Thaddeus Stevens Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

2010

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Finding aid encoded by Glenn R. Gardner, 2010

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Collection Summary

Title: Thaddeus Stevens Papers
Span Dates: 1811-1927
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1850-1868)
ID No.: MSS41442
Creator: Stevens, Thaddeus, 1792-1868
Extent: 4,750 items; 8 containers; 3.2 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Abstract: Lawyer and United States representative from Pennsylvania. General and official correspondence, legal, business, and financial papers, drafts and printed copies of Stevens's speeches, clippings, and other printed matter relating chiefly to Stevens's career in Congress and to family and business affairs.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Abdallah, Sultan of Anjouan, Comoros.
Binney, John, 1844-1913--Correspondence.
Buchanan, James, 1791-1868--Correspondence.
Camp, William E., d. 1841--Estate.
Chase, Salmon P. (Salmon Portland), 1808-1873--Correspondence.
Dent, W. M.--Correspondence.
Dickey, Oliver James, 1823-1876--Correspondence.
Dockray, F. A. (Frederick A.), b. ca. 1840--Correspondence.
Frémont, John Charles, 1813-1890--Correspondence.
Goddard, Henry, 1785-1871--Correspondence.
Greeley, Horace, 1811-1872--Correspondence.
Hood, Alexander--Correspondence.
Johnson, Andrew, 1808-1875--Impeachment.
Johnson, Andrew, 1808-1875.
Johnson, Reverdy, 1796-1876--Correspondence.
M'Conaughy, D. (David), b. 1823--Correspondence.
Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, 1832-1867.
McClure, Alexander K. (Alexander Kelly), 1828-1909--Correspondence.
McPherson, Edward, 1830-1895--Correspondence.
Merrill, Lewis, 1834-1896--Correspondence.
Nesbit, William, fl. 1867-1868--Correspondence.
Reed, William B. (William Bradford), 1806-1876--Correspondence.
Reilly, Edward, fl. 1862--Correspondence.
Scott, Winfield, 1786-1866--Correspondence.
Selden, Dudley, d. 1855--Correspondence.
Shoch, Samuel--Correspondence.
Spencer, Charles S.--Correspondence.
Stevens family.
Stevens, A. J., d. 1863--Correspondence.
Stevens, Simon--Correspondence.
Stevens, Thaddeus, 1792-1868.
Stevens, Thaddeus, Jr.--Correspondence.

Sumner, Charles, 1811-1874--Correspondence.
Sweney, John--Correspondence.
Wills, David, 1831-1894--Correspondence.

Organizations
Caledonia Iron Works.
J.D. Paxton & Co.
Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-)
Stevens & Paxton Co.
Union Pacific Railroad Company.
United States. Army--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States. Army--Recruiting, enlistment, etc.
United States. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.
United States. Congress. House.
Whig Party (U.S.)
Wrightsville, York, and Gettysburg Railroad Company.

Subjects
African Americans--Suffrage.
Anti-Masonic movements.
Bank loans--United States.
Coal mines and mining--Pennsylvania.
Education--Pennsylvania.
Gold standard.
Government securities--United States.
Impeachments--United States.
Iron industry and trade--Pennsylvania.
Iron mines and mining--Pennsylvania.
Paper money--United States.
Railroads--United States.
Reconstruction (U.S. history, 1865-1877)
Secession--Southern States.
Slavery--United States.
States' rights (American politics)
Tariff--United States.
Taxation--United States.

Places
Alaska--Annexation to the United States.
Anjouan (Comoros)--History.
Mexico--History--European intervention, 1861-1867.
Pennsylvania--Commerce.
Pennsylvania--Politics and government--19th century.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Confiscations and contributions.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Participation, African American.
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865.
United States--Politics and government--19th century.

