

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD NETWORK TO FREEDOM**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Type (pick one): Site Facility Program

Name: **Grave of U.S. Congressman Thaddeus Stevens (1792-1868)**

Address: **Concord-Shreiner Cemetery**
Corner of North Mulberry and West Chestnut Streets

City, State, Zip: **City of Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17603**

County: **Lancaster** Congressional District: **16th, Pennsylvania**

Physical Location of Site/facility (if different):

Address not for publication? N/A

Date Submitted: **January 13, 2006**

Summary: Describe in 200 words or less, the significance to the Underground Railroad, of the site, program, or facility nominated for inclusion in the Network.

U.S. Congressman Thaddeus Stevens (1792-1868) was a pivotal figure in the public affairs of Pennsylvania and the nation from the 1820s through 1868, when he died in Washington D.C. As a state representative he championed free public education in the early-mid 1830s. During two terms in the U.S. Congress, he was a member of the Whig Party (1849-53) and help found the Republican Party (1859-1868). An avowed Abolitionist and Constitutional scholar, Stevens played key roles in the passage of the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. He also laid the groundwork for the 15th Amendment, enacted after his death. The "old Commoner" was one of the prime movers of Reconstruction and was the leading advocate for the Impeachment of President Andrew Johnson. Stevens was an Underground Railroad activist during his residency in Lancaster, PA (1842-1868). Appropriately, the south face of Stevens's memorial in Lancaster is inscribed with the epitaph: **"I repose in this quiet and secluded spot, not for 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."**

Owner/Manager (Share contact information Y N)

Name: **Alex Munro, President, The Concord- Shreiner Cemetery Foundation**
Address: **740 East End Avenue, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 17602-3714**
Phone, Fax, e-mail: **(717) 295-9666 FAX (717) 295-9652**

Application Preparer (Enter only if different from contact above.) (Share contact information Y N)

Name: **Randolph Jon Harris, a NPS Network to Freedom Partner**
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Privacy Information: The Network to Freedom was established, in part, to facilitate sharing of information among those interested in the Underground Railroad. Putting people in contact with others who are researching related topics, historic events, or individuals or who may have technical expertise or resources to assist with projects is one of the most effective means of advancing Underground Railroad commemoration and preservation. Privacy laws designed to protect individual contact information (i.e., home or personal addresses, telephone numbers, fax numbers, or e-mail addresses), may prevent NPS from making these connections. If you are willing to be contacted by others working on Underground Railroad activities and to receive mailings about Underground Railroad-related events, please add a statement to your letter of consent indicating what information you are willing to share.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom to nominate properties, facilities, and programs to the Network to Freedom. A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Response to this request is required for inclusion in the Network to Freedom in accordance with the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act (P.L. 105-203).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 15 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Coordinator, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, NPS, 601 Riverfront Drive, Omaha, Nebraska 68102.



SITES:

The following materials have been submitted with the application for this site:

- 1) Letters of consent from property owner for inclusion in the Network to Freedom
- 2) Text and photographs of all site markers
- 3) Photographs illustrating the current appearance and condition of the site being nominated
- 4) Maps showing the location of the site

S1. Site type:

Building **Object-Grave Memorial** District (neighborhood)

Structure Landscape/natural feature Archeological site

Other (describe): **Cemetery**

S2. Is the site listed in the National Register of Historic Places? Y N

What is the listing name: City of Lancaster National Historic District

Concord- Shreiner Cemetery is a contributing structure to the City of Lancaster National Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places September 7, 2001. The memorial at Stevens's gravesite, approximately 4 feet wide by 8 feet long and 7 feet high, is the most prominent in the small public cemetery. From its inception, this burial ground accepted ownership of plots and burials of people of all races. The cemetery grounds measure approximately 130 feet X 260 feet, which is an area of .79 acre, and generally the equivalent of two standard lots based on the City of Lancaster town plan.

S3. Ownership of site:

Private Private, non-profit (501c3) Multiple ownership

Public, local government Public, state government Public, federal government

S4. Describe the site's association and significance to the Underground Railroad. Provide citations.

Supplemental chronologies are encouraged.

