

= Thaddeus Stevens =

Thaddeus Stevens (April 4 , 1792 ? August 11 , 1868) was a member of the United States House of Representatives from Pennsylvania and one of the leaders of the Radical Republican faction of the Republican Party during the 1860s . A fierce opponent of slavery and discrimination against African @-@ Americans , Stevens sought to secure their rights during Reconstruction , in opposition to President Andrew Johnson . As chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee during the American Civil War , he played a major part in the war 's financing .

Stevens was born in rural Vermont , in poverty , and with a club foot , giving him a limp he kept his entire life . He moved to Pennsylvania as a young man , and quickly became a successful lawyer in Gettysburg . He interested himself in municipal affairs , and then in politics . He was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives , where he became a strong advocate of free public education . Financial setbacks in 1842 caused him to move his home and practice to the larger city of Lancaster . There , he joined the Whig Party , and was elected to Congress in 1848 . His activities as a lawyer and politician in opposition to slavery cost him votes and he did not seek reelection in 1852 . After a brief flirtation with the Know @-@ Nothing Party , Stevens joined the newly formed Republican Party , and was elected to Congress again in 1858 . There , with fellow radicals such as Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner , he opposed the expansion of slavery and concessions to the South as war came .

Stevens argued that slavery should not survive the war ; he was frustrated by the slowness of President Abraham Lincoln to support his position . He guided the government 's financial legislation through the House as Ways and Means chairman . As the war progressed towards a northern victory , Stevens came to believe that not only should slavery be abolished , but that African @-@ Americans should be given a stake in the South 's future through the confiscation of land from planters to be distributed to the freedmen . His plans went too far for the Moderate Republicans , and were not enacted .

After Lincoln 's assassination in April 1865 , Stevens came into conflict with the new president , Johnson , who sought rapid restoration of the seceded states without guarantees for freedmen . The difference in views caused an ongoing battle between Johnson and Congress , with Stevens leading the Radical Republicans . After gains in the 1866 election the radicals took control of Reconstruction away from Johnson . Stevens 's last great battle was to secure articles of impeachment in the House against Johnson , though the Senate did not convict the President . Historiographical views of Stevens have dramatically shifted over the years , from the early 20th @-@ century view of Stevens as reckless and motivated by hatred of the white South , to the perspective of the neoabolitionists of the 1950s and afterwards , who applauded him for his egalitarian views .

= = Early life and education = =

Stevens was born in Danville , Vermont , on April 4 , 1792 . He was the second of four children , all boys , and was named to honor the Polish general who served in the American Revolution , Thaddeus Kościuszko . His parents were Baptists who had emigrated from Massachusetts around 1786 . Thaddeus was born with a club foot , at the time seen as a judgment from God for secret parental sin ? and his older brother was born with the condition in both feet . The boys ' father , Joshua Stevens , was a farmer and cobbler who struggled to make a living in Vermont . After fathering two more sons (born without disability) Joshua abandoned the children and his wife Sarah (née Morrill) . The circumstances of his departure and his subsequent fate are uncertain ; he may have died at the Battle of Oswego during the War of 1812 .

Sarah Stevens struggled to make a living from the farm , with the increasing aid of her sons . She was determined that her sons improve themselves , and in 1807 moved the family to the neighboring town of Peacham , where she enrolled young Thaddeus in the Caledonia Grammar School (often called the Peacham Academy) . He suffered much from the taunts of his classmates for his disability . Later accounts describe him there as " wilful , headstrong " with " an overwhelming burning desire to secure an education " .

After graduation , he enrolled at Burlington College of the University of Vermont , but suspended his studies due to the federal government 's appropriation of campus buildings during the War of 1812 . Stevens then enrolled in the sophomore class at Dartmouth College in Hanover , New Hampshire . At Dartmouth , despite a stellar academic career , he was not elected to Phi Beta Kappa ; this was reportedly a scarring experience for him .

Stevens graduated from Dartmouth in 1814 , and was chosen as a commencement speaker . Afterwards , he returned to Peacham and briefly taught there . Stevens also began to study law with Judge John Mattocks in Danville . In early 1815 , after writing to friends in York , Pennsylvania , he moved there .

= = Pennsylvania attorney and politician = =

= = = Early years = = =

In Pennsylvania , Stevens taught school at the York Academy and continued his studies for the bar . Local lawyers passed a resolution barring from membership anyone who had " followed any other profession while preparing for admission . " , a restriction likely aimed at Stevens . Undaunted , he reportedly (according to a story he often retold) presented himself and four bottles of Madeira wine to the examining board in nearby Harford County , Maryland , and few questions were asked but much wine drunk . He left Bel Air the next morning with a certificate allowing him , through reciprocity , to practice law anywhere . Stevens then went to Gettysburg , the seat of Adams County , where he opened an office in September 1816 .

Stevens knew no one in Gettysburg , and initially had little success as a lawyer . His breakthrough , in mid @-@ 1817 , was a case in which a farmer who had been jailed for debt later killed one of the constables who had arrested him . His defense , although unsuccessful , impressed the local people , and he never lacked for business thereafter . In his legal career , he demonstrated the propensity for sarcasm that would later mark him as a politician , once telling a judge who accused him of manifesting contempt , " Sir , I am doing my best to conceal it . "

Many who memorialized Stevens after his death in 1868 agreed on his talent as a lawyer . He was involved in the first ten cases to reach the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania from Adams County after he began practice , and won nine . One case he later wished he had not won was *Butler v. Delaplaine* , in which he successfully reclaimed a slave on behalf of her owner .

In Gettysburg , Stevens also began his involvement in politics , serving six one @-@ year terms on the borough council between 1822 and 1831 and becoming its president . He took the profits from his practice and invested them in Gettysburg real estate , becoming the largest landowner in the community by 1825 , and had an interest in several iron furnaces outside town . In addition to assets , he acquired enemies ; after the death of a pregnant black woman in Gettysburg , there were anonymous letter @-@ writers to newspapers , hinting that Stevens was culpable . The rumors dogged him for years ; when one newspaper opposed to Stevens printed a letter in 1831 naming him as the killer , he successfully sued for libel .

= = = Anti @-@ Masonry = = =

Stevens 's first political cause was Anti @-@ Masonry , which became widespread in 1826 after the disappearance and death of William Morgan , a Mason in Upstate New York ; fellow masons were presumed to be the killers of Morgan because they disapproved of his publishing a book revealing the order 's secret rites . Since the leading candidate in opposition to President John Quincy Adams was General Andrew Jackson , a Mason who mocked opponents of the order , Anti @-@ Masonry became closely associated with opposition to Jackson , and to his policies once he was elected president in 1828 .

Jackson 's adherents were from the old Democratic @-@ Republican Party and eventually became known as the Democrats . Stevens had been told by fellow attorney (and future president) James

Buchanan that he could advance politically if he joined them , but Stevens could not support Jackson , out of principle . For Stevens , Anti @-@ Masonry became one means of opposing Jackson ; he may also have had personal reasons as the Masons barred " cripples " from joining . Stevens took to Anti @-@ Masonry with enthusiasm , and remained loyal to it after most Pennsylvanians had dropped the cause . His biographer , Hans Trefousse , suggested that another reason for Stevens 's virulence was an attack of disease in the late 1820s that cost him his hair (he thereafter wore wigs , often ill @-@ fitting) , and " the unwelcome illness may well have contributed to his unreasonable fanaticism concerning the Masons " .

