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# Excavations at the Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia HamiltonSmith Site, Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Archaeological Evidence for the Underground Railroad

## **Cover Page Footnote**

There are a number of people and organizations we would like to acknowledge and thank. First and foremost, the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County sponsored this project, and we thank them for their ongoing support of archaeology in Lancaster. Randy Harris and his successor Tim Smedick were extremely helpful and patient throughout the process of excavation and report preparation. Our thanks also go to the Lancaster County Convention Center Authority for generously allowing us to conduct research on the site. We extend our gratitude to the entire board of the Authority, but especially to Judy Ware, Jim Pickard, and Dave Hixson. We are equally indebted to Franklin and Marshall College for logistical and financial support in processing and analyzing artifacts recovered from the Stevens and Smith Site. We are particularly grateful to the many undergraduate students from Franklin and Marshall College (Alex Baer, Jill Conley, Chandra Gioiello, Karen Hippe, Mandy Mallon, Beth Moyer, Beth Rottner, and Linday Rush) and Kutztown University (Christopher Mull, Terry Winson, Matt Van Allen, Marco Soto, Melissa Flannery, and Collin Ferriman), who not only excavated but processed and analyzed much of the artifactual material. We received additional field assistance from a number of graduate students from Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania including Kelly Britt, Christine Chen, Jill Gaieski, Chana Kraus-Friedberg, and Janet Six. We would like to especially acknowledge Kelly Britt's invaluable support and dedication to this project. This article has profited from the comments offered by Doug Armstrong (Syracuse University), Marley Brown (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation), Cheryl LaRoche (University of Maryland), and Mark Leone (University of Maryland). All four generously traveled to Lancaster in the summer of 2003 to view the Stevens and Smith Site and associated artifacts. An early version of this article was presented at the 2004 Society for Historical Archaeology meetings in St. Louis. We benefited from the discussion that our papers generated and the comments offered by Chuck Orser (Illinois State University), discussant for the session. This project could not have been completed without the assistance of many individuals in Lancaster. We thank Bill Laing for his insight on the history of Lancaster, Gene Aleci and Community Heritage Partners for their help and permission to use their renderings, Linda Aleci for her steadfast commitment to the project, and Mayor Charlie Smithgall for his interest in the project. We are eternally grateful to our colleague David Schuyler of the American Studies Department at Franklin and Marshall College for having first proposed that an archaeological investigation be conducted at the Stevens and Smith Site. And finally, we thank the many members of the greater Lancaster community who volunteered their time and efforts in the field and in the lab.

## Excavations at the Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith Site, Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Archaeological Evidence for the Underground Railroad?

James A. Delle and Mary Ann Levine

*This article reports on archaeological investigations conducted at the Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith Site in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The Stevens and Smith Site stands in the footprint of a proposed convention center and hotel complex, and will be partially destroyed by the construction. Stevens, a noted anti-slavery legislator, and Smith, his African American housekeeper and companion, are reputed to have been actively involved in the Underground Railroad during the 1850s. While little concrete evidence exists to corroborate the degree to which Stevens and Smith assisted fugitives escaping from enslavement, our excavations uncovered a modified cistern that may have been used as a hiding place. The evidence supporting that hypothesis is presented here.*

*Cet article rend compte des recherches archéologiques ayant eu lieu au site de Thaddeus Stevens et Lydia Hamilton à Lancaster en Pennsylvanie. Le site Stevens et Smith se situe à l'intérieur des limites d'un complexe « centre de congrès-hôtel » dont la construction proposée détruirait partiellement le site. Stevens, un législateur antiesclavagiste notoire, et Smith, sa bonne afro-américaine et compagne, sont reconnus pour avoir été activement impliqués dans le chemin de fer clandestin durant les années 1850. Quoique très peu de faits concrets nous permettent de prouver l'importance de l'aide que Stevens et Smith ont fourni aux fugitifs tentant d'échapper à l'esclavage, les fouilles ont permis la découverte d'une citerne modifiée ayant pu être utilisée comme cachette. Les preuves supportant cette hypothèse sont présentées dans cet article.*

### Introduction

Sometime in the summer of 2005, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, will begin construction on a new hotel-convention center complex in the middle of its 18th-century downtown. Encompassing an entire city block, the convention center will radically change the fabric of the downtown historic district. Several of the buildings that will be impacted by this construction were owned at one time by Thaddeus Stevens (1792–1868), a founder of the Republican Party in Pennsylvania, and one of the 19th century's best known radical politicians (FIG. 1).

Now known as the Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith Site, the cluster of buildings is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Queen and Vine Streets in Lancaster. Although much of an entire city block contained within Lancaster's historic district will be destroyed, parts of four historic buildings associated with Stevens will be preserved. A local preservation group, the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County (HPT), is currently planning to renovate the Stevens buildings and to create a

museum commemorating Thaddeus Stevens and his close associate Lydia Hamilton Smith. As part of this effort, we were approached by the HPT to conduct archaeological research in the area to be impacted by the construction of the convention center.

In this article, we report on the work conducted behind the home and law office of Thaddeus Stevens. It is our hope that we can contribute to a wider public recognition of the importance of both Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith. Largely forgotten in public memory, Stevens and Smith were tireless crusaders against slavery in a border state. Local tradition holds that they were active in the Underground Railroad, and our archaeological investigations discovered a feature that compellingly suggests that Stevens and Smith may have been harboring fugitives on their property.

### Background of the Project

Lancaster, incorporated as a borough in 1742, is one of Pennsylvania's oldest and most historic cities. Like many small eastern cities, Lancaster, now home to about 50,000 people,

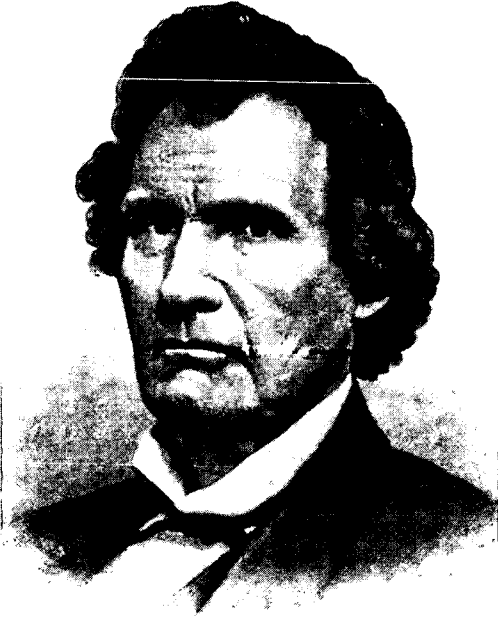


Figure 1. Thaddeus Stevens in the 1860s. Courtesy of the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County.

has experienced a significant demographic shift since the Second World War, as increasing numbers of the middle class have moved from the urban core into the suburbs. The city, while remaining the administrative hub of Lancaster County, one of the Commonwealth's fastest growing regions with over 500,000 residents, has seen most of its significant retail and service establishments move into suburban malls and shopping centers (Schuyler 2002).

As has been the case with many cities that have experienced suburbanization, successive generations of city leaders have sponsored a series of projects to either "renew" or "revitalize" the downtown core of the city. In the 1960s and early-1970s, this led to a huge urban renewal project that included the demolition of some of the city's most beautiful historic structures. In their place was erected a labyrinth of concrete parking decks and a modernist shopping center, whose anchor store failed within 28 months of opening (Schuyler 2002).

The final blow to large-scale retail shopping in Lancaster came in 1989 when the Bon Ton department store closed its downtown facility, and relocated to a suburban mall. The Bon Ton had occupied Lancaster's signature

building, the early-20th century Watt and Shand Building. Several plans were circulated in Lancaster to rehabilitate the Watt and Shand, which dominates the streetscape of downtown Lancaster's primary crossroads, Penn Square. By 1999, a group of investors purchased the building, and proposed the development of a hotel and convention center complex. Planned as a joint venture of the private Penn Square Partners and the public Lancaster County Convention Center Authority, construction is scheduled to begin by the summer of 2005.

To this end, the Lancaster County Convention Center Authority (LCCCA) has acquired by eminent domain the entire city block adjacent to the Watt and Shand building. The block, which is the southeastern quadrant of the main city square, contains a number of historic structures that date to the late-18th and early-19th centuries. Because the CRM laws in Pennsylvania in effect leave all but Section 106 archaeological mitigation up to the municipalities, and because no federal funding is involved in the project (Gaijeski 2004), there are currently no plans for a full-blown CRM project to be conducted prior to the construction of the \$120 million dollar convention center and hotel (FIG. 2). Consequently the local preservation community, through the HPT, sponsored our investigations. Recognizing that potentially significant archaeological resources could be destroyed by the construction of the convention center, the HPT-sponsored project focused on Lot 134, the southernmost lot on the block and the property that was once owned by Thaddeus Stevens.

### **Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith**

Although little remembered in the popular consciousness, Thaddeus Stevens (1792–1868) was one of the most famous and controversial figures of the Civil War and Reconstruction era. The subject of no fewer than nine biographies published between 1876 and 1997, Stevens has been both heralded and reviled for his political stands on slavery and reconstruction (Brodie 1959; Callender 1882; Current 1942; Harris 1876; Korngold 1955; Miller 1939;

Trefousse 1997; Woodburn 1913; Woodley 1937).