The site -- Concord-Shreiner Cemetery in Lancaster, PA -- is associated with the Underground Railroad and the Anti-Slavery Movement through the presence at this public burial ground of the grave and memorial of Thaddeus Stevens (1792-1868), U.S. Congressman, early civil rights advocate and Underground Railroad activist.

Stevens's memorial -- with its compelling epitaph -- is the only existing physical remnant of Steven's life that is currently accessible to the public and which provides the visitor with a powerful outward testimony of his progressive quest for racial equality.

Stevens's stately memorial in Lancaster has for more than 100 years been the site of on going commemorations to this significant historical figure by local residents, scholars and historians. The gray, granite memorial bears the moving epitaph, written by Stevens himself, and is positioned, appropriately, on the south-facing elevation:

"I repose in this quiet and secluded spot, not for 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."



S4. Describe the site's association and significance to the Underground Railroad, continued.

His home and law office in Gettysburg, PA have long been demolished, leaving no opportunity to fully interpret his legacy through a physical site in that community. While plans currently are underway to preserve and interpret Stevens's Lancaster home and law office as part of a public convention center, the future of the overall project is not certain at this time. National level recognition of the burial site of "The Old Commoner" presents a critical opportunity to focus needed attention on this man, his memorial and its message.

Stevens was a pivotal figure in the public affairs of Pennsylvania and the nation from the 1820s through 1868, when he died in Washington D.C. Stevens was an attorney, major landowner and an industrialist in Gettysburg, Adams County from the 1817 through 1842. There he distinguished himself as a defender of African American freedom seekers in that border county. As a member of the Pennsylvania General Assembly representing Adams County, Stevens made his most indelible mark as a state legislator when he delivered a key speech in 1835 that preserved legislative support for free public education. He served in the U.S. Congress, representing Lancaster County as a member of the Whig Party from 1849 until 1853.

He served as a Republican for a second term from 1859 through his death on August 11, 1868. An avowed Abolitionist, attorney and Constitutional scholar, Stevens played key roles as strategist and advocate for the passage of the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. He also laid the groundwork for what would become the 15th Amendment, enacted after his death. He was one of the prime movers of Reconstruction in the Southern States following the Civil War and was the leading advocate in the U.S. House of Representatives in the Impeachment of President Andrew Johnson. Stevens was also a newspaper publisher. He served as co-counsel to defendants charged with treason against the United States in connection with the Resistance at Christiana, PA, also known as the Christian Riot, September 11, 1851. In the months following the incident, Stevens and his co-counsels obtained acquittals for their clients who were tried in Philadelphia federal court. The Resistance, the acquittals and the resulting weakening of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 have been described it as a critical series of events that created a flashpoint leading to the outbreak of the Civil War some ten years later.

Stevens's Underground Railroad involvement documented to date rests on three elements: 1) the direct harboring of freedom seekers at his home/office in Lancaster, PA, 1842; 2) his financial and tactical support for infiltration into the activities of slave catchers in Lancaster County, circa 1850; 3) contemporary archeological excavations on the site of properties Stevens's owned in Lancaster that indicate harboring of freedom seekers.

- 1) **Direct Harboring of Freedom Seekers:** In 1842 Stevens is recorded as harboring a major contingent of 26 armed freedom seekers at his home and office in the City of Lancaster in 1842, the year he moved there from Gettysburg, Adams County, PA.¹ It is believed that this home/office was demolished, circa 1980. This contingent of former slaves is reported to have fled Anne Arundel County, MD, making their way to York, PA, before arriving in Columbia, Lancaster County and finally at Stevens's home and office in the City of Lancaster. Stevens is reported to have fed them and directed them to the next stop on the Underground, the farm of Daniel Gibbons, located near the village of Bird-in-Hand, some 10 miles east of Lancaster. Gibbons and his wife Hanna, along with their son Dr. Joseph Gibbons, are described in Siebert, Smedley and Still as Lancaster County's most prolific station masters from their farmstead (no longer extant). Joseph Gibbons is reported to have corresponded regularly with Stevens. A letter dated April 17, 1862 from Stevens to Joseph Gibbons is included in *The Papers of Thaddeus Stevens: Volume I*.²

¹ Smedley, R. C. – See Bibliography

² Palmer, Beverly – See Bibliography



S4. Describe the site's association and significance to the Underground Railroad, continued.

