Fifty Sites in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Associated With the Civil Rights Activist

W. E. B. Du Bois

'In general thought and conduct I became quite thoroughly New England...'

— *Dusk of Dawn* (1940)

A BERKSHIRE TOWN IN 1885

"Great Barrington was a town of middle-class people, mostly native white Americans of English and Dutch descent. There were differences of property and income and yet all the men worked and seemed at least to be earning their living...," sociologist, historian and civil rights activist William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) recalled in his *Autobiography*.

"Du Bois was fond of Great Barrington; he believed his experiences here helping shape his later ideas. Those ideas were often strongly worded and radical. They were also prophetic. In almost every political event around the world today, you see how essential Dr. Du Bois's themes are — peace, justice, equity and the centralness of the color line," commented David Graham Du Bois, president and CEO of the W.E.B. Du Bois Foundation.

What was Du Bois's Great Barrington like? It boasted a population of 4,471 in 1885, when William was 16. Of these citizens, 107 were classed "native blacks" in that year's state census. The Great Barrington of his youth included blacks free since the American Revolution; ex-slaves who had fled the South; and a growing number in domestic service who came to town with their well-to-do employers.

Though its population had diminished slightly since the Civil War, the town by 1885 had evolved from a rural agricultural to an industrial economy. Besides the textile mill in Great Barrington, Owen Paper and Monument Mills tapped the waterpower in the northern village of Housatonic. There was an iron furnace in VanDeusenville. Longtime farmers and laborers, members of Du Bois's own maternal Burghardt family gravitated into the village to find work or left to pursue employment elsewhere.

Great Barrington was and is a thriving commercial and cultural center. While many sites associated with Du Bois's youth are gone — victims of progress — there are sufficient remnants to give a sense of the town in the 1880s. In this publication we visit the town's people and places as Du Bois recalled them, illustrating his remarks with maps and photos from the Mason Library and other collections.

This paper only scuffs the surface of Du Bois's childhood; yet except for a few more details and anecdotes, questions of his formative years can only be answered speculatively from his writings. Obviously as a teen he was developing a keen awareness of race. He was uncomfortable at the social ranking of people with his skin color, though he realized there was happiness in their lives here.

As Du Bois said himself of interviews, "The attempt of a stranger to sum up in a half hour the experience which another has spent 80 years in accumulating is invariably a mess which neither likes" (Du Bois Papers, 1949). We won't even try. This admittedly brief survey is a very localized introduction to a very complex and globally fascinating individual.

— Bernard A. Drew, Past President, Great Barrington Historical Society

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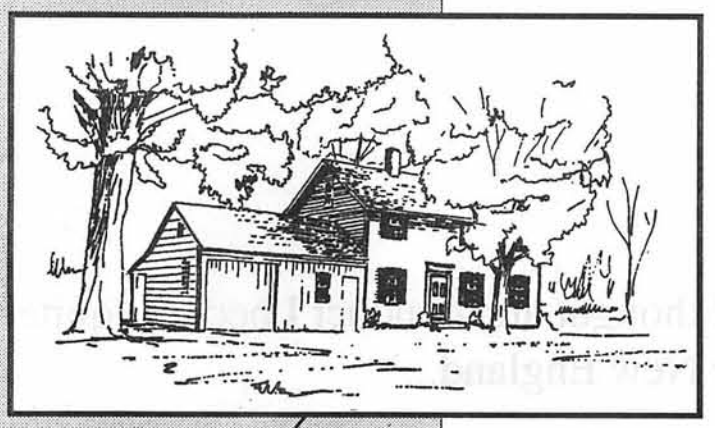
USING THIS GUIDE:

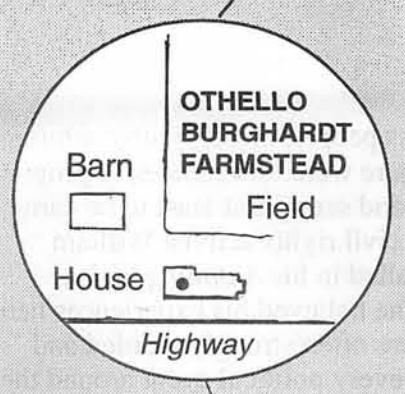
Each of the 50 site descriptions begins with a remark from W.E.B. Du Bois. Unmarked quotes are from *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois.* Ones with an * are from *Voice from Within the Veil,* those with ** are from *Dusk of Dawn.* Sources of other comments are indicated in the text.

Entries are keyed to four maps and one photograph. The birthsite, for example, is marked B1, C1 & D1, meaning it is site 1 on Map B, Map/Photo C and Map D. Similarly, A2 is shown as site 2 on Map A, and so on.

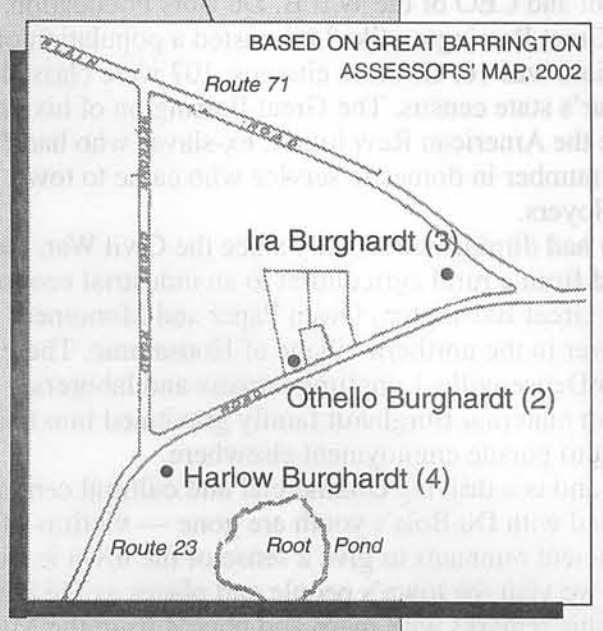
PLEASE RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF THE OWNERS OF THESE PROPERTIES TODAY.

DRAWING OWNED BY WALTER WILSON, BASED ON OLD PHOTOGRAPH/AS REPRODUCED IN BERKSHIRE EAGLE 2 March 1968





MAP A



My name is pronounced in the clear English fashion: Du, with u as in Sue; Bois, as oi in voice. The accent is on the second syllable.'

— Correspondence (1939)

BIRTH SITE

1 • "I was born by a golden river and in the shadow of two great hills...," W.E.B. Du Bois wrote of his arrival in this world 23 February 1868. "The house was quaint, with clapboards running up and down, neatly trimmed; there were five rooms, a tiny porch, a rosy front yard, and unbelievably delicious strawberries in the rear."*

The daughter of a rural farming family, his mother Mary Silvina Burghardt (1831-1885) had met and fallen in love with a new arrival from the Albany area, Alfred Du Bois. ("...I really know very little of my father. He had been brought from Haiti by his father....") They were married 5 February 1867 in Housatonic village. Du Bois worked as a barber and waiter. ("In nature he was a dreamer, — romantic, indolent, kind, unreliable."*)

The Du Boises rented one of two dwellings at the base of Church Street owned by Thomas Jefferson "Old Jeff" McKinley (ca 1784-1896). An escaped slave ("tall, thin, and black, with golden earrings, and given to religious trances"*) who followed Union troops home to Great Barrington, McKinley was a coachman for the Edwin Humphrey family and a vegetable gardener.

"I was born in a rather nice little cottage which belonged to a black South Carolinian, whose own house stood next, at the lower end of one of the pleasant streets in town.... Here they [my parents] lived for a year or two and against them the black Burghardt family carried on a more or less open feud, until my birth...."* Consequently Alfred left town for New Milford, Conn. Mary never followed him ("Mother no longer trusted his dreams, and he soon faded out of our lives into silence"*). She moved to her parents' farm.

McKinley's home was razed about 1897 to make way for construction of an electrical manufacturing plant. The cottage to the rear may have been demolished then or earlier — it doesn't show up on the 1876 Beers map or Burleigh 1884 perspective view. **[See Maps B1, C1 & D1]**

The neighborhood where Du Bois was born changed dramatically as the result of a successful electrical experiment the spring after William went to college. William Stanley (1858-1916) perfected his alternating current transformer in the old rubberware factory on the Housatonic River south of Cottage Street in 1886. Stanley soon established a manufacturing plant in Pittsfield. Ironically, it was Stanley's factory in Pittsfield, under successor owner General Electric, which was responsible for significant chemical contamination of the river. The inventor returned to Great Barrington and in 1896 purchased land on new River Street — including the old McKinley place — to construct his Stanley Instrument plant to make watt-hour meters and, later, insulated vacuum bottles.

The original enameling facility still stands and is owned by Berkshire Corp. M.T. Cavanaugh plumbing replaced the main Stanley shop; the rear yard is approximately where Du Bois was born. The Great Barrington Historical Society installed a bronze marker near the site in 1994.

HOUSE OF THE BLACK BURGHARDTS

2, 3 & 4 • "...My family was among the oldest inhabitants of the valley..."

Mary Du Bois took her infant son to her parents' home on Egremont Plain in about 1870. **[A2]** "It is the first home that I remember... On this wide and lovely plain, beneath the benediction of grey-blue mountain and the low music of rivers, lived for a hundred years the black Burghardt clan. Up and to the east on a hill of rocks was Uncle Ira [1801-71] **[A3]** , down and to the south was Uncle Harlow [1800-72] **[A4]** in a low, long, red house beside a [Root] pond... And here right in the center of the world was Uncle 'Tallow,' as Grandfather Othello was called," Du Bois wrote in *The Crisis* (April 1928).

Grandfather Othello Burghardt (1789-1872) ("good-natured but not energetic"*) and his wife Sara (1793-1879) ("thin, tall, yellow and hawk-faced"*) helped raise young William and his older half-brother Idlebert (born in 1861, apparently out-of-wedlock) and their cousin Inez (daughter of Mary's widowed brother James) on a small farm.

"It was a delectable place — simple, square and low, with the great room of the fireplace, the flagged kitchen, half a step below, and the lower woodshed beyond. Steep, strong stairs led up to Sleep, while without was a brook, a well and a mighty elm...," Du Bois wrote in *The Crisis*. "Then this house passed to other branches of the clan and we moved to rented quarters in town..."

The dwelling is already in disrepair when W.E.B. Du Bois and his second wife, Shirley Graham Du Bois, examine the old Burghardt farmstead in the early 1950s. (Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

That was after Othello's death 19 September 1872, when his wife, "Sally," had to give up the farm.

Years later, "I desperately wanted to own that house for no earthly reason that sounded a bit like sense ... It was decrepit almost beyond repair save that into its tough and sturdy timbers the black Burghardts had built so much of their own dumb pluck...," he said in *Crisis*. Du Bois's friends purchased the old homestead and presented it to him as a 60th birthday gift in 1928. While he or his benefactors may have done minor repairs — Great Barrington historian Lila S. Parrish noted the home's central chimney fireplace was replaced with a brick one on the east end during this time — he appears not to have been able to restore it to the degree shown in blueprints in the University of Massachusetts archive. When he brought his second wife, Shirley Graham Du Bois (1907-1977), to see the homesite in the early 1950s, it had begun to fall in.

