



Read Jeff Kirkland's article about the music and culture we love. See Page 2.



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CAY HCC Journal

Journal of The Crispus Attucks York History and Culture Center

We will explore the history and culture of York's African American community to foster an open dialog about past, present, and future racial issues while promoting multicultural harmony.

YORK'S LAST BLACK CIVIL WAR VETERAN

By Benjamin Werkley



Mr. Wilson

John Aquila Wilson was born in 1841 in York County, Pa. When he was 14 the American Civil War came to York, Pa. when the Confederates invaded Pennsylvania. After several days of marching, the Confederates reached Wrightsville where they met a Union force which had been digging trenches to defend the Wrightsville-Columbia bridge. John Aquila Wilson was among the Union defenders of the bridge. After holding out for about 2 hours under enemy fire the defenders of the Wrightsville bridge had to retreat back across the bridge. They ultimately needed to burn the bridge down to prevent the enemy from crossing over into Lancaster County.

The next year in 1864, John Aquila Wilson would enlist in the 32nd USCT (United States Colored Troops). After training at Camp William Penn out near Philadelphia, the 32nd USCT was deployed down to South Carolina. In

South Carolina, Wilson and his comrades in the 32nd USCT saw action around Charleston. They fought well at several battles and took part in a lengthy battle for the city. Down in South Carolina Wilson and the 32nd USCT also helped to protect escaped slaves that had fled to Union lines.

(See Wilson on p. 8)

BEN WASHINGTON - PERSEVERENCE, HARD WORK, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

By Jeff Pacl

The Great Migration refers to the mass movement of African Americans from the southern states to the northern states beginning around 1910. They left their homes to find jobs and escape the oppression of the Jim Crow South.

(see Hard Work on p. 8)



Mr. Washington

CAY HISTORY SPOTLIGHT

By Jeffrey Parris

Bob Hollis is an esteemed member of the York community. Having served many years as the Director



Mr. Hollis

of programming at Crispus Attucks York (CAY), Bob is known for his humility and for the pride he takes in his work for the community. He was born to a Hungarian father and an Italian mother. (see Spotlight on p. 11)

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CAY

By Jim McClure

Dr. George W. Bowles set the vision for Crispus Attucks York from the beginning in saying, "Crispus Attucks is a character-building organization."



Mr. McClure YDR

That mission has remained in view as the organization looks forward to the opening of its History and Culture Center in 2025. (see McClure on p. 5)

History & Culture

By Jeff Kirkland



Mr. Kirkland

I am writing this article to highlight the need for serious change in our community, particularly in the area of social policy as it relates to Males of color in this community. To many of us, violence amongst this population has reached pandemic proportions which rival the Covid pandemic. Admittedly this violence has nationwide presence, but my concern is that while much of the violence we see nationwide is perpetrated by outside forces such as police, the extreme violence we see here in our city is mainly perpetrated by us on us. Many people are puzzled as to how we got to this point, but to those of us who follow and study social policy and community psychology it is No surprise we are where we are. Much of our predicament can be attributed to the failures and successes of those policies. Yes successes. But that is a discussion for

another time and place. My thoughts today will be about the responsibility we have in perpetuating or combating this social disorder.

It is no coincidence that you often hear people say Music is a universal Language. Music speaks to the Soul, to the Spirit. For us, as a people, this has been particularly true.

For me, an eye opener on the True significance of Music came in 1971 as I read a poem written for the liner notes of an album called **Ethiopian Knights** by Donald Byrd. The Poem was written by Bill Quinn, who was an Instructor at the Department of Jazz Studies at Howard University. Where Donald Byrd was also a Music instructor