By any measure Thaddeus Stevens was a political figure of local, regional, and national prominence. A graduate of Dartmouth College, in 1815 Stevens, a native of Vermont, moved to York, Pennsylvania, where he taught school and studied law. Passing the Maryland bar in 1816, Stevens soon began practicing law in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. While a resident of Gettysburg, Stevens gained a reputation as an excellent trial lawyer and began massing a fortune through real estate speculation and iron production. By 1822 Stevens had begun his political career, being elected to the Gettysburg Borough Council in that year

(Brodie 1959: 32–33, 38; Current 1942: 8–9; Trefousse 1997:10–23).

Stevens served in the lower house of the Pennsylvania legislature from 1833–1836, and again from 1838–1843. In 1832, Stevens was elected to the Pennsylvania State Assembly as a member of the Anti-Masonic Party. During his first term in the state legislature, Stevens crusaded against the Masonic Order, which he portrayed as a politically powerful yet blasphemous secret society whose elitism was antithetical to the republican virtue of equality. In perhaps a more practical political moment, Stevens has been credited with organizing the defeat of a bill that would have abolished public education in Pennsylvania, a bill that

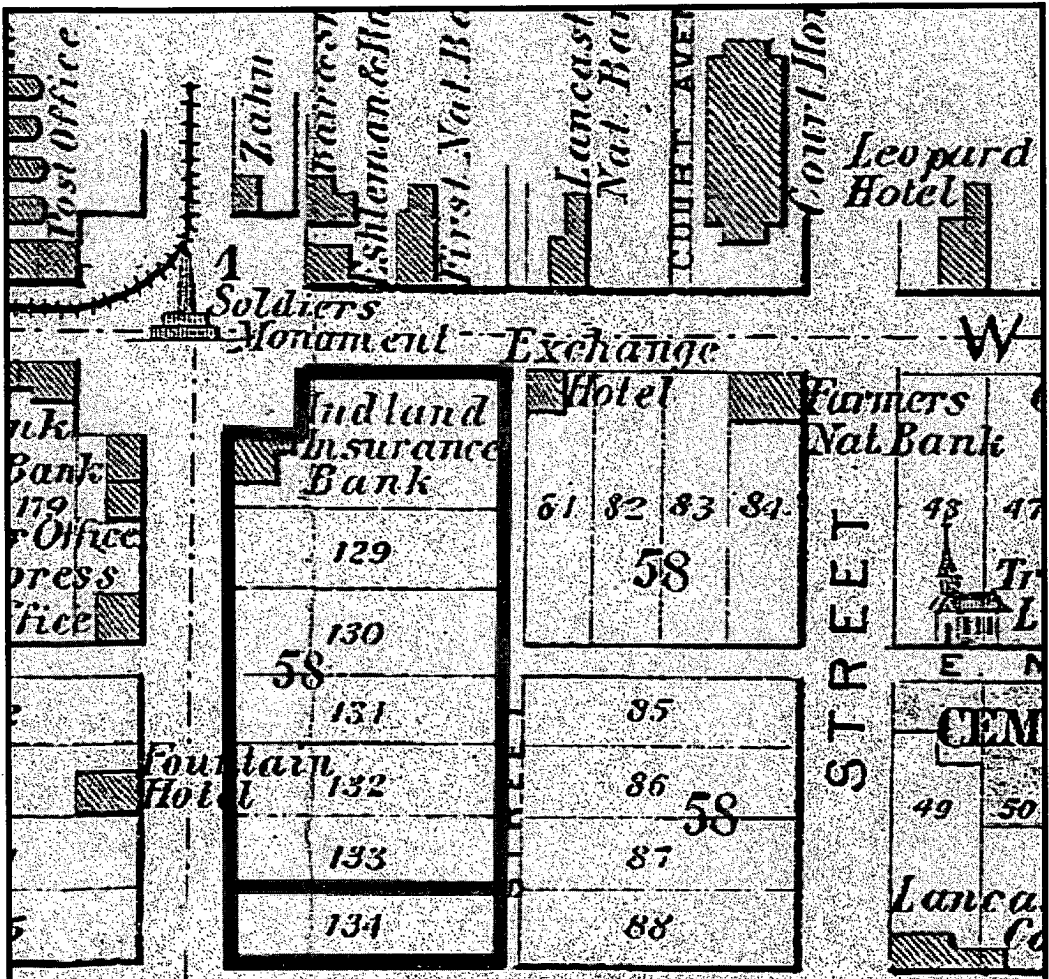


Figure 2. Detail of Brion Atlas rendition of downtown Lancaster City, dated 1875, showing Lot 134, purchased by Thaddeus Stevens in 1843. Heavy line indicates footprint of planned convention center.

had passed the state senate, and had strong support in the Assembly (Palmer and Ochoa 1997:19–30). He also argued for the abolition of both public executions and the death penalty itself, and introduced and supported legislation to aid Pennsylvania College (later Gettysburg College), an effort that has been credited with saving that institution (Brodie 1959: 59; Current 1942: 22–23; HPTLC 2002; Trefousse 1997: 21; 39–43).

Although he was defeated in the election of 1836, Stevens remained politically active, serving as a delegate to the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1837. During this convention, Stevens gained a reputation as a crusader for the rights of African Americans. He proposed that the state guarantee public education to both blacks and whites, and introduced an amendment that would have enfranchised all tax-paying freeman with the right to vote at age 21. His amendment was defeated, and Stevens refused to sign the new Constitution of Pennsylvania as a result (HPTLC 2002; Trefousse 1997: 49–51).

Stevens was returned to the state legislature in 1838. During his second stay in the Assembly, Stevens was castigated for his support of an expensive railroad scheme that would have linked his own ironworks to several main lines. By 1843, Stevens' power was reduced in the Assembly, as the Anti-Masonic movement lost both regional and national support. At the end of his final term in the state legislature in July of 1843, Stevens moved from Gettysburg to Lancaster, where he was admitted to the bar. It was at this time, the summer of 1843, that Stevens purchased Lot 134 at a sheriff's sale, and the properties under review here became the possession of Thaddeus Stevens. At that time, the property included the Kleiss Saloon, which Stevens leased, as well as the Stevens House, several smaller dwellings toward the back of the lot, and a number of outbuildings. Soon after its purchase, Stevens expanded the main house to include a law office (FIG. 3).

Stevens soon rose to prominence in the Lancaster bar, and was elected as a Whig candidate to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1848, where he served until 1853. During this term in federal office, Stevens spoke against the Compromise of 1850, opposed the expan-

sion of slavery into newly annexed territories, and unsuccessfully fought to have the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 repealed. Between sessions, and true to his antislavery beliefs, Stevens was a member of the defense team that successfully defended participants in the Christiana Resistance, an incident in which a group of free blacks protected several fugitive slaves from being apprehended by a U.S. Marshall. The incident turned violent when Edward Gorsuch, the slaveholder claiming ownership of the fugitives, rushed the house in which the fugitives were harbored. Gorsuch was killed in the ensuing melee, and his son was wounded. While many of the African-American participants in the conflict immediately fled to Canada, some of those who stayed behind as well as several white bystanders were arrested for crimes against the government, both for failing to aid in the recapture of fugitives as was mandated by the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and for firing on a U.S. Marshall. With Stevens' assistance, the first defendant tried, Castner Hanway, a white neighbor who was a bystander during the melee, was acquitted of treason. The cases against the remaining defendants were dismissed (Brodie 1959: 115–16; Current 1942: 91–93; Hensel 1911; Palmer and Ochoa 1997: 136–38; Slaughter 1991; Trefousse 1997: 84–85).

Stevens' reputation as an antislavery politician was galvanized by his participation in the Castner Hanway trial, and his national reputation grew. However, his participation in the trial served to erode some of his political support in conservative Lancaster, and Stevens failed to win the Whig nomination for his own



Figure 3. The modern front façades of the Thaddeus Stevens House (left) and Kleiss Saloon (right).

congressional seat for the election of 1852 (Trefousse 1997: 86).

Although Stevens returned to his successful law practice in Lancaster, he remained politically active, and was one of the founders of the Republican Party in Pennsylvania, which began as a coalition of former anti-slavery Whigs, Anti-Masons, and nativists, the so-called Know Nothing party. In 1858, Stevens was elected as a Republican to his old congressional seat, which he held until his death in 1868 (Current 1942: 108–111; Trefousse 1997: 95–97). Although he did have ambitions of being appointed or elected to a higher office, he was frustrated in these efforts, largely because he was seen as being far too radical to be appointed to the Senate or to serve in the cabinet of Lincoln or Johnson. Nevertheless, his tenure as a Republican congressman catapulted him to national prominence during the Civil War and Reconstruction, during which time he was arguably the most powerful member of the United States Congress.

