

Join us for the CAY HCC's Community Night on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 5:30 PM at the CAY gym at 605 S. Duke St.



That Belongs in a Museum! Would you like to donate or loan a historically significant object to the HCC? Join us at the HCC Community Night!

# 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.

### WITNESS TO A MURDER

By Jeff Pacl, Editor



Lillie Belle Allen

Bob Mann witnessed the murder of Lillie Belle Allen as a 14-year-old boy at 9:15 PM on July 21, 1969 at the intersection of Newberry and Gay Streets. The event traumatized him and changed his life forever. He lived just five houses up from where Ms. Allen was killed. On the night of July 21, Bob was waiting outside a friend's house when Ms. Allen was shot down in cold blood.

For the last six years Mr. Mann has tended to the memorial for Lillie Belle Allen and Police Officer Henry Schaad. Fresh flowers are laid on the benches that commemorate their tragic deaths.

Bob grew up on West Gay Street. He remembers a white car driving up Newberry street on the night of July 20, 1969 (the night before Ms. Allen's murder) and stopping after the first set of railroad tracks when the "trunk popped open and a guy got out of the trunk and started shooting the street up". (See WITNESS TO MURDER p. 2)

### EUREKA BAND

By Jeffrey Kirkland, Lead Historian



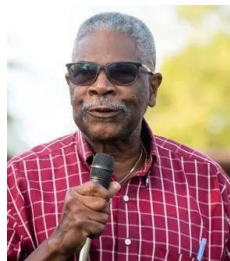
William Dorsey

The Eureka Band of York, Pa. was an all colored band which traveled and entertained throughout the area between 1900 and 1919. The band practiced at the Old Bethel A.M.E. Church when it was on the corner of King

and Newberry Street. (EUREKA BAND on p. 4)

### CAY HISTORY SPOTLIGHT

By Dalton Emig, Historian



Mr. Elby YDR

The story of Daniel Elby is one of building a rewarding life and a strong community through

willpower and discipline. It is the story of a man whose lifelong work has been to improve the lives of others, particularly the generations that will follow his own. (DAN ELBY SPOTLIGHT on p. 5)

### THE 1803 CONSPIRACY

By Ben Werkley, Historian

In 1803, a series of arson attacks caused mass panic throughout the city of York, PA. After several days of unrest, York's black community would be blamed for this outbreak of arsons. The exact story of the 1803 Conspiracy is hard to know for certain based on the sources that survive.



Mr. Werkley

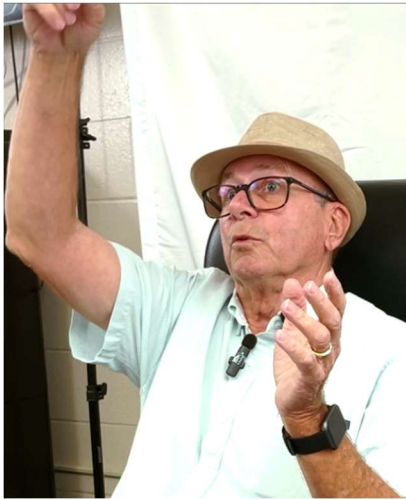
(1803 CONSPIRACY on p. 8)

**WITNESS TO MURDER (from Pg. 1)**

Bob took shelter behind a telephone pole. Mr. Mann said that it was mostly rocks and bottles until July 20, 1969. "After that, the guns came out."

The situation intensified the next morning, July 21<sup>st</sup>, when he saw about 50 people with guns and overheard conversations saying "Somebody is going to die tonight."