The University of Massachusetts at Amherst's Anthropology Department conducted summer field schools at the farmstead in 1983 and '84, mapping features and extracting artifacts from middens. Robert Paynter, who guided the effort, said even if it were not associated with someone of Du Bois's stature, the degree of archaeological preservation, the succession of free black ownership and the fact that it stayed in one family for so long make it a fascinating site.

"It's difficult to speak about the Afro-American presence in New England," Paynter said. "It's easy to forget the long history. They were brought to New England in the early 1600s, as slaves and as free people. But we know this from documents, not from historic sites...." With the rich material which emerged from the black Burghardt site, anthropologists were able to broaden their understanding of black culture and assimilation in the North.

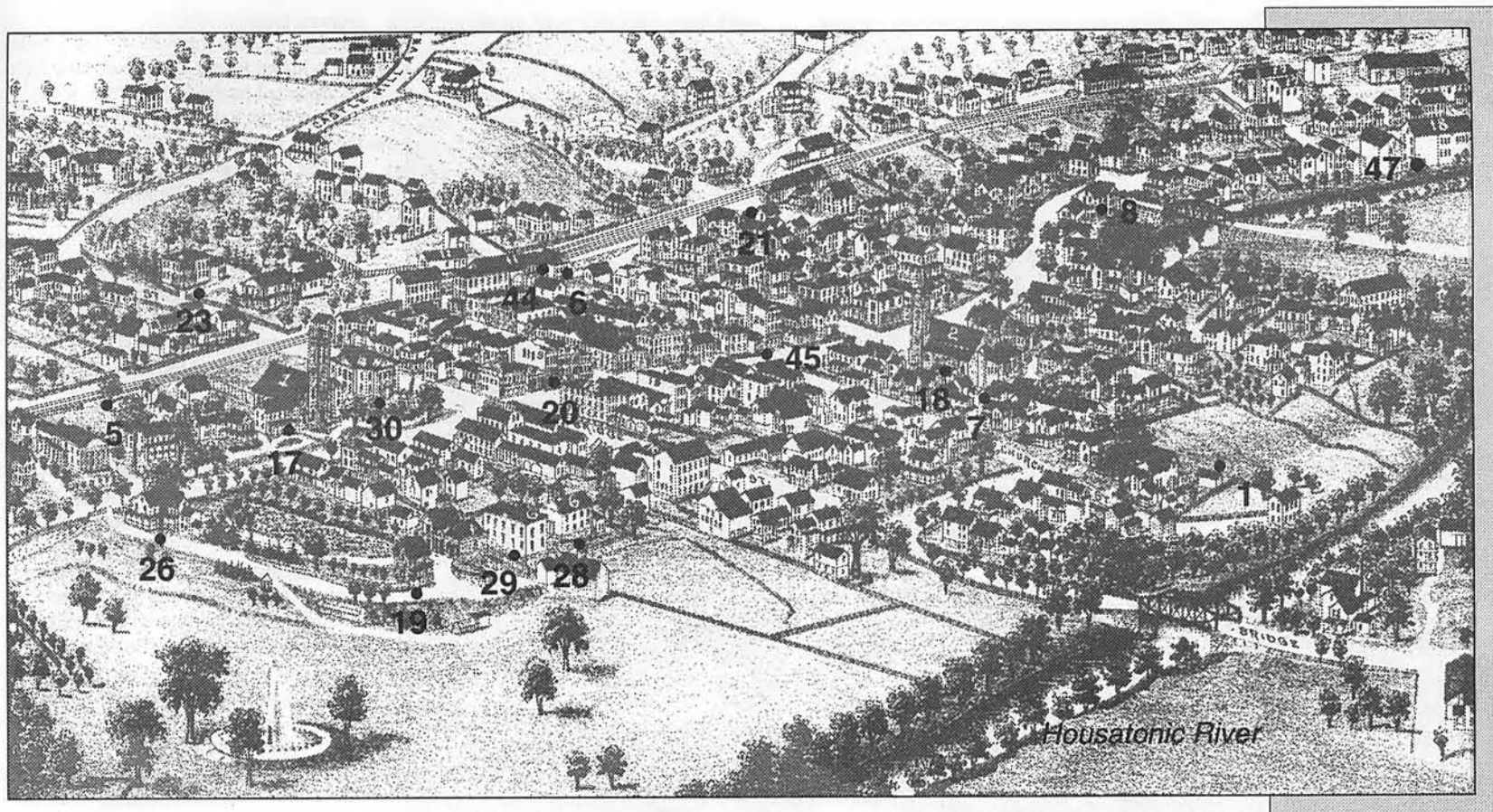
One of Paynter's team, Nancy Ladd Muller, continued the research by investigating property ownership records and reconstructing a Burghardt family tree. She makes a convincing argument that Du Bois's first ancestor on the land was great-grandfather Jackson Burghardt (ca1766-1832), who had secured his freedom at least by 1780 with passage of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights. Great Barrington historian Charles J. Taylor and Du Bois himself believed a Tom Burghardt, perhaps Jackson's father, after four days' military service with Captain John Spoor's company in 1780 during the Revolutionary War secured his freedom and was given a farm. Muller could find no factual basis for this story, nor that Jackson Burghardt took the celebrated Mum Bett (Elizabeth Freeman) as his second wife, dispelling another Du Bois claim perhaps based more on wish than fact.

The researcher constructed a chain of farm occupation from Jackson Burghardt (at least by 1795) down to Woosters (related to the Burghardts through the female line) in 1910, then after an interlude of outside ownership, Du Bois from 1928 to '54. She omits to elaborate on it, but a building lot (privately owned today) was inexplicably carved from the heart of the farm (then owned by James G. and Elsie Bowen) sometime before 1967, when Walter Wilson (1903-91), a Ghent, N.Y., real estate developer, writer and activist, with others acquired the property. The decrepit Burghardt home had by then been bulldozed to the rear of the property. (Harlow Burghardt's home is also gone, but Ira's appears to remain, privately owned.)

Playwright William Gibson and actor Ossie Davis participated in a dedication service at the homesite 18 October 1969. Illustrator Norman Rockwell of Stockbridge supported designation of the farmstead as a Du Bois memorial, as did the Rev. Martin Luther King, William L. Shirer and dozens of others. There was considerable negative tension in town, said Elaine Gunn of Great Barrington, who drove guest speaker Julian Bond from the airport. Veterans particularly decried Du Bois's communist affiliation — at a time when the United States was at war with communists in Asia. "Communism was still the personification of evil in all forms — we were in that state of mind," Frederick W. Lord of Housatonic, who served on the Du Bois Memorial Committee, recalled in 1994.

The Berkshire Eagle suggested, however, "Those who would discredit the late W.E. Burghardt Du Bois for his membership in the Communist party should take into account the fact that Dr. Du Bois joined the party when he was 93 years old and deeply disappointed in the Negro's slow progress toward equality. His long career before that as a writer, co-founder of the N.A.A.C.P. and eloquent spokesman for civil rights, he earned a state memorial many times over."

The nation, certainly, forgave him; Du



Based on L.R. Burleigh 1884 Great Barrington, Mass. bird'seye view map

MAP B

MAP KEY

1. Jefferson McKinley cottage site
5. Increase Sumner carriage house
6. Railroad Street apartment
7. Jonathan Cass cottage
8. Minerva Newport
17. St. James Episcopal Church
18. First Congregational Church
19. William Crosley
20. Sumner Hall
21. A.M.E. Zion Church
23. George Russell
26. Kellogg Terrace
28. Center School
29. Great Barrington High School
30. Town Hall
44. Housatonic Railroad depot
45. Berkshire Courier
47. Russell mill

Bois was depicted on commemorative postage stamps in 1992 and 1998.

"He felt he was so fortunate to have been born in this valley, the valley that represented the revolution of people who fought against tyranny," Shirley Graham Du Bois is quoted by the *Berkshire Eagle*, 19 October 1970, when she visited the memorial.

The black Burghardt property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts assumed ownership of the five-acre, U-shaped property in 1987.

LATER HOMES

5 • "...This nearness to school induced mother to chose this home... There was a nice wide yard and a running brook which afforded me infinite pleasure."

Mary Du Bois ("She gave one the impression of infinite patience, but a serious determination was concealed in her softness"*) and her household lived over the stables at the Sumner estate **[B5, C5 & D5]** for several years after moving into Great Barrington center from Egremont Plain. She likely did housework for the Sumners.

Increase Sumner (1801-1871) was the first justice of the Southern Berkshire District Court when it was established in 1870. The property was two doors south of St. James' church, opposite the lane which went to the grammar school. The property was cleared in 1899 to make way for what is today Taconic Avenue.

6 • Mary Du Bois suffered a stroke and was incapacitated. "My mother worried and sank into depression. The family closed about her as a protecting guardian. The town folk who knew the Burghardts took her and me into a sort of overseeing custody. We lived in simple comfort...."

After Sally Burghardt's death 19 January 1879, Mary moved her family to an apartment hard by the tracks on upper Railroad Street ("right next to the station" and "over a store by the railway"**) in a house ("with infinite interests and astonishing playmates"**) **[B6, C6 & D6]** shared with the Millers, a white family. Idelbert had gone to Albany. (Du Bois once visited his half-brother there, but in news sent to the *Globe* for 26 January 1884 he noted Idlebert had moved: "Mr. I.M. Burghardt, of Meriden, Conn., was in town a short time ago.")

Years later, in October 1896, flames swept both sides of Railroad Street, destroying several business blocks. The house the Du Boises lived in, just north of the present Martin's Restaurant block, was either destroyed then or in 1901 when Railroad Street was extended to Elm Street.

7 • "Our landlord, Mrs. Cass, received no rent, I am sure, for long intervals. I think the rent was four dollars a month, and finally it was accounted for by settlement as a gift when I went to college."

Mary Du Bois rented quarters at the rear of the residence of Dr. Jonathan Cass (1825-1886) on Church Street ("down a long lane and in a homely, cozy cottage, with a living room, a tiny sitting-room, a pantry, and two attic bedrooms"*) **[B7, C7 & D7]** for about four years. It was next to the Congregational Church's horse sheds. Uncle Jim Burghardt (1829-1913) boarded with them, having arrived in 1876 from "the little town east of us [Lee] where he had been leading barber." William by now had several part-time jobs.

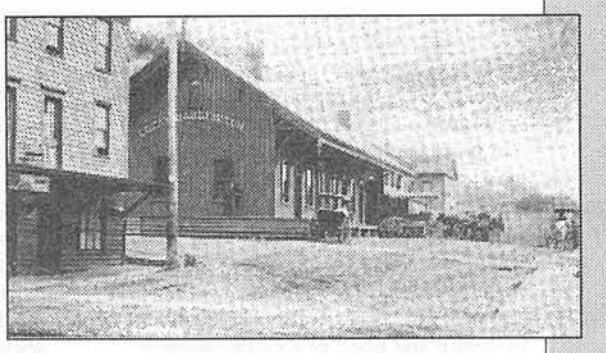
The main Cass house burned in 1908. A section of the old Housatonic Hall girls school was moved to the lot in 1910 and made into a dwelling, but the property was cleared when the Finast grocery store expanded its parking lot in 1965.