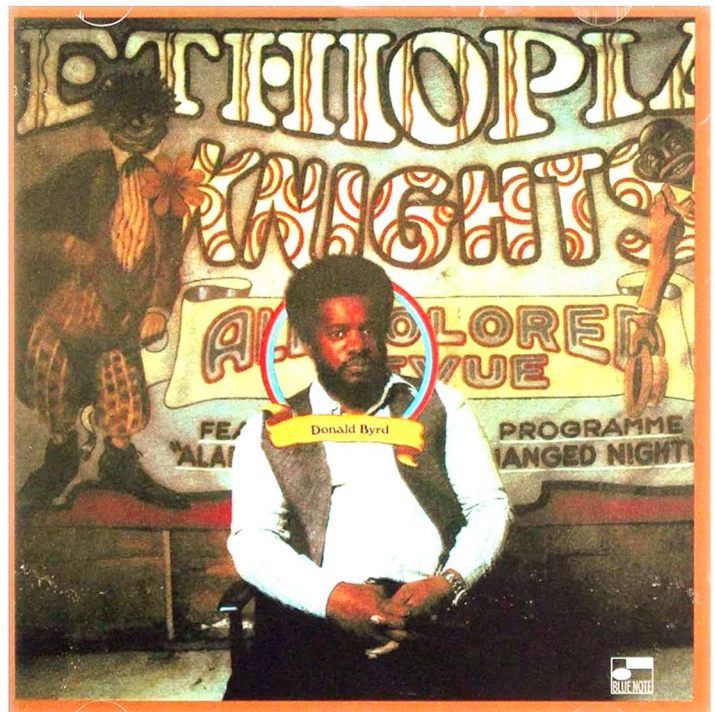
It was called "The Music". Here is a short excerpt:

***It was the music* that took them past the urine in the blind, bloodhole belly of the slave ships. Where they were Vomiting History, Culture, Religion and Identity.**

***It was the Music* that dulled the ropebite, cooled the gutburn and hushed the netcrack as the Manic crowd of the lynch mob closed in on the dead body to take its final dignity and beat it, shoot it, shred it, divide it and display its parts in pickle jars on drugstore counters.**

***It's the Music* that takes him past the landlord, the black and white police cars, the hospital, the judge, the jails and prison yards.**

***It's the Music* which says no when the dopeman calls, says present when the parole officer calls role. The Music says keep looking when he can find no job.**



It's The Music.

A community grows and develops by building upon its History, Culture, Traditions, and Values as well as the accomplishments of its previous generations. That is why Marcus Garvey says, "A people without knowledge of its History, is like a tree without Roots, destined to die." For if we are disconnected from our History, Culture and Traditions we essentially begin the community development process over in each generation.

Music is an important part of our Culture and History. Music is much more than a form of entertainment. Music identifies races, nationalities and communities. It has far-reaching, hypnotic effects on the Brain and the Soul and can take complete control of the Body & Mind. It can help determine the mood or attitude of a person or a people. **"Music is also a running commentary on the state of black culture."**

It stands to reason that if Music can have that type of effect we need to beware, for the effects of Music can be used for good or evil. We must ask ourselves is there a mode or musical sound which can harm the Mind? There were government agencies who studied the Culture of certain peoples, especially their Music, in the hope of finding ways to use it against them.

In watering our Music down to have that Crossover appeal and sell more, we have significantly weakened its Spiritual Strength and Cultural significance. In that search for material wealth, we made a Bad deal. **It is time to regroup.**

We have tasted what the world defines as wealth, but we have lost the former wealth which we possessed as a people. **"What does it matter to gain the world but to lose your Soul?"** Our inherent feeling of closeness and oneness, as a people, is gone. Our national wealth has been destroyed or stolen. Our Mothers, Fathers, Sisters and little Brothers have been bargained away. Remember, **the little that a righteous Man has is better than the Riches of wicked men.** When we are fooled by material wealth, we may be tempted to envy the wicked ways of people who seem to have it all.

Again, it is **time to regroup.** We must begin, understand, and appreciate the Spiritual connections and Strength of our History and Culture.

A primary area to begin with is our Culture specifically Music & Dance. Do any of you remember in History books and sometimes in movies how the African & American Indian used to Dance, sometimes until they were totally exhausted.

An African who could not relate to dance for instance was like a Soul without Spirit. Dance & Music were magnificent expressions of Creative Genius. It was first and foremost a form of Prayer. One of the very first Dances was entitled Praise ye the Lord. (Hallelujah) After that came the Dance for Strength & Understanding. Then there were Dances and Songs for the Harvest, Plantings, the rains, Birth and Marriages. All a continuation of Praise for God. How did we as a People get so far away from the realization that the Worship of God is a Way of Life. Everything we do and create should reflect the righteousness of God. (And I mean Everything).