In July of 1861, Stevens was named Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and thus was in charge of congressional approval for the allocation of federal money during the Civil War. Nearly from the beginning of that conflict, Stevens pressed an abolitionist agenda, lobbying Lincoln to abolish slavery and introducing unsuccessful legislation to that end (Brodie 1959:150–159; Korngold 1955: 162–68). Stevens played a significant role in drafting the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution, which reversed the Dred Scott Decision of 1857, outlawed slavery and granted citizenship and due process to any person born or naturalized in the United States, regardless of race (Korngold 1955: 324–47; Trefousse 1997: 140–41; Woodley 1937: 361–78).

Following Lincoln's 1865 assassination, Stevens was a vocal and powerful critic of Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction efforts. Stevens felt that the best way to reconstruct the South would be to redistribute plantation land confiscated from wealthy Confederates. He introduced legislation, that ultimately failed, that would have provided each newly freed household with 40 acres of confiscated land, and funds to build a house (Korngold



Figure 4. Lydia Hamilton Smith in the 1870s. Courtesy of the Lancaster County Historical Society.

1955: 281–90; Trefousse 1997: 168–69, 210–11; Woodley 1937: 351–60). Johnson opposed this legislation, and through his executive power pardoned most of the southern participants in the conflict with the stipulation that their confiscated property would be returned to its previous owners or their heirs. As a result of this political conflict, Stevens agitated for Johnson's impeachment, and served as one of the seven managers during the impeachment trial. Johnson was acquitted by a single-vote margin, and the now frail and very ill Stevens died in Washington three months later, on August 11, 1868 (Trefousse 1997: 224–234, 241). At the time of his death, Stevens was attended by two Sisters of Charity, two African-American clergymen, his physician, and his long-time housekeeper and confidante, Lydia Hamilton Smith (FIG. 4).

Lydia Hamilton Smith, born on February 14, 1813, was first employed by Stevens in 1848, after his move to Lancaster. As Mrs. Smith had been, like Stevens, a resident of the Borough of Gettysburg prior to this time, the possibility exists that the two had been previously acquainted. It is unclear at this point whether Lydia was born into slavery or was a freewoman from birth. Her obituary in the *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer* (February 15, 1884)

describes her as “a ‘colored’ woman, but had very little Negro blood in her veins, and could anywhere have passed as a Spaniard or a Cuban” (quoted in HPTLC 2002: 35). Her obituary in the rival *Lancaster Daily Examiner* (February 15, 1884) states that Mrs. Smith “managed [Stevens’] household affairs...He placed the most implicit confidence in her and up to the day of his death...she directed the affairs of his bachelor establishment and ministered to his personal wants” (quoted in HPTLC 2002: 36).

This last statement alludes to a persistent rumor that the relationship between Stevens and Smith was somewhat more than professional. His political foes often accused him of having an illicit affair with Mrs. Smith, undoubtedly in the hope that allegations of miscegenation would harm his political standing in staid Lancaster. Although such allegations cannot be corroborated, it is clear that Mrs. Smith was held in the highest esteem by Stevens, who trusted Mrs. Smith with the management of his household and business affairs and care of his alcoholic nephew. Stevens also commissioned a portrait of Lydia by a leading portrait artist and left her \$5000 in his will (Brodie 1959: 86–93; Current 1942: 289–290; Korngold 1955: 72–76; Miller 1939: 9–13; Trefousse 1997: 69–70).

Given her social standing, Lydia Hamilton Smith was an important personage in her own right. She was one of only three women of color to own property in Lancaster County during the middle of the 19th century. Using her own resources, she purchased a house from Stevens on the back of Lot 134 in 1860, the house now identified as 23 East Vine St., and known as the Lydia Hamilton Smith House (FIG. 5; Levine 2004; Rottner 2003). The deed indicates that the transfer of property included a house on the lot “which the said Lydia Smith has erected” (HPTLC 2002).

Following Stevens’ death in 1868, Mrs. Smith purchased his former residence and law office from the estate. It seems likely that with this action she became the legal owner of a house in which she had resided with Stevens for some time. Stevens noted in his will that “Mrs. Smith has some furniture of her own, used in common, with mine, some bought with her own money as well as others which it would be difficult to distinguish” (HPTLC



Figure 5. The Lydia Hamilton Smith House.

2002). This statement appears as an admission of common property within the household, further suggesting the closeness of the relationship between them.

Over the course of the next 15 years, Mrs. Smith purchased several other properties in the city, and became an important landowner and landlord. In addition, she owned a four-story, six-bay boarding house in Washington, DC, where she died in 1884. At the time of her death, in addition to her various properties, Mrs. Smith bequeathed \$4150 in cash to various friends and relations. She was most certainly a woman of wealth at the time of her death.

### Stevens and the Underground Railroad

Lancaster County, positioned as it is between the Chesapeake drainage and Philadelphia, was a natural route for fugitive slaves attempting to escape from Maryland farms and plantations to Philadelphia and points north (Brodie 1959:115–16; Miller 1939: 33). Lancaster was connected by rail both to the Susquehanna River to the west, and Philadelphia to the east (Switala 2001: 124). Fugitives escaping from the Chesapeake up the Susquehanna would thus have had to pass through Lancaster County; if they took the rail route to Philadelphia, they would pass directly through Lancaster City (Okur 1995: 541–42; Siebert 1898: 121). However, while it is quite evident that some in Lancaster were involved in the Underground Railroad, there is little documentary evidence connecting Thaddeus Stevens directly to the movement.



Throughout his public and private lives, Stevens was a staunch opponent of slavery, and an equally strong voice for the extension of equal rights to all men. As early as the mid-1830s, Stevens participated in public meetings opposed to slavery (Trefousse 1997: 47). As a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1836, Stevens supported a bill to prevent the kidnapping of free blacks to be sold into slavery, and reported against Southern efforts to limit the activities of abolitionists (Trefousse 1997: 47).

In a recent review of the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania, Switala (2001: 109) asserts that while a lawyer in Gettysburg, Stevens was "an outspoken critic of slavery and an agent on the Underground Railroad," though he offers no citation to support this statement. He further asserts that Stevens harbored fugitives at his Caledonia ironworks near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. There was a large black population living near Caledonia in Mercersburg, often referred to as "Little Africa." It has been reported that Stevens employed free blacks at Caledonia, and that he harbored fugitives there (HPTLC 2002; Blockson 1994: 117-18). Several early historians of the Underground Railroad report that Stevens offered material support to fugitives heading north (Siebert 1898: 106; Smedley 1883: 38,46).

After moving to Lancaster, it appears likely that Stevens actively worked to assist fugitives escaping from slavery. In a widely cited letter written in 1847, Stevens is reported to have commented about this activity to his colleague Jeremiah Brown:

I learn that the manstealers of Lancaster have taken measures to obtain authority from Maryland (which they hope to obtain) to arrest and take into slavery two colored girls who lately lived with you and your brother...Will you see that they flee to an immediate city of refuge. They should not stop short of Canada. There is a regular chain of agents and spies of the slaveholders in this and all adjoining counties. I have a spy on the spies and thus ascertain the facts...These are the eighth set of slaves I have warned within a week" (Spott 1966; quoted in Trefousse 1997:73).

The spy in question has been identified as Edward H. Rauch. In Rauch's elderly years, he

reportedly confessed that he and Stevens conspired to thwart attempts to capture fugitives. In a reminiscence about Stevens and his associates published in 1933, a former newspaper man, W. Frank Gorrecht, asserted that Rauch had told him he was part

of the secret agency that Stevens formed and financed entirely from his own resources, after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, for the purpose of frustrating the operations of the slave catchers in Lancaster County...Rauch, while openly acting with the slave catchers, was in reality the spy for Stevens. Learning of the proposed raids, he would transmit the information to Stevens, who in turn took such measures as he deemed best to thwart them." (Gorrecht 1933: 29-30).

Despite such anecdotes, the degree to which Stevens participated in the Underground Railroad movement is difficult to ascertain. His anti-slavery opinions are well known, and his conviction was so deep that he jeopardized his political career on several occasions. His role as counsel to the defendants of the Christiana Resistance is the best example of how his commitment to fight the Fugitive Slave Law impeded his own political career. To one of his early biographers, Stevens involvement in the Christiana Resistance trial signaled that "Stevens was ever ready to use his talents and legal ability to prevent escaping slaves...from becoming victims of the [Fugitive Slave Law]" (Woodburn 1913: 124).

He did occasionally correspond with several known abolitionists and members of the Underground Railroad movement, including Elijah Pennypacker, Samuel Evans, Gerritt Smith, and Thomas Witson (Palmer and Ochoa 1997: 108-09, 145, 232, 284-85). He also either directly defended or took professional interest in several fugitive slave cases (Palmer and Ochoa 1997: 88-89, 105-106), and of course participated in the Christiana Treason Trial.