By 1829 , Anti @-@ Masonry had evolved into a political party that proved popular in rural central Pennsylvania . Stevens quickly became prominent in the movement , attending the party 's first two national conventions in 1830 and 1831 . At the latter , he pressed the candidacy of Supreme Court Justice John McLean as the party 's presidential candidate , but in vain as the nomination fell to former Attorney General William Wirt . Jackson was easily reelected ; the crushing defeat (Wirt won only Vermont) caused the party to disappear in most places , though it remained powerful in Pennsylvania for several years .

In September 1833 , Stevens was elected to a one @-@ year term in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives as an Anti @-@ Mason , and once in Harrisburg sought to have the body establish a committee to investigate Masonry . Stevens gained attention far beyond Pennsylvania for his oratory against Masonry , and also quickly became expert in legislative maneuvers . In 1835 , a split among the Democrats put the Anti @-@ Masons in control of the legislature . Granted subpoena powers , Stevens summoned leading state politicians who were Masons , including Governor George Wolf . The witnesses invoked their Fifth Amendment right against self @-@ incrimination , and when Stevens verbally abused one of them , it created a backlash that caused his own party to end the investigation . The fracas cost Stevens reelection in 1836 , and the issue of Anti @-@ Masonry died in Pennsylvania . Nevertheless , Stevens remained an opponent of the order for the rest of his life .

= = = Crusader for education = = =

Beginning with his early years in Gettysburg , Stevens advanced the cause of universal education . At the time , no state outside New England had free public education for all . In Pennsylvania , there was free education in Philadelphia , but elsewhere in the state , those wishing to have their children educated without paying tuition had to swear a pauper 's oath . Stevens opened his extensive private library to the public and gave up his presidency of the borough council , believing his service on the school board more important . In 1825 , he was elected by the voters of Adams County as a trustee of Gettysburg Academy . As the school was failing , Stevens got county voters to agree to pay its debt , allowing it to be sold as a Lutheran seminary . It was granted the right to award college degrees in 1831 as Pennsylvania College , and in 1921 became Gettysburg College . Stevens gave the school land upon which a building could be raised and for many years served as a trustee .

In April 1834 , Stevens , working with Governor Wolf , guided through the legislature an act to allow districts across the state to vote on whether to have public schools and the taxes to pay for them . Gettysburg 's district voted in favor , and also elected Stevens as a school director , where he served until 1839 . Tens of thousands of voters signed petitions urging a reversal . The result was a repeal bill that easily passed the Senate . It was widely believed the bill would also pass the House , and be enacted despite opposition by Stevens . When he rose to speak on April 11 , 1835 , he defended the new educational system , stating that it would actually save money , and demonstrated how . He stated opponents were seeking to separate the poor into a lower caste than themselves , and accused the rich of greed and failure to empathize with the poor . Stevens argued , " Build not your monuments of brass or marble , but make them of everliving mind ! " The repeal bill was defeated ; Stevens was given wide credit . Trefousse suggested that the victory was not due to Stevens 's eloquence , but due to his influence , combined with that of Governor Wolf .

= = = Political change ; move to Lancaster = = =

In 1838 , Stevens ran again for the legislature . He hoped that if the remaining Anti @-@ Masons and the emerging Whig Party gained a majority , he could be elected to the United States Senate , whose members until 1913 were chosen by state legislatures . A campaign dirty even by the standards of the times followed . The result was a Democrat elected as governor , Whig control of the state Senate , and the state House in dispute , with a number of seats from Philadelphia in question , though Stevens won his seat in Adams County . Stevens sought to have those Philadelphia Democrats excluded , which would create a Whig majority that could elect a Speaker and himself as senator . Amid rioting in Harrisburg ? later known as the " Buckshot War " ? Stevens 's ploy backfired , with the Democrats taking control of the House . Stevens remained in the legislature most years through 1842 , but the episode cost him much of his political influence , as the Whigs blamed him for the debacle and were increasingly unwilling to give leadership to someone who had not yet joined their party . Nevertheless , he supported the pro @-@ business and pro @-@ development Whig stances . He campaigned for the Whig candidate in the 1840 presidential election , former general William Henry Harrison . Though Stevens later alleged that Harrison had promised him a Cabinet position if elected , he received none , and any influence ended when Harrison died after a month in office , to be succeeded by John Tyler , a southerner hostile to Stevens 's stances on slavery .

Although Stevens was the most successful lawyer in Gettysburg , he had accrued debt due to his business interests . Refusing to take advantage of the bankruptcy laws , he felt he needed to move to a larger municipality in order to gain the money to pay his obligations . In 1842 , Stevens moved his home and practice to the city of Lancaster . He knew Lancaster County was an Anti @-@ Mason and Whig stronghold , which ensured that he retained a political base . Within a short period , he was earning more than any other Lancaster attorney ; by 1848 he had reduced his debts to \$ 30 @,@ 000 , and paid them off soon after . It was in Lancaster that he engaged the services of Lydia Hamilton Smith , a mulatto housekeeper who remained with him the rest of his life .

= = Abolitionist and prewar congressman = =

= = = Evolution of views = = =

In the 1830s , few sought the immediate eradication of slavery . The abolitionist movement was young and only recently had figures such as William Lloyd Garrison taken on the fight . Stevens 's reason for adopting slavery as a cause has been disputed among his recent biographers . Richard Current in 1942 , suggested it was out of ambition ; Fawn Brodie , in her controversial 1959 psychobiography of Stevens , suggested it was out of identification with the downtrodden , based on his handicap . Trefousse , in his 1997 work , also suggested that Stevens 's feelings towards the downtrodden were a factor , combined with remorse over the Butler case , but that ambition was unlikely to have been a major motivator , as Stevens 's fervor in the anti @-@ slavery cause inhibited his career .

At the Pennsylvania constitutional convention in 1837 , Stevens , who was a delegate , fought against the disenfranchisement of African @-@ Americans , though he was willing to support a minimum property requirement for all voters . According to historian Eric Foner , " When Stevens refused to sign the 1837 constitution because of its voting provision , he announced his commitment to a non @-@ racial definition of American citizenship to which he would adhere for the remainder of his life " . After he moved to Lancaster , a city not far from the Mason ? Dixon line , he became active in the Underground Railroad , not only defending people believed to be fugitive slaves , but coordinating the movements of those seeking freedom . A 2003 renovation at his former home in Lancaster disclosed that there was a hidden cistern , attached to the main building by a concealed tunnel , in which escaped slaves hid .

Stevens , until the outbreak of the Civil War , took the public position that he supported slavery 's end and opposed its expansion . Nevertheless , he would not seek to disturb it in the states where it

existed as the Constitution protected their internal affairs from outside interference . He also supported slaveowning Whig candidates for president : Henry Clay in 1844 and Zachary Taylor in 1848 .