- 2) **Financial and Tactical Support to Thwart Slave Catchers:** Stevens is reported to have been directly responsible for several actions in the late 1840s of thwarting the actions of slave catchers in Lancaster County and the surrounding region. He paid at least one acquaintance over a number of years to infiltrate the rings of slave bounty hunters who were tracking freedom seekers then being sheltered at Underground Railroad stations in the rural Lancaster County farms of Stevens's network of associates. These activities are documented in two Lancaster newspapers – *The Inquirer* and *The Examiner & Herald* -- and in *The New York Times*, all published in late October and early November 1883. The articles were written by persons who knew Stevens personally and who had direct knowledge of Stevens's secret activities.

On November 3, 1883, *The New York Times* published an article (page 3, Col. 1) with the headline:

THAD STEVENS'S ALLIES

INTERESTING REMINISCENCES OF THE DAYS OF SLAVERY; HOW RUNAWAY NEGROES
WERE SAVED FROM CAPTURE AND AIDED ON THEIR WAY TO CANADA

From the Lancaster (Penn.) Examiner.

The headline above and the accompanying article was based directly on, and attributed to, two separate but directly related news stories published nearly concurrently in the two leading Lancaster, PA newspapers: *The Examiner & Herald* (Publisher/Editor John A. Hiestand) on October 27, 1883, and in *The Inquirer*, (a weekly; Ellwood Griest, Publisher/Editor). They show the same publication date, although *The Examiner's* first account makes reference to *The Inquirer's* prior publication.³

The Examiner & Herald article was published in response to what had been in *The Inquirer* perhaps a few days prior: A "hitherto unpublished letter", dated January 9, 1847 written by Thaddeus Steven (not yet a U.S. Congressman) to Judge Jeremiah Brown, Jr., a resident of Fulton Township, Lancaster County, PA.

[The name of Judge Jeremiah Brown, Jr. appears years later (1898) in Siebert's, [The Underground Railroad](#), as an agent, or UGRR operative.]

This letter is also reprinted in the 1963 pamphlet, *The Pilgrim's Pathway*, by Franklin and Marshall College (Lancaster, PA) professor, Dr. Charles Spotts.

Neither of the two Lancaster newspapers (as far as can be determined) nor *The New York Times* mentions the source of the 1847 Stevens-to-Brown letter.

In the letter re-printed in the Lancaster papers and, a few days later in *The New York Times*, Stevens warns Judge Brown to immediately move the two Negro girls he or his brother were then harboring. Stevens also openly describes his other recent actions in support of the Underground Railroad and makes reference to a spy who kept him apprised about the activities of slave catchers in the County. That letter elicited a question in print from the publisher of *The Inquirer*, Major Ellwood Griest, as to the identity of that spy.

In a turn of journalistic tables unprecedented today, a response to the newspaperman's query was published by John Hiestand, editor of the competing newspaper, *The Examiner*, as stated above, on the same date as the Stevens-to-Brown letter was reprinted in *The Inquirer*, and in which Major Griest stated his question as to the identity of the spy.

³ The Inquirer, Lancaster, PA, October 27, 1883. See Bibliography and see S-11, Page 9.



S4. Describe the site's association and significance to the Underground Railroad, continued.

Editor Hiestand declared that the Stevens spy was Edward H. Rauch (1820-1902), by then (1883) editor of the Mauch Chunk, PA (today's Jim Thorpe, PA) newspaper, *The Democrat*.

Then, in the October 31, 1883 edition of *The Examiner & Herald*, Hiestand published the response by "Capt." E.H. Rauch, verifying Hiestand's account and the declaration that he, Rauch, was indeed Stevens's spy. This entire exchange was then re-printed in the November 3, 1883 edition of *The New York Times*.

To solidify the community connections with these journalists and their publications, it should be noted that E.H. Rauch assisted Stevens's close associate, Edward McPhearson, in the editing and production of *The Independent Whig*, a newspaper started in November 1851 by a joint stock company with Thaddeus Stevens as the head, according to *A History of Lancaster County* by Ellis & Evans, 1883.