8 • "On the steep slope of the river in the upper part of the town there is a house where I lived for a while... and down back of that old house was a magnificent view, vast, dark trees and pools and rocks. A few years ago coming into town I found that just about this mystery nook of my youth somebody had placed a little playground, the merest shadow of a thing... strategically placed, challenging the dirt of the factory above [the Russell mill], and greeting the high shore opposite. Below is my pool...," Du Bois recalled in 1930.

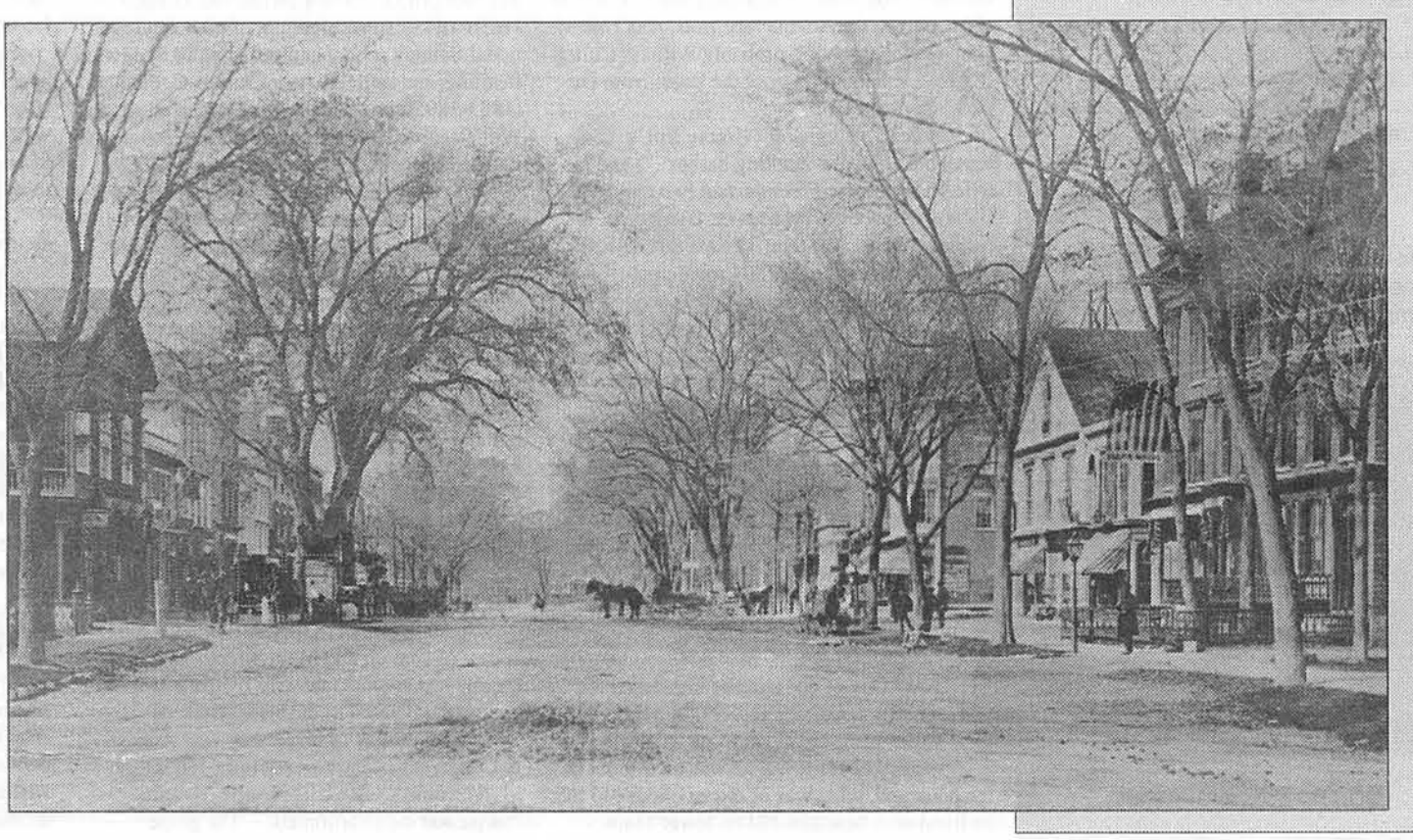
Mary Du Bois died 23 March 1885, her burial site unidentified but likely the family plot in Mahaiwe Cemetery. William stayed with his mother's sister Frances Minerva Burghardt Newport (born ca 1822) for a few months until he left for Fisk University in September. Minerva, who with her late husband Amos Wells Newport had six children, now boarded alone at 41 Main St. (numbering has since changed). Municipal street directories suggest that house was close to the southeast corner of Cottage and Main Streets. **[B8]** By 1896 she lived on Bridge Street.

Du Bois in his social column for the *Freeman*, 22 November 1884, said of Aunt Minerva: "On Tuesday night, the 11th inst., there was a pleasant gathering at the house of Mrs. M. Newport. The time was pleasantly passed in dancing and singing...."

The playground Du Bois spoke of is Riverside park, created when a town improvement committee headed by banker Frederick N. Deland (1843-1922) in December 1909 removed several old buildings including a blacksmith shop and bottling works on the west bank of the Housatonic River just north of Cottage Street. The town park commission installed a swing set and improved the grounds

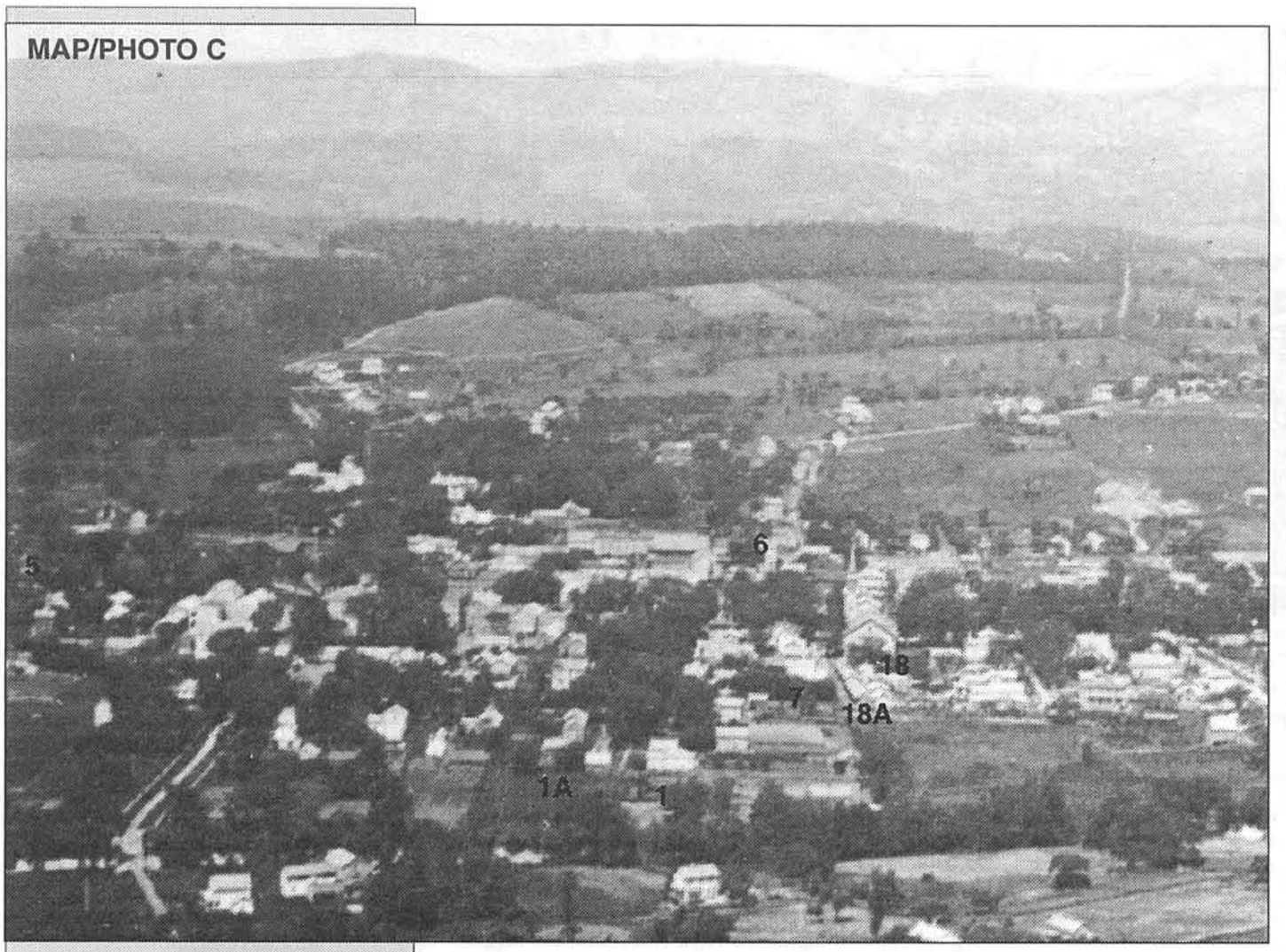


The Railroad Hotel is at the top of Railroad Street (far left in photo), next to the train station. The Du Boises lived in the two-story building just north (right), now a parking lot. (Picturesque Berkshire, 1893)



Great Barrington's Main Street, 1885 (below): The Miller House is on the right, Morgan's newsstand in one of the buildings on the left. (Drew collection)

MAP/PHOTO C

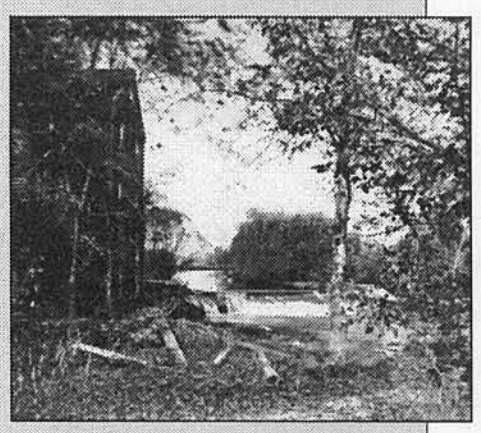


This photograph — the original three-inch-square steroview image has been tripled in size here — remarkably shows four dwellings where Du Bois lived in Great Barrington. It was taken by professional photographer Julius Hall some time before 1882, the year the wooden second Congregational Church building on Main Street burned. Bridge Street is on the left, crossing the Housatonic River. The Du Bois birthsite on Church Street is a light colored structure, at the rear of the McKinley house and woodshed, and with a large garden plot behind it. The two-story dwelling on upper Railroad Street faces the depot. The stable at the Sumner estate is close to the Episcopal church. And the cottage behind the Cass house on Church Street is right beside the the Congregational church horse sheds. Also visible in the photo are the Sumner and City Blocks on Main Street and the old Railroad Hotel near the train station. (Julius Hall photo/Mason Library collection)

PHOTO KEY

1. McKinley cottage
1A. Jefferson McKinley home
5. Sumner carriage house
6. Railroad Street apartment
7. Cass cottage
18. Congregational Church
18A. Congregational Church horse sheds

Du Bois swam in the Green River Mill pond (north of the present Route 23 bridge) as a boy. (Mason Library collection)



in the 1920s. The area was designated Stanley Park in 1947, in honor of the electrical inventor.