While the documentary evidence for Stevens' direct participation in the Underground Railroad movement is scant, enough circumstantial evidence exists for his latest biographer to make such assertions as "[a]t the end of the [1850-51 Congressional] session, he went home to Lancaster, to his practice and his activities in the Underground Railroad" (Trefousse 1997: 84). Various

accounts of the Underground Railroad movement in Pennsylvania assert or assume that Stevens was directly involved in assisting fugitives on their way north, possibly as early as the 1830s (Switala 2001: 108–09). His relationship with Lydia Hamilton Smith, reputed in Lancaster's modern community as having been a lead conductor in the Underground Railroad, demonstrates Stevens' close ties to Lancaster's African American community. Matthew Pinkser (2000) has recently revealed the degree to which local black communities in Pennsylvania cities participated in aiding fugitives escaping from slavery. He argues that abolitionists in Lancaster County worked closely with the black-led Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, an organization constituted to assist fugitives and to protect free blacks from kidnapping for sale into slavery. Given his prominence in the anti-slavery community, and his close ties to the African American community (Mrs. Smith and her sons lived for a time with him) Stevens would have been aware of these activities. Furthermore, it seems more than likely that Stevens was acquainted with Lucretia Mott, the famous abolitionist and Underground Railroad activist, as Mott had attended the Christiana Treason Trials (Hensel 1911). While the documentary evidence points to the possibility that Stevens and Smith were active in the Underground Railroad movement, the archaeological record of the Stevens and Smith Site provides compelling evidence to suggest that these two luminaries may indeed have been fighting on the front lines against slavery by harboring fugitives on their property.

### **Archaeology at the Stevens and Smith Site**

When Stevens purchased Lot 134 in 1843, several structures were already standing. A small brick story-and-a-half dwelling house fronted on Queen Street, as did the three-story brick Kleiss Saloon. Several outbuildings also stretched between Queen and Christian Streets, including at least one framed barn, a malt house, and a brew house. Both the Stevens House and the Kleiss Saloon appear to have been built between 1759 and 1786 by

John Frick, who operated a brewing establishment on site until he sold the property to Philip Kleiss in 1786. Kleiss operated the brewery until his death in 1800, when his two sons John and George were bequeathed the property. George bought his brother's share out in 1801, operating the brewery until his own death in 1842/43. Stevens purchased the property from George Kleiss's estate at a sheriff's sale in 1843, but apparently kept rooms across the street at the Fountain Hotel until the early 1850s, when he expanded the small story-and-a-half brick house into a full three-story mansion. During this renovation, Stevens added a considerable ell extending from the eastern elevation of the house, and built a contiguous extension to the south, physically connecting the Stevens House and Kleiss Saloon with a storefront which served as his law office. The Kleiss Saloon remained a drinking establishment owned by Stevens but occupied and operated by Mrs. George Kleiss until ca. 1850 and Jonathan Whitlinger until ca. 1857, at which time it appears Stevens was resident in his newly renovated property on Queen Street. At least one of the small houses at the corner of Queen and Christian Streets—the Lydia Hamilton Smith House—was constructed by Mrs. Smith sometime prior to 1860.

Following his death in 1868, the lot was subdivided, with Lydia Hamilton Smith purchasing the Stevens House and Law Office, and Jacob Effinger purchasing the Kleiss Saloon. Mrs. Smith operated the former residence as a boarding house, though she herself continued to live in Washington, DC. The Kleiss Saloon remained a tavern and saloon at least through Prohibition, known successively as Effinger's Tavern and the Southern Market Hotel. A variety of businesses were constructed and operated on the site in the later-19th and early-20th centuries, including a series of warehouses, a livery stable, and a veterinary hospital. In the later-20th century, all of the buildings were reconfigured into apartments.

The archaeology project at the Stevens and Smith Site was initially designed as a classic salvage excavation prior to the construction of the convention center. While it was hoped that

we would recover artifacts and features related to the Stevens and Smith occupation of the site, the project was not designed to focus on the site's potential as an Underground Railroad station. Hoping to find sealed pit features relating to domestic activity, the archaeological work conducted on the Stevens and Smith Site focused on two small courtyards located behind the Thaddeus Stevens House and the Lydia Hamilton Smith House. The first is located between the east wing of the Kleiss Saloon (49/51 South Queen) and the east wing or ell of the Stevens residence (47 South Queen) (FIGS. 6 and 7). The second courtyard is located between two ell extensions of the Lydia Hamilton Smith House (21 and 23 East Vine). Excavations soon revealed that the Smith courtyard had been significantly disturbed in the opening decades of the 20th century. Although nearly 1000 artifacts were recovered from this locus, they postdated the Lydia Hamilton Smith occupation (Levine 2004; Rottner 2003). Because the Stevens courtyard had not been disturbed nearly as much, the focus of our excavation, and the subsequent analysis presented here, concentrated on this first courtyard. As Smith owned this property following Stevens' death, and lived for a time with him prior to his death, we refer

to the site as the Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith Site.

Dr. James Delle of Kutztown University and Dr. Mary Ann Levine of Franklin and Marshall College supervised the fieldwork. A team of archaeology students from both institutions conducted the fieldwork. Resources allocated to the archaeology project by the HPT were used to hire graduate students in archaeology from the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University, who worked in conjunction with Delle's team from Kutztown. Levine's students in the archaeology laboratory at Franklin and Marshall College completed the processing of the artifacts.

The initial goals of the archaeological investigation were twofold: 1) to determine whether intact archaeological features relating to the Stevens and Smith occupation of the site existed under the footprint of the proposed Convention Center; and 2) to recover and/or record archaeological features and artifacts that could be used to interpret the lives of Stevens and Smith on site in what the HPT hopes will be an interpretive center housed in the Stevens residence and Kleiss Saloon. As this is the first formal urban archaeology project undertaken in Lancaster, no precedent

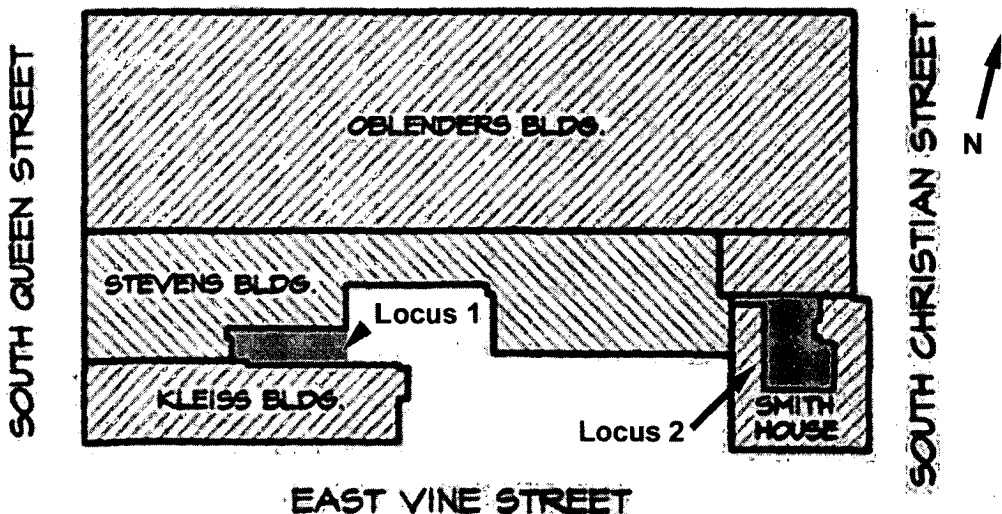


Figure 6. Locus 1 and Locus 2 in relation to each other and the surrounding buildings (adapted from drawings rendered by Community Heritage Partners).

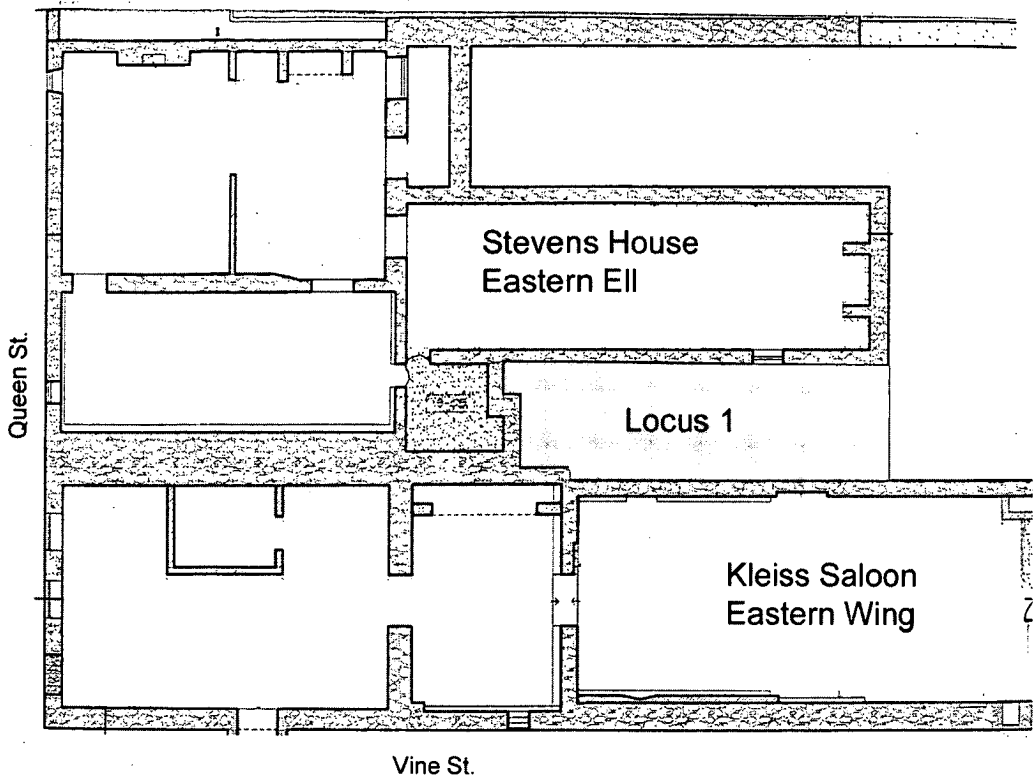


Figure 7. Location of Locus 1 (shaded in gray) in relation to the Stevens House and Kleiss Tavern. East Vine St. is to the bottom of the rendering, Queen St. is to the left (adapted from drawings rendered by Community Heritage Partners).

existed to inform us on the in situ condition of historical archaeological resources in the city, thus no more formal research design was implemented for the initial phases of the investigation beyond these two goals.

