

Thaddeus Stevens:
Champion of Rights

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Individual Website

Process Paper

I wanted to do a National History Day project that had a local connection. Since many History Day projects will focus on civil or educational rights, I decided to do my project about a person responsible for those rights. I selected Thaddeus Stevens as my topic for the 2014 National History Day, themed "Rights and Responsibilities in History". After reading about Stevens, I decided he would be an excellent choice for this year's theme. Stevens was the most powerful Congressman of his time and fought for civil and educational rights his entire life. Though not as well known today, Stevens was influential in American educational and civil rights. Constitutional amendments that Stevens authored, inspired, or supported are still used to determine rights in America today.

My research started by speaking to my history teacher about the general topic. I visited the Lancaster Historical Society, several libraries, and museums where I viewed primary documents, books, and pictures. I used the internet to research websites, looked at videos, and pictures. I found it difficult to research Thaddeus Stevens' thoughts because he destroyed most of his papers. I contacted several people including Ross Hetrick founder of the Thaddeus Stevens Society and Matthew Pinsker, Associate Professor of History at Dickinson College. Dr. Pinsker, Pohanka Chair in American Civil War History (2002), researches the career of Abraham Lincoln, partisanship in the Civil War era, American constitutionalism, the Underground Railroad and the history of U.S. campaigns and elections.

I chose a website for my project because I am interested in computers. Building this website allowed me to use my knowledge of computers and gain new skills. I designed my website using Weebly. I learned to use HTML code to insert music and sound effects. I liked that I could show pictures, videos, documents, historical facts, and my thoughts in an entertaining and informative way.

My project, "Thaddeus Stevens: Champion of Rights" fits and relates to the National History Day theme well. Thaddeus Stevens always fought for educational and equal rights for all. He believed it was the government's responsibility to ensure these rights and believed that he was responsible to fight for those rights. Stevens was a significant figure in history because he changed rights and thoughts of others. Thaddeus Stevens' contributions to educational and civil rights have changed America.