Occupations
Lawyers.
Representatives, U.S. Congress--Pennsylvania.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The first installment of the papers of Thaddeus Stevens, lawyer and United States representative from Pennsylvania, was acquired by the Library of Congress as part of the papers of Edward McPherson in 1907. McPherson was a trustee of the estate of Thaddeus Stevens and contemplated writing a biography of him. In this capacity he collected the papers that comprise the major portion of this collection. The papers were purchased from Edward McPherson's sons, John Bruce McPherson and Donald P. McPherson. The second installment of the Edward McPherson-Thaddeus Stevens material was deposited in the Library in 1941 by McPherson's grandson, Donald P. McPherson, Jr., who converted these papers to a gift in 1944. Additional papers of Thaddeus Stevens were gifts of Elsie Singmaster Lewars, 1942-1945. Through Lewars, the Library communicated with other holders of Stevens manuscripts and obtained copies of them.

Processing History

The papers of Thaddeus Stevens were processed in 1964 and reprocessed in 1985. The finding aid was revised in 2010.

Related Material

Related collections in the Manuscript Division include the papers of Edward McPherson, which contain files dealing with the administration of Stevens's estate and material compiled by McPherson for an intended biography of Stevens.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Thaddeus Stevens is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Thaddeus Stevens are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Thaddeus Stevens Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	*Event*
1792, Apr. 4	Born, Dansville, Vt.
1810-1814	Attended the University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt., and graduated from Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.
1816-1826	Practiced law, Gettysburg, Pa.
1826	Became partner of James D. Paxton & Company, an iron company
1833-1841	Elected to Pennsylvania house of representatives
1838	Delegate to Pennsylvania state constitutional convention

1840	President, Wrightsville, York and Gettysburg Railroad Co.
1848	Elected representative to Congress on the Whig ticket
1853	Left Congress in protest to Whig moderation on the issue of slavery
1855-1856	Organized the Lancaster County, Pa., Republicans and attended the Republican National Convention
1858	Reelected to Congress
1860	Delegate to the Republican National Convention
1861	Chairman, House Ways and Means Committee
1865	Member, Joint Committee on Reconstruction
1866	Under his leadership Congress passed a Civil Rights Bill and a revised Freedman's Bureau Bill over Andrew Johnson's veto
1868	Member, committee to draft articles of impeachment against President Andrew Johnson and a manager of the case before the Senate
1868, Aug. 11	Died, Washington, DC

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Thaddeus Stevens (1792-1868) cover the period 1811-1927, although the bulk of the material is concentrated in the years 1850-1868. The collection is organized into the following series: General Correspondence, Speeches and Writings File, Legal File, and Miscellany series.

The General Correspondence series, consisting primarily of letters from constituents from Pennsylvania and from inhabitants of many northern and southern states, reflects major issues that concerned Stevens throughout his political career. Also included are letters from political colleagues and friends. Stevens's involvement during the 1830s and 1840s in Pennsylvania politics, especially his role in the anti-Masonic movement, is recorded. His stature within the Whig Party, and later the Republican Party, was to take on a national significance, with Stevens aggressively pushing issues and people he championed. Of particular interest are letters from Winfield Scott concerning Scott's nomination as the Whig candidate for the presidency in 1852.

The largest portion of the correspondence centers on issues surrounding the Civil War and its aftermath. Antislavery appears as a prominent theme in the 1850s and continues to be debated throughout the 1860s. As one of the most outspoken members of the radical Republicans, Stevens received many letters on states' rights, secession, rebellion, and the ensuing war, most in support of his point of view. Abraham Lincoln's and Stevens's cautious relationship is discussed: the opposition of Stevens and his colleagues to Simon Cameron for a position in Lincoln's cabinet, their dismay at Lincoln's conciliatory course with the rebel states, and Stevens's initial reluctance to endorse Lincoln for reelection and his later vigorous support.

The fate and movement of the Union army, conscription, and African-American soldiers are also significant topics. Stevens's nephews, A. J. Stevens, who died in the war in 1863, and Thaddeus Stevens, Jr., write their uncle detailed reports of Civil War battles in which they were involved. Their letters recount the hardships of war, often a consequence of the disorganization and

mismanagement of the army. During and after the war, other soldiers provide Stevens with similar if less intimate accounts.