### Results of Excavation

As is often the case in urban contexts, the archaeological record of Lot 134 is very complex. The analysis of the excavated materials is still ongoing, and will in future studies be used to shed light on the urban experience in Lancaster from the late-18th through the early-20th centuries. For the purpose of this article, artifacts were used primarily to date excavated features; analysis is thus limited here to a discussion of feature function and date.

The small courtyard we excavated is bounded by the two-story east wing of the Kleiss Saloon to the south, the eastern ell of the Stevens House to the north, and the Stevens

Law Office to the west. Prior to excavation, a concrete-slab pavement covering the entire courtyard was removed. This procedure exposed a layer of mixed fill composed primarily of coal ash, but containing a fair number of discarded bricks and similar construction debris (e.g. broken slate roofing shingles, iron gutters). Below the fill we uncovered an intact brick courtyard pavement, below which we discovered several interesting 19th-century cisterns. Following a discussion of the various features and strata we excavated, we provide an interpretation of one of the cisterns we uncovered as potentially being a feature associated with the Underground Railroad.

### The Fill

Ceramic and glass vessels recovered from fill strata below the concrete pad established timelines for the deposition of the fill matrix. For Fill Level 1, fragments of seven datable

earthenware vessels were recovered. These include one undecorated fragment of a creamware vessel (ca. 1762–1820), one sherd of blue edge-decorated pearlware (ca. 1780–1830), 17 fragments of a blue transfer-printed whiteware plate featuring the “John Alden” motif (c. 1900), and one fragment each of an ironstone teacup (c. 1840–2002), an undecorated whiteware plate (1820–1900), a hand painted polychrome whiteware plate (1825–1900), and a green transfer printed whiteware plate (1830–1900). The mean ceramic date for this ceramic assemblage is 1864.

A number of glass objects were recovered from the fill. The most significant of these included a Hoyt’s 10¢ Cologne bottle, which originated from the F. Hoyt & Company perfumers of Philadelphia. In the late-19th and early-20th century, “Hoyt’s Dime Cologne” was a popular fragrance (FIG. 8). In 1867, Eli Hoyt of Lowell, Massachusetts began marketing the product; in 1877 he and his partners began producing “Hoyt’s German Cologne.” The popularity of this product precipitated a number of knock-offs, and by 1880 Hoyt of

Lowell was advertising “Important Notice to the Trade: Beware of Counterfeits and Imitations” (Mallon and Baer 2002). It seems likely that the F. Hoyt & Company product was one such imitation. Hoyt cologne bottles are bracketed within the dates 1877–1948. Four bottle lips with crown finishes were uncovered in Fill Level 1. The crown lip, familiar still today among beer bottles without screw tops, was patented in 1892, again suggesting a late-19th- to early-20th-century date for the filling of the courtyard. Two fragments of gramophone records recovered from Fill Level 1 also suggest a post-1890s date for the fill. Several glass bottles recovered from the fill also point to the early 1900s (FIG. 8). Of particular note is a cobalt-blue poison jar dated to 1920–1930 (Polak 1994: 234).

An interesting feature associated with Fill Level 1 was a construction trench apparently dug to install or maintain water lines into the Stevens House. The remnants of two water lines, one of iron and the other of lead, were removed (though the possibility remains that one of these lines carried gas instead of water). This trench penetrated Fill Level 1 but itself overlaid the brick pavement (Feature 7). The most significant artifacts recovered from this trench feature (Feature 14) included two complete one-quart milk bottles embossed with the names of local dairies, including the Ideal Milk Products Company and the Lancaster Sanitary Milk Company.

Research into the Lancaster City Directories indicated that the Lancaster Sanitary Milk Company first was listed as a business in 1911; a dairy called the Lancaster Dairy Company operated at the same address prior to 1911. By 1913, the Lancaster Sanitary Milk Company had relocated. The company appears to have existed under this name until 1928 or 1929, as it was not listed in the 1929 city directory (Mallon and Baer 2002). The Ideal Creamery and Dairy Company first appears in the directories in 1907, and was not listed after 1912. It is presumed that the Ideal Milk Products bottle is associated with this company. If we infer that these bottles, which were both fully intact, were deposited immediately following the consumption of their contents, it seems likely that the trench (Feature 14) was dug and filled in 1911 or 1912. It is

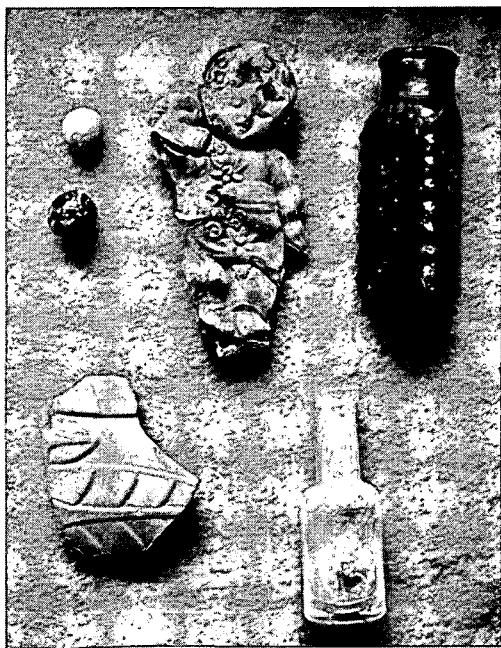


Figure 8. Early 20th-century artifacts recovered from fill levels, including ca. 1920 poison bottle (upper right), and “Hoyt’s 10-cent Cologne” (lower right).

more certain that the trench was filled after 1911, when the Lancaster Sanitary Milk Company was first listed as a business in the city (Mallon and Baer 2002). The possibility also remains that the Lancaster Sanitary Milk Company reused bottles embossed with their former competitor's name after the Ideal Creamery ceased operation, presumably in 1911 or 1912.

A second fill level, which was a concentrated area of hard-packed brown soil, was sterile. Fill Level 3, which underlay a sand lens associated with Fill Level 1, was nearly identical in composition to Fill Level 1, but with a high concentration of loose bricks. Notable artifacts recovered include three fragments of bottles embossed with the name of the Lancaster Sanitary Milk Company (1911–1929), 2 crown-lip bottle caps (post-1892), and 2 fragments of electric light bulbs.

Taken as a whole, the fill levels and associated features point to an early-20th-century date for the filling of the courtyard. The presence of crown-lip bottles and bottle caps date the fill to at least 1892; the bottles associated with the Lancaster Sanitary Milk Company move the date up to at least 1911, and the cobalt-blue poison bottle suggests a date

around 1920. The artifacts recovered from the various strata and features show no significant difference in composition or in date range, suggesting that the entire area was filled within a short period of time. It also seems likely that the concrete slab removed prior to excavation was not the initial pavement covering the fill, as the trench (Feature 14) clearly penetrates Fill Level 1. It seems likely that the courtyard was filled and probably paved between 1911 and 1920, and was soon after penetrated to install or repair water lines. This likely occurred in the 1910s or 1920s. The trench was filled, and the courtyard likely repaved.

