The Philadelphia Tribune

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Where you live

Blacks in Germantown

By Sherry Stone
Tribune staff

Photographs, paintings, antiques, and period clothing from Germantown's history bring the past closer to the present at the Germantown Historical Museum, 5503 Germantown Ave.

Although the area, as evidenced by its name, was settled by German Quakers in 1683, the museum also has considerable information on file about the role of Blacks in Germantown history. The museum is also seeking to record more current information on Blacks as they become a growing part of the Germantown population.

"We are now collecting twentieth century history and African-American history, reflective of Germantown today," said museum Managing Director Barbara Warnick Silberman. The museum also wants to collect more artifacts from African-American families from the area.

The effort is part of a project funded by the Pennsylvania Historical Museum. "We are collecting oral histories; we have them on tape in our library. So far we have been talking with people who grew up here between the two World Wars. We worked through some of the churches in the community," said Silberman. "The next step is to transcribe the tapes."

> *'He was one of the first Blacks to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania, and his son and grandson followed.' Barbara Silberman, managing director Germantown Historical Museum*

Through The Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission, the Germantown Historical Museum is also helping to develop an African-American curriculum. The project is expected to be completed within six months.

African-Americans listed among the archives of the Germantown Historical Museum library are easy to find. Museum officials encourage African-Americans from the area to make an appointment to read or hear about people like themselves who lived in early Germantown. The museum is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, and by appointment.

Expect to read about the William Warricks family. "He was one of the first Blacks to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania, and his son and grandson followed," said Silberman.

Germantown was also the home of many historic Black churches in Philadelphia.

Founder of Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church, Rev. James D. Brooks, lived in Germantown, according to The 1984 "Germantown Crier" a souvenir book published by the Germantown Historical Society. Brooks was born a slave in Virginia. He joined the Union cavalry at age 11, and was educated by an officer's family. He eventually graduated from Howard University's theological department, and began building Enon Tabernacle in 1879.

Bethel AME Church was organized in 1859; it is now located at

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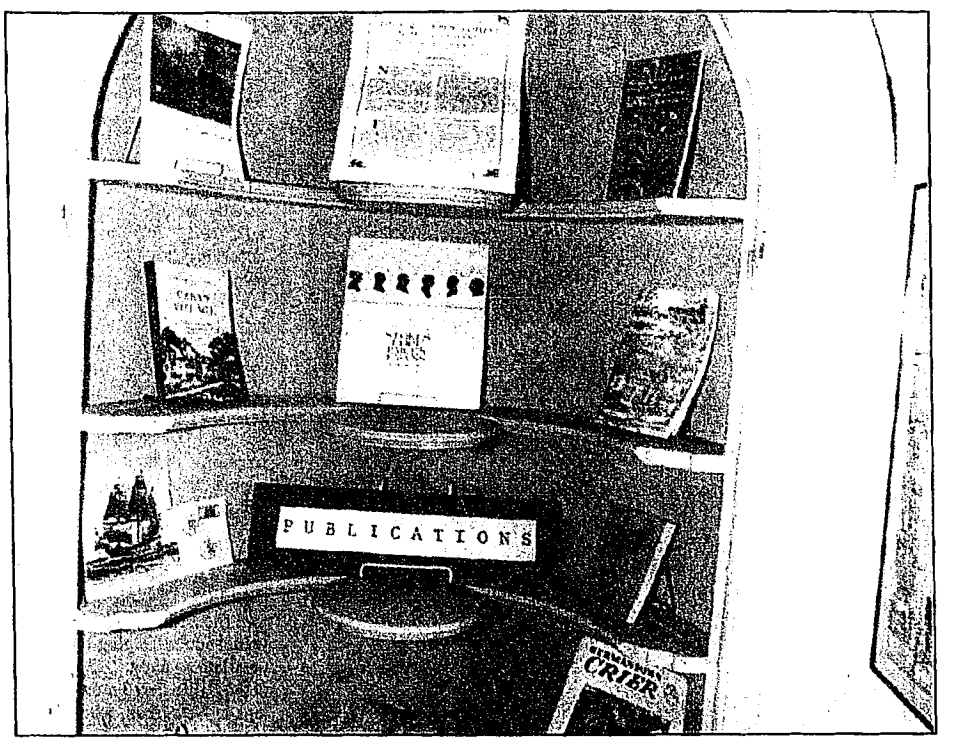

The Germantown Historical Society is encouraging African-Americans to share the history of their families in Germantown. The museum already has considerable information on file about African-Americans in the area's past. — James O'Neal photo

Wharton Square Center, 24th and Wharton streets, occupies only one room, but it provides an amazing number of activities for those who use it. -Paris Gray photo.

Doing a lot with a little

By Barnett Wright
Tribune staff

Wharton Square Center (WSC) is the efficiency apartment of recreation centers. WSC, at 24th and Wharton streets in South Philadelphia could probably fit twice into most rec centers.

While most centers have swimming pools and basketball courts and game rooms and even weight rooms, Wharton Square is situated in one large room. And there are two bathrooms and one tiny office for administrators.

But size doesn't matter here. What matters is that the community has a comfortable place to learn, enjoy and have fun.

On a recent evening children were enjoying themselves beneath blinking red and green Christmas lights under the watchful eye of Trudy Gay, who coordinates the programs.

Gay and a small contingent of volunteers make sure seniors, children and teens have a place to come at all times. And they mostly do it with little money and little adulation.

"We not funded by anyone," said Gay, recently. "It's nonprofit. Our money comes from fundraisers and out of our own pockets. All the parents come here on a volunteer basis."