As chairman of the House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee, Thaddeus Stevens played an instrumental role in the financing of the Union war effort and later in the process of Reconstruction. In order to attack the problem of financing the war and rebuilding the country at the end of the war, the committee discussed a wide range of solutions including taxation on goods, bank loans, printing paper money secured by government bonds, tariffs on foreign products, the Gold Bill, and the controversial postwar confiscation. The papers document public opinion concerning the progression of these programs.

Another issue in the General Correspondence relating to Reconstruction is the political situation in the South, with many complaints from loyal Union men at the election of rebels and old guard Southerners into the government. The Freedman's Bureau Bill and Negro suffrage are debated as means for remedying the lack of political status and protection for ex-slaves and the mistreatment resulting therefrom. The growing discontentment with Andrew Johnson's policies and the movement toward his impeachment are also major topics.

Other subjects aside from United States politics include Maximillian's occupation of Mexico in 1866 and the offer to the United States of Johanna Island, one of the Comoro Islands, by Abdallah, Sultan of Njouan, Comoros, in 1867.

Along with his interest in politics, Stevens was also engaged in various business enterprises. From 1826 until his death, he was involved with the Caledonia Iron Works. Initially Stevens was the partner of J. D. Paxton & Company; Stevens later bought out Paxton and became sole owner. Letters from Stevens' nephew, Thaddeus Stevens, Jr., and from his foreman, John Sweney, provide particulars about the day-to-day operations. The struggles, profits, innovations, and attempts to sell the works are discussed. Also included are letters describing the complete destruction of the Caledonia Iron Works operations by rebel forces in 1863. The Legal File also has information relating to the ironworks. Stevens's concern for exploitation of mineral resources goes beyond his personal financial concerns, for he encouraged the mining of iron ore and coal throughout Pennsylvania. He also advocated tariffs on foreign materials to enhance domestic development, which his Pennsylvania constituents supported.

The other major business in which Stevens actively concerned himself with is the railroad industry. He was president of the Wrightsville, York and Gettysburg Railroad Company in 1840. A file in the Miscellany series concerns this company. There is also voluminous correspondence concerning railroad expansion throughout Pennsylvania and the United States, especially the Union Pacific railroad, whose construction Stevens pushed.

Family correspondence consists of letters from his mother and brothers in the earlier years and from his nephews and nieces.

Stevens's law students, Edward McPherson and Alexander Hood, write to Stevens giving him their devoted support for his political judgments. Simon Stevens (not related), who was a student and later law partner, writes to him concerning Stevens's business affairs.

Other correspondents in the General Correspondence include John Binney, James Buchanan, John Charles Frémont, Salmon P. Chase, W. M. Dent, Oliver James Dickey, F. A. Dockray, Henry Goddard, Horace Greeley, Reverdy Johnson, Alexander K. McClure, D. M'Conaughy, Lewis Merrill, William Nesbit, William B. Reed, Edward Reilly, Dudley Selden, Samuel Shoch, Charles S. Spencer, Charles Sumner, and David Wills.

Stevens's letters are scattered throughout the General Correspondence series. Although they do not represent a comprehensive file of his responses, they give an impression of his business and political activities.

Included in the Speeches and Writings File is Stevens's speech to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1835 in which he advocates free schools throughout the state. Stevens's speech of 1860 at Cooper Union Institute in New York endorsed Lincoln for president and defends the principles of the Republican Party. The bulk of the speeches, however, relate to issues surrounding the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the impeachment of Andrew Johnson. More specific topics in this series are Abraham Lincoln's death, confiscation, secession, suffrage, and the treaty to purchase Alaska.

About one-third of the Legal File concerns settlement of the estate of William E. Camp, of which Stevens was executor. The Legal File also contains documents relating to Stevens's ironwork operations that supplement the letters in the General Correspondence series. A file on the Stevens & Paxton, an iron company, concerns contractual arrangements between the two partners. In addition, the cases of *Stevens v. Sam Hughes* and *Stevens v. J. H. Hughes* relate to property rights surrounding the Caledonia Iron Works.