## After that, the guns came out.



Bob Mann

On that fateful evening he was sitting outside his friend's house when Mann saw a white car driving up Newberry Street. The driver tried to turn the vehicle around when it stalled sideways on the railroad tracks. Lillie Belle's sister, Hattie Dickson, was driving and she became very nervous and couldn't continue. Lillie Belle Allen got out of the back seat of the car to drive the vehicle out of the dangerous situation. "I remember her raising her hands in the air and [saying] 'Don't Shoot! ...there was one shot and then there was a hundred shots... Everybody on that street had a gun. They were in the alleyways, they were on the rooftops. They all opened fire on that car...There were more than a hundred bullet holes in that car.'" Ms. Allen was the only one killed that night. "It was horrible." Mr. Mann said. He remembers jumping off of his friend's porch and crawling under a car to avoid the gunfire. "The bullets were bouncing off the houses, there were that many shots. People were shooting from everywhere."

Bob still wonders 55 years later why Ms. Allen and her family were allowed to pass through the police barricade at Newberry and Philadelphia Streets by York Police Officer Ron Zeiger and other policemen.

-Editor's Note: The police had a signaling system set up with the Newberry Street Boys; the police were to attach white flags to the "safe cars" when they let them through the barricade. The police did not attach a white flag to Ms. Allen's car.

Two years ago, Bob and his wife went down to Aiken, SC to pay their respects at Ms. Allen's graveside. While there, they met Lillie Belle's daughter, Deborah. They laid a wreath and flowers at Ms. Belle's grave. Deborah took the Manns on a tour through town. In an eerie coincidence, the main street through Aiken is named Newberry Street. While speaking to the Allen family, he said that they would like a historical marker to be placed at the sight of her murder.



Ms. Lillie Belle Allen's Grave



Bob Mann

Bob's interest in maintaining the Allen-Schaad memorial is because of his personal connection to the tragic event he witnessed. It is also because of his strong desire to educate the public on York's local history. He laments that local history is often overlooked in the public schools. Mr. Mann stated "What happened in 1969 was a horrible part of York, Pennsylvania's history, but it's still history, you have to tell people so they know...so they understand what was going on."

When asked what he thought caused the 1968 – 1969 riots, Mr. Mann stated that he thought it was due to virulent racism. In particular he remembers the actions of York's Mayor Snyder.

"I remember John Snyder, the mayor, you'd see him sic the dogs on Black people. That was horrible!" "He had his own German shepherd...he used it all the time" to attack African Americans. "He was an open racist." Mann said.

He remembers York Police Officer (and later mayor) Charlie Robertson driving down the street in an armored car using the vehicle's PA system to shout "White power! White power!" Mr. Mann also remembers Robertson "handing out 30.06 bullets to the guys on Newberry Street."

He believes that the spark that set off the violence in 1968 was when Chester Roach shot 10 people from his residence above Hoffman's Meat Market and wasn't even brought to trial. The police said that there was not enough evidence. HCC Lead Historian Jeffrey Kirkland was there that night. His brother, Eric Kirkland, was among those shot by Roach.



Mayor Snyder Patrolling with his Police Dog -Courtesy, YDR

In addition to participating in the Living History Project, Mr. Mann has graciously donated the original signs that he installed on the fiftieth anniversary of the tragedy (and recently replaced with new ones) at the Allen-Schaad memorial benches in Farquhar Park. The signs will hold a place of honor in our new CAY History and Culture Center.

**Love will always win  
Hate has no place in this world  
God Bless us and help us all understand  
May Ms. Lillie Belle Allen's soul rest in peace forever  
With God's help, we can all learn to love one another and live in peace  
From the bottom of my heart, I wish Ms. Allen's family peace and harmony, for  
Ms. Lillie Belle Allen paid the ultimate price trying to protect her family from harm**

- A letter left at Ms. Allen's grave by Bob Mann



**EUREKA BAND (from p. 1)**

## The Eureka Band

This is a photo of an early York band called the Eureka Band of York, Pa. Some of the officers and band members were; William Dorsey, President; Benjamin Richardson, vice-President; Harry Barton, Secretary and Manager; Rankin Wilson, Leader; David Barton asst. Leader; Charles Thomas, Treasurer; Basil Harris, Charles Jones and James Berry, Trustees. Other members included; F.G Gordon and Earl Dorsey. They played at different venues around the area including Memorial services at the Lebanon Cemetery several of which were hosted by Master of Ceremony Aquilla Howard and were attended by members of Faith Presbyterian Church, Shiloh Baptist Church, Bethel A.M.E. Church and Zion A.M.E. Church.

