



**Pennsylvania's Free School Laws of 1834, Vol. 7:  
And Their Great Defender Thaddeus Stevens;  
Read Before the Lebanon County Historical  
Society, June 27, 1917 (Classic Reprint)**

*John L. Rockey*

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Excerpt from Pennsylvania's Free School Laws of 1834, Vol. 7: And Their Great Defender Thaddeus Stevens; Read Before the Lebanon County Historical Society, June 27, 1917

Thaddeus Stevens, here called the Great Defender of the School Laws of 1834, was not a native of Pennsylvania. By adoption and service he became one of its most useful and distinguished citizens, as well as a national figure, reflecting great credit upon the State.' But no matter how distinguished he might have been in forensic ability and statecraft, the chief purpose of this sketch is to show how persuasive and forceful he was in action at a most critical time, in preventing the repeal of untried school laws, which have placed our Commonwealth in line with other progressive States of the Union. That act alone should cause his memory to be cherished as one of Pennsylvania's greatest men.

Thaddeus Stevens was born at Danville, Caledonia county, Vermont, April 4, 1792. He was one of four sons, children of Sally and Joshua Stevens, who had removed to that locality, six years earlier, from Essex County, Massachusetts. The father added to his trade as shoemaker that of surveyor, and for that service received a tract of land in the new country.-which had a cold and rigorous climate. Consequently most of the settlers remained poor, but 'they were very democratic in their feelings. There was no aristocracy of position or wealth, and the greatest equality of every nature prevailed,, with much freedom of thought upon every subject. These surroundings were deeply impressed upon young Stevens, causing him to imbibe principles which he never forgot; and which were reflected in all his career.

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