What do you think of when you hear Curtis Mayfield sing, We're a Winner or We people Who are Darker than Blue? Or the Temptations singing Message to a Black Man. How about Earth Wind and Fire singing Keep Your Head to the Sky. Louis Armstrong What Did I Do to Be so Black & Blue. Have you heard Billie Holiday sing Strange Fruit in which she chronicled the viciousness of Lynchings in those times? Gil Scott Heron sang about Winter in America, The Ojays Message in our Music. Sam Cooke A Change is Gonna Come. How about War The World is A Ghetto and of

course James Browns signature piece, Say It Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud. Music meant something significant.

We must correct the modern terms used to describe our music for in many instances they are very misleading. It is imperative that the original names be understood and revived.

The original name for what we called the Blues was the music of Lamentations, in which the Bible teaches you that actions have consequences.

The original name for church music was Gospels or Songs of Zion. This **Music** was a way for **slaves** to express their feelings whether it was sorrow, joy, inspiration or hope. **Songs** were passed down from generation to generation throughout **slavery**. These **songs** were influenced by African and religious traditions and would later form the basis for what is known as "Negro Spirituals".

The original name for what we call Jazz or Modern Jazz, you may be shocked to know was Spirituals. Spirituals were a form of Christian song of African American origin, containing codes that slaves used to **communicate** with each other and help give directions. Some believe Swing Low Sweet Chariot was a direct reference to the Underground Railroad and was sung as a signal for **slaves** to ready themselves for escape. As it was illegal in most **slave** states to teach **slaves** to read or write, **songs** were used to **communicate** messages and directions about when, where, and how to escape, and warned of dangers and obstacles along the route.

Soul Music retains its name but much of the content has changed. Almost from its inception, Soul music was concretely intertwined with the American Civil Rights movement and the issues surrounding race relations.

Soul music breathed life into civil rights and black empowerment. It acted as a galvanizing force in times of despair among black Americans before evolving to become the movement's soundtrack.

African American spirituals, gospel, and folk **music** all played an important **role** in the **Civil Rights Movement**. **Music** is a vital part of everyday life. It is a part of religious ceremonies, festivals, and social rituals. Songs are used for the **important** events in a person's life (birth, coming of age, marriage, and death). They are used for curing the sick, bringing rain, and religious dances.

When we look back and examine any facet of today's society, we can readily see how far off we have gotten in the quest for God. Common sense has been replaced by uncommon sense and what we have left has destroyed and undermined our sense of what is ethical, moral and naturally right.

I will leave you with an African word from the Akan tribe in Ghana. **Sankofa**

The literal translation of the word is ***"it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind."***

The Akans believe that there must be forward progress and new learning as time passes. As this forward march proceeds, the knowledge of the past must **never** be forgotten. Sankofa seeks to provide the enlightenment of our Culture through educational, cultural and social events.

Thus, the Akans believe the past serves as a guide for planning the future. To the Akan, it is this wisdom in learning from the past which ensures a strong future. We must go back to connect with who we really are in order to survive and thrive in a Hostile world. Like the words inscribed on many of the tombs of Ancient Egypt, **Know Thyself**.....Thank you for your patience.....

(McClure from p. 1)

With construction of the CAY History and Culture Center giving the building shape before our eyes, it is time to reflect on Crispus Attucks York's (CAY) rich history through the comments and ideas of those who built and observed the work of this respected community organization. With construction of the CAY History and Culture Center giving the building shape before our eyes, it is time to reflect on Crispus Attucks York's (CAY) rich history through the comments and ideas of those who built and observed the work of this respected community organization.

So, we've chosen a form of storytelling via a series of quotes from those with a great stake in the organization over the years.

Here is a sampling of comments about the life and times of Crispus Attucks York:

“The Women’s Clubs ban her. The Girl’s Club ignores her. The Salvation Army refuses beds to her brothers in black because a white down-and-out man refuses to be near him. A man without manners has the privilege of ordering colored girls moved from beside him in a theater. Her boys have no boys club except a poolroom. The Social Service club does not invite her. The Community Circle changes the game when the next turn is hers’.