The bandleader, James Rankin Wilson, was the grandfather of my friend Kehl Berry and David and Harry Barton were his great uncles. They would play in the Elks Parade marching down Maple Street by the old Crispus Attucks Center. Mr. Wilson also delivered and distributed the "Colored papers" to York, Columbia and Wrightsville. He furnished Rev. Montouth the "Colored papers" which he sold at his store.

Bandleader James Wilson also played piano at Shiloh Baptist for more than 30 years. He and his wife, Ida May, were charter members of old Bethel AME church. David Barton, who's in the picture, played piano and organ at Bethel for many years.

One of their most memorable performances was when they played for the Two Hundred and ninety-sixth anniversary of the Afro-American in this country on

December 8, 1915 at St. Paul's Hall on West Jackson Street. The Celebration was sponsored by the Young Men's Progressive Club and the Young Ladies Always Ready Club, two African American organizations based at Bethel A.M.E. Church.

In addition to the lively entertainment there were several powerful speeches given throughout the event including one by Rev. Dr. J.A. Cole entitled "Will the Education of the Negro Solve the Race Problem? Dr. George Bowles spoke on the topic of "What Achievements has the African American Made to this Country"? The final talk for the event was from Professor J. I. Reed who spoke on "How Can the Negro Best Enjoy His Liberty and Freedom. From all reports it was a joyous and uplifting affair.

The photo was submitted by my cousin Calvin Kirkland and was restored by me (Jeff Kirkland)...hope you enjoy it as much as I did...

### DAN ELBY SPOTLIGHT (from Pg. 1)



Dan Elby

Dan Elby's strong values and beliefs in education were the key to his success, bringing him to Crispus Attucks where he has become a cornerstone.

Mr. Elby grew up in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania where he described the school systems as being "pretty much integrated" depending on where you lived. Despite this, his elementary school consisted of a 90% black population. Once he moved on to high school at Addison Hill, his peers were mostly white. Dan attributes his dedication to sports and physical fitness to his later appreciation of discipline. He reflected that at practices they were required to run a certain distance in a certain time; Otherwise, they would have to stay after and run more. At the time he didn't

understand the mentality of this seemingly senseless exercise, but he credits this as a formative experience toward building his commitment to discipline. This commitment to discipline and health has persisted long into his life. At the age of 62, he ran a 26.2-mile marathon in New York City.

After graduating from high school Mr. Elby attended college at Loch Haven University where he would earn his bachelor's degree before moving on to Michigan State. While there, Dan managed the dormitories for about 14,000 students. He believes that this job allowed him to develop skills in a community setting which would serve him well later in life. During his college years Dan felt motivated to keep his grades and GPA high in order to avoid the draft which loomed at the time. Fears of the draft were ever present in the minds of the students. If your grades dropped beneath 2.0 your name was automatically placed on the 1A list, making you eligible to be drafted. His field of study at Michigan State was student affairs, which helped him develop skills for community service.

He had the goal of graduating with a doctorate and eventually becoming the president of the institution itself. This came to an end after his sister, an undergraduate student at



Virginia State University, died in a tragic car accident. He felt it was important to be at home with his family. He knew it was now his responsibility to put his goals aside, to be there for his mom, and help raise his sister's children.

It was around this time that Camp Hill State Prison decided to remove juveniles from the premises. The decision came after an incident resulting in the loss of a young man's life who was detained at the prison. This incident left a gap in the youth correctional system. At the time Dan was tending bar for his father which led to him encountering a Vietnam Veteran who stated that he was looking for people to create a program to fill the gap of youth corrections left by the closure of Camp Hill to juveniles. This was the beginning of Dan's long commitment to working to solve juvenile delinquency. Going in, Dan did not have any formal training in juvenile corrections. What Dan did have was a strict upbringing. He stated that his parents were harder on him than any police officer or system could be. He recalled that "when you live in the city you're around it [delinquency] all the time" and that his parents were what helped keep him straight.