#### *The Brick Pavement*

Underlying the various fill layers was a brick-paved surface (FIG. 9). Three distinct paving patterns were obvious. The brick pavement on the southern section of the courtyard was designated Feature 6, while the northern section was designated Feature 7. The two sections of pavement are bisected by what at first glance appeared to be an intrusive trench, designated Feature 2, but that was eventually recognized as a clay-lined channel running through the courtyard. The feature served as a

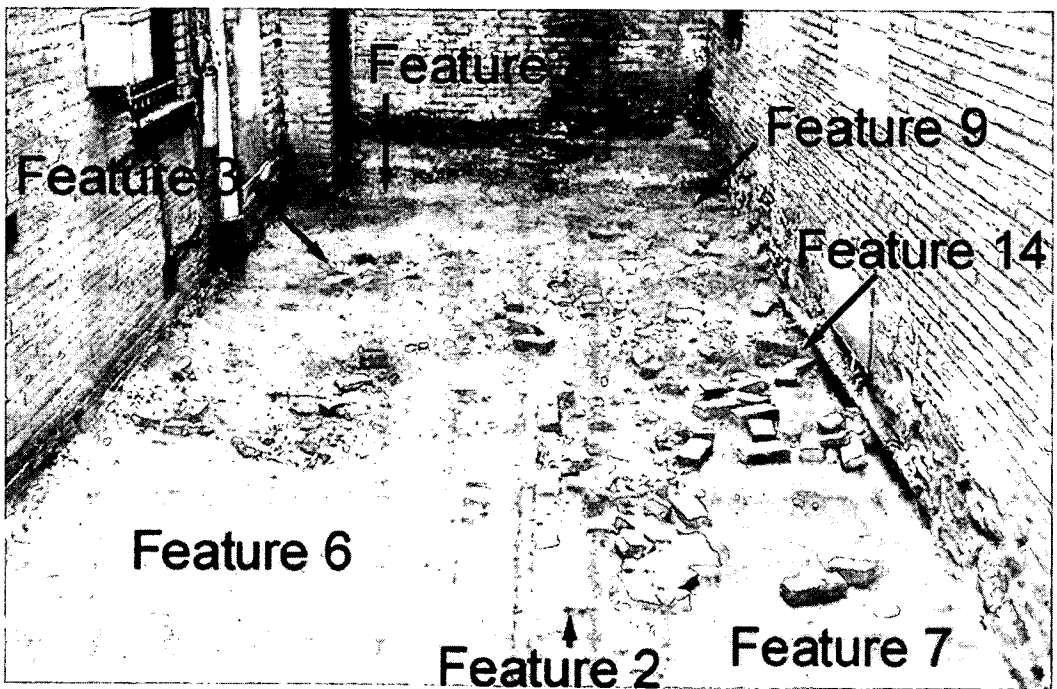


Figure 9. Location of primary features prior to removal of brick pavement. North is to the right of the image.

gutter or conduit that originally channeled water into one of the two cisterns we excavated, and was later filled.

The bricks (Feature 6) were removed to expose subsurface features presumed to underlie the brick pavement; following the removal of the bricks, the various strata were screened through 1/4" hardware cloth (FIG. 10). The bricks themselves were photographed and drawn, then removed as Feature 6-Level 1. Below the bricks was a layer of orange-brown sand removed as Feature 6-Level 2. Several isolated pockets of soil were removed as separate strata, including a lens of white mortar (Feature 6-Level 3) and a mixed sandy fill lens (Feature 6-Level 5). Deposited more generally beneath Level 2 was a dark brown mixed fill layer, designated Feature 6-Level 4. This layer overlay two strata: one was the top of the vaulted roof of a cistern (Feature 10); on either side of the apex of the vault was laid a heavy green-gray clay, apparently used to cover the cistern except at its uppermost peak. This stratum was designated Feature 6-Level 6. This stratum was removed from the roof of the cistern, but was only partially excavated between the southern wall of the cistern and the northern wall of the eastern wing of the Kleiss Saloon.

Several artifacts were recovered from Feature 6-Level 1 (the bricks themselves and the matrix between them). Although only 5 ceramic fragments were uncovered, all dated to the late-18th to early-19th century (ca. 1760–1820). Of much greater interest was Feature 6-Level 2. This orange-brown sand layer appears to have been deposited during

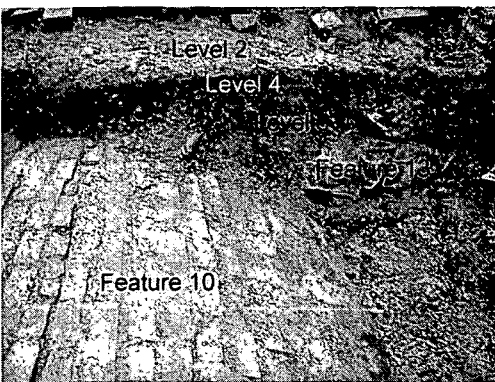


Figure 10. Primary stratigraphy underlying Feature 6 (southern brick pavement).

the laying of the brick pavement, and thus can be used to suggest a date for the construction of the courtyard. Using conservative estimates for minimum vessel counts, datable ceramics include one undecorated creamware vessel (eight sherds; median ceramic date 1791), one undecorated pearlware vessel (25 sherds; median ceramic date 1805), one transfer-printed pearlware vessel (two sherds; median ceramic date 1818), one edge-decorated pearlware vessel (two sherds; median ceramic date 1805), and one yellowware vessel (two sherds; date range 1827–1920). Discounting the yellowware as an outlier or possible intrusion, the mean ceramic date suggested by the refined earthenware ceramics is 1805 (Moyer and Rush 2002).

Underlying this stratum was a layer of mixed brown and gray fill, designated Feature 6-Level 4. The ceramics from this assemblage were composed of 90 fragments of creamware, representing a minimum vessel count of 47, including one mocha vessel, one engine turned vessel, and 45 undecorated vessels. The pearlware recovered included 140 sherds representing a minimum vessel count of 59, which included 16 transfer-printed vessels, 10 hand-painted vessels, 11 edge-decorated vessels, and 21 undecorated vessels. Of particular note are the mocha vessels, with a date range of 1780–1815, and one of the edge-decorated vessels, which featured a green fish-scale motif that was produced only 1800–1820. Five fragments of whiteware appear to come from five different vessels. The mean ceramic date derived from the vessels recovered from Feature 6-Level 4 is 1804 (Moyer and Rush 2002).

Feature 6-Level 6, which was immediately below Level 4, contained far fewer datable artifacts than the strata above it. Fourteen sherds of undecorated creamware represent a minimum vessel count of three while 13 pearlware sherds represent a minimum of one undecorated vessel, one handpainted polychrome vessel, one green edge decorated vessel, and one blue transfer-printed vessel. Taken together, the mean ceramic date for these seven vessels is 1800 (Moyer and Rush 2002).

Given the proximity of the dates derived from the datable ceramic data (1805 for

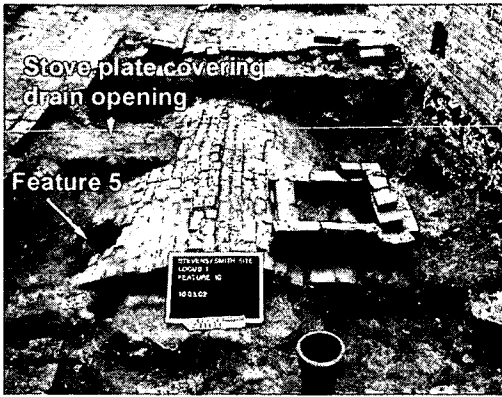


Figure 11. Feature 10, the vaulted cistern, following excavation of Feature 6, the brick pavement and underlying strata.

Feature 6-Level 2, 1804 for Feature 6-Level 4, and 1800 for Feature 6-Level 6), it seems likely that these strata were deposited at the same time, most likely in the first quarter of the 19th century. Because these layers lie directly atop the vaulted cistern (Feature 10), the construction date for both the cistern and the paved courtyard can be comfortably placed in the first quarter of the 19th century, most likely the 1800's or 1810's, well before Thaddeus Stevens acquired the property.

### *The Cistern Complex*

The most visibly interesting features excavated during this project were two cisterns, designated Features 10 and 11, a vaulted cistern and domed cistern respectively (FIG. 11). A number of features excavated during this project were directly associated with the cisterns, including Feature 2 (a channel flowing into Feature 10), a hole punched into the cistern, apparently post-dating its use for water storage (Feature 5), a trench dug between the two unconnected cisterns (Feature 12), and a retaining wall abutting both Feature 10 and the foundation wall of the eastern wing of the Kleiss Saloon (Feature 13).

As mentioned above, the artifactual evidence from the strata overlying the cistern suggests an early-19th-century construction date, most likely in the first two decades of the century. The cistern, which measures 2.41 m (7 ft 11 in) east-west by 1.78 m (5 ft 10 in) north-south, featured a vaulted roof and was floored with brick. The eastern and western walls

were constructed of brick and limestone, though the eastern wall experienced a significant episode of rebuilding. The north and south walls, from which the vaulted roof ascends, were of brick.

At the time of its construction the cistern featured two penetrations, one in the northeastern corner of the cistern, the other in the southwestern corner. The northeastern penetration existed within the clay-lined gutter or channel, and seems to have been the opening through which either rain water or water drawn from a stream or spring drained into the cistern. The southwestern penetration was later surrounded by a rectangular brick structure, which most likely served as a pump housing.

Feature 2, the clay-lined channel, was filled sometime after the cistern ceased functioning as a water supply. Documentary evidence suggests that public water was available on Queen Street by 1850, making cisterns fairly obsolete. Three strata were excavated within this feature; the upper two (Feature 2-Level 1 and Feature 2-Level 2) were fill. Level 1 of this feature contained roughly placed brick, laid to connect the two existing pavements (Feature 6 and Feature 7), but in a very haphazard pattern. The lowest level excavated (Feature 2-Level 3), was the same clay matrix evident in the lowest strata below the brick pavement (Feature 6-Level 6), suggesting that the channel was clay lined and constructed at the same time as the cistern was constructed, most likely the late-18th or early-19th century.

At the time the channel was filled, the drain into the cistern was capped with a stove plate, which has been identified as part of a Masters of Martic cast-iron stove dating to 1760 (Mercer 1961). The placement of this cap effectively sealed the cistern; it in turn was covered by the fill laid into the channel (Feature 2).