-Faith Presbyterian Church’s Community House officials write to York’s Chamber of Commerce in 1922. The Community House and The Emergency Girls Club were two organizations that served the Black community before the founding of Crispus Attucks York.

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“Helen didn’t just teach children, she taught them to be proud.”

-Sylvia Newcombe, retired York Recreation Commission head, says about Helen Reeves Thackston, who directed Crispus Attucks’ Early Learning Center from 1932 to 1964.

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“Today in Germany, because of the arrogant bigotry of the so called superior race, no such dedicatory ceremony would be possible... . The loss of a firm national character and the degradation of a nation’s honor is the inevitable prelude to that nation’s destruction and decay.”

-George W. Bowles, who was there at the beginning of Crispus Attucks York, said at the wartime opening of the organization’s new center in a former church on East Maple Street in 1944.

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“In the future Negro people will have many new doors of opportunity open to them. To you boys and girls who hope to spend your time marching, what will you be able to do with your new opportunities? It will not fit you to accept a job in the diplomatic service or in an engineering firm. You must have a firm background. No matter how hard the dog barks, the mountains do not fall down. That requires hard work. In all your doings, then, think clearly before acting.”

-Crispus Attucks Executive Director Edward R. Simmons, on protest marches, in 1949.



Wade Bowers

“When we sang, he made it our calling. I can still remember many of the songs we used to sing. We sang in Italian and in other languages. We sang songs from operas. He gave us song that carried us through. He demanded that we get the best and be the best that we could be.”

-Longtime York educator Dr. Julia Hines-Harris remembers Crispus Attucks York’s Wade Hampton Bowers III, a professional musician who for years headed CA’s music and educational programs.

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“C.A. was a focal point for keeping the family together. It kept the kids off the streets and allowed parents to send their children to a place they felt was positive and safe.”

-The late historian and former York City Council member Wm. Lee Smallwood who said in his later years that he still considers Crispus Attucks York his home away from home.



Wm. Lee Smallwood

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**“Are you in earnest. Seize the moment.
What you think you can do, begin it.
Boldness has courage, power and magic in it.
Begin, and the mind grows heated.
Begin, and the job will be completed.”**

-Sadie Orr Dunbar, CA Herald, 1971.

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Frederick D. Holliday

“The mission of Crispus Attucks is to improve the quality of life for the citizens of York, especially those who are Black and oppressed. Major emphasis is to improve health and employment opportunities, education and recreation for the Center’s participants. In addition, it is the Center’s aim to teach the less fortunate to become their own advocates and mediators. ... We can change the way things are. And, of all the institutions in York, Crispus Attucks is the logical choice to improve the quality of life among the disaffected.”

-York City Schools Supt. Frederick D. Holliday, CA’s annual meeting, 1975.

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“We needed a strong personality to clean up things, to restore a sense of pride. The answer was right there sitting on the board, Bobby Simpson. He didn’t have fancy credentials behind his name, but other things can be more important; a sense of life’s experience, leadership ability, the courage to take a risk and a big heart. Bobby had it all.”

-Longtime Crispus Attucks Board member Dan Elby recalls the hiring of Bobby Simpson as Crispus Attucks’ executive director in 1979 after the organization had turned over a half dozen people in that position in that decade.

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“Someone asked me what was the greatest speech I’ve ever heard, and I’ve heard many great speeches by famous people (The) speech which most impressed me was by a very poor, humble and uneducated lady, and the speech was short and simple, yet it had a lasting impact on me, and it came from my mother. She simply stated no one owed you a living in life, get it for yourself. This is what I live by, and what we try to instill and encourage our people at Crispus Attucks to do.”

-Bobby Simpson, in a speech to a class at York’s Jackson Elementary.

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“Here’s a center that has pulled itself together and is doing something about drug abuse, affordable housing, and day care. They’re taking the whole community and trying to solve an enormous amount of problems and that’s very exciting. I think this will be a pilot program the rest of the country will want to copy.”

-Barbara Bush, after a visit to Crispus Attucks York.

