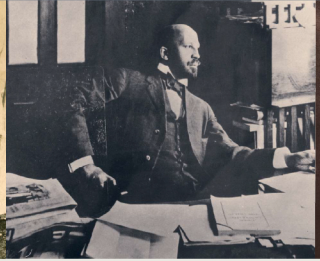
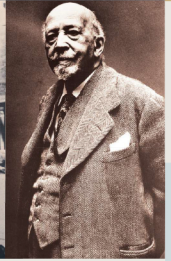
Du Bois at age 4, 1872.

Du Bois, age 15, with Great Barrington High School class of 1884.



Du Bois, age 41, at Atlanta University, 1909.



Du Bois, 1950s.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was a tireless and often radical crusader for social justice. His international legacy as a defender of freedom grew from his work as a pioneer sociologist, educator, author, and editor. He instigated the Niagara Movement and helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Editor of the NAACP's *The Crisis* magazine, he gave intellectual voice to America's complex and fractured drive for equality. Du Bois is Great Barrington's best-known native son.

Born on 23 February 1868, Du Bois spent his childhood mostly in the village. He left Great Barrington to attend Fisk University, studied in Berlin, and became the first Black to obtain a doctorate from Harvard University. He wrote his dissertation on the African slave trade. Compiling a remarkable sociological study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, he also voiced the frustrations of a minority in his landmark collection of essays, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

Du Bois grew up in the age of Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, but shaped his own views on how the nation should overcome the color line. Considered the father of Pan-Africanism, he had a dynamic career, which stretched into the modern civil rights movement, to the era of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.

"W.E.B. Du Bois correctly stated that the problem of the 20th century would be the problem of the color line. . . . The roots of the crisis are as old as the world itself."

— JULIAN BOND, DEDICATION, W.E.B. DU BOIS MEMORIAL PARK, 18 OCTOBER 1969

Du Bois held degrees from Fisk University and Harvard (Ph.D.). He studied as well at the University of Berlin. Teaching at Wilberforce University in Ohio, he met Nina Gomer (1870–1950) there, and they married in May 1896. He also taught at the University of Pennsylvania, then served on the Atlanta University faculty until 1910. For the next twenty-four years he worked with the NAACP, an organization he helped to found.

During racially stressful times in Atlanta, Du Bois sent his wife to stay with his Uncle James in Great Barrington, where Burghardt Gomer Du Bois was born in 1897; the child's life was tragically brief, however. Nina returned to Great Barrington for their daughter Nina Yolande Du Bois's birth in 1900. Du Bois was last here in 1961, to bury his daughter. Soon after, he left for Ghana with his second wife, Shirley Graham (1896–1977). He died in Accra, Ghana, on 27 August 1963, the eve of the great March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Great Barrington in the 1870s and '80s was evolving from a rural agricultural to an industrial and commercial economy, with a textile mill, pig iron furnace and other factories. Clothing, furniture, and feed stores lined Main Street. Longtime farmers and laborers, including members of Du Bois's own maternal Burghardt family, gravitated to the village to find work. Great Barrington boasted a population of 4,471 in 1885, when young William was 16. Of these citizens, 107 were classed as "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.

Du Bois's hometown of Great Barrington profoundly influenced the formation of his ideas, life, and career. He visited frequently and attempted to refurbish his grandfather's old house. Many building sites associated with Du Bois are now gone, but sufficient historical notations remain to give a sense of the town when Du Bois absorbed his practical Yankee ethic.

This self-guided walking tour reveals the town's people and places as Du Bois recalled them.

THE FOLLOWING PHOTOS BELONG TO SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES, W.E.B. DU BOIS LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, AMHERST: DU BOIS AT AGE 4, 1872, REF. NO. 380; GREAT BARRINGTON HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1884. W.E.B. DU BOIS STANDING, LEFT. PRINCIPAL FRANK HOSMER SEATED, CENTER, REF. NO. 388; W.E.B. DU BOIS, IN HIS OFFICE, ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, 1909, REF. 393; W.E.B. DU BOIS, 1950s, REF. NO. 547; W.E.B. DU BOIS, NINA GOMER DU BOIS, AND JAMES WELDON JOHNSON AT THE BURGHARDT HOMESITE ON 23 FEBRUARY 1928, DU BOIS'S 60TH BIRTHDAY, REF. NO. 445.

House of the Black Burghardts, artist's conception.

A National Historic Landmark since 1979, this is where the maternal family of W.E.B. Du Bois lived from the 1820s, as well as Du Bois himself, for a time as a young boy in the 1870s.

It is the first home that I remember.

— W.E.B. DU BOIS, *Autobiography*

Friends in the NAACP purchased the homestead and presented it to Du Bois as a 60th birthday gift in 1928. He cherished the wrought-iron tongs that stood by the fireplace when he was a child.

Long years I have carried them tenderly over all the earth.

— W.E.B. DU BOIS, *"House of the Black Burghardts"*

With architect Joseph McArthur Vance, and assisted by lumber and land entrepreneur Warren Davis, Du Bois attempted to remodel the home and live there part of the year. Yet the house was never made habitable. He sold the property in 1954.

In 1967 Walter Wilson and Edmund W. Gordon acquired the homesite and, spurred by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., established a Du Bois Memorial Park on 18 October 1969.

"Du Bois was fond of Great Barrington; he believed his experiences here helped shape his later ideas. 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."

— DAVID GRAHAM DU BOIS

"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."

— W.E.B. DU BOIS, *Autobiography*

W.E.B. Du Bois, Nina Gomer Du Bois, and James Weldon Johnson at the homesite, 1928.

Du Bois and Shirley Graham Du Bois visit the homesite, in disrepair, 1950s.

Du Bois Memorial Committee places National Landmark plaque, 1980.

ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF THE HOUSE OF THE BLACK BURGHARDTS. RUTH D. JONES COLLECTION, W.E.B. DU BOIS MEMORIAL COMMITTEE. W.E.B. DU BOIS MEMORIAL COMMITTEE PLACES BRONZE NATIONAL LANDMARK PLAQUE AT THE BOYHOOD HOMESITE ON 12 JULY 1980. IN THE FRONT ARE WALTER WILSON AND RUTH D. JONES. STANDING BEHIND RUTH JONES ARE DAVID GUNN, SR. (LEFT) AND WILLIAM GIBSON (RIGHT). PHOTO BY DONALD B. VICTOR.