"Leaving Great Barrington to attend Fisk University at Nashville had an enormous impact on the 17-year-old Du Bois," David Graham Du Bois said recently. "Slavery had not long been ended. During the summers Du Bois searched rural Tennessee on foot for black schools in need of a teacher and lived with the rural families of his students. The sharp contrast between their lives and his own childhood must have been central to the choice of his life's work."

9 • After graduating from Fisk, Du Bois became the first black to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard. He taught at Wilberforce University in Ohio then while at the University of Pennsylvania, he met Nina Gomer (1870-1950) and they were married 12 May 1896. Du Bois accepted a teaching position at Atlanta University (where he served from 1897 until 1910, when he began a twenty-four year tenure with the NAACP). He sent his wife ("...a slip of a girl, beautifully dark-eyed and thorough and good as a German housewife"*) to stay with Uncle Jim in Great Barrington. The Du Boises' son Burghardt Gomer Du Bois was born in town 2 October 1897, though the child's life was tragically brief.

Nina came back to Great Barrington for daughter Nina Yolande Du Bois's birth 21 October 1900. Mother and daughter returned in 1906, during the Atlanta race riots, and Yolande attended local school, probably William Cullen Bryant Elementary (across the street from Du Bois's birthsite).

James T. Burghardt ("Uncle Jim, a reputable and hard-working barber...") and his wife Mary Louise Freeman had two children. By now apparently a widower, Burghardt resided at what was then 32 East Street **[E9]**; that's his address in an 1894 municipal directory. Deeds and other records suggest he may have boarded with Ellen Brown (1837-1906), an Irish woman who lived a couple houses south of the East and Quarry Streets intersection, on the east side — a private home today. The Cooleys lived diagonally across the street at 38 East. *The Berkshire Courier* in its obituary notice 27 March 1913 said Burghardt was "one of [Great Barrington's] oldest and most respected colored residents."

NEIGHBORS

10 • "One of our citizens impressed me greatly. C.C. [sic] Taylor was a little white-haired man who was writing a history of the town: he was an official of the bank and, what was of closer interest to me, he lived on a beautiful hill on lower Main Street. He kept a herd of cattle. They gave so much milk that he told my mother that anytime she wanted skimmed milk, to send me down and get all we wanted. I remember those morning walks up to the great elm on our corner; down the vast expanse of Main Street; past the Town Hall and the watering trough opposite; then by the Kellogg meadow and home and Mike Gibbons' cottage and up to the Taylor home and the delicious fresh milk."

Charles J. Taylor (1824-1904), merchant, industrialist and town historian, was an early advocate for young William and hired him for small tasks. Taylor's home is Finnerty-Stevens Funeral Home today. **[E10]**

11 • "He suggested quite as a matter of fact, that I ought to take the college preparatory course... If Hosmer had been another sort of man with definite ideas as to a Negro's 'place,' and had recommended agricultural 'science' or domestic economy, I would doubtless have followed his advice... I did not then realize that Hosmer was quietly opening college doors to me, for in those days they were barred with ancient tongues."*

Frank A. Hosmer (1853-1918), principal of Great Barrington High School, nurtured the bright young student. Hosmer saw a lot of young Will outside of school as well, as he also lived on Church Street until April 1885 **[D11]**, when he purchased a home on Elm Street. Hosmer recruited Congregational Pastor Everts Scudder (1833-1886), Edward Van Lennep (1856-1946), superintendent of the Congregational Sunday school and principal of Sedgwick Institute, and retired pastor Charles C. Painter (1833-1895), one-time federal Indian agent, to Will's cause. They arranged for four Congregational churches to put up a scholarship for the youth to attend Fisk University.

After a stint as editor of *The Berkshire Courier* from 1888-90, Hosmer and his wife Esther went to Hawaii. After the revolution which installed pineapple king Sanford B. Dole as provisional president, Hosmer became president of Oahu College for a decade.

12 • "Once while I was in high school, a number of us students stole some grapes from a tempting arbor.... Judge Dewey suggested that I and the others might be better off in Reform School... The victim of the theft, however, refused to press any charge and nothing more was heard of Judge Dewey's proposal. But I was considerably disturbed...."

Justin Dewey (1836-1900) lived at the corner of Church and Main Streets. **[D12]** Dewey had studied law with Increase Sumner and was appointed to the Massachusetts Supreme Court in 1886. Dewey was also active in Congregational Church affairs. His daughter Mary, whom Du Bois liked well enough, "surpassed me in arithmetic." The grape incident was surely forgotten by the time Du Bois graduated from high school; "the diplomas were presented by Hon. Justin Dewey, Chairman of the School Committee," according to the local newspaper 2 July 1884.

The Dewey home was razed in 1940 to allow construction of a Finast grocery store. That building, twice enlarged over the years, houses several businesses today.

13 • "... [A] matter of splitting up kindling for two maiden ladies... was one of the first of my economic enterprises [in 1883]." The Misses Smith lived on South Main Street **[E13]** .

14 • "Will Beckwith lived on a farm near [south of] town, where sometimes my mother went as temporary 'help.' I always came out over weekends, played with Will, and ate with the family..." The Beckwith place was apparently near the fairgrounds south of town. **[E14]**

George Beebe was "a handsome classmate in high school, two or three years older than I, and extravagantly dressed. My own clothes were never ragged, but seldom new and certainly not in current style. Yet George and I were excellent friends because with all his clothes he was rather dumb in class and knew it, while I was bright and just this side of shabby, so that we balanced each other." Beebe went on to become a doctor. (His home has not been identified.)

Du Bois recalled a string of school mates — too many to track down. Among these are Clarence ("serious and studious") and Ralph Sabin ("a little devil"), Art Benham (who "could draw pictures"), Jim Parker ("son of a watchmaker"), Boardman Tobey ("son of a jeweler"), George Phelps ("the tinner's son"), Edith Pixley and Lottie Doolittle ("pretty but did not know much"), Sara Taylor and Minnie Crissey ("sober country girls and good students whom I liked"), Agnes O'Neil ("a newcomer to town whose ancestors nobody knew" and probably the girl who spurned his personal card during a social exercise at school and shocked him into recognition of a color barrier), Irish boys Mike Gibbons ("marvelous facility at playing 'marbles' ") and Ned Kelly ("fat and jolly").

Children found amusement in Fourth of July and cattle show festivities. They played baseball and football: "I was not particularly good at these games but joined gaily in the fun."

William refused to fish or hunt: "I have never killed a bird nor shot a rabbit."

15 • "We had in the town several picturesque hermits, usually retrograde Americans of old families. There was Crosby, the gunsmith, who lived in a lovely dale with brook, waterfall and water wheel. He was a frightful apparition but we boys often ventured to visit him...."

George Clinton Crosby (d. 1894), who lived in the then-isolated "Brooklyn" section east of the river **[E15]**, had been upset when the town constructed the Bridge Street bridge over the Housatonic in 1870 as he no longer could ferry hunters across the river in his small boat, *Alice*. Gruff to all but children, he was eventually committed to an asylum. His two-story house burned in 1895. Crosby Street bears his name today.

16 • "Outside the town, we approached a stream which broadened into a little pond," wrote Shirley Graham Du Bois in *His Day Is Marching On* (1971). "'That's where I learned to swim...,' " Du Bois told her.

This was the mill pond to the old Kellogg satinet mill, which in 1880 was converted into a grist mill. The mill was razed in 1978. But there is still a popular swimming hole south of the Green River bridge on the present Route 23. **[E16]**

Du Bois recalled his introduction to water differently for the 1930 gathering of the Alumni of Searles High School: "With every real Great Barrington boy, I was initiated into the mystery of water by swimming across the Big Bend...." This is the crook in the river north of where he was born, in the vicinity of the old rubber factory.

CHURCHES

17 • "As we turned into Main Street in Great Barrington," wrote Shirley Graham Du Bois in *His Day Is Marching On*, "he [Du Bois] pointed out the large Episcopal church. 'That's where my mother took me every Sunday morning. I loved the singing...."

Mary Du Bois until 1878 attended services at St. James Episcopal Church. Constructed in 1857, the building is still standing. **[B17 & D17]** "The older families and the new well-to-do attended."

18 • "...[B]ecause the minister, Scudder, was especially friendly, my mother early joined this church. I think we were the only colored communicants... I grew up in this church and its Sunday School..., and it was there that one of the lady members, looking down on a chubby little brown child walking beside his mother, saw me take off my hat. My rather stiff long curls were revealed, and with considerate kindness she said sweetly: 'Little girls keep their hats on in church.' This of course precipitated at home a wild fight on my part to have my curls cut off, and of course in time, and to my mother's grief, off they came...."

First Congregational Church built its third meeting house on Main Street in 1860. The church was destroyed by fire in March 1882 and rebuilt. **[B18, C18 & D18]** "The [3,954-pipe Hilborne L. Roosevelt] organ, which was given by Mr. Timothy Hopkins, of San Francisco [great-great-grandson of the church's first minister, the Rev. Samuel Hopkins], is one of the most complete in the world," Du Bois wrote in the *Globe* for 29 September 1883. Mary and William attended services during the pastorate of Everts Scudder from 1867-1886. Mary joined the church in 1878.

The church community assisted with William's expenses at Fisk and Harvard. Their relationship continued; "William E.B. Du Bois, the talented young colored student who has done so much and promises so much more to the honor of this, his native town, has been engaged by the recently organized entertainment committee to deliver a lecture at the chapel of the Congregational church...," *The Berkshire Courier* reported 24 December 1890. In 1909, the Congregational Sunday school donated $30 to his work in the South — and received a letter of thanks which was read to the children, according to a *Berkshire Courier* article, 16 December 1909. The church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

19, 20 & 21 • "Later, and while I was in high school, the colored folk of the town, mostly newcomers, and not old families like the Burghardts, organized a small branch of the A.M.E. Zion church... now and then we used to attend the services...."**

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Society began meeting in Great Barrington in 1861. William sometimes wrote reports of its activities for the New York *Globe* and *Freeman*. The church at first met quarterly and heard guest pastors such as the Rev. J. Anderson or the Rev. J.F. Lloyd. From his newspaper accounts, church members met in a various locations but often at W.M. Crosley's home **[B19]** or at Julia Sumner Hall on Main Street **[B20 & D20]** until they purchased land north of Railroad Street in 1881. **[B21 & D21]**

Crosley and his wife Sarah (1849-1889), African-Americans, lived at Kellogg Terrace; William was coachman for Mary Hopkins. ("The new coachman's house, commenced by Mrs. M. Hopkins last summer, is finished and Mr. Wm. Crosley has moved in," Du Bois reported in the *Globe* for 26 May 1883. That structure and the stable, though built of blue dolomite quarried from East Mountain, burned in December 1885. The carriage house was rebuilt in slightly different design.)