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“The new wing will focus on the preparation of our youth for leadership roles in the community. Here at Crispus Attucks, we are constantly exposing our youth to the positive aspects of our culture We all know the importance of education; it is something no one can ever take from you.”

-Longtime Crispus Attucks York board member Ray Crenshaw, 1994.

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Ray Crenshaw

“Pioneers such as Dr. George Bowles, Rev. Thomas Montouth, Chester Hayes, Edward Simmons, Helen Thackston, Dr. (Omar) Kimbrough and others too numerous to mention would be very proud of the dedication and commitment many of you have shown in carrying on and building upon the noble intentions, goals and ideals they expressed upon the founding of this great and historic organization.”

-CAY HCC Lead Historian Jeff Kirkland

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“I don’t think money can buy what Crispus Attucks gives.”

-Bob Hollis, Crispus Attucks York’s associate director, 1988.

“We wanted them to know that if you believe in what you do, work hard and continue to move forward, even in the face of adversity, all things are possible.”

-Bobby Simpson speaking at the groundbreaking of the Crispus Attucks History and Culture Center in 2023.

Sources: [Crispus Attucks 75th anniversary special section](#), York Daily Record; Crispus Attucks York archives; Jeff Kirkland’s “Crispus Attucks Association, 85 Years of Community Building”; WitnessingYork.com.

(Wilson from p. 1)

On August 22, 1865 John Aquila Wilson and the rest of the 32nd USCT would be mustered out, Wilson received an honorable discharge for his Civil War service.

After returning home from the war, Wilson would marry his wife Mary Wilson, and together they would have several children. Records indicate that Wilson and his family continued to live in Fawn Township located in southern York County. Wilson would live well into the 20th Century, living until 1942 when he would die, he was 101 years old, he is buried at Fawn A.M.E Zion. He was proud of his service in the Union Army and he attended several veterans events throughout Central Pennsylvania.

In a 2010 interview with the York Daily Record, his granddaughter Isabella Philips would give an interview where she would express that “He wanted to have the same rights as everybody else.” It is hard to truly do justice to the story of someone like John Aquila Wilson in such a short article, but he and his fellow black soldiers in the Union Army not only risked their lives but also their freedom by serving. They helped pave the way for the abolition of slavery and future generations of African American servicemen and women through their sacrifice to their country.

(Hard Work from p. 1)

Let's Begin at the Beginning

Benjamin Washington was born to Nathaniel and Olive Washington on their farm in Bamberg, South Carolina in 1947. He had 22 brothers and sisters. Mr. Washington still owns the farm he was born on. The family grew a wide variety of crops including cotton and produce. They also raised chickens, cows, hogs, etc. They would butcher 10 or 12 hogs at a time, cure and then smoke them. They did their own canning. His family plowed every bit of the land using mules. His family was self-sustaining, they rarely bought anything. The family also fished and hunted game including squirrels and gators. Ben caught a gator as recently as last year when he was down at the farm.

His grandfather on his father's side, J. W. Washington, came over to America on a slave ship. He adopted the name of his master following the Civil War. Ben's grandfather was able to borrow money from the banks and purchase land using the name J. W. Washington. He bought land from Florida to Ohio. J. W. buried his money and land deeds which Ben's oldest brother later found.



Ben Washington

Jack Wiggins, Ben's grandfather on his mom's side, was also an enslaved person. He was freed at the age of fifteen when the Civil War ended. During the post war Reconstruction era, the Klan created an atmosphere of racial animus and violence. The Klan fiercely opposed the education of the newly freed African Americans. “If they catch you with a book, you got hung or shot.”, Mr. Washington said recalling the words of his grandfather. Despite the dangers, Mr. Wiggins started a four-year trade college in Denmark, South Carolina that the family still supports through a scholarship fund.

Mr. Washington remembers walking to school at the Hampton one-room schoolhouse in Bamberg. Hampton was a segregated school for black children. He remembers that he had to stay home about two days a week to work the farm. When they desegregated the schools in Ben's senior year of high school, Mr. Washington recalls an incident

where a White kid and a Black kid got in a fight at his school. The principal stopped the fight and made the two kids hug each other. The next day the White kid showed up with a large contingent of Clansmen. They rampaged through the school looking for the principal. Mr. Washington said that the principal was quickly ushered away from the incident. A short while later, the grandfather of the white kid built a large private school exclusively for his grandchildren and the other white children of his friends which still operates to this day.