In his 1883 letter, dated October 29 from Mauch Chuck, PA, Rauch wrote to Hiestand at *The Examiner* that only four other men were aware of his activities:

"A.H. Hood, George Ford, the Rev. Robert Boston (colored) and I also believe Dr. Joseph Gibbons."

The latter was the son of Daniel Gibbons, Lancaster County's most prolific stationmaster who reportedly helped in excess of 1,000 fugitives prior to 1850. The reference to Robert Boston is slightly incorrect. In 1847 Robert Boston was not a pastor. He first appears in the 1850 census as a barber. In 1863 the local directory identifies him as pastor at Lancaster's Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

3) Archeological Excavations, 2002-2003: The Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County initiated a professional dig at the site of the homes, law office and tavern owned by Thaddeus Stevens at the corner of South Queen and East Vine Streets. These properties were among the first properties he acquired when he moved to Lancaster in 1842. He retained ownership of some of these buildings until his death. He sold one residence to his long-time live-in housekeeper, property manager and confidante, Lydia Hamilton Smith (1815-1884). Prof. James Delle of Kutztown (PA) State University, and Prof. Mary Ann Levine of Franklin & Marshall College (Lancaster, PA) conducted the dig. Evidence from the site and their hypothesis were described in Smithsonian Magazine in February, 2004. ⁴ See also: [Thaddeus Stevens' House Archaeological Dig](http://www.w3webdesign.net/archdig/) at www.w3webdesign.net/archdig/

Profs. Delle and Levine have presented a hypothesis that the cistern in the ground behind Stevens's law office and adjacent to a tavern he owned was used as a place for hiding freedom seekers in the early to mid-1850s. This hypothesis is based on the historical characteristics of Stevens, Smith and their associates; examination of the fill material found in the cistern; the presence of a crudely installed brick-sealed opening at one end of the otherwise well-crafted cistern; examination of the fill behind that opening; and the location of these features adjacent to an area of the tavern's north foundation wall that was obviously opened and later repaired/replaced. This opening would accommodate passage of a human, as would the opening at the end of the cistern itself.

S5. Provide a history of the site since its time of significance to the Underground Railroad, including physical changes or alterations.

The funeral of Thaddeus Stevens was held on Monday, August 17, 1868. ⁵ An estimated 20,000 people lined the streets of Lancaster to witness the funeral procession and burial. Newspapers reported the vast uneasiness in the crowds as Steven's casket was accompanied to Concord Cemetery by a contingent of armed African American Zouaves. These guards stood watch over Stevens's body in the Rotunda of the US Capital and they traveled aboard the train to Lancaster with the Congressman's remains.

⁴ - Bordewich, Fergus M., *Smithsonian Magazine*, Digging into a Historic Rivalry – See Bibliography

⁵ - The Daily Evening Express, Lancaster, PA 8/18/1868. See Bibliography.



S5. Provide a history of the site since its time of significance to the Underground Railroad, continued.

The Rev. Dr. J. Isidor Mombert, rector of Saint James Episcopal Church, Lancaster, delivered the eulogy. He stated, in part:

“Thaddeus Stevens loved liberty. This inborn love of liberty and abhorrence of all exclusiveness, made him actually select this retired spot for his burying place, for he refused even to allow his ashes to lie in a cemetery, which, unlike God’s earth and air, forbids that those who are created with His image carved in ebony instead of ivory, should sleep there their last sleep.”

The cemetery was founded in 1836 and has served as such until today. The site was first managed by its founder/owner, Martin Shreiner (1767-1866), who wrote:

“Having taken pleasure and interest in establishing and laying out ‘Concord Cemetery,’ at present an ornament to the city, and with the view of having it continued and kept for all time to come in a good and suitable condition...I order and direct...that suitable persons...take charge and care of it.”
-excerpt from Martin Shreiner’s will

Shreiner, who lived on West Chestnut Street directly across from the north end of the property, first called the site Concord Cemetery. In the years following Shreiner’s death and internment on the site, cemetery managers changed its name to Shreiner Cemetery. Since its inception, the site has been governed by plot owners and community residents and has maintained a policy of accepting burials from persons of all races.