= = = First tenure in Congress = = =

In 1848 , Stevens ran for election to Congress from Pennsylvania 's 8th congressional district . There was opposition to him at the Whig convention . Some delegates felt that because Stevens had been late to join the party , he should not receive the nomination ; others disliked his stance on slavery . He narrowly won the nomination . In a strong year for Whigs nationally , Taylor was chosen as president and Stevens was elected to Congress .

When Congress convened in December 1849 , Stevens took his seat , joining other newly elected slavery opponents such as Salmon P. Chase . Stevens spoke out against the Compromise of 1850 , crafted by Kentucky Senator Henry Clay , that gave victories to both North and South , but would allow for some of the territories recently gained from Mexico to become slave states . In June , as the debates continued , he stated , " This word ' compromise ' when applied to human rights and constitutional rights I abhor " . Nevertheless , the pieces of legislation that made up the Compromise passed , including the Fugitive Slave Act , which Stevens found particularly offensive . Although many Americans hoped that the Compromise would bring sectional peace , Stevens warned that it would be " the fruitful mother of future rebellion , disunion , and civil war " .

Stevens was easily renominated and reelected in 1850 , even though his stance caused him problems among pro @-@ Compromise Whigs . In 1851 , Stevens was one of the defense lawyers in the trial of 38 African @-@ Americans and three others in federal court in Philadelphia on treason charges . The defendants had been implicated in the so @-@ called Christiana Riot , in which an attempt to enforce a Fugitive Slave Act warrant had resulted in the killing of the slaveowner . Justice Robert Grier of the U.S. Supreme Court , as circuit justice , tried the case , and instructed the jury to acquit on the grounds that though the defendants might be guilty of murder or riot , they were not charged with that , and were not guilty of treason . The well @-@ publicized incident (and others like it) increased polarization over the issue of slavery and made Stevens a prominent face of Northern abolitionism .

Despite this trend , Stevens suffered political problems . He left the Whig caucus in December 1851 , when his colleagues would not join him in seeking the repeal of the offensive elements of the Compromise , though he supported its unsuccessful 1852 candidate for president , General Winfield Scott . His political opposition , and local dislike of his stance on slavery and participation in the treason trial , made him unlikely to win renomination , and he sought only to pick his successor . His choice was defeated for the Whig nomination .

= = = Know @-@ Nothing and Republican = = =

Out of office , Stevens concentrated on the practice of law in Lancaster , remaining one of the leading attorneys in the state . He stayed active in politics , and in 1854 , to gain more votes for the anti @-@ slavery movement , he joined the nativist Know Nothing Party . The members were pledged not to speak of party deliberations (thus , they knew nothing) , and Stevens was attacked for his membership in a group with similar rules of secrecy as the Masons . In 1855 , Stevens joined the new Republican Party . Other former Whigs who were anti @-@ slavery joined as well , including William H. Seward of New York , Charles E. Sumner of Massachusetts , and Abraham Lincoln of Illinois .

Stevens was a delegate to the 1856 Republican National Convention , where he supported Justice McLean , as he had in 1832 . The convention , however , nominated John C. Frémont , whom Stevens actively supported in the race against his fellow Lancastrian , the Democratic candidate James Buchanan . Nonetheless , Pennsylvania helped elect Buchanan . Stevens returned to the practice of law , but by 1858 , with the President and his party unpopular and the nation torn by such controversies as the Dred Scott decision , Stevens saw an opportunity to return to Congress . As the

Republican nominee , he was easily elected . Democratic papers were appalled . One banner headline read , " Niggerism Triumphant " .

= = = 1860 election ; secession crisis = = =

Stevens took his seat in Congress in December 1859 , only days after the hanging of John Brown , who had attacked the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry hoping to cause a slave insurrection . Stevens opposed Brown 's violent actions at the time , though later , he was more approving . Sectional tensions spilled over into the House , which proved unable to elect a Speaker for eight weeks . Stevens was active in the bitter flow of invective from both sides ; at one point , Mississippi Congressman William Barksdale drew a knife on him , though no blood was spilled .

With the Democrats unable to agree on a single presidential candidate , the 1860 Republican National Convention in Chicago became crucial , as the nominee would be in a favorable position to become president . Prominent figures in the party such as Seward and Lincoln sought the nomination . Stevens continued to support the 75 @-@ year @-@ old Justice McLean . Beginning on the second ballot , most Pennsylvania delegates supported Lincoln , helping to win the Illinoisan the nomination . As the Democrats put up no candidate in his district , Stevens was assured of reelection to the House , and campaigned for Lincoln in Pennsylvania . Lincoln won a majority in the Electoral College . The President @-@ elect 's known opposition to the expansion of slavery caused immediate talk of secession in the southern states , a threat that Stevens had downplayed during the campaign .

Congress convened in December 1860 , with several of the southern states already pledging to secede . Stevens was unyielding in opposing efforts to appease the southerners , such as the Crittenden Compromise , which would have enshrined slavery as beyond constitutional amendment . He stated , in a remark widely quoted both North and South , that rather than offer concessions because of Lincoln 's election , he would see " this Government crumble into a thousand atoms " , and that the forces of the United States would crush any rebellion . Despite Stevens 's protests , the lame @-@ duck Buchanan administration did little in response to the secession votes , allowing most federal resources in the South to fall into rebel hands . Many , even in the abolition movement , were content to let it be so , and to let the South go its own way . Stevens did not agree , and the congressman was " undoubtedly pleased " by Lincoln 's statement in his first inaugural address on March 4 , 1861 , that he would " hold , occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the Government " .

= = American Civil War = =

= = = Slavery = = =

When war began in April 1861 , Stevens argued that the Confederates were revolutionaries , to be crushed by force . He also believed that the Confederacy had placed itself beyond the protection of the U.S. Constitution by making war , and in a reconstituted United States , slavery would have no place . Speaker Galusha Grow , whose views placed him with Stevens among the members becoming known as the Radical Republican (for their position on slavery , as opposed to the Conservative or Moderate Republicans) , appointed him as chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee . This position gave him power over the House 's agenda .

In July 1861 , Stevens secured the passage of an act to confiscate the property , including slaves , of certain rebels . In November 1861 , Stevens introduced a resolution to emancipate all slaves ; it was defeated . However , legislation did pass that abolished slavery in the District of Columbia and in the territories . By March 1862 , to Stevens 's exasperation , the most Lincoln had publicly supported was gradual emancipation in the Border states , with the masters compensated by the federal government .