The deposition of soil within the cistern indicates that it was filled through the southwestern opening. A large mound of coal ash fill was heaped against the western wall of the cistern, sloping down to the east.

The cistern fill was excavated by stratigraphic levels determined by changes in the composition of the fill. However, these changes were slight, and most likely were due



to variable moisture absorption by the soil relative to the strata's proximity to the hole punched through the roof of the cistern (Feature 5) and the southwestern opening, and thus to water entering the cistern after it was filled. The soil itself, as well as the artifacts contained within the levels, indicate that the cistern was filled in a single, rapid episode.

Hundreds of artifacts were recovered from the cistern, including ale glasses, glass steins, ceramics, jewelry fragments, building materials, and faunal remains. A number of the recovered ceramic and glass vessels can be used to confidently date the filling of this feature. Of particular note is a fragment of ironstone bearing the mark "ALFRED MEAKIN ROYAL IRONSTONE CHINA." This type of ceramic was not manufactured until 1897, thus the cistern would have had to be filled after this date. Corroborating this are dates drawn from several glass artifacts, including a medicine bottle embossed with "PISO'S CURE," bottled by Hazletine and Company of Warren, PA. This product, which contained opiates, was sold as a remedy for consumption between 1864 and 1894 (Fiske 1987:104). Two locally produced soda bottles help to firmly establish the date of the fill episode. A mineral water bottle attrib-

uted to Fred Engle, a bottler who operated in Lancaster between 1876 and 1914, was recovered from the cistern fill. A second soda bottle was attributed to John F. Blair, another Lancaster bottler who was in business between 1897 and 1914 (FIG. 12). Finally, a medicine bottle embossed with the name "H.N. SNYDER" was attributed to a druggist of that name operating in Lancaster from 1888-1907 (Hippe and Gioiello 2002).

In the late-19th century a variety of bottle-stoppers were introduced to replace the traditional cork, largely for beer and soda bottles so the beverages would not lose their effervescence between bottling and consumption. The date ranges on a number of these stopper technologies are well established, and can be used to further narrow down the date the cistern was filled. One of the five green-glass beer bottles recovered from the cistern still had the remnants of what has been identified as a Putnam stopper attached to it. This particular stopper was used between 1859 and 1905. One of the soda bottles recovered from the cistern had the remnants of a Hutchinson stopper still within the bottle. This kind of stopper was in use between 1879 and 1912 (Jones and Sullivan 1985).

It thus seems likely that the cistern was filled sometime between 1897 when Blair's business first appears in the city directory, and 1905 when the Putnam stopper ceased being used. This date is fairly firm, as bottles with Hutchinson and Putnam stoppers, both technologies that left parts of the stopper in the bottle after use, were difficult to reuse, suggesting that these bottles were deposited soon after the consumption of their contents. At this time, the Kleiss Saloon was known as the Southern Market Hotel. The cistern contents undoubtedly relate to this establishment.

A second cistern, Feature 11, was discovered to the east of Feature 10. This cistern was domed rather than vaulted, and cylindrical rather than rectangular. As this feature was excavated toward the end of the project, the materials recovered from this cistern are still under analysis at the time of this writing. However, preliminary analysis indicates that this cistern was filled at the same time with same fill as the vaulted cistern (Feature 10). Of particular interest were sherds of a single



Figure 12. Late 19th-century soda bottles recovered from the fill in the vaulted cistern (Feature 10).

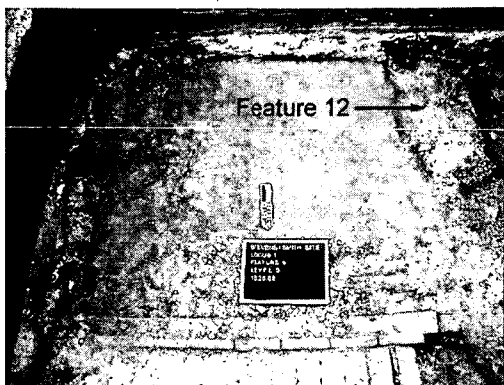


Figure 13. Feature 12 under excavation.

copper lusterware vessel recovered from both cisterns. Also of note was that this cistern was sealed with the same yellow-brown sand as the vaulted cistern. This strata was excavated as Feature 11-Level 1.

#### *Interpreting the Cistern*

As mentioned previously, the eastern wall of the vaulted cistern (Feature 10) was rebuilt sometime between the cessation of the cistern's use for water storage and the time it was filled. The analysis of when and why this was accomplished requires the discussion of several features relating to Feature 10, including Features 12 and 13.

Feature 12 is a trench feature dug into the sandy soil underlying the brick pavement as well as the heavy clay deposited on top of the vaulted cistern (Feature 10); the trench was apparently dug to expose the eastern wall of the cistern and soon after filled (FIG. 13). The interface with the sandy Feature 11-Level 1 was particularly noticeable. The ceramic assemblage recovered from this feature is dominated by a distinctive ceramic type known as Blue Tinted Molded Ironstone (Brown 1982). This type of ceramic was introduced in 1850, and was most popular in the decade that followed.

Several glass bottles recovered from this trench (Feature 12) include an intact porter bottle. Although this bottle shape existed in Europe from 1760, it has been reported that beer was not commonly bottled in the United States until after 1850 (Polak 1994: 60). The bottle featured a double tapered lip and was embossed with "DYOTTSVILLE GLASS WORKS,

PHILA" and "BROWNSTOUT," confirming both its place of origin and its contents. The glass works in question operated between 1833 and 1923; the double tapered lip was in production only between 1815 and 1885. A base of a second bottle identical to this one was also recovered from this feature. Taking all of this information into account, this trench had to be filled after 1850, and most likely before 1885.

Feature 13 is a loosely built retaining wall extending from the vault of Feature 10 to the foundation wall of the Kleiss Saloon. Feature 12 (the trench fill) directly abuts the retaining wall; on the opposite side of the wall is the heavy clay of Feature 6-Level 6. Feature 13 seems to have been constructed either to hold back this clay when the cistern (Feature 10) was constructed in the early-19th century, or to hold back the heavy clay when Feature 12 was dug and later filled.

The trench appears to have been dug to reconfigure the eastern wall of the vaulted cistern (Feature 10). When we first entered the cistern it was evident that this wall had been modified sometime after its initial construction. Of particular interest is a roughly square "window" which penetrates the eastern wall, but was very roughly bricked in (FIG. 14). The entire upper half of the eastern wall appears to have been modified, as the loosely laid limestone masonry and brick construction does not match the western wall of the cistern in material or quality of construction workmanship.

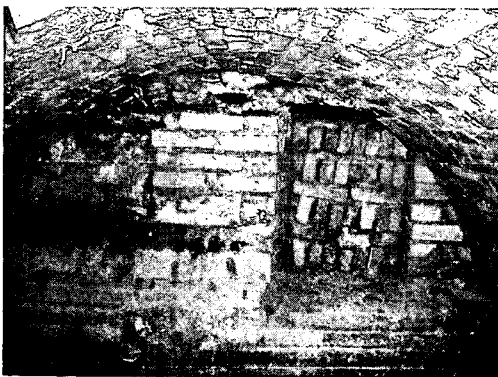


Figure 14. Eastern wall of Feature 10, the vaulted cistern, prior to removal of the vaulted ceiling. Note the brick reconstruction phases on either side of the "window," and the haphazard way the "window" was bricked in. Feature 12, the crawl way trench, is immediately behind those latter bricks.

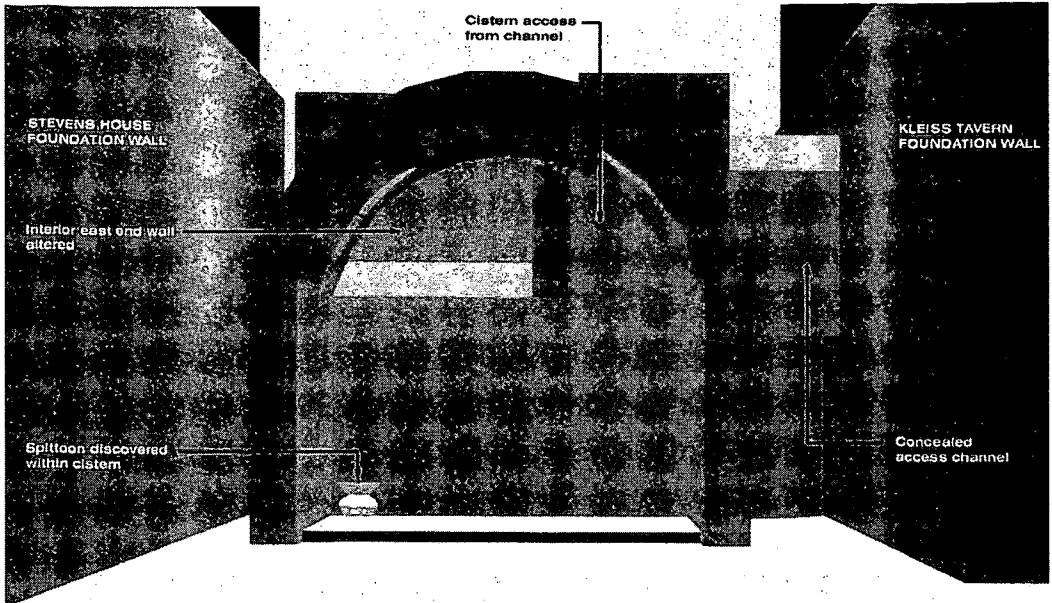


Figure 15. Artist's rendition of the cistern modifications, showing crawl way between the cistern and the basement of the Kleiss Saloon. Courtesy of the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County and Community Heritage Partners.