The Thaddeus Stevens Memorial Association installed the Stevens memorial in the first decade of the 20th century. The fund was made possible through the personal, community leadership of John H. Landis, Superintendent, U.S. Mint, Philadelphia; William H. Griest, Secretary, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and Dr. N.C. Schaeffer, Superintendent, Public Instruction, Lancaster, PA.

From 1939 to 1941, William Frederic Worner, Librarian of the Lancaster County Historical Society (1922-1935) and his associates documented the grave sites and the overall conditions of the cemetery: “At the time of our visits the cemetery was in a state of neglect.”⁶

The year 1990 marked the successful completion of a community fundraising campaign that began in about 1986 and was responsible for establishing a fund for on going maintenance.

State Rep. P. Michael Sturla of Lancaster in 2000 secured a state grant of approximately \$30,000 to create a special partnership with the private cemetery that allowed for seasonal maintenance by the City of Lancaster.

S6. Describe current educational programs, tours, markers, signs, or plaques at the site. Include text and photographs of markers.

A historical marker placed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Historical and Museum Commission is locate at the site at the corner of West Chestnut and North Mulberry Street. The marker reads:

Thaddeus Stevens
Lawyer, congressman, defender of free public schools,
abolitionists lies buried in the rear of this cemetery.
He believed in the “Equality of man before his Creator.”
Resided in Lancaster from 1842 until his death, 1868.

⁶ - Tombstone Inscriptions from Graveyards in Lancaster County, PA, Vol. 8 – See Bibliography.



Also located within the grounds of the cemetery near the West Chestnut Street entrance is the 1990 plaque referenced above describing the community residents who assumed leadership roles in the community to care for this historic site.

S7. Identify historical sources of information. Include a bibliography.

Citations for Footnotes:

- 1) Smedley, M.D., R.C., *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania*, Lancaster, PA, 1883; reprinted in paperback, Rutgers University, page 38.
- 2) Palmer, Beverly Wilson, *The Papers of Thaddeus Stevens, Vol. I*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA 1997.
- 3) *The Inquirer*, Lancaster, PA October 27, 1883, Page 2.
- 4) Fergus M. *Digging into a Historic Rivalry*, Smithsonian Magazine, February, 2004, Pg. 96.
- 5) Daily Evening Express, Lancaster, PA, Tuesday, August 18, 1868, Page 1.
- 6) Worner, William Frederic, *Tombstone Inscriptions from Graveyards in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania*, Volume 8, The Lancaster County Historical Society, 1941, Page 7.

The Inquirer, Lancaster, PA, October 27, 1883, page 2.

The Herald and Examiner, Lancaster, PA, October 27 and 31, 1883, page 1.

“Thad Stevens’ Allies” *The New York Times*, November 3, 1883, page 3.

TWO NOTABLE GRAVES The Washington Post (1877-1954); May 20, 1883, page 7.

Blockson, Charles L. *African Americans in Pennsylvania – A History and Guide*, Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press), 1994.

Ellis & Evans, *History of Lancaster County*, 1883

Pinsker, Matthew. *Vigilance in Pennsylvania. Underground Railroad Activities in the Keystone State, 1837-1861* (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission), 2000.

Siebert, Wilbur H. *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1898).

Still, William. *The Underground Rail Road*, 1872. (Chicago: Johnson Pub. Co.) 1970.

S8. Describe any other local, state, or federal historic designations, records, signage, or plaques the site has.

These are described above: 1) Contributing structure (site) to the City of Lancaster National Historic District, and 2) location of PHMC roadside marker commemorating the gravesite of Thaddeus Stevens.

S9. Is the site open to the public, and under what conditions?

The site is open from dawn until dusk daily. Adjacent neighbors volunteer as gatekeepers and general monitors, alerting police to any suspicious activity or loitering.