Stevens and other radicals were frustrated at how slow Lincoln was to adopt their policies for

emancipation ; according to Brodie , " Lincoln seldom succeeded in matching Stevens 's pace , though both were marching towards the same bright horizon " . In April 1862 , Stevens wrote to a friend , " As for future hopes , they are poor as Lincoln is nobody . " The radicals aggressively pushed the issue , provoking Lincoln to comment : " Stevens , Sumner and [Massachusetts Senator Henry] Wilson simply haunt me with their importunities for a Proclamation of Emancipation . Wherever I go and whatever way I turn , they are on my tail , and still in my heart , I have the deep conviction that the hour [to issue one] has not yet come . " The President stated that if it came to a showdown between the radicals and their enemies , he would have to side with Stevens and his fellows , and deemed them " the unhandiest devils in the world to deal with " but " with their faces ... set Zionwards " . Although Lincoln composed his proclamation in June and July 1862 , the secret was held within his Cabinet , and the President turned aside radical pleadings to issue one until after the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam in September . Stevens quickly adopted the Emancipation Proclamation for use in his successful reelection campaign . When Congress returned in December , Stevens maintained his criticism of Lincoln 's policies , calling them " flagrant usurpations , deserving the condemnation of the community " . Stevens generally opposed Lincoln 's plans to colonize freed slaves abroad , though sometimes he supported emigration proposals for political reasons . Stevens wrote a nephew in June 1863 saying , " The slaves ought to be incited to insurrection and give the rebels a taste of real civil war . "

During the Confederate incursion into the North in mid 1863 that culminated in the Battle of Gettysburg , Confederates twice sent parties to Stevens 's Caledonia Forge . Stevens , who had been there supervising operations , was hastened away by his workers against his will . General Jubal Early looted and vandalized the Forge , causing a loss to Stevens of about \$ 80 000 . Early said that the North had done the same to southern figures , and that Stevens was well known for his vindictiveness towards the South . Asked if he would have taken the congressman to Libby Prison in Richmond , Early replied that he would have hanged Stevens and divided his bones among the Confederate states .

Stevens pushed Congress to pass a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery . The Emancipation Proclamation was a wartime measure , did not apply to all slaves , and might be reversed by peacetime courts ; an amendment would be slavery 's end . The Thirteenth Amendment ? which outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude except as punishment for crime ? easily passed the Senate , but failed in the House in June ; fears that it might not pass delayed a renewed attempt there . Lincoln campaigned aggressively for the amendment after his reelection in 1864 , and Stevens described his December annual message to Congress as " the most important and best message that has been communicated to Congress for the last 60 years " . Stevens closed the debate on the amendment on January 13 , 1865 . Illinois Representative Isaac Arnold wrote : " distinguished soldiers and citizens filled every available seat , to hear the eloquent old man speak on a measure that was to consummate the warfare of forty years against slavery " .

The amendment passed narrowly after heavy pressure exerted by Lincoln himself , along with offers of political appointments from the " Seward lobby " . Allegations of bribery were made by Democrats ; Stevens stated " the greatest measure of the nineteenth century was passed by corruption , aided and abetted by the purest man in America . " The amendment was declared ratified on December 18 , 1865 . Stevens continued to push for a broad interpretation of it that included economic justice in addition to the formal end of slavery .

After passing the Thirteenth Amendment , Congress debated the economic rights of the freedmen . Urged on by Stevens , it voted to authorize the Bureau of Refugees , Freedmen , and Abandoned Lands , with a mandate (though no funding) to set up schools and to distribute " not more than forty acres " [16 ha] of confiscated Confederate land to each family of freed slaves .

= = = Financing the war = = =

Stevens worked closely with Lincoln administration officials on legislation to finance the war . Within a day of his appointment as Ways and Means chairman , he had reported a bill for a war loan . Legislation to pay the soldiers Lincoln had already called into service and to allow the administration

to borrow to prosecute the war quickly followed . These acts and more were pushed through the House by Stevens . To defeat the delaying tactics of Copperhead opponents , he had the House set debate limits as short as half a minute .

Stevens played a major part in the passage of the Legal Tender Act of 1862 , when for the first time the United States issued currency backed only by its own credit , not by gold or silver . Early makeshifts to finance the war , such as war bonds , had failed as it became clear the war would not be short . In 1863 , Stevens aided the passage of the National Banking Act , that required that banks limit their currency issues to the amount of federal bonds that they were required to hold . The system endured for a half @-@ century , until supplanted by the Federal Reserve System in 1913 .

Although the Legal Tender legislation allowed for the payment of government obligations in paper money , Stevens was unable to get the Senate to agree that interest on the national debt should be paid with greenbacks . As the value of paper money dropped , Stevens railed against gold speculators , and in June 1864 after consultation with Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase , proposed what became known as the Gold Bill ? to abolish the gold market by forbidding its sale by brokers or for future delivery . It passed Congress in June ; the chaos caused by the lack of an organized gold market caused the value of paper to drop even faster . Under heavy pressure from the business community , Congress repealed the bill on July 1 , twelve days after its passage . Stevens was unrepentant even as the value of paper currency recovered in late 1864 amid the expectation of Union victory , proposing legislation to make paying a premium in greenbacks for an amount in gold coin a criminal offense . It did not pass .

Stevens , like most Pennsylvania politicians of both parties , was a major proponent of tariffs , which increased from 19 % to 48 % from fiscal 1861 to fiscal 1865 . According to activist Ida Tarbell in " The Tariff in Our Times : " [Import] duties were never too high for [Stevens] , particularly for iron , for he was a manufacturer and it was often said in Pennsylvania that the duties he advocated in no way represented the large iron interests of the state , but were hoisted to cover the needs of his own ... badly managed works . "

= = Reconstruction = =

= = = Problem of reconstructing the South = = =

As Congress debated how the U.S. would be organized after the war , the status of freed slaves and former Confederates remained undetermined . Stevens stated that what was needed was a " radical reorganization of southern institutions , habits , and manners " . Stevens , Sumner and other radicals argued that the southern states should be treated like conquered provinces , without constitutional rights . Lincoln , on the contrary , said that only individuals , not states , had rebelled . In July 1864 , Stevens pushed Lincoln to sign the Wade ? Davis Bill , which required at least half of prewar voters to sign an oath of loyalty for a state to gain readmission . Lincoln , who advocated his more lenient ten percent plan , pocket vetoed it .

Stevens reluctantly voted for Lincoln at the convention of the National Union Party , a coalition of Republicans and War Democrats . He would have preferred to vote for the sitting vice president , Hannibal Hamlin , as Lincoln 's running mate in 1864 , but his delegation voted to cast the state 's ballots for the administration 's favored candidate , Military Governor of Tennessee Andrew Johnson , a War Democrat who had been a Tennessee senator and elected governor . Stevens was disgusted at Johnson 's nomination , complaining , " can 't you get a candidate for Vice @-@ President without going down into a damned rebel province for one ? " Stevens campaigned for the Lincoln @-@ Johnson ticket ; it was elected , as was Stevens for another term in the House . When in January 1865 Congress learned that Lincoln had attempted peace talks with Confederate leaders , an outraged Stevens declared that if the American electorate could vote again , they would elect General Benjamin Butler instead of Lincoln .