In the Miscellany series is material related to congressional business, including bills, drafts of resolutions, memorials, and petitions, for the most part related to the aftermath of the Civil War. The printed matter consists chiefly of newspapers and clippings with some pamphlets, mostly relating to Stevens.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- General Correspondence, 1829-1869
- Speeches and Writing File, 1835-1868
- Legal File, 1825-1867
- Miscellany, 1811-1927

Description of Series

Container	*Series*
BOX 1-5	General Correspondence, 1829-1869 Largely letters received and some letters from Stevens. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 5-6	Speeches and Writing File, 1835-1868 Largely drafts and printed copies of speeches. Printed copies of speeches are filed first, in chronological order. Drafts and related notes of speeches, largely undated, are arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX 7-8	Legal File, 1825-1867 Estate papers, contracts, wills, indentures, memoranda, notes, and other legal material. Arranged by type of material or name of case.
BOX 8	Miscellany, 1811-1927 Financial, congressional, and biographical material, printed matter, and miscellaneous items. Arranged by type of material.

Container List

Container	*Contents*
BOX 1-5	General Correspondence, 1829-1869
	Largely letters received and some letters from Stevens.
	Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1	1829-1862
	(13 folders)
BOX 2	1863-1865, Sept.
	(11 folders)
BOX 3	1865, Oct.-1866, Sept.
	(9 folders)
BOX 4	1866, Oct.-1868, Apr.
	(11 folders)
BOX 5	1868 May-1869, Jan., undated
	(5 folders)
BOX 5-6	Speeches and Writing File, 1835-1868
	Largely drafts and printed copies of speeches.
	Printed copies of speeches are filed first, in chronological order. Drafts and related notes of speeches, largely undated, are arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX 5	1835-1868
	(5 folders)
BOX 6	Abraham Lincoln's death
BOX 6	Alaska, treaty for the purchase of
BOX 6	Amendments to the Constitution
BOX 6	Andrew Johnson, impeachment speech
	(3 folders)
BOX 6	Confiscation
BOX 6	Human rights (rights of the poor)
BOX 6	Reconstruction
BOX 6	Restoration of the Union
BOX 6	Secession
BOX 6	Suffrage
BOX 6	Temperance
BOX	Treatment of rebel states, soldiers, and citizens
BOX 6	War debt and losses
BOX 6	White man's government
BOX 6	Miscellaneous notes
BOX 7-8	Legal File, 1825-1867
	Estate papers, contracts, wills, indentures, memoranda, notes, and other legal material.

Container	*Contents*
	Arranged by type of material or name of case.
BOX 7	Miscellaneous, 1824-1867, undated
BOX 7	Thaddeus Stevens & J. D. Paxton Co., contractual agreements, 1825-1847
BOX 7	William E. Camp Estate, 1825-1849, undated (5 folders)
BOX 7	Sarah Haines Estate, 1838-1866
BOX 7	Stevens v. Sam Hughes, 1838
BOX 8	Stevens v. J. H. Hughes, 1862 (2 folders)
BOX 8	Stevenson v. Grier, undated
BOX 8	Miscellany, 1811-1927
	Financial, congressional, and biographical material, printed matter, and miscellaneous items.
	Arranged by type of material.
BOX 8	Financial file
BOX 8	Miscellaneous, 1811-1868, undated
BOX 8	Wrightsville, York and Gettysburg Railroad Co., 1836-1840
BOX 8	Congressional material
BOX 8	Bills, 1866-1868, undated
BOX 8	Bills regarding Texas, 1868
BOX 8	Drafts of resolutions, 1862-1868, undated
BOX 8	Memorials, 1862-1866, undated
BOX 8	Notes on Supreme Court decisions, undated
BOX 8	Petitions, 1849-1867, undated
BOX 8	Biographical sketches
BOX 8	Fisk, William, undated
BOX 8	Stevens, Thaddeus, sketches and reminiscences, 1868-1927, undated
BOX 8	Printed matter
BOX 8	Newspapers and clippings, 1830-1895, undated (3 folders)
BOX 8	Pamphlets and other documents, 1836-1866
BOX 8	Miscellaneous material
BOX 8	"Is the Union Victorious?" (anonymous essay), 1867 [?]
BOX 8	Scattered notes, undated
BOX 8	In Stevens' s hand
BOX 8	On various topics, not in Stevens's hand