> *'The children don't have any other recreation facility in the area. This is the only one.'*
> Trudy Gay

Gay has a core group of helpers, including her husband Robert; her son, Benjamin; Donyetta Allen; Johnette Allen; James Stephney, Leroy Myles, and Tony Meyers.

"We need more help," said Trudy. "We need more parents to come out. The kids come but rarely do you see the parents."

Hopefully, said her husband, parents will see children enjoy themselves then perhaps volunteer.

"Hopefully, we'll give them some inspiration as far as the parents are concerned," said Robert. "What it takes is a family. Maybe when they see us they'll want to get involved."

Wharton Square is a nondescript parcel of land with concrete walkways leading to the center of the square where the building is situated. Prior to moving into the center over a year ago, Trudy held activities on the outside, in the square.

"We had the Easter egg hunt on the outside," she recalled, "and once

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The 'Desert Rapper' is changing his tune

By Kendall Wilson
Tribune staff

His face showed up across the network television and local screens often during the Persian Gulf War.

"I know you . . . You're the 'Desert Rapper,'" people would say when crossing paths with Darryl Peek, 28.

He earned that title partly by accident and partly by initiative. The Overbrook High School product was a staff sergeant with the 23rd Fighter Wing in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm from Sept. 2, 1990 to March 27, 1991. While in Saudi Arabia, he was assigned to King Fahd International Airport in the desert, just outside Damman.

ABC's "Good Morning America," searching for holiday angles to air back to the states, stopped around the airport during Thanksgiving week.

Peek had decided on his own to deliver a special message on the importance of African-American awareness to the troops thousands of

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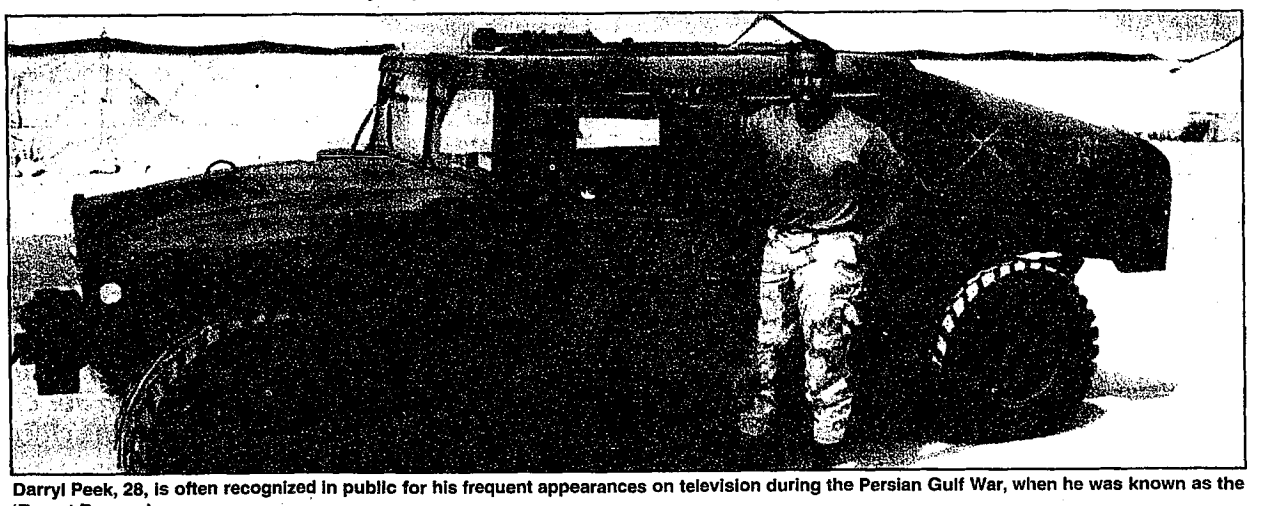

Darryl Peek, 28, is often recognized in public for his frequent appearances on television during the Persian Gulf War, when he was known as the 'Desert Rapper.'

AROUND TOWN

IN NORTH PHILA.

Liberty Grace Brethren Church, 2314 E. York St., is looking for people interested in becoming adult literacy tutors for their neighborhood centers, affiliated with the Mayor's Commission on Literacy.

The tutoring centers will offer basic reading and language skills based on the Mayor's Commission on Literacy's Gateway: Path to Adult Learning program. The Commission will offer free tutor training anyone wanting to volunteer at the Liberty Grace Brethren Church site. If you wish to sign up for tutor training or arrange to improve your literacy skills by working with a tutor, you can call Michael Blackie at 426-2242.

The Cecil B. Moore Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia, 2320 Cecil B. Moore Ave., is offering a series of January programs for school-age children. The schedule: Jan. 6, African Tales Through Puppetry; Jan. 11, Storytelling by Kenneth Houston; Jan. 13, Family Program honoring Dr. Martin Luther King; Jan.20, Black History Program by Margaret Atkinson.

Molly Garrett will lead children in group games in the Cecil B. Moore Branch of the Philadelphia Free Library, 2320 Cecil B. Moore Ave., on Wednesday, Feb. 3 at 4 P.M. No registration is required and the event is free.

A Black History Program for school age children, entitled "Mlanjeni Nduma and His Magical Theater," will be presented at the Cecil B. Moore Branch of the Free Library, 2320 Cecil B. Moore Ave. Admission is free. The presentation will take plce on Wednesday, Feb. 24.

IN WEST PHILA.

An exhibit of ancient Nubian materials entitled "Egypt's Rival in

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News from your neighborhood: You'll find it here

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