Mr. Washington recalls making \$3.00 a day picking huge watermelons in the hot sun as a young boy. Men and boys stood in a line twenty feet long; you'd pick a melon and pitch it to the next man, who'd pitch it to the next, and so on until the last man would place the melon on the truck. At the market, the melons would sell for less than 10 cents apiece. Starting in ninth grade, Ben trained as a bricklayer. By the time he graduated high school he was a master bricklayer, a trade that earned him just \$2.00 per day in Bamberg.

Senseless Racism

When Ben was a child in Bamberg you couldn't sit down at a restaurant or use the bathroom. He recalls "You couldn't have white chickens running around your house. That may sound silly but, it's the gospel truth" Ben said. "If I was a Black man and I had white chickens and you [a white man] was to see a black chicken jump on a white chicken...you had to get rid of the white chickens and get rid of them fast. If they [the white people] catch a Black man drinking a Coca-Cola they act like you [took advantage of] a white woman...They would return the bottles and they didn't want to drink behind [a] Black [person]...although they sterilized them... We could drink any kind of soda out of...the store but a Coca-Cola."

The Klan

The KKK came visiting at the Washington farm one evening; the Washingtons let them get about half way up their road and they opened up on them, sending them fleeing through the cane fields. The next day Mr. Washington's father confronted the head of the Klan, assuring him that there would be another Civil War if the Klan set foot on his farm again.

Welcome to York, PA

Mr. Washington came to York from Bamberg in 1964 after graduating high school, saying that living in the deep south as an African American had become too much because of the bigoted attitude of Whites around Bamberg. He plainly said that he feared for his life and safety if he remained in Bamberg. He joined his older brother and about half of his family who were already settled in York. Within six months of arriving in York, Mr. Washington purchased a house on East Jackson Street. After about a year, he and his family here in York returned to Bamberg to bring his parents to York. They also paid off the tax debt on the farm that had accrued over the years because of predatory loan practices perpetrated by the local banks. Ben returns to Bamberg every year to pay the taxes on the farm personally.

A Hard-Working Man

The first day Ben arrived in York, he got a job washing pots and pans in a restaurant. He soon found a job as a bricklayer's attendant at \$5.00 an hour and quickly became a bricklayer. He immediately experienced racial discrimination from white union bricklayers who threatened to picket the job unless his boss got rid of the N---r. Mr. Washington's boss attempted to appease the union by suggesting Ben be demoted back to bricklayer's attendant. His boss persuaded him to stay on for a couple more



Peach Bottom Nuclear Power Plant

weeks while he attempted to secure Mr. Washington a bricklayer's union card. When it didn't happen, Ben packed up his tools and quit. He then joined the laborers union where he took a position as a carpenter's helper. He did such a good job that the other carpenters recommended he sign up for the four-year carpenter's apprenticeship program. The program paid a dollar less an hour initially, but by the fourth year he would be making four times what a laborer made. During the first year of his apprenticeship he also attended classes at night at William Penn High School to learn welding. By the end of the year he was a certified welder. While he was on a job at the Peach Bottom Nuclear Powerplant he experienced further discrimination when he asked to take the welder's test to become certified to work at the facility. The steward for the job told Washington that they didn't want any Black welders, despite the fact that the other welders in the carpenters union were uncertified and had cost the union a huge 10 by 100 foot cement pour due to bad welds in the steel of the molds. Ben called the business manager and told him what happened. The steward was fired as a result and another steward appointed. Ben went up and took the test. Out of more than 50 people, he was the only one who passed. Though he had three years left on his apprenticeship, Ben earned Journeyman wages every time he picked up a welding 'stinger'. This meant he was paid journeyman's wages throughout the remainder of his carpenter's apprenticeship. Once he became a journeyman, he advanced rapidly from journeyman to foreman to general foreman to superintendent in about a month. Mr. Washington worked at Peach Bottom for 10 years.