With his background and the new opportunity, Dan's agency, Alternative Rehabilitation Communities (ARC), was poised to become a leading force in juvenile corrections in Harrisburg and eventually York. ARC was determined to distinguish itself from state run correctional efforts by not only providing housing and living conditions for the kids but by prioritizing rehabilitation. They began by selecting kids they could work with through interviews. The intention was to find those who were willing to make a commitment to turning their lives around. On top of that, efforts were made to ensure the employees were good role models for the incoming students. Dan ensured that employees looked like the children they were working with and were athletes who possessed natural people skills in bringing out qualities that the children did not know were within them. In the agency, education was touted above all else as the key to success. To achieve this, education was tailored to the children's needs, as it was evident that the public-school system had failed them. An essential element of this was that the children were not allowed to be the "troubled kids" that they were identified as in the public system.

The teachers were not the only employees working for the betterment of the children. Dan credits the cooking staff as some of the most vital employees of the agency. It was the cooks that functioned as informal advisors to the children while feeding them and giving them the confidence they needed to push them towards success. The employees helped build a thriving community within the agency, creating an alternative to the toxic environment in which the children had been living.

In 1975 Mr. Elby moved to York, the city that his wife is from. He came with his masters degree and his foundational upbringing from Harrisburg ready for a career, yet knew almost no one. He did however know Ray Crenshaw from Crispus Attucks who he knew through his mother. Until this point, Dan had only heard of Crispus Attucks through a few mentions in the newspaper during the 1968-1969 York Race Riots. He credits Mr. Crenshaw for facilitating his involvement with Crispus Attucks and, thanks to Ray, he was able to secure a place on



Robert Simpson, Ray Crenshaw, and Dan Elby

the board. At the time Crispus Attucks was entering a transitional period. Dan was introduced to Robert Simpson and the two quickly bonded over their similar ambitions for the future of Crispus Attucks with Ray acting as the glue that held them all together.

Dan found his footing when he was elected vice chair of the Crispus Attucks board of directors. The organization had a new building which no one previously had seemed to know how to manage. This tumultuous period was marked by rapid leadership changes that stabilized under Robert Simpson. Dan recalled how Mr. Simpson was convinced to become the chairman over a pizza dinner. He made it a point to meet with Robert daily to provide support, as he “didn't want to throw him out there without it.” There was never a doubt from Dan that Robert could do the job, he knew the community and he could garner attention.

Dan recalled the implementation of the charter school at Crispus Attucks. When asked about the situation he remembered how they had children who were struggling in the school system and the belief was that Crispus Attucks could help facilitate a better future for them. One of their most successful strategies in accomplishing this was to motivate students to serve as models for other students. They believed that students looked up to their peers, and if they could motivate some to truly believe in what Crispus Attucks had to offer, they could reach their troubled classmates.

Mr. Elby was raised in a Christian household with strong Christian values. His wife Brenda, of fifty years, shared a similar upbringing. The two of them hold master's degrees and they have a deep understanding that the biggest factor in a successful life is education. They also believe that cultivating your child's education and sense of accountability is the ticket to creating good citizenship for the future.

Despite Dan's efforts in constructing a community that he is proud of, an event in his memory still highlights a problem still lingering in the community. Dan's family was the first to move into Penn Oaks neighborhood, one which has a tradition of gifting a bottle of wine to new families. Despite being new homeowners in the neighborhood, Dan's family never received that gift, or any other welcoming sentiment, even after a white family moved in afterwards who did receive that welcome. This episode is evidence of lingering issues within York's racial attitudes.

