advance registration is required for in-person and virtual participation to ensure seating and access to the Zoom link.

At this time, in-person attendance is sold out and not accepting a wait list. Tickets are still available to tune in to the livestream. Registrations can be made online at [lancasterhistory.org/events](https://lancasterhistory.org/events) or by calling (717) 392-4633. The lecture will be recorded and uploaded to LancasterHistory's YouTube channel for broader access.

Copies of *An Uncommon Woman* are available at LancasterHistory's Museum Store, 230 N. President Avenue in Lancaster, and on [LancasterHistory's online Museum Store](#).

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### **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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