The Riots

At the time of the 1968 - 1969 riots, Mr. Washington was living on the corner of Jackson and Duke Streets. He remembers that he had his family in the basement to keep them safe. The rioters had the police pinned down in his back yard. The next time he looked out he saw one of his friends pinned down by gunfire in his yard, bullets were hitting the back of his house. Ben opened the back door and yelled for his buddy to come inside. He ran through the house and out the front door. Later, an armored truck came along and all of the cops piled up onto his porch. He recalls the gun shop up the street handing out guns out of the back door. Mr. Washington said "It was terrible, it was bad. I was glad when the National Guard came in to shut it down."

In response to the chaos of the riots, Mr. Washington became active in the York Charrette. He sponsored several of the meetings to discuss the need for compliance regulations to guarantee equitable access to contracts for woman and minority owned businesses.

Ben Strikes Out on His Own

After his tenure at Peach Bottom, Mr. Washington decided to start his own construction business. He began renovating houses for the City of York. For the first year, he kept coming in second in the bidding for jobs because he was in the habit of turning his bids in early. He was losing the jobs by \$100 each time. After 14 or 15 times, he figured out that he could turn in his bid five minutes before the deadline. He would then wait while they opened and recorded the bids. He started winning most of his bids from then on. One of his early jobs was restoring the very first house purchased by CAY. It was over on Duke Street.

After a couple of years, Mr. Washington convinced his brother Odell to join the company. Before that, Ben was having to turn away many jobs because he didn't have enough help. Odell was able to double their capacity because each brother ran their own construction crew. The business became very successful despite the discriminatory banking practices they encountered. The requirements for the loans they applied for were much more stringent than necessary. Once they discovered this they immediately changed to another bank that was much more reasonable.

He liked and admired both Rev. David Orr and Rev. Irvin Kittrell. Ben laments that religion and moral teaching were taken out of the schools. He believes that this has led to many of the problems we see today.

**Mr. Washington has been a working man all of his life and still is to this day.
We thank Mr. Ben Washington for sharing his life story with the community.**

(Spotlight from p. 1)

Hollis grew up during the high tensions of the civil rights movement. He recalls a time at a school assembly where Black and White students (without being told to do so) were sitting on opposite sides of the gym. Bob, knowing a handful of the black students having run track with them, he went to sit with his black friends. He recalls this moment breaking the tension in the space and students feeling more open to intermingling with each other. When asked how he knew to do that, he said "I didn't do anything; I did what was natural". The issue of race is one that continues to show up in the life of Bob Hollis. He is conscious of the role race played in both his personal and professional life. This shines through in his work and the impact he had on the Crispus Attucks community and the wider York community.

After excelling in high school, Mr. Hollis had the option of attending a plethora of schools, but he chose to wait. He saw the financial strain placed on his mother every time his sibling's college bills came around. Bob did not feel right adding that kind of financial burden on to her. He instead enlisted into the U. S. Army. He was among the two million men who served the country during the Vietnam war. While enlisted, he served in combat as a fire direction control officer. While overseas, he fired somewhere around 3000 missions with no errors. He also took his turn as a tunnel rat.



Bob Hollis

While stationed in Vietnam, he was very aware of the racial tensions back home in the US. While overseas in 1968, both Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy Sr. were assassinated. Hollis recalls a time when he and a fellow soldier were joking about the situation back home. His friend McGee, an African American soldier from San Francisco, California, said "Yo Hollis, we back in the US, I'd be firing at you". Although the joke was made while in combat to make light of their current situation, the riots following the murder of Dr. King were no laughing matter. Race riots ensued in cities all over the country, including York, Pennsylvania. Although there were riots in York that were part of the aftermath of Dr. King's murder, it's important to remember that York has a unique and long history of racial tensions, violence, and police brutality against the black community.

In college he majored in community engagement, which was perfect for the career he would soon have. Hollis' time at Crispus Attucks York began after he graduated from Penn state in 1975. He was recruited directly out of college by CAY to work as an intern. He had offers further west but York was a more feasible option for him. During his time here, he worked with the many budding programs that came out of CAY and helped them become what they are now. Bob takes pride in the fact that the recreation program became well known in the region, particularly in Philadelphia

and Washington D.C. He even recalls a time when a young Kobe Bryant came to play at our recreation center.