When asked about the vision for the upcoming cultural center, Mr. Elby asserted that in a position like his, one can see what the community needs. He feels strongly that the community of York needs a facility where all of Crispus Attucks' goals can be concentrated in one building. He sees the cultural center as being the vehicle to broadcast what Crispus Attucks has to offer to the wider community. He believes that the cultural center not only engages with distant history but the living history of those in York themselves. Many in York have lived this history and it is through the cultural center that their stories can be highlighted and preserved for the benefit of future generations. Dan values these efforts for the absolute benefit of the community of York as he firmly believes that “a man or woman is more complete as a person when they know about their own history.”

**“The people who propagate history are the people who water the tree of life”**

- Jeffrey Kirkland

**(1803 CONSPIRACY from p. 1)**

On February 23rd, 1803 an enslaved woman named Margaret Bradley was put on trial for attempting to poison two women, Sophia and Matilda Bentz, whom her master had rented her out to. On March 7th, 1803 not long after Bradley's conviction, the stables of a local resident of York were set on fire. The person who started this fire is unknown. A local newspaper reported that it seemed like it may have been started intentionally. Over the next few weeks, a series of fires were set in other stables and barns. The fires often got out of control, leading to several other buildings being damaged in the ensuing infernos. Articles published in local newspapers at the time presented a general sense of uneasiness and anxiety among the residents of York.

On March 15th, 1803 a young black girl was caught mistakenly attempting to burn down a barn at 12:00 noon rather than at midnight as she had been instructed. After being apprehended, she gave up the names of some of her coconspirators whom she implicated in the plot to burn down York. Despite the capture of this young girl, the fires continued. On March 17th, 1803 several prominent citizens of York sent a letter to Pennsylvania Governor Thomas McKean demanding that he send in the militia to restore order in York and stop the fires. McKean dispatched the militia and things began to quiet down. Authorities in York now suspected York's black community was involved. The City enacted a curfew and pass system for all black people (free and enslaved) living in the borough of York and the surrounding 10-mile radius. All of the black residents of York County affected by this edict had to carry a pass with them at all times from the local sheriff.



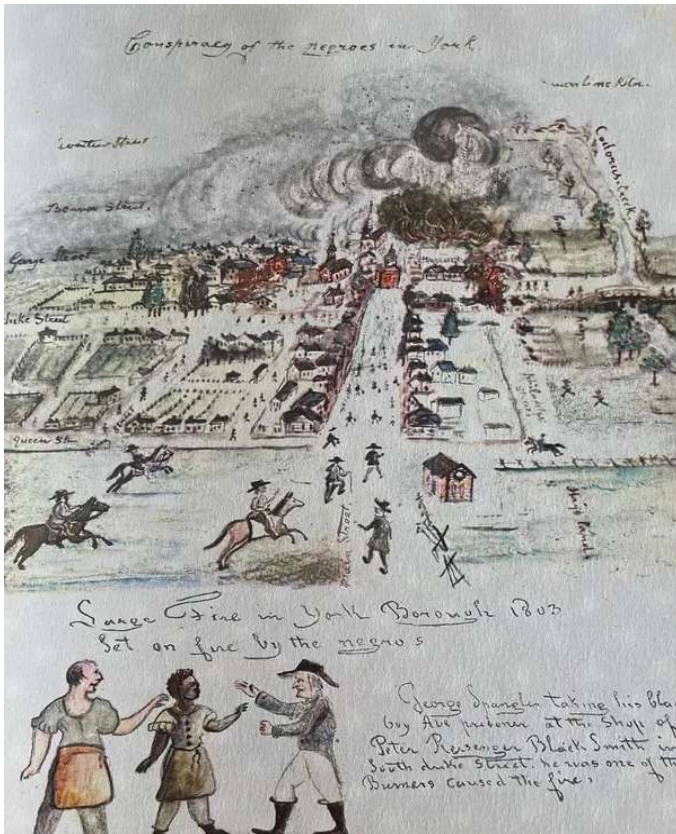
The Trial of the "Conspirators" By Lewis Miller YDR

Over the following months, several residents of York were rounded up and put on trial. In total, 21 people were tried, most of them black or mixed race with a small number of white people. Four of those charged pleaded guilty to their involvement. In May of 1803, the court made its final decision. Five men were sentenced to twelve years of hard labor in prison with six of those years being spent in solitary confinement.

