

STEVENS, THADDEUS. Statesman.

Thaddeus Stevens was born in Danville, Vermont, April 4, 1792; he died in Washington, D. C. August 11, 1868.

He entered Vermont University in 1810, and after its close on account of the war in 1812, he went to Dartmouth, and was graduated in 1814. He then taught and studied law in Vermont and Pennsylvania, was admitted to the bar at Bel Air, Maryland, and began practice in Gettysburg, Pa., in 1816, early attaining a high rank in his profession.

Mr. Stevens was elected to the Legislature in 1833, '34, '35, '37, '38, and 1841. He was a member of the State Constitutional Convention in 1836, but on account of his anti-slavery principles would not sign the report which gave the franchise only to white citizens, and throughout his whole career he was a champion of the slaves, and an advocate of equal rights to all men.

In 1842, he removed to Lancaster, Pa. where he devoted himself to his profession for several years, and held the foremost place at the bar.

Mr. Stevens was elected to Congress as a Whig in 1848 and 1850, and opposed vehemently the Clay compromise measures and the fugitive slave law. In 1858 he was again elected to Congress as a Republican, and became and remained a leader in that party until his death. He was radical in his anti-slavery principles, advocated emancipation, urged on President Lincoln the necessity and justice of the emancipation proclamation, was ever the friend of the negro, and was the originator and promoter of the 14th amendment to the Constitution. Because of his remarkable power of oratory and strength of character, he was called the "Great Commoner".

He was Chairman of the House Committee on Reconstruction, and reported the bill which placed the Southern States under military rule until they adopted constitutions giving suffrage and equal rights to the negroes.

Mr. Stevens proposed the impeachment of President Johnson in Congress on February 24, 1868, was appointed one of the Committee of seven to draw up articles of impeachment, and was Chairman of the Board of Managers appointed by the House to conduct the trial.

The University of Vermont conferred on him the degree of LL.D. in 1867.

Mr. Stevens left a large lot in Lancaster as a burial place for those who could not afford to pay for graves, and was himself buried in this private cemetery, explaining in the epitaph which he wrote for his tomb that, as public cemeteries were limited to the white race, he preferred to be true to the principles which had governed him in life, and in his death illustrate his belief in the "equality of man before his Creator."

He also left a legacy for the founding of an orphan asylum in Lancaster, to be open to both white and colored children.