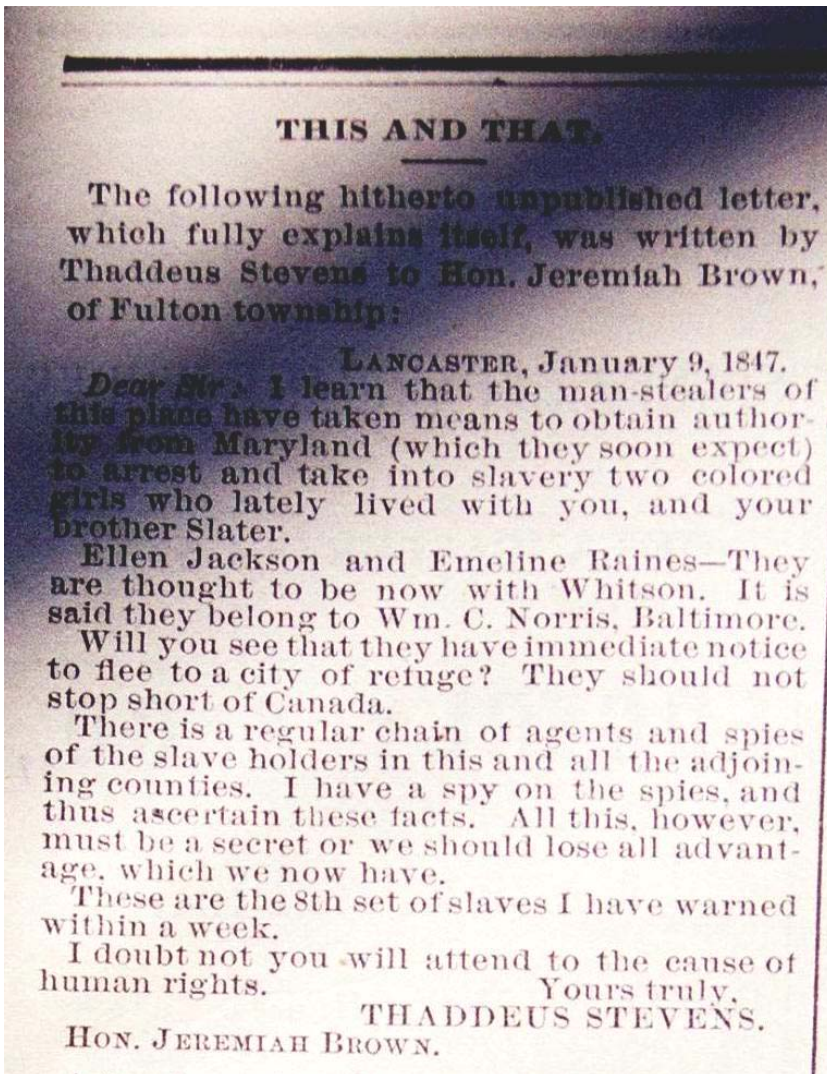


S10. Describe the nature and objectives of any partnerships that have contributed to the documentation, preservation, commemoration, or interpretation of the site.

Through the on going work of the Thaddeus Stevens College, the Concord-Shreiner Cemetery Foundation and the groups and individuals referenced above under S6, a Master Plan for cemetery improvements has been produced by a local landscape, architectural and planning firm. The Master Plan, excerpted here and with illustration copies included, was produced by the Lititz, PA firm of Derck & Edson & Associates, LLP. This Plan will be utilized for future fundraising and improvements throughout the site. The Plan was developed for the Concord- Shreiner Cemetery Foundation.

In the weeks and days prior to the annual Stevens commemorative event on April 4, students and faculty of Stevens College join with neighborhood residents and other community volunteers who are organized with the help of Pennsylvania State Representative P. Michael Sturla, to clean the cemetery grounds of winter debris. The volunteer crews trim trees and shrubs, mulch flowerbeds and plant flowers in preparation of the commemorative events on April 4.

S11. Additional data or comments. (Optional)



The Inquirer,
Lancaster, PA,
October 27, 1883
Page 2.

“*This and That*” was a regular column in this newspaper, written by Elwood Griest, an associate of Thaddeus Stevens and an affiliate of many of the prominent Quaker Abolitionists of Lancaster County, circa 1840-1850.

From original edition,
Lancaster County
Historical Society,
Lancaster, PA