The "window" itself appears to be a late modification, and has no apparent utilitarian function related to water storage. The "window" is just large enough for a person of medium build to fit through. Near this window, resting upright on the brick floor of the cistern, we recovered an intact, though corroded, iron spittoon.

The modification of the eastern wall of the cistern suggests that the cistern may have been used as a hiding place. We discovered a patch in the foundation wall of the Kleiss Saloon immediately behind the filled-in trench. It was thus possible for a person to enter the cistern from the basement of the saloon without being seen. (FIG. 15). Taken together, the penetration through the foundation, the retaining wall, the trench, and the rebuilt eastern wall of the cistern suggest that modifications were made to the Kleiss Saloon and the cistern that would have allowed a person to crawl from the basement of the building into the cistern. The artifacts recovered from the trench feature indicate that it was filled sometime between 1850 and 1885, suggesting that these modifications would have been in play during the 1850s (FIG. 15).

Although the evidence is circumstantial at best, one feasible explanation for this is that the cistern was used in the 1850s as a hiding place for fugitive slaves escaping through Lancaster on the Underground Railroad. Although another function for the crawl way between the basement of the saloon and the abandoned cistern may eventually be discovered, the fact that the saloon building would have been owned by Stevens (a noted abolitionist and radical egalitarian) and likely monitored by Smith (reputed by local oral tradition to have been a conductor on the Underground Railroad) strongly support an Underground Railroad connection. The upright position of the spittoon suggests that it was in use by someone in the cistern; the hole broken into the roof of the cistern (Feature 5), could have let both light and air enter the cistern after it was no longer used for water storage. The archaeological evidence clearly suggests that the cistern was no longer used for water storage after 1850, and was filled by 1920. The artifacts recovered from the trench fill suggest that this feature was filled sometime before 1885, but most certainly before the first quarter

of the 20th century when the entire courtyard was filled.

Because it would have been most difficult to carry things through the crawl way, given the narrow passageway and difficult drop into the cistern, it is implausible that the cistern was used for storage of vegetables or other perishables. There are a series of persistent rumors in Lancaster that taverns like the Kleiss Saloon were used as speakeasies during Prohibition, and we briefly entertained the possibility that the cistern was used to hide contraband liquor or beer. The artifacts recovered from fill, however, suggest that both the trench and the cistern were filled before Prohibition became law—for example, not a single 20th-century artifact was recovered from the crawlway fill.

Because Stevens was out of office between 1853 and 1859, it is possible that he spent these years actively participating in the Underground Railroad movement from his home base in Lancaster. The modifications we found may indeed relate to his occupation of the site—the artifacts clearly point to that possibility. If this is so, we may have uncovered evidence that Stevens carried his anti-slavery crusade directly to his home base by sponsoring a depot on the Underground Railroad on his own property.

## Conclusion

One of the immediate goals of this project was to determine whether intact archaeological features associated with the Stevens and Smith occupation did in fact exist beneath 20th-century overburden. If our study proves nothing else, it certainly demonstrates beyond a doubt that interesting and intact features dating to the mid-19th century do exist at this site. According to this analysis, the cisterns would have been used during the 1840s for supplying water to the Kleiss Saloon and possibly the Stevens residence. If our interpretation is correct that the modifications to the cistern complex do relate to an Underground Railroad hiding place, this is a very important and tangible piece of Lancaster's history that should be preserved and interpreted.

Archaeological evidence for Underground Railroad activity is notoriously difficult to find

and interpret (Shellenhamer 2001). Most archaeological investigations have focused on sites that have long been recognized as being Underground Railroad stations, including the homes of notable abolitionists like Harriet Tubman, and A.M.E. churches that maintain their oral histories of aiding fugitives escaping north (Armstrong 2003; Armstrong and Wurst 2003). Complicating matters are local traditions attributing mysterious landscape features to the Underground Railroad. Cold storage cellars, abandoned cisterns, and filled in cellar doors often capture people's imagination. As Shellenhamer (2001) has noted, some have even asserted that tunnels hundreds or thousands of meters long were constructed in or near their homes to help fugitives escape along the Underground Railroad.

Most often, such interpretations are fanciful at best (Fruehling and Smith 1998). Rarely do tunnels emerge that were or could have been used to hide fugitives. The nature of the Underground Railroad movement was such that fugitives would have been given shelter in houses, garrets, cellars, or outbuildings. The "Underground" part of the "Underground Railroad" was a metaphorical device describing the clandestine nature of the participants helping fugitives escape from the South, and did not mean to imply that people were literally hidden under the ground. Many homeowners and local enthusiasts do not necessarily understand the allusion, and attribute unexplained underground features to the Underground Railroad. Most of the time simple explanations can dispel pervasive myths about the presumed function of such 18th- and 19th-century features that seem mysterious to the casual 21st-century eye (Fruehling and Smith 1998).

In our case, local tradition holds that Lydia Hamilton Smith was a conductor on the Underground Railroad, but no location has necessarily been attributed to her activities. While much of this tradition may be based simply on faith, Thaddeus Stevens' anti-slavery positions, and his willingness to fight against slavery, cannot be disputed. It does seem conceivable that Stevens and Smith were providing shelter to fugitives attempting to escape to Philadelphia. Lancaster is located on

the main 19th-century road (and multiple secondary roads) between Philadelphia and the Susquehanna River, which drains into the Chesapeake in northern Maryland. The Columbia-Philadelphia railroad line, which connected Philadelphia with the Susquehanna, passed directly through Lancaster; the depot was but a block from the Stevens House.

Although not large by the standards of bigger cities, there was a considerable African American population in the city, and Lancaster was a place where travelers would commonly stay. Indeed, the city was home to scores of taverns and hotels in the 19th century. South Queen Street, the location of the Stevens properties including the Kleiss Saloon, was densely populated with taverns and hotels. The Zion A.M.E. church was located only a few blocks away, and the Southeast quadrant of the city, which includes the corner of Queen and Vine, was home to the majority of Lancaster's black residents. The site of African American strangers in the neighborhood would not have aroused all that much suspicion.

If our interpretation is correct, in all likelihood the cellar of the Kleiss Saloon would have been the actual Underground Railroad station. The ruined outlines of several cold storage cellars in the basement of the building lend credence to the idea that the cellar was used for utilitarian purposes. Lit only by a few small windows, the cellar would have been an ideal place to hide fugitives. However, as both Stevens' letter to Jeremiah Brown and the Christiana Resistance indicate, agents active in the capture of African Americans were operating in Lancaster County. If such a bounty hunter or a U.S. Marshall were to enter or surround the premises while fugitives were hiding in the basement, they could have crawled through the short passage into the modified cistern as an emergency "escape route." The entrance into the passage could have easily been hidden, and the fugitive would have been safe. An oral history of the Underground Railroad in Lancaster County, published in a series of articles that appeared in the *Lancaster Sunday News* in the 1920s, corroborates that this could have happened. Frank Witmer noted in one article that a leading abolitionist in the county was reputed to have hidden fugitive slaves in a modified cistern

(Witmer 1929). Although it is doubtful that we found the very cistern he was talking about, it does seem possible that the occasional cistern was used as a hiding place in Lancaster.

Our archaeological investigation has demonstrated that the modified cistern we uncovered was intentionally sealed with a cast-iron stove plate so that water could not enter the cistern. A hole (Feature 5) was cut into the roof of the now-unused cistern, which would have allowed light and air to enter into the cistern from the brick pavement above. According to the artifactual evidence, both of these modifications were completed in the 1850s. The eastern wall of the cistern was partially demolished and rebuilt, complete with a small opening or "window," allowing crawl access into the cistern from a small trench that stretched the few feet from the cistern through the foundation wall of the Kleiss Saloon. The passage would have been very narrow, as a second cistern stood immediately to the east. It would have been a tight squeeze, but a medium-sized person could have made it with only a little difficulty. The entrance into the cistern was roughly bricked in, and the passage filled in before 1880—most likely soon after the building was sold out of Stevens' estate in 1871.

Because Underground Railroad activity was secret, and because today there are so many local myths—in Lancaster as elsewhere—we may never know beyond a shadow of a doubt if in fact fugitive slaves were harbored by Stevens and Smith, and if indeed the cistern was ever used as a hiding place. Given the archaeological evidence of the cistern's modification, and the historical presence of such a noted anti-slavery crusader as Thaddeus Stevens, it is a compelling possibility.

### Acknowledgements

There are a number of people and organizations we would like to acknowledge and thank. First and foremost, the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County sponsored this project, and we thank them for their ongoing support of archaeology in Lancaster. Randy Harris and his successor Tim Smedick were extremely helpful and patient

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