SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1883

“The Underground Railroad.”
A History of Its Workings in Chester, Lancaster and Adjacent Counties.

The “History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania,” published at the office of the Friend’s Journal, and printed by John A. Hiestand, has just been issued. The book, as has been noted in the Inquirer, was principally compiled by Dr. C.R. Smeldley, of West Chester. He died in January last, and the work has been finished by Robert Purvis and Marianna Gibbons. The volume contains almost four hundred pages, and its appearance throughout is highly creditable to the printers of the Examiner office.

The Lancaster county people sketched who assisted fugitive slaves on the road to freedom are William Wright, of Columbus; Samuel W. Millin, of Columbus, now living in the interesting days; Daniel Gill, who, with his wife Hannah and their son Dr. Jos. Gibson, all of Bird-in-Hand; Dr. J.K. Eshleman, of near Strasburg; Thomas Whison, of Harrisburg; Jabez Hart, of Ephrata; Jeremiah Moore, of Christians; Caleb C. Eshleman, of Bart; Lindle Coates, of Sadsbury; Joshua Britton, of Salisbury; Thomas Bonsall, of Christians; Lewis Ewart, of Lampeter; Joseph P. Scarlott, of Sadsbury; Joseph Smith, of Drumore; Oliver Furniss, of Little Britain; John Neal Russell, of Drumore; and those concerned in the Christiana Riot. Some of these men and women are living, but most of them are dead.

Notwithstanding some very astounding inaccuracies of fact and date, and the palpable lack of editing which the work has received from the successors of Dr. Smeldley, much interesting matter is found in it. It is a pity that so large a number of beautiful things are taking as that of Dr. Smeldley’s should not have received that close revision which would have made it thoroughly reliable and at the same time have added to its compactness, its arrangement, and its literary merit.

Somebody should write and publish in book form the true history of the Christiana slave riot in 1861. It would be “mightily interesting reading” if the bottom facts were reached and related, a thing that could not have been done for many years after the occurrence. Now, however, there can be no reason for concealment on the part of any one. Nearly the third of a century has elapsed since the affair took place, and it is to have an authentic history it should soon be forthcoming.

And this reminds me that Lancaster county should have an Historical Society, with the wealth and extent of an empire, and rich in historical facts, she has no organized association to gather and preserve them. Let us have by all means. There are hundreds of important historical items but a limited number of our people, that this means be made to do good service.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1883

THIS AND THAT.

Mrs. Lydia Smith, Thaddeus Stevens’ housekeeper for twenty-four years, who was in Lancaster last week attending the wedding of Dr. Henry Carpenter’s daughter, told me that she was born in Adams county, in the very house to which James Buchanan’s father first went when he landed in this country. Through the friend of his boyhood, Josiah Russell, who had preceded him in the search for home and fortune in the new world. The return was born in slavery and received therewith by Mr. Stevens. Mrs. Smith attributes this fact to Mr. Stevens’ first housekeeper, Keziah Shannon, was at one time the chaste of a Carlie, in Lancaster, PA. From him he ran off and found her way to Gettysburg. Mr. Stevens ascertained that by the law of 1879 she was entitled to her freedom. She obtained it after a legal case with a former master. Keziah removed with the family of John McCreery, who kept hotel in Gettysburg, to Westminster, Md., where she married a man named Ephraim Wiliams. Soon afterwards he was offered for sale. Twice Keziah walked from Westminster to Gettysburg before making Mr. Stevens to buy her husband. She was, however, only at a strenuous time her recrude husband behavior so badly that Stevens was compelled to turn him out of the situation he had given him in his own Gettysburg home. This so distressed the poor woman that she hanged herself in the chimney corner on the evening before the day he took for their departure from the house of their benefactor. Here Mrs. Smith was the first to make a call, found her. Prompt medical aid restored the poor woman to consciousness. The very next night in their new home near the Gettysburg poor house, Dr. David Horner was instrumental in again frustrating her determination to die. “Ah,” said Mrs. Smith, “I have heard Mr. Stevens say she was the handsomest woman that I had ever seen.” But consumption and a brutal husband soon accomplished what she had twice vainly attempted; and, in the first six months of 1887, Mrs. Smith, then Miss O’Neill, standing at the window of her Gettysburg home, saw carried to the little Catholic churchyard near by wife, husband and little boy. Long years after, Bill, the only surviving issue of this unfortunate and unhappy alliance came to Lancaster and sought out from Mr. Stevens, and by him was held to New York city, where he engaged in a career on the great ship Central America that sailed away and never returned to port again. Such is the story of Thaddeus Stevens’ first housekeeper as it was told to me by the last woman who presided over his domestic affairs. Mrs. Smith now lives in Washington; she keeps a boarding house on Fourteenth street, adjoining the house at 554 Fourteenth street, adjoining the house at 554 Fourteenth street.

See reverse
In publishing in last week’s INQUIRER a letter written by Thaddeus Stevens to Jeremiah Brown, of Fulton township, we asked if any one could tell who the spy was, which Mr. Stevens said he had on the spies of the slaveholders. In reply, Mr. Hiestand, in Saturday’s EXAMINER, says: “As to the last question, we can give some facts which will throw some light upon it.

At the time mentioned in Stevens’ letter, 1847, there lived in Lancaster a notorious slave catcher named George Hughes; he owned slaves in Baltimore and was at times elected a constable agent. He was the trusted agent of the Baltimore and Southern slave catchers. He was brutal and relentless, and had his correspondence done for him by others. He, about this time, had a room, or sort of an office, on East King street, somewhere between Lane’s store and the Farmers’ Bank. At the same time, J. H. Bauch, still well remembered by our oldest citizens, and now the editor of the Mainch Chunk Democrat, kept the toll-gate on the Philadelphia turnpike, at the east end of Wittmer’s bridge. He was a great friend of Mr. Stevens, hated slavery and slave hunters, and was ready to render any service that would aid the runaway slave to reach what was called a city of refuge.

Bauch and Hughes became acquainted and intimate, both by accident and design, and Bauch became Hughes’ confidential clerk, attended his correspondence, and, of course, had a full knowledge of all the secrets between Hughes and the slave-catchers of Baltimore and other places South. Of course, he concealed his opinions about slavery from Hughes, and apparently entered heartily into the plots, plans and schemes for catching runaway slaves, and sharing the handsome rewards offered by the slaveholders for their runaway chattels. After Hughes’ death, Bauch, in speaking of his ‘business’ venture with Hughes, said that it was one that was not a success. They never were able to declare a ‘dividend’ on the investment. Mr. Stevens’ letter tells the whole story.

Captain Bauch could relate some interesting incidents of the days when slave hunting was an exciting business along the border of Maryland.”