Sumner Hall, used by many social organizations in town, was the upper floor of the mansard-roofed commercial block. Col. Samuel B. Sumner constructed the building in the 1860s and today it houses retail tenants on street level and has apartments upstairs.

The congregation in 1888 completed a church building on Elm Court which is still in use. Du Bois, fresh home from Germany, gave a talk on "Some Impressions of Europe" for the congregation in July 1894.

ESTATES

22 & 23 • "The Russell brothers, middle-aged men whom I knew quite well, went to work every day, superintending the Berkshire Woolen Mills in the upper part of town."

Du Bois was familiar with some of the town's elegant homes, among them Brightside on what is now West Avenue owned by Berkshire Woolen President Parley A. Russell (1838-1916). **[E22]** (The name is misgiven "Farley" in *Autobiography*.)

Russell's son Louis, who attended Sedgwick Institute on South Main Street, was a buddy of Will's. "...He was frail, good-hearted, but slow-witted, and did not go to public school. Mostly he was kept at home, and Mrs. Russell made special effort to find companions for him, and she especially chose me. So that quite often I went across the railroad tracks and up the wide and flowered meadow which led to the Russell home. It was one of the most imposing in the village, isolated and surrounded with grass, flower, and fruit. There were stables in the rear, and outhouses for farming....

"I always had a good time when I went to play with Louis. We were welcomed in the house; we ate bread and milk together in the big kitchen; and the Irish servants were kind. Once or twice Mrs. Russell insisted on my taking home certain of Louis' toys. The one which gave me most pleasure was an old wooden bicycle.... It was Mrs. Russell to whom my high school principal turned when he wanted me to take up Greek, and my mother and I hesitated because of the cost of the books. She bought all my Greek books."

Du Bois's reference is to Celeste S. Gilbert Russell (1845-1932), Parley's second wife. Mary Du Bois worked for her as a housekeeper.

Remaining in the family until 1967, Brightside was used as a private school for a time and, moved several hundred feet in 1996 to a new foundation, is again a private residence today.

Parley's brother George Russell (1841-1902) and his family lived on Castle Street **[B23]**, just west of the railroad tracks in a building now home to Children's Health Program.

24 • "There was no great exhibition of wealth. The homes of the Russells, the Churches and Dr. Collins were comparatively large with perhaps eight or ten rooms and built of wood or, more rarely, of stone....In general living, the contrast between the well-to-do and the poor was not great. Living was cheap and there was little real poverty...."

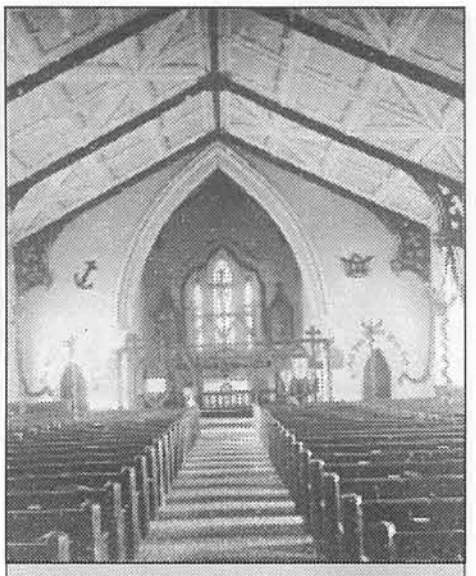
Dr. Clarkson T. Collins (1821-81), twice president of the Berkshire Medical Society, resided at the corner of Maple Avenue and Main Street in a home called Indianola. **[E24]** The mansion has since 1925 been home to the Christian Science Society.

25 • "The Church family had considerable inherited wealth from their ancestors, the Coffins...."

George Church (1826-1903) was a bank officer and agent for the VanDeusenville iron furnace. He and his wife, Maria (Bostwick) (1841-1923), lived on South Street. William played with young Charles and John Church, even though they "went to Edward Van Lennep's private school, where numbers of rich young people from out of town were taught. Our own opinion in the high school was that these students did not have brains enough to go to public school. We were probably prejudiced...."

The Church home was razed and the land given to the town as a park in 1925. **[E25]**

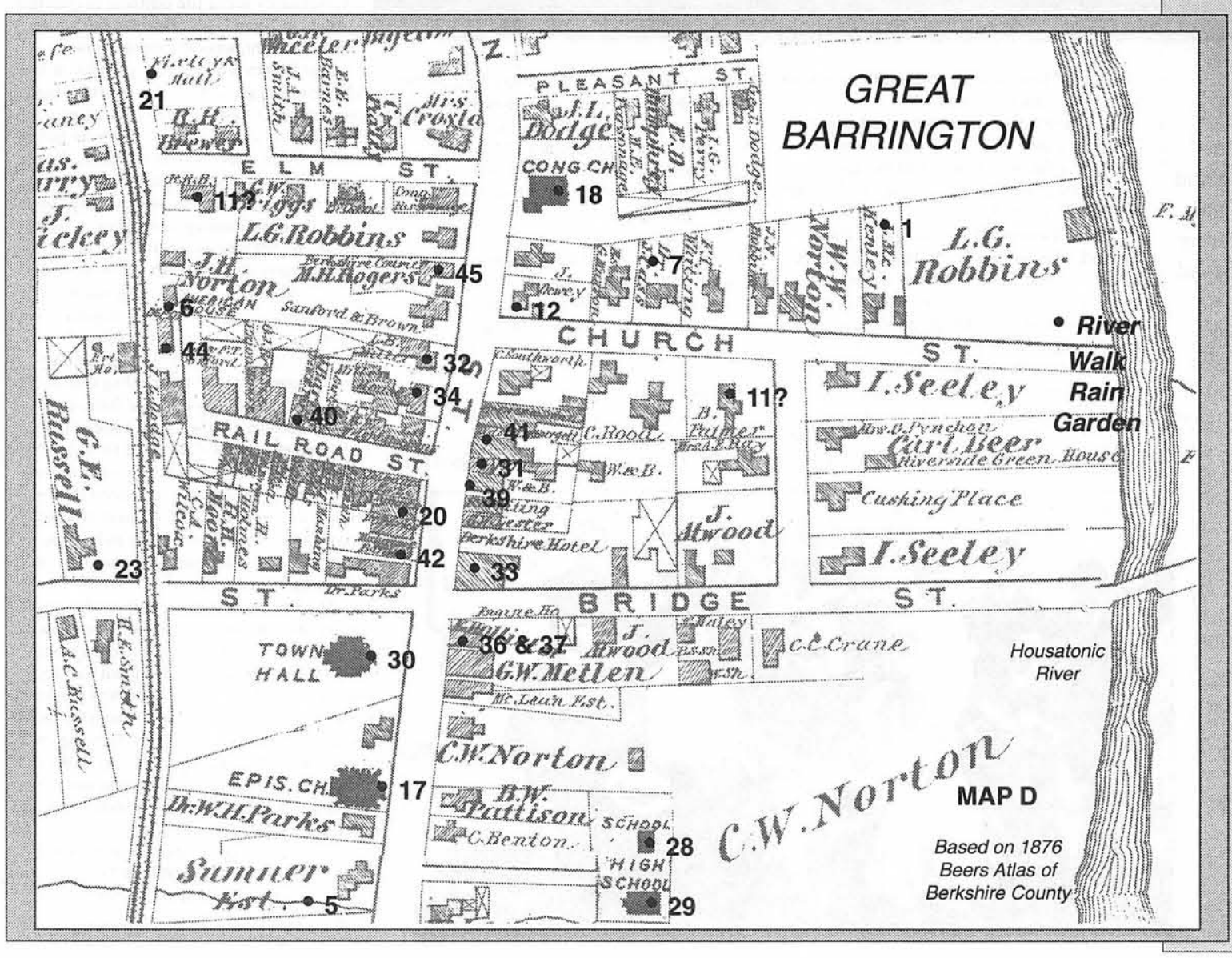
26 • "I was thought to be too young for college, being 16, and so for a year I became a time-keeper on the building of Mrs. Hopkins' beautiful new home...," Du Bois wrote in a



Interior views are of St. James Episcopal Church (above) and First Congregational Church (below). (Hall photos, Mason Library collection)

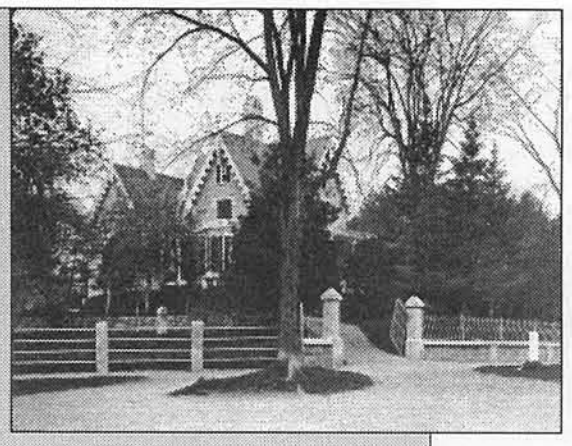
'My best virtue— grit; my worst fault — sensitiveness; my favorite song — Go Down Moses; my pet vanity — a beard; my favorite food — bread and milk; my favorite drink — ginger ale; my favorite sport (outdoor) — walking; my favorite sport (indoor) — reading; my favorite character in history — Toussaint L'Ouverture.'

—Du Bois Papers (1938)



MAP KEY

1. McKinley cottage site
5. Increase Sumner carriage house
6. Railroad Street apartment
7. Jonathan Cass cottage
11. Frank A. Hosmer
12. Justin Dewey
17. St. James Episcopal Church
18. First Congregational Church
20. Sumner Hall
21. A.M.E. Zion Church
23. George Russell
28. Center School
29. Great Barrington High School
30. Town Hall
31. Morgan's newsstand
32. L'Hommedieu's millinery
33. Berkshire Hotel
34. Miller House
36. Hollister's dry goods
37. Cooley's restaurant
39. Whiting's pharmacy
40. Girling's clothing
41. Brewer's hardware
42. Mahaiwe National Bank
44. Housatonic Railroad depot
45. Berkshire Courier



The Collins' estate Indianola is at the corner of Main and Maple Streets. (Hall photo, Mason Library collection)

Kellog Terrace — also called Barrington House and Searles Castle — was not completed by the time William Du Bois had to leave to attend Fisk. This construction photo was taken in 1886. (A.M. Costello photo, Mason Library collection)

letter thanking Searles High School senior Ronald Linder for his birthday card (*Berkshire Courier*, 5 May 1960).

Mary Frances Sherwood Hopkins (1819-1891), widow of railroad tycoon Mark Hopkins, constructed a French chateau-style mansion (designed by McKim, Mead & White) which she called Kellogg Terrace **[B26]** on ancestral property on Main Street. From the contractor Norcross Brothers of Worcester Du Bois "received the fabulous wage of a dollar a day... I pored over the plans and specifications and even came in contact with the elegant English architect Searles who finally came to direct the works."**

Hopkins' interior designer and eventual second husband Edward F. Searles (1841-1920) renamed the property Barrington House, but today it is popularly known as Searles Castle and is home to the John Dewey Academy.