= = = Presidential Reconstruction = = =

Before leaving town after Congress adjourned in March 1865 , Stevens privately urged Lincoln to press the South hard militarily , though the war was ending . Lincoln replied , " Stevens , this is a pretty big hog we are trying to catch and to hold when we catch him . We must take care that he does not slip away from us . " Never to see Lincoln again , Stevens left with " a homely metaphor but no real certainty of having left as much as a thumbprint on Lincoln 's policy " . On the evening of April 14 , 1865 , Lincoln was assassinated by Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth . Stevens did not attend the ceremonies when Lincoln 's funeral train stopped in Lancaster ; he was said to be ill . Trefousse speculated he may avoided the rites for other reasons . According to Lincoln biographer Carl Sandburg , Stevens stood at a railroad bridge and lifted his hat .

In May 1865 , Andrew Johnson began what came to be known as " Presidential Reconstruction " : recognizing a provisional government of Virginia led by Francis Harrison Pierpont , calling for other former rebel states to organize constitutional conventions , declaring amnesty for many southerners , and issuing individual pardons to even more . Johnson did not push the states to protect the rights of freed slaves , and immediately began to counteract the land reform policies of the Freedmen 's Bureau . These actions outraged Stevens and others who took his view . The radicals saw that freedmen in the South risked losing the economic and political liberty necessary to sustain emancipation from slavery . They began to call for universal male suffrage and continued their demands for land reform .

Stevens wrote to Johnson that his policies were gravely damaging the country and that he should call a special session of Congress , which was not scheduled to meet until December . When his communications were ignored , Stevens began to discuss with other radicals how to prevail over Johnson when the two houses convened . Congress has the constitutional power to be the judge of whether those seeking to be its members are properly elected ; Stevens urged that no senators or representatives from the South be seated . He argued that the states should not be readmitted as thereafter Congress would lack the power to force race reform .

In September , Stevens gave a widely reprinted speech in Lancaster in which he set forth what he wanted for the South . He proposed that the government confiscate the estates of the largest 70 000 landholders there , those who owned more than 200 acres (81 ha) . Much of this property he wanted distributed in plots of 40 acres (16 ha) to the freedmen ; other lands would go to reward loyalists in both North and South , or to meet government obligations . He warned that under the President 's plan , the southern states would send rebels to Congress who would join with northern Democrats and Johnson to govern the nation and perhaps undo emancipation .

Through late 1865 , the southern states held white -only balloting and in congressional elections , chose many former rebels , most prominently Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens , voted as senator by the Georgia Legislature . Violence against African -Americans was common and unpunished in the South ; the new legislatures enacted Black Codes , depriving the freedmen of most civil rights . These actions , seen as provocative in the North , both privately dismayed Johnson and helped turn northern public opinion against him .

= = = Congressional Reconstruction = = =

By this time , Stevens was in his seventies and in poor health ; he was carried everywhere in a special chair . When Congress convened in early December 1865 , Stevens made arrangements with the Clerk of the House that when the roll was called , the names of the southern electees be omitted . The Senate also excluded southern claimants . A new congressman , Ohio 's Rutherford B. Hayes , described Stevens , " He is radical throughout , except , I am told , he don 't believe in hanging . He is leader . "

As the responsibilities of the Ways and Means chairman had been divided , Stevens took the post of chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations , retaining control over the House 's agenda . Stevens focused on legislation that would secure the freedom promised by the newly ratified Thirteenth Amendment . He proposed and then co -chaired the Joint Committee on Reconstruction with Maine Senator William Pitt Fessenden . This body , also called the Committee

of Fifteen , investigated conditions in the South . It heard not only of the violence against African @-@ Americans , but against Union loyalists , and against what southerners termed " carpetbaggers " , northerners who had journeyed south after the restoration of peace . Stevens declared : that " our loyal brethren at the South , whether they be black or white " required urgent protection " from the barbarians who are now daily murdering them . "

The Committee of Fifteen began consideration of what would become the Fourteenth Amendment . Stevens had begun drafting versions in December 1865 , before the Committee had even formed . In January 1866 , a subcommittee including Stevens and John Bingham proposed two amendments : one giving Congress the unqualified power to secure equal rights , privileges , and protections for all citizens ; the other explicitly annulling all racially discriminatory laws . Stevens believed that the Declaration of Independence and Organic Acts already bound the federal government to these principles , but that an amendment was necessary to allow enforcement against discrimination at the State level . The resolution providing for what would become the Fourteenth Amendment was watered down in Congress ; during the closing debate , Stevens said these changes had shattered his lifelong dream in equality for all Americans . Nevertheless , stating that he lived among men , not angels , he supported the passage of the compromise amendment . Still , Stevens told the House : " Forty acres of land and a hut would be more valuable to [the African @-@ American] than the immediate right to vote . "

When Illinois Senator Lyman Trumbull introduced legislation to reauthorize and expand the Freedmen 's Bureau , Stevens called the Bill a " robbery " because it did not include sufficient provisions for land reform or protect the property of refugees given them by the military occupation of the South . Johnson vetoed the Bill anyway , calling the Freedmen 's Bureau unconstitutional , and decrying its cost ? Congress had never purchased land , established schools , or provided financial help for " our own people " . Congress was unable to override Johnson 's veto in February , but five months later passed a similar bill . Stevens criticized the passage of the Southern Homestead Act of 1866 arguing that the low @-@ quality land it made available would not drive real economic growth for black families .

Congress overrode a Johnson veto to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1866 (also introduced by Trumbull) , granting African @-@ Americans citizenship and equality before the law , and forbidding any action by a state to the contrary . Johnson made the gap between him and Congress wider when he accused Stevens , Sumner , and Wendell Phillips of trying to destroy the government .

After Congress adjourned in July , the campaigning for the fall elections began . Johnson embarked on a trip by rail , dubbed the " Swing Around the Circle " , that won him few supporters ; his arguments with hecklers were deemed undignified . He attacked Stevens and other radicals during this tour . Stevens campaigned for firm measures against the South , his hand strengthened by violence in Memphis and New Orleans , where African @-@ Americans and white Unionists had been attacked by mobs , including the police . Stevens was returned to Congress by his constituents ; Republicans would have a two @-@ thirds majority in both houses in the next Congress .

= = = Radical Reconstruction = = =

In January 1867 , Stevens introduced legislation to divide the South into five districts , each commanded by an army general empowered to override civil authorities . These military officers were to supervise elections with all males , of whatever race , entitled to vote , except for those who could not take an oath of past loyalty ? most white southerners could not . The states were to write new constitutions (subject to approval by Congress) and hold elections for state officials . Only if a state ratified the Fourteenth Amendment would its delegation be seated in Congress . The system gave power to a Republican coalitions of freedmen (mobilized by the Union League) , carpetbaggers and co @-@ operative southerners (the last dubbed scalawags by indignant ex @-@ rebels) in most southern states . These states ratified the Fourteenth Amendment , which became part of the Constitution in mid @-@ 1868 .

Stevens introduced a Tenure of Office Act , restricting Johnson from firing officials who had received Senate confirmation without getting that body 's consent . The Tenure of Office Act was

ambiguous , since it could be read to protect officeholders only during the tenure of the president who appointed them , and most of the officials the radicals sought to protect had been named by Lincoln . Chief among these was Secretary of War Edwin Stanton , a radical himself .