Another man was sentenced to five years with six months of that time being spent in solitary. A white man named John Foulks as well as eleven black people were found not guilty by the court. At the sentencing hearing, the President of the Court chastised the convicted conspirators for not being more thankful to the white residents of Pennsylvania who he said had laid out a plan for ending slavery back in 1780 when Pennsylvania enacted its gradual emancipation act. A newspaper article in *The York Recorder* announcing the court's verdict also attempted to fault the local abolitionist society in York for helping bring escaped slaves to York, the article accused the local abolitionist society of bringing the "...vile, worthless black people, fugitives from a



neighboring state..." to York. The men that were found guilty as well as Margaret Bradley were transferred from the York County Jail to the Walnut Street Prison in Philadelphia to serve their sentences.



Lewis Miller Drawing of York Burning YDR

This is the story that is traditionally told whenever the 1803 Conspiracy is discussed in any source on the history of York County. There are many issues and inconsistencies with this story. First, no connections between Margaret Bradley's conviction and the arsons were made until 1835 when W.C. Carter and A.J. Glossbrenner published their book *History of York County: from its erection to the present time* (the first book documenting the history of York). News reporting in 1803 made no connection between Bradley and the conspiracy other than the two events occurring in the same year and relatively closely together. The link between the fires and Bradley's conviction seems tenuous at best. Second, this version of events completely ignores the several poor whites who were believed to have been connected to the conspiracy. In Scott

Mingus' book *The Ground Swallowed Them Up*, Mingus points out that at least one white woman who was believed to have been involved escaped authorities and at least one white man pled guilty to being involved with the conspiracy (it should be noted that this man later recanted and was released). There is evidence that the same town leaders who called on Governor McKean to send in the militia to restore order to York also spoke about how they had a strong suspicion that some of York's whites were involved in the conspiracy. In their letter to the governor they specifically said, "It is strongly suspected that many of our worthless white people are involved in the combination." Third, the story of a black girl being arrested on March 15, 1803 for attempting to burn down a barn at noon rather than midnight is also not consistent across sources. In some sources this person is a young woman, in other sources they are male, and in some other sources claim that they were arrested during the late afternoon rather than at 12:00 noon.

With these inconsistencies in mind, there can be another explanation for the 1803 Conspiracy that does not need these inconsistencies to be true, that it was more so a case of class-based unrest rather than racial unrest. This idea was first brought up in the 2012 doctoral dissertation of Ted Sickler and further discussed in a 2022 article by local historian Jim McClure. In his dissertation, Sickler suggests that as more and more African Americans were gaining their freedom under the Gradual Emancipation Act of 1780, the need for free labor in PA was lessening. Many of the freedmen and women in

Pennsylvania were taking advantage of the numerous opportunities offered to them, opportunities that the Africans still left in chains and the white indentured servants still bound by their contracts could not take advantage of. It is possible that the white indentured servants of York as well as the enslaved population of the borough may have taken out their anger on their lack of opportunity on the upper class of York by attempting to destroy their property.

With this idea of class in mind, we can see the harsh punishments inflicted upon the conspirators in a new light, it was meant as a message to both the enslaved community and the white lower class. Stay in line or else you will receive the full wrath of the law. These punishments were meant to discourage any further resistance from York's black and lower-class white communities. While little is known for certain about York's Conspiracy of 1803 one thing is for sure, it would be the first of many incidents of civil unrest throughout York's history.

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### Building the HCC



Every day the HCC project is moving forward. The HCC is completely weatherproof. Drywall hanging and finishing are continuing. The Cascading Stairway installation is progressing and looks stunning.

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The CAY HCC Journal thanks our proofreader, Greg Smith, for his service and wishes him a wonderful retirement.