27 • It was while "I was in high school that I became the local Great Barrington correspondent of the *Springfield Republican*, which was the most influential and widely circulated paper in western Massachusetts. I sent it from time to time some items of interest..."

Du Bois became a newsman at Johnny Morgan's urging. One of his reports was of a spectacular fire which destroyed the huge model barn at the Brookside estate **[E27]** south of town 8 July 1855:

"The Famous $100,000 Leavitt Barn Burned. The big barn on the farm of Harry A. Leavitt at Great Barrington, was burned last evening. The cause of the fire is unknown and is supposed to be accidental, since no motive for incendiarism can be alleged. The building was entirely destroyed. The live stock was saved, but most of the other contents, hay, grain, farming tools, machines and the like were burned. The insurance is not known. The barn was a remarkable collection of buildings, including stables, quarters for common and fancy stock, grist-mill, saw-mill and carriage houses. Although built in 1852, it was always called the biggest and best equipped barn in the state. Its builder was David Leavitt, grandfather of Harry A. Leavitt, and he spent $100,000 on it. The Leavitt place, a short distance south of the village has for many years been the summer home of the family, originally New Yorkers." Du Bois might have added his friend William Crosley was first to spot the flames and ran to the fire house to sound the alarm.

The old Leavitt property, later the William Stanley and William Hall Walker estates, is Eisner Camp for Living Judaism today.

SCHOOLS & TOWN HALL

28 • "In a wee wooden schoolhouse...," is how Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) described the elementary school he attended.

Center School was at the end of a lane across from the Episcopal church. **[B28 & D28]** Built in 1851 to replace an earlier structure which had burned, the three-room schoolhouse served the community until replaced by Bryant Elementary School in 1889.

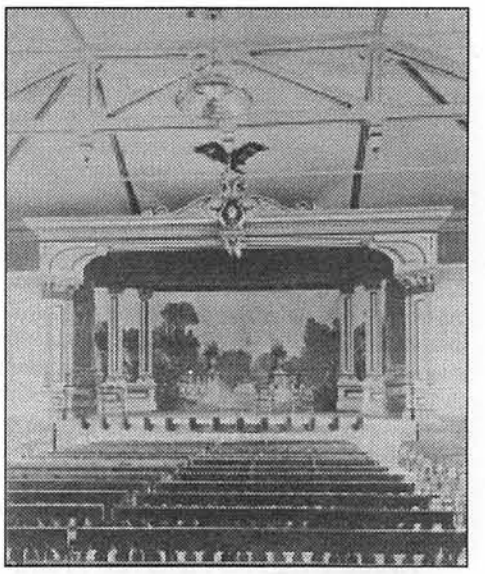
"The curriculum was simple: reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic; grammar, geography and history. We learned the alphabet; we were drilled rigorously on the multiplication tables and we drew accurate maps. We could spell correctly and read clearly."**

Center School was approximately at the lower end of the parking lot behind Wheeler & Taylor today.

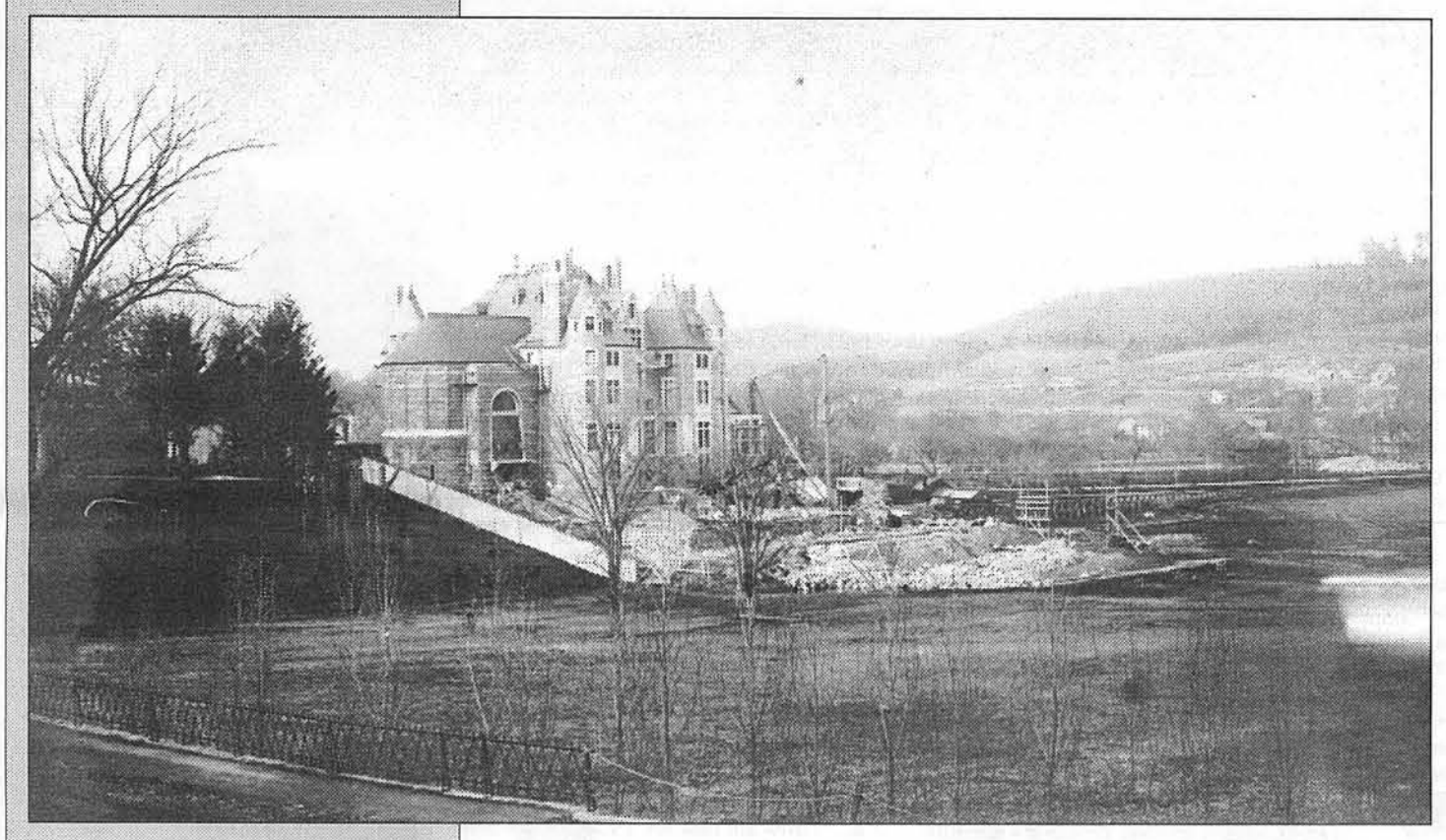
29 • "[Abolitionist] Wendell Phillips was an appropriate subject for William E. Du Bois, a colored lad who has had good standing in the High School. It was an excellent oration and provoked repeated applause....," *The Berkshire Courier* reported of his graduation in its 2 July 1884 issue.

"This was my first sweet taste of the world's applause."*

The two-story brick Great Barrington High School — the town's first public high school — was completed in 1870 and stood directly beside Center School. **[B29 & D29]**



Great Barrington Town Hall's second floor was a popular auditorium until the Mahaiwe Theater was built on Castle Street in 1905. (Hall photo, Mason Library collection)



"For recreation we played games: 'marbles,' 'hi-spy,' 'duck on a rock,' and 'Indians.' We went mountain climbing and explored caves. We swam, and coasted the long hill from far up Castle Street, across the railroad tracks down to Main Street. Most of the children used to skate; but not I for two reasons: skates cost too much, and my mother was afraid of the water."
— Autobiography (1969)

Great Barrington High School Class of 1884 (below): Du Bois stands at left, his hand resting on the shoulder of George Beebe. Principal Frank Hosmer is seated in the center. Other classmates, in no particular order, are Sara Taylor, Myrtle Clark, Minnie E. Crissey, Minnie A. Ford, Joseph C. Frein, Mary E. Frein, Abby M. Joyner, Stanley Millard, James S. Parker, Clarence B. Rowe and Frederick W. Sanford. (Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

Will was younger than most of his classmates and, thanks to his mother's quiet urging, excelled at his studies. "Many remember him as a bright-faced, active, mischief-loving boy...," said *The Berkshire Courier* 12 July 1894.

Edward Searles, who had inherited his wife's estate, in 1896 offered to build the town a new high school next to the Housatonic River in exchange for the old one and the land it sat on — which abutted his Barrington House. ("...It may be that some thoughtful person saw far beyond the present and grasped the idea that they were putting this institution on what was the natural great highway of the valley," Du Bois commented in 1930.) The new school was completed in 1897 and named for Searles. (Today it is a middle school.) The old high school building was removed and the site is vacant.

30 • "From early years, I attended the town meeting every Spring, and in the upper room in that little red brick Town Hall, fronted by a Roman 'victory' commemorating the Civil War, I listened to the citizens discuss things about which I knew and had opinions: streets and bridges and schools .... Community social life centered in entertainments in Town Hall... Hosmer and young Frank Wright, who was reading law in Judge Dewey's office, put on a play at Town Hall, Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, and most high school students took some part. There was a folk play, *Old John Brown Had a Little Indian*, in which I was one of the participants...."

Du Bois took a keen interest in town ethno-politics: "...I did not notice many colored men at the town meeting last month: it seems that they do not take as much interest in politics as is necessary for the protection of their rights," he wrote in the New York *Globe* for 14 April 1883. He was particularly disgusted when a black man who was candidate for night watchman (constable) lost out because only white citizens were on the deciding committee.

"The colored men of Great Barrington hold the balance of power," he insisted in the 29 September 1883 *Globe*, "and have decided the election of many officers for a number of years. If they will only act in concert they may become a power not to be despised. It would be a good plan if they should meet and decide which way would be most advantageous for them to cast their votes."

Du Bois and others formed "a club for literary and social improvement to be known as the Sons of Freedom," he reported 6 December 1884. They gathered at the William Crosley home or elsewhere. M.F. Mason was president, Crosley vice president. Du Bois became the group's secretary and treasurer. They put on a reception for "the ladies" in January 1885 and soon were in "their new club-room, which was presented them by their lady friends," he said in the *Freeman* of 16 May 1885.

Great Barrington's municipal building opened in January 1876. **[B30 & D30]** A large hall on the upper floor provided space for all kinds of entertainment, from music and drama to lectures and poultry shows. Town offices and

the Southern Berkshire Registry of Deeds occupy the building today.

STORES & COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

31 • "I remember especially Johnny Morgan. He was a small man, I think of Welsh descent, and ran a bookstore in the front part of the little shop where the village post office occupied the rear. I went to the post office daily, not because I was expecting mail or often got any, but because of the intriguing exhibition of periodicals and books in Johnny Morgan's store...."