Stevens steered a bill to enfranchise African @-@ Americans in the District of Columbia through the House ; the Senate passed it in 1867 , and it was enacted over Johnson 's veto . Congress was downsizing the Army for peacetime ; Stevens offered an amendment , which became part of the bill as enacted , to have two regiments of African @-@ American cavalry . His solicitude for African @-@ Americans extended to the Native American ; Stevens was successful in defeating a bill to place reservations under state law , noting that the native people had often been abused by the states . An expansionist , he supported the railroads . He added a stipulation into the [Transcontinental] Pacific Railroad Act requiring the applicable railroads to buy iron " of American manufacture " of the top price qualities. Although he sought to protect manufacturers with high tariffs , he also sought unsuccessfully to get a bill passed to protect labor with an eight @-@ hour day in the District of Columbia . Stevens advocated a bill to give government workers raises ; it did not pass .

= = Impeaching the President = =

The new Congress , which convened on March 4 , 1867 , was not as aggressive in opposing Johnson as Stevens had hoped . It soon adjourned until July , though its Judiciary Committee remained to hold hearings on whether the President should be impeached . Stevens firmly supported impeachment , but others were less enthusiastic once the Senate elected Ohio 's Benjamin Wade as its president pro tempore , next in line to the presidency in the absence of a vice president . Wade was a radical who supported wealth redistribution ; a speech of his in Kansas so impressed Karl Marx that he mentioned it in the first German edition of *Das Kapital* . Also a supporter of women 's suffrage , Wade was widely mistrusted for his views ; the prospect of his succession made some advocates of Johnson 's removal more hesitant . Stevens , however , strongly supported the removal of the President , and when the Judiciary Committee failed to report , tried to keep Congress in session until it did . Despite his opposition to its leader , Stevens worked with the administration on matters both supported ; he obtained an appropriation for the purchase of Alaska and urged Secretary of State Seward to seek other territories to expand into .

Most of Johnson 's Cabinet supported him but Secretary of War Stanton did not , and with the General of the Army , war hero Ulysses S. Grant , worked to undermine Johnson 's Reconstruction policies . Johnson obeyed the laws that Congress had passed , sometimes over his veto , though he often interpreted them in ways contrary to their intent . After Stanton refused Johnson 's request that he resign in August 1867 , Johnson suspended Stanton , as permitted by the Tenure of Office Act , and made General Grant interim Secretary of War . Republicans campaigned in that year 's election on the issue of African @-@ American suffrage , but were met with a voter surge towards the Democrats , who opposed it . Although no seats at Congress were directly at stake , voters in Ohio both defeated a referendum on black suffrage and elected the Democrats to the majority in the legislature , meaning that Wade , whose term was due to expire in 1869 , would not be reelected .

When Congress met again in December , although the Judiciary Committee voted 5 ? 4 for impeachment , the House voted against it . On January 13 , 1868 , the Senate overturned Johnson 's suspension of Stanton . Grant resigned as Secretary of War , and Stanton reclaimed his place . Nevertheless , on February 21 , the President ousted Stanton from his position , appointing General Lorenzo Thomas in his place ? though Stanton barricaded himself in his office . These actions caused great excitement in Washington , and in the House of Representatives , Stevens went from group to group on the floor , repeating , " Didn 't I tell you so ? What good did your moderation do you ? If you don 't kill the beast , it will kill you . " Stevens concluded the debate on a renewed impeachment resolution on February 24 , though due to his poor health he was unable to complete his speech and gave it to the Clerk to read aloud . He accused Johnson of usurping the powers of other branches of government , and of ignoring the will of the people . He did not deny impeachment was a political matter , but " this is not to be the temporary triumph of a political party , but is to

endure in its consequence until the whole continent shall be filled with a free and untrammelled people or shall be a nest of shrinking , cowardly slaves . " The House voted 126 ? 47 to impeach the President .

Stevens led the delegation of House members sent the following day to inform the Senate of the impeachment , though he had to be carried to its doors by his bearers . Elected to the committee charged with drafting articles of impeachment , his illness limited his involvement . Nevertheless , dissatisfied with the committee 's proposed articles , Stevens suggested another , that would become Article XI . This grounded the various accusations in statements Johnson had made denying the legitimacy of Congress due to the exclusion of the southern states , and stated that Johnson had tried to disobey the Reconstruction Acts . Stevens was one of the managers , or prosecutors , elected by the House to present its case in the impeachment trial . Although Stevens was too ill to appear in the Senate on March 3 , when the managers requested that Johnson be summoned (the President would appear only by his counsel , or defense managers) , he was there ten days later when the summons was returnable . The New York Herald described him as having a " face of corpselike color , and rigidly twitching lips ... a strange and unearthly apparition ? a reclused remonstrance from the tomb ... the very embodiment of fanaticism , without a solitary leaven of justice or mercy ... the avenging Nemesis of his party ? the sworn and implacable foe of the Executive of the nation " .

Increasingly ill , Stevens took little part in the impeachment trial , at which the leading House manager was Massachusetts Representative Benjamin F. Butler . Stevens nourished himself on the Senate floor with raw eggs and terrapin , port and brandy . He spoke only twice before making a closing argument for the House managers on April 27 . As he spoke , his voice weakened , and finally he allowed Butler to read the second half of his speech for him . Stevens focused on Article XI , taking the position that Johnson could be removed for political crimes ; he need not have committed an offense against the law . The President , having sworn to faithfully execute the laws , had intentionally disobeyed the Tenure of Office Act after the Senate had refused to uphold his removal of Stanton , " and now this offspring of assassination turns upon the Senate who have ... rebuked him in a constitutional manner and bids them defiance . How can he escape the just vengeance of the law ? " .

Most radicals were confident that Johnson would be convicted and removed from office . Stevens , however , was never certain of the result as Chief Justice Chase (the former Treasury Secretary) made rulings that favored the defense , and he had no great confidence Republicans would stick together . On May 11 , the Senate met in secret session , and senators gave speeches explaining how they intended to vote . All Democrats were opposed , but an unexpectedly large number of Republicans also favored acquittal on some or all of the articles . Counting votes , managers realized their best chance of gaining the required two @-@ thirds for conviction was on the Stevens @-@ inspired Article XI , and when the Senate assembled to give its verdict , they scheduled it to be voted upon first . The suspense was broken when Kansas Senator Edmund Ross , whose position was uncertain , voted for acquittal . This meant that , with the votes of those who remained , the President would not be convicted on that article . The article failed , 35 in favor to 19 against . In the hope that delay would bring a different result , Republicans adjourned the Senate for ten days . Stevens was carried from the Senate in his chair ? one observer described him as " black with rage and disappointment " ? and when those outside clamored for the result , Stevens shouted , " The country is going to the devil ! " .