Hollis was part of the CAY Men's club. They did a lot of work in the community to make sure that the environment of Crispus Attucks was a safe and welcoming place. They were part of an attempt to reduce the level of drugs in the community. They would confront people in the streets and in the areas surrounding CAY to let the community know that there was a barrier separating the world of drugs from the children and families who were at CAY.



Lead Historian Jeff Kirkland Interviews Mr. Hollis

In the interview that Hollis gave to the History and Culture Center, he was asked how the programming of Crispus Attucks changed over the years. One thing that Bob always makes sure to do is acknowledge the role that race played in the history of the Crispus Attucks organization. Mr. Hollis mentioned childcare, which has been a staple in the life of Crispus Attucks since the beginning. In the 1930s, there was a need for this service, especially in the black community because both black men and women were required to work in order to get by. Hollis speaks about how this was a time when white women were not required to work while most of the domestic labor in

those white homes was performed by black women who were made to do domestic work because of the black codes of the time. The early learning program at Crispus Attucks is NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) accredited. This classification is a demonstration of the service provided at Crispus Attucks. This particular accreditation is a rigorous one. Maintaining an accreditation proves that the early learning program here at CAY is one that should set examples for other programs like it.

One major change that was made during his time at CAY was the shift toward more social programs for the community. In addition to the existing early learning and recreational programs, there was a need to create a space where people could come together for the purpose of community building. Groups like the boy scouts and the senior groups that are offered through Crispus Attucks provide an environment for people of different age groups to be a part of their greater community. One very successful program to come out of Crispus Attucks was the charter school. The Youth Build program provides job training for people ages 16-24 who do not have a high school diploma. The charter school at Crispus Attucks is a Youth Build affiliated school that, in addition to a traditional high school, incorporates hands-on job training and service learning for grade 12 students ages 17 to 21.

While working at Crispus Attucks, the director of the program was relieved of their position because they did not want to relocate to York for the job. In their absence, Bob Hollis stepped into the role. To place himself on the payroll, he applied for a grant through CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act). This act was signed into law by President Nixon in 1973 as a way for people to find employment for economically disadvantaged persons, unemployed, and underemployed persons. The program also funds programs that assist the groups. And in the case of Crispus Attucks, employment assistance is one of the many things Bob Hollis helped with while serving as director. Hollis sat as the program activity director of programming at Crispus Attucks for many years.

After a few years and two executive directors, the time came again to hire a new director. The Board of CAY asked him if he would consider stepping into the role of executive director. He replied, "Sure I'd consider it, but I'm not going to do it. I think this organization needs an African American (leading it). I will be the best number two man you'll ever get, but you need someone the children can look to and say, 'I want to be just like him, and act like him.' And Bobby (Simpson) fits that role." Hollis thought it was crucial that the head of this organization be an African American person. Seeing that the main demographic that CAY serves is Black, Hollis thought it disingenuous for him to be the face of the organization. In everything that he does, Hollis makes sure to acknowledge the racial issues that surround him. Bobby Simpson became executive director of Crispus Attucks in 1979 and has been serving this community ever since.

The amazing thing about Bob Hollis is that although he was very aware of the racial climate, he was never afraid to acknowledge the racial disparities in the communities he worked in. After serving many years as director of programming at Crispus Attucks, he is still a revered member of the York community. He is a shining example of what a leader should be; enthusiastic about the work that is being done and humble enough to know when they are not the right person for the job. He champions the work done here at CAY and is someone who has carved out a spot for himself in the almost century long history of Crispus Attucks.

Bob Hollis has impacted the CAY community through his outstanding leadership. There is so much we can learn from him. He was able to reach the heights of success by caring about the community he served. Anyone can lead an organization, but, to be able to connect with the people you work with and leave a lasting impact is memorable on another level. We thank Bob Hollis for his lifelong, selfless service to CAY and the community he serves to this day.

Building the HCC



Most of the work on the HCC is happening on the inside. Rest assured Stewart and Tate is working hard to complete the huge work that goes into making the HCC a vibrant history and culture center for York's African American community.