"Through the displays of literature there I got my first idea of national politics," he added in an essay, "From McKinley to Wallace."

John W. Morgan (1846-1943), who worked out an arrangement so Du Bois could purchase the five volumes of Macaulay's *History of England*, was a news agent in the Sprague/Kastner Block on Railroad Street until 1875, when he relocated to the post office block. **[D31]**

Great Barrington Post Office, run by Postmistress Julia E. Seeley (1830-1906) during the years 1872-1892, was located in the Registry of Deeds building on the east side of Main Street, opposite Railroad and south of Burget & Watson. That structure burned mysteriously in 1901 and was rebuilt. The post office has had its own building on Main Street opposite Dresser Avenue since 1928.

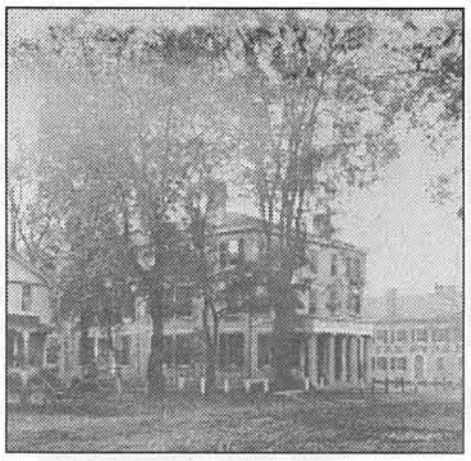
32 • "My first regular wage began as I entered the high school: I went early of mornings and filled with coal one or two of the new so-called 'base burning' stoves in the millinery shop of Madame L'Hommedieu...."

Elizabeth L'Hommedieu (1819-90) and her daughter Mary E. (1841-1905) operated a women's clothing business on Main Street north of (and in 1895 absorbed by) the Miller Hotel (called Barrington House today). **[D32]**

33 & 34 • "There were two hotels: the Berkshire catered to summer visitors, chiefly from New York, the Miller House depended on local trade."

The Berkshire House was at the corner of Main and Bridge Streets. **[D33]** Built of stone in 1839 by George R. Ives, it replaced a wooden tavern. It was destroyed by fire in 1895 and was rebuilt retaining some of the original lower level stonework. Today it houses retail stores and offices.

The F.B. Miller Hotel on the west side of Main Street was built in 1853-54 and added onto in 1895, '98 and 1902. Today, with its



third facade, it is Barrington House. **[D34]**

35 • "There were one or two liquor saloons, which the town did not like to recognize, but had to. George Briggs, a native American, used to run such a saloon, but got out of the business when I was quite small and went into the more respectable business of selling meat..."

Briggs (1831-94) by 1886 was a dealer in boots, shoes and rubbers with a store on Main Street. (The site has not been identified.)

36 • "Ned Hollister's father had his large grocery store near the watering-trough for horses [in front of Town Hall]; his stock of tropical fruit introduced me to dozens of oranges which Ned forced on me when accidentally his stone hit me instead of the 'duck on the rock' at which he was aiming. He attained fame by bringing the first high-wheeled bicycle to town."

1847. 1887.

F. T. WHITING & SON,

APOTHECARIES.

Fancy Goods in all varieties we keep a very complete stock of, and can show anything useful in that line. Also Foreign and Domestic Cigars we carry a very large stock of. Then our Drug and Patent Medicine Line is larger than is often found in the country.

GREAT BARRINGTON, MASS.

Egbert Hollister (ca1817-89) — a retailer, town treasurer, legislator and bank president — operated the Berkshire Store in the Hollister Block on the southeast corner of Bridge and Main Streets. The building had been erected in 1829. In later years, Harper's Garage and A&P smarket were on the corner. Pittsfield Co-operative Bank built its present office in 1977. **[D36]**

37 & 38 • "Messrs. Cooley & Mason, our enterprising caterers to the public appetite, will reopen their restaurant at the Agricultural Fair which takes place here Sept. 24th, 25 and 26th," Du Bois wrote for *The Freeman* 27 September 1884. "Theirs is the only colored establishment on the ground, and we wish them the same success this year as has attended them in their former ventures...."

Jason Cooley (1836-1911) and his wife, Almira (1842-1932), African-Americans, ran a restaurant in the Hollister Block **[D37]**, and later at other locations in town. The Cooley home on East Street still stands, as does an earlier residence which was moved from Main Street to State Road (neither is on the map). The fairgrounds **[E38]** survived the tornado of 1995, but the annual agricultural show has since ceased.

39 • "The Whitings, an old well-to-do family, ran a drugstore...."

Frederick T. Whiting (1825-95) and his son J. Frederick Whiting (1852-1930) operated a pharmacy on Main Street opposite Railroad. The building was rebuilt in 1894 following a fire. **[D39]**

40 • "The Girlings had a clothing store...."

Robert Girling (1824-1896) sold garments in a business block he had constructed on Railroad Street in 1873-76. Today it is home to the Snap Shop. **[D40]**

41 • "...[A]nd the Brewers dealt in hardware and fuel."

John Brewer (d. 1888) purchased the Burget & Watson hardware store on Main Street opposite Railroad (and just north of the old registry building) in 1867 and his son John A. ran the business. The building was rebuilt in 1895, and now is home to a restaurant and retail store. **[D41]**

42 • "There was a bank, the Mahaiwe National."

National Mahaiwe Bank incorporated in 1847. Its office was at the corner of Main and Castle Streets for many years. Many mergers later, it is Banknorth. **[D42]**

43 • "...There was little crime or misdemeanor in our town. We had a single policeman, a little old man named Abe who wore a badge and carried a club. We boys used to make sly fun of him. But there was a little one-roomed 'lock-up' and once in a while it had an occupant for a night."

The officer may have been A.N. Warner (1818-86), who was hired for limited police duty beginning in the 1860s. The lockup was on South Main Street in the vicinity of the present Ward's Nursery. **[E43]**

44 • "I went down the Housatonic railroad to Bridgeport ..." to visit paternal grandfather Alexander Du Bois in 1883.

Chartered in 1836, the Housatonic Railroad had begun service through Great Barrington in 1842. The original 1844 depot was twice replaced, in 1872 **[B44 & D44]** and again, at a location slightly south, in 1900. Only the last survives.

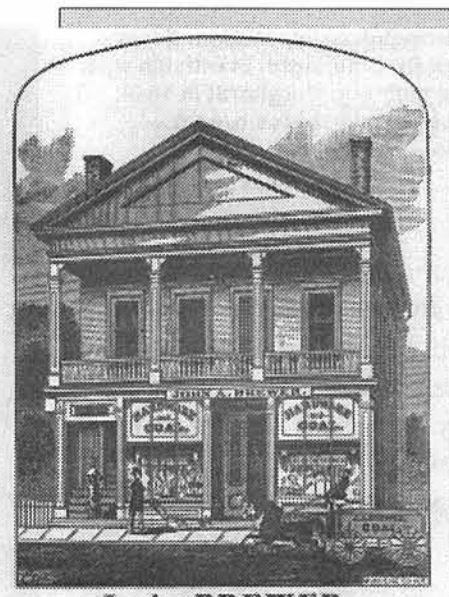
"Willie returned to Great Barrington —," wrote Shirley Graham Du Bois, "but he knew that some day he would go out into the wider world."

45 • "When the *Berkshire Courier*, our local weekly newspaper, made social announcements it was usually marriages, births, and deaths, visiting relatives from out of town, and trips to New York or the West by local residents."

Established in 1834, *The Courier's* then-publisher Marcus H. Rogers (1835-1926) constructed the Courier Building south of Carr Hardware in 1869-70. **[B45 & D45]** Clark W. Bryan (1824-99), publisher from 1879 until 1888, was instrumental in moving the office next door to the Marble Block in 1902 to accommodate a new, larger printing press. Later used as a bakery and a bank, the Courier building still stands with its 1916 facade and white pillars.

The newspaper kept up with Du Bois's activities over the years: "W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, a former colored resident of this town, has an extremely interesting article on 'The Training of the Black Man' in the September *Atlantic*" it reported 4 September 1902.

A news item "Alumni Hold Annual

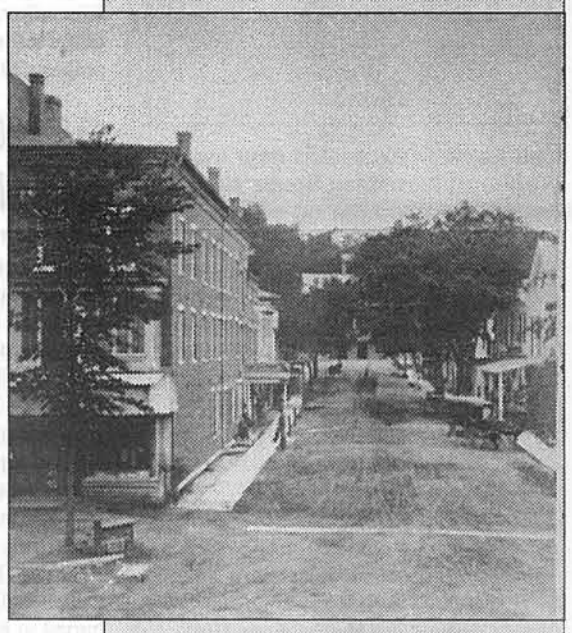


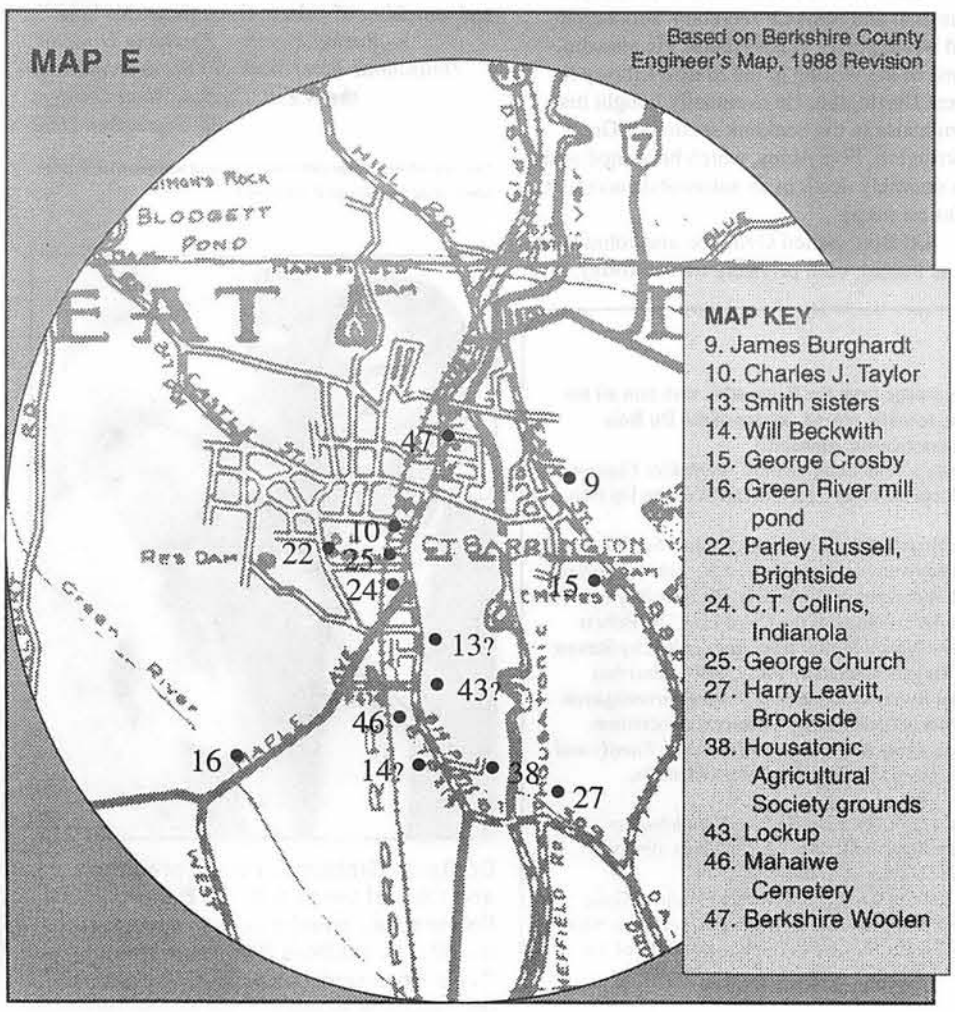
Brewer's hardware store (above) stood on Main Street. (*Book of Berkshire*, 1886)

The Berkshire Block (top left) was rebuilt after a disastrous arson fire. (O.B. Buell photo, Mason Library collection)

The Whiting pharmacy (advertisement left) began in 1847.