= = Final months and death = =

During the recess of the impeachment court , the Republicans met in convention in Chicago and nominated Grant for president . Stevens did not attend , and was dismayed by the exclusion of African @-@ American suffrage from the party platform as radical influence began to fade in the Republican Party . When the Senate returned to session , it voted down Articles II and III by the same 35 ? 19 margin as before , and Chase declared the President acquitted . Stevens did not give up on the idea of removing Johnson ; in July , he proffered several more impeachment articles (the

House refused to adopt them) . He offered a bill to divide Texas into several parts so as to gain additional Republican senators to vote out Johnson . It was defeated ; the Herald stated , " It is lamentable to see this old man , with one foot in the grave , pursuing the President with such vindictiveness . " Nevertheless , Stevens planned to revisit the question of impeachment when Congress met again in late 1868 .

Brodie suggested that Stevens 's hatred of Johnson was the only thing keeping him from despair , aware as he was of the continued violence in the South , some of which was committed by the Ku Klux Klan . Several of the southern states had been re @-@ admitted by this time , and the murders and intimidation were aiding the Democrats there in restoring white rule . With the Republicans unwilling to embrace black suffrage in their platform and the Democrats opposed to it , Stevens feared Democratic victory in the 1868 elections might even bring back slavery . He told his fellow Pennsylvania politician , Alexander McClure , " My life has been a failure . With all this great struggle of years in Washington , and the fearful sacrifice of life and treasure , I see little hope for the Republic . " , He took pride , he continued , in his role in establishing free public education in Pennsylvania . When interviewed by a reporter seeking to gain his life story , Stevens replied , " I have no history . My life @-@ long regret is that I have lived so long and so uselessly . " Nevertheless , in his last formal speech to the House , Stevens stated that " man still is vile . But such large steps have lately been taken in the true direction , that the patriot has a right to take courage . "

When Congress adjourned in late July , Stevens remained in Washington , too ill to return to Pennsylvania . Stevens was in pain from his stomach ailments , from swollen feet , and from dropsy . By early August , he was unable to leave the house . He still received some visitors though , and correctly predicted to his friend and former student Simon Stevens (no relation) that Grant would win the election . On the afternoon of August 11 , his doctor warned that he would probably not last through the night . His longtime housekeeper and companion , Lydia Hamilton Smith , his nephew Thaddeus , and friends gathered by him . Two black preachers came to pray by him , telling him that he had the prayers of all their people . He sucked on ice to try to sooth the pain ; his last words were a request for more of it . Thaddeus Stevens died on the night of August 11 , 1868 , as the old day departed .

President Johnson issued no statement upon the death of his enemy . Newspaper reaction was generally along partisan lines , though sometimes mixed . The Detroit Post stated that " if to die crowned with noble laurels , and ... secure of the respect of the world ... is an end worthy the ambition of a well spent life , then the veteran Radical may lie down with the noblest of the fathers to a well contented sleep " . The New York Times stated that Stevens had " discerned the expediency of emancipation , and urged it long before Mr. Lincoln issued his proclamation " but that after the war , " on the subject of Reconstruction , then , Mr. Stevens must be deemed the Evil Genius of the Republican Party . The [Franklin , Louisiana] Planter 's Banner exulted , " The prayers of the righteous have at last removed the Congressional curse ! May ... the fires of his new furnace never go out ! "

Stevens 's body was conveyed from his house to the Capitol by white and African @-@ American pallbearers together . Thousands of mourners , of both races , filed past his casket as he lay in state in the Rotunda ; Stevens was the third man , after Clay and Lincoln , to receive that honor . African @-@ American soldiers constituted the guard of honor . After a service there , his body was taken by funeral train to Lancaster , a city draped in black for the funeral . Stevens was laid to rest in Shreiner 's Cemetery (today the Shreiner @-@ Concord Cemetery) ; it allowed burial of people of all races , although at the time of Stevens 's interment , only one African @-@ American was buried there . The people of his district posthumously renominated him to Congress , and elected his former student , Oliver J. Dickey to succeed him . When Congress convened in December 1868 , there were a number of speeches in tribute to Stevens ; they were afterwards collected in book form .

= = Personal life = =

Stevens never married , though there were rumors about his 20 @-@ year relationship (1848 ? 1868) with his widowed housekeeper , Lydia Hamilton Smith (1813 ? 1884) . She was a light @-@ skinned African @-@ American ; her husband Jacob and at least one of her sons were much darker than she was .

It is uncertain if the Stevens @-@ Smith relationship was romantic . The Democratic press , especially in the South , assumed so , and when he brought Mrs. Smith to Washington in 1859 , where she managed his household , that did nothing to stop their insinuations . In the one brief surviving letter from Stevens to her , Stevens addresses her as Mrs. Lydia Smith . Stevens insisted that his nieces and nephews refer to her as Mrs. Smith , deference towards an African @-@ American servant almost unheard of at that time . They do so in surviving letters , warmly , asking Stevens to see that she comes with him next time he visits .

As evidence that their relationship was sexual , Brodie pointed to an 1868 letter in which Stevens compares himself to Richard M. Johnson , vice president under Martin Van Buren , who lived openly with a series of African @-@ American slave mistresses . Johnson was elected even though this became known during the 1836 campaign , a fact that Stevens notes , and expresses his bitterness about his inability to gain election by the legislature to the Senate , or to secure a Cabinet position .

When Stevens died , Smith was at his bedside , along with his friend Simon Stevens , nephew Thaddeus Stevens Jr . , two African @-@ American nuns , and several other individuals . Under Stevens ' will , Smith was allowed to choose between a lump sum of \$ 5 @,@ 000 or a \$ 500 annual allowance ; she was also allowed to take any furniture in his house . With the inheritance , she purchased Stevens ' house , where she had lived for many years . A Roman Catholic , she chose to be buried in a Catholic cemetery , not near Stevens , although she left money for the upkeep of his grave .

Stevens had taken custody of his two young nephews , Thaddeus (often called " Thaddeus Jr . ") and Alanson Joshua Stevens after their parents died in Vermont . Alanson was sent to work at Stevens 's business , Caledonia Forge , Thaddeus Jr. was expelled from Dartmouth , though he subsequently graduated and was taken into his uncle 's law practice . Alanson during the Civil War rose to be commanding captain of a Pennsylvania Volunteers field artillery unit and was killed in action at Chickamauga . After Alanson 's death , his uncle used his influence to have Thaddeus Jr. made provost marshal of Lancaster .

= = Related sites = =

Buildings associated with Stevens and with Smith in Lancaster are being renovated by the local historical society , LancasterHistory.org. In his will , Stevens made a number of bequests , with much of his estate to his nephew Thaddeus Jr . , on condition that he refrain from alcohol . If he did not , that bequest would go to establish an orphanage in Lancaster , to be open to all races and nationalities without discrimination . A legal fight over his estate ensued , and it was not until 1894 that the courts settled the matter , awarding \$ 50 @,@ 000 to found the orphanage . The school today is the Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology , in Lancaster .

Among a number of other schools named for Stevens , the Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School in Washington , D.C. was founded in 1868 as the first school built for African @-@ American children there . It was segregated for the first 86 years of its existence . In 1977 , Amy Carter , daughter of President Jimmy Carter , a Georgian , was enrolled there , the first child of a sitting president to attend public school in almost 70 years .