This view (below) is west up Railroad Street. The City Store, on the left, still stands. (Julius Hall photo, Mason Library collection)





E. Hollister & Son,

DRY GOODS

Foreign and Domestic Dress Goods,

PLAIN AND FANCY SILKS.

Cloaks and Wraps.

Ladies', Misses' and Infants' Muslin Underwear.

CORSETS,

C. P. Royal Worcester, R. & G., and all the best makes.

HOSIERY.—Ladies' Misses' and Infants'—Special Attention Given to this Department.

CARPETS.

Moquett, Body Brussels, Tap. Brussels, Three Ply, Ingrain Cotton, Wool and Cotton.

Wall Papers—The Newest Effects.

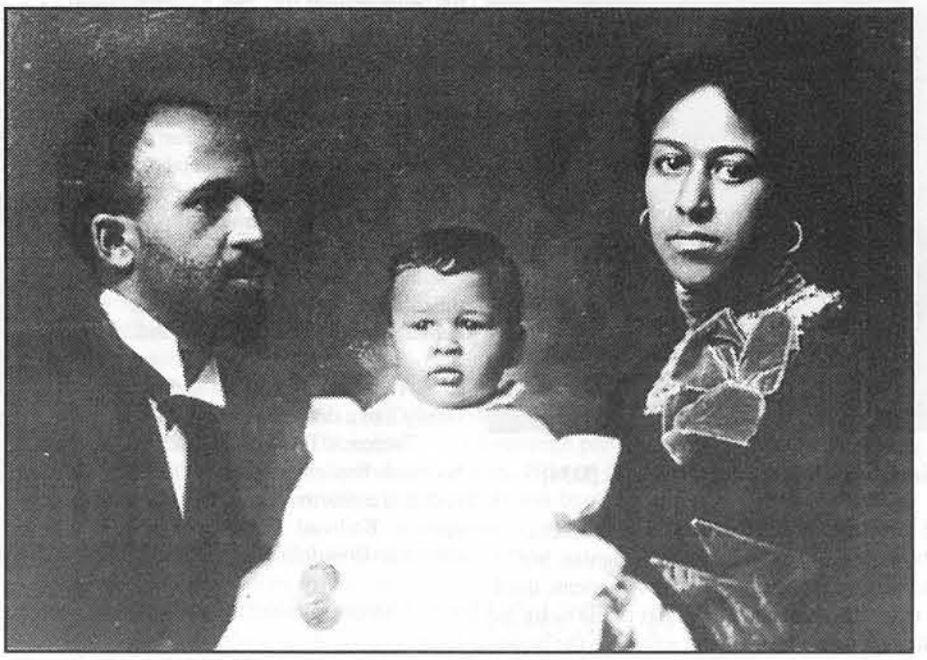
SHADE DEPARTMENT. Full line in stock, Lonsdale Opaque, Etc. Special sizes furnished at short notice. China and Japanese Mattings. Porch Shades.

E. Hollister & Son,

Main St., Gt. Barrington, Mass.

Hollister's was a major dry goods merchant. (Child's *Gazetteer*, 1886)

Great Barrington native William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, right, is with his wife, Nina, and their son Burghardt in 1898.
(Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst)



'... [W]e should rescue the Housatonic and clean it as we have never in all the years thought before of cleaning it, and seek to restore its ancient beauty; making it the center of a town, of a valley, and perhaps — who knows? — of a new mesaure of civilized life.'
—Alumni Association speech, 1930

Alex Kapteyn excavates near the Burghardt farmstead house site in Great Barrington during a University of Massachusetts Summer Field School in Archaeology in August 2003. Dr. Robert Paynter, Department of Anthropology, directed the four-week project. (Bernrd Drew photo)

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DU BOIS & THE HOUSATONIC RIVER WALK

Great Barrington is "turning its back to the river," W.E.B. Du Bois warned in a talk about the Housatonic River for the annual meeting of the alumni of Great Barrington and Searles high schools in July 1930. The speaker commended the town for having created what is now Stanley Park near Cottage Street, according to *The Berkshire Courier* for 24 July 1930, but he "expressed the hope that upon his next visit to his native town he would see even greater improvements along the Housatonic."

If Du Bois were to visit today, we hope he would appreciate the results of fifteen years of community effort to create a Housatonic River Walk, where some 1,600 volunteers have transformed a once-blighted section of riverbank into a public riverside greenway. They have removed more than 335 tons of rubble and debris, restored the riverbank to its native ecology and installed one half mile of public trail. More than half of the volunteers have been school-age children and young adults. Most recently they reclaimed an area that previously served as an "unofficial" dump, creating a small park with lovely native plantings and a sitting area. This park, which serves as an entrance to River Walk, is located a few paces from where Du Bois was born. The park now has a "rain garden" where storm water from the street is collected and cleansed by wetland plants before making its way to the river.

For some time, River Walk volunteers have been inspired by Du Bois's special regard for the "golden river" near which he was born. Again in 1961, he wrote Searles Alumni Association president George P. Fitzpatrick* and admonished the town for failing to clean and restore the river to "a clear and limpid stream, flowing gently through grass, trees, and flowers, flanked by broad roadways and parks as the life stream of the town."

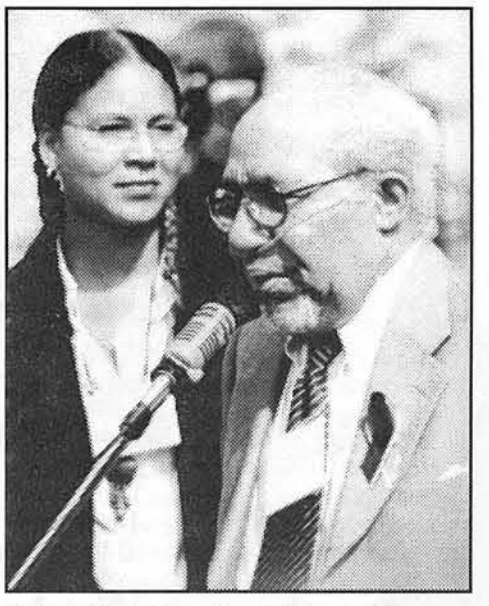
Du Bois's hopes for the Housatonic summarize River Walk's mission and inspired the dedication of the River Garden to his memory.

As he said in 1930, "For this valley, the river must be the center. Certainly it is the physical center; perhaps, in a sense, the spiritual center. Perhaps from that very freeing of spirit will come other freedoms and inspirations and aspirations which may be steps toward the diffusion and diversification and enriching of culture throughout this land."

— Rachel Fletcher, Founding Director, Housatonic River Walk, for the dedication of the W.E.B. Du Bois River Garden, 28 September 2002

** Excerpt of the 13 June 1961 letter reprinted with permission of the family of the late George P. Fitzpatrick.*

Memorial stone after installation at the W.E.B. Du Bois River Garden in Great Barrington. (Rachel Fletcher photo)



Dr. David Graham Du Bois, president and CEO of the W.E.B. Du Bois Foundation, speaks at the dedication of the W.E.B. Du Bois River Garden in Great Barrington as Evelyn Jeffers looks on. (Monica Fadding photo)

OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

46 • "In 1950 the month of February had for me special meaning. I was a widower. The wife of 53 years lay buried in the New England hills beside her first-born boy," Du Bois is quoted on a bronze marker installed in Mahaiwe Cemetery **[E46]** by the Great Barrington Historical Society in 1994.

Young Burghardt Du Bois died 24 May 1899 of diphtheria and was buried (without stone) with his Burghardt ancestors.

His mother Nina Gomer Du Bois, who died 1 July 1950, was interred in the same plot.

The Du Boises' daughter, Nina Yolande Cullen Williams, died in March 1961 and is buried in Baltimore. (Shirley Graham Du Bois in *Du Bois: A Pictorial Biography* [1978] recalled coming to Great Barrington for a funeral, but there is no stone or local record of her burial here.)

Du Bois himself died 27 August 1963 in Ghana and was buried there, beneath a stone which prominently proclaims the town of his birth: "Great Barrington, Massachusetts, USA."

47 & 48 • Parley and George Russell's father John C. Russell (1804-73) and their uncle Asa C. Russell (1808-76) established Berkshire Woolen mill on upper Main Street near the Great Bridge in 1836. This factory's effluent was possibly the source of Du Bois's "golden river," though he also wrote, "The Housatonic yellowed by the paper mills, rolled slowly through [Great Barrington's] center...."** Thus Owen Paper just south of Housatonic village was the more likely polluter. Organized in 1862, the manufacturer of fine ledger papers was in Du Bois's day operated by Henry D. Cone (1836-96).

The old Russell mill was razed in 1968 and E. Caligari & Sons has a paint and home furnishings store on the site today. **[E47]** Owen Paper was succeeded by present-day Rising Paper, a division of Fox River Paper. **[Not on map]**

49 & 50 • Du Bois was active with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for many years, and his Berkshires attracted two others affiliated with the civil rights organization.

Mary White Ovington (1865-1951), a staunch Du Bois ally on the NAACP, converted an old barn into a home in Alford in 1920 and called it Riverbank. She stayed there off and on for the next twenty years. **[Not on map]**

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938), a musician and NAACP secretary, summered and wrote poetry at Riverbank. He also did some of his writing at the Mason Library in Great Barrington. He eventually bought his own house in the Seekonk section of Great Barrington, Five Acres, which he visited until his untimely death in an automobile accident. **[Not on map]**

Du Bois visited Ovington and Johnson at these homes, both privately owned today.

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