= = Historical and popular view = =

As Stevens biographer Richard N. Current put it , " to find out what really made the man go , the historian would need the combined aid of two experts from outside the profession ? a psychoanalyst and a spiritualist . " The historical view of Thaddeus Stevens has fluctuated widely in the near century and a half since his death , generally in a manner inverse to that of Andrew Johnson . Early biographical works on Stevens were composed by men who knew him , and reflected their

prejudices . Biographies at the turn of the century , such as that by Samuel McCall in 1899 and James Albert Woodburn in 1913 , presented Stevens favorably , as a sincere man , motivated by principle . Early African @-@ American historian W. E. B. Du Bois called Stevens " a leader of the common people " and " a stern believer in democracy , both in politics and in industry " . Pulitzer Prize @-@ winning historian James Ford Rhodes opined that though Stevens had a " profound sympathy " towards the African @-@ American , " coming straight from the heart " , he also showed " virulence toward the South " and was " bitter and vindictive " . This view of a vengeful Stevens originated during Reconstruction , and persisted well into the 20th century .

With the advent of the Dunning School 's view of Reconstruction after 1900 , Stevens continued to be viewed negatively , and generally as motivated by hatred . These historians , led by William Dunning , taught that Reconstruction had been an opportunity for radical politicians , motivated by ill @-@ will towards the South , to destroy what little of southern life and dignity the war had left . Dunning himself deemed Stevens " truculent , vindictive , and cynical " . Lloyd Paul Stryker , who wrote a highly favorable 1929 biography of Johnson , labeled Stevens as a " horrible old man ... craftily preparing to strangle the bleeding , broken body of the South " and who thought it would be " a beautiful thing " to see " the white men , especially the white women of the South , writhing under negro domination " . In 1915 , D. W. Griffith 's film *The Birth of a Nation* was released , containing the villainous character , Congressman Austin Stoneman , who resembled Stevens down to the ill @-@ fitting wig , limp , and African @-@ American lover (named Lydia Brown) . This popular treatment reinforced and reinvigorated public prejudices towards Stevens . According to Foner , " as historians exalted the magnanimity of Lincoln and Andrew Johnson , Stevens came to symbolize Northern malice , revenge , and irrational hatred of the South . " The highly popular historian James Truslow Adams described Stevens as " perhaps the most despicable , malevolent , and morally deformed character who has ever risen to high power in America . "

Historians who penned biographies of Stevens in the late 1930s sought to move away from this perspective , seeking to rehabilitate him and his political career . Thomas F. Woodley wrote of Stevens in 1937 , and while his work shows admiration of Stevens , he attributed Stevens 's driving force to bitterness over his clubfoot . Alphonse Miller , in his 1939 biography , found that the former congressman was motivated by a desire for justice . Both men were convinced that recent books had not treated him fairly . Richard Current 's 1942 work reflected current Beardian historiography which saw all American history , including Reconstruction , as a three @-@ way economic struggle between the industrialists of the Northeast (represented by Stevens) , the planters of the South and the farmers of the Midwest . Current argued that Stevens was motivated in his Reconstruction policies by frustrated ambitions , and a desire to use his political position to promote industrial capitalism and advance the Republican Party . He concluded that despite Stevens 's egalitarian beliefs he actually promoted inequality , for " none had done more than he to bring on the age of Big Business , with its concentration of wealth " .

With Ralph Korngold 's 1955 biography of Stevens , the neoabolitionist school of historians began to consider the former congressman . These professors rejected the earlier view that those who had gone South to aid the African @-@ American after the war were " rascallion carpetbaggers " defeated by " saintly redeemers " . Instead , they applauded those who had sought to end slavery and forward civil rights , and castigated Johnson for obstructionism . They took the view that the African @-@ American was central to Reconstruction , and the only things wrong with the congressional program were that it did not go far enough , and stopped too soon . Brodie 's 1959 biography of Stevens was of this school . Controversial in its conclusions for being a psychobiography , it found that Stevens was a " consummate underdog who identified with the oppressed " , and whose intelligence won him success , while his consciousness of his clubfoot retarded his social development . According to Brodie , this also made him unwilling to marry a woman of his own social standing .

Scholars who followed Brodie continued to chip away at the idea of Stevens as a vindictive dictator , who dominated Congress to get his way . In 1960 , Eric McKittrick deemed Stevens " a picturesque and adroit politician , but a very limited one " whose career was " a long comic sequence of devilish schemes which , one after another , kept blowing up in his face " . From the mid @-@ 1970s onward

, Foner argued that Stevens 's role was in staking out radical position , but events , not Stevens , caused the Republicans to support him . Michael Les Benedict in 1974 suggested that Stevens 's reputation as a dictator was based more on his personality than on his influence . In 1989 , Allan Bogue found that as chairman of Ways and Means , Stevens was " less than complete master " of his committee .

Historian Hans Trefousse stated in a 1969 study of the Radical Republicans that Stevens 's " one abiding passion was equality " . In 1991 , he noted that Stevens " was one of the most influential representatives ever to serve in Congress . [He dominated] the House with his wit , knowledge of parliamentary law , and sheer willpower , even though he was often unable to prevail . " In his 1997 biography of Stevens , though , he took a position similar to McKittrick 's : that Stevens was a relatively marginal figure , with his influence often limited by his extremism . Trefousse believed that Brodie went too far both in deeming Stevens 's clubfoot responsible for so much about him , and in giving full credence to the Stevens @-@ Smith relationship : both those things cannot now be determined with certainty .

Steven Spielberg 's 2012 film Lincoln , in which Stevens was played by Tommy Lee Jones , brought new public interest in Stevens . Jones 's character is portrayed as the central figure among the radicals , responsible in large part for the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment . Historian Matthew Pinsky notes that Stevens is referred to only four times in Doris Kearns Goodwin 's Team of Rivals on which scriptwriter Tony Kushner based the film 's screenplay ; other radicals were folded into the character . Stevens is depicted as unable to moderate his views for the sake of gaining passage of the amendment until after he is urged to do so by the ever @-@ compromising Lincoln . According to Aaron Bady in his article about the film and how it portrays the radicals , " he 's the uncle everyone is embarrassed of , even if they love him too much to say so . He 's not a leader , he 's a liability , one whose shining heroic moment will be when he keeps silent about what he really believes . " The film depicts a Stevens ? Smith sexual relationship ; Pinsky comments that " it may well have been true that they were lovers , but by injecting this issue into the movie , the filmmakers risk leaving the impression for some viewers that the ' secret ' reason for Stevens 's egalitarianism was his desire to legitimize his romance across racial lines . "

= = = Historiography = = =

Jolly , James A. " The Historical Reputation of Thaddeus Stevens , " Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society (1970) 74 : 33 ? 71

Pickens , Donald K. " The Republican Synthesis and Thaddeus Stevens , " Civil War History (1985) 31 : 57 ? 73 ; argues that Stevens was totally committed to Republicanism and capitalism in terms of self @-@ improvement , the advance of society , equal distribution of land , and economic liberty for all ; to achieve that he had to destroy slavery and the aristocracy .