

Dwight Little Never Forgot Du Bois's Talk

W.E.B. Du Bois made an impression on a Sheffield youth, so much so that 60 years after Dwight R. Little heard the future activist speak, he wrote a fan letter in 1950, and invited Du Bois to send a written message to students at his alma mater, Great Barrington High School.

"My dear Dr. Du Bois," Little wrote. "Since the time you gave a reading in the Sheffield Congregational Church (probably in 1890 or 1891, as I remember you were introduced as from Harvard) I have followed your career with great interest. I must have been at that time about to begin my high school course, which I followed up with college work at Williams, graduating in 1900. After that I taught in Brooklyn until 1937, then came to Gt. Barrington. The principal of our high school tells me he expects to speak of you in assembly sometime before your birthday on the twenty-third, and it occurred to me that you might be willing and able to write to them a word of greeting from an alumnus who has made his mark. I might modify this by saying 'probably their greatest alumnus, who has made a mark for which a nation and a race is indebted.' I thank you for the note, if you see fit to send it, and, in any case, for the inspiration you have been to a Sheffield boy." The handwritten letter is among the Du Bois Papers at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archive. (Copy courtesy Danielle Kovacs, curator of manuscripts and university archives.)



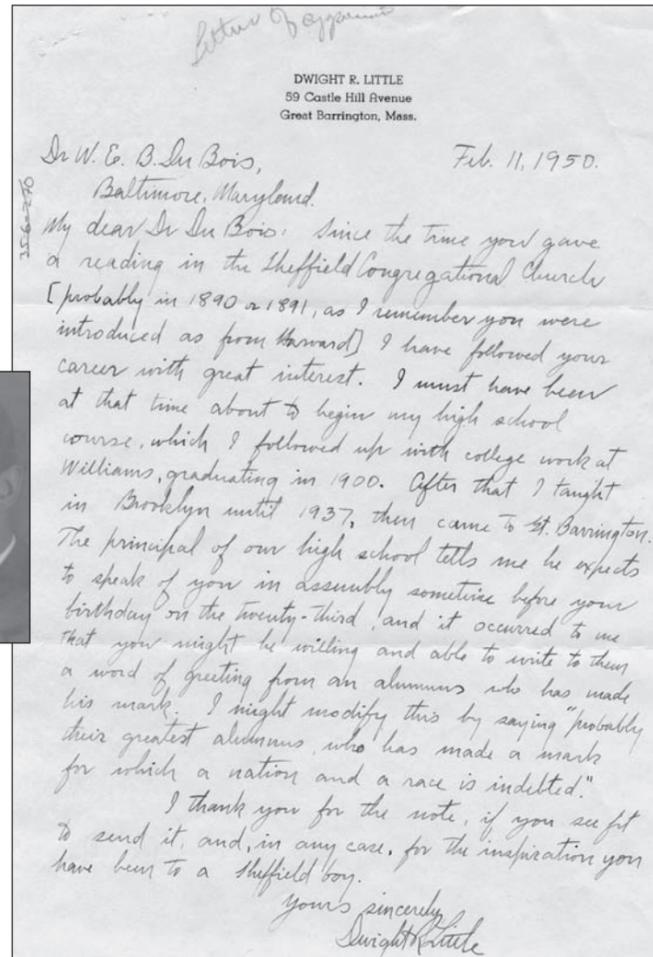
Little (1877-1961) grew up in Sheffield, attended Sedgwick Academy in Great Barrington (he rowed in the school's annual regattas at Lake Buel), attended Williams (he was a track athlete) and did post-graduate work at New York University. He taught and coached at Polytechnic Preparatory Country Day School in Brooklyn, was principal of Froebel Academy and in 1911 founded Flatbush School and Flatbush Teacher Training School (one of its graduates was C. Everett Koop, future U.S. Surgeon General). Little operated Camp Berkshire at Lake Buel from 1912 to 1937 as a summer camp for boys. He then converted his Monterey property into Littlecrest Inn, to take in summer guests. (It closed in 1959.)

Kyle Pierce of Pittsfield and Lake Buel still has the letter her grandfather Little received from Du Bois, dated Feb. 17, 1950, typed on Color and Democracy Colonies and Peace stationery. Du Bois was no doubt pleased to have been remembered in his hometown, and one detects a slight relaxation of his usual reserved manner: "I appreciate your kind letter of February 11, and am enclosing a short greeting to the high school students. I have sent the main facts of my biography to the Editor of the Berkshire Courier, who wrote for it. I am hoping to come up to Great Barrington sometime next Spring or Summer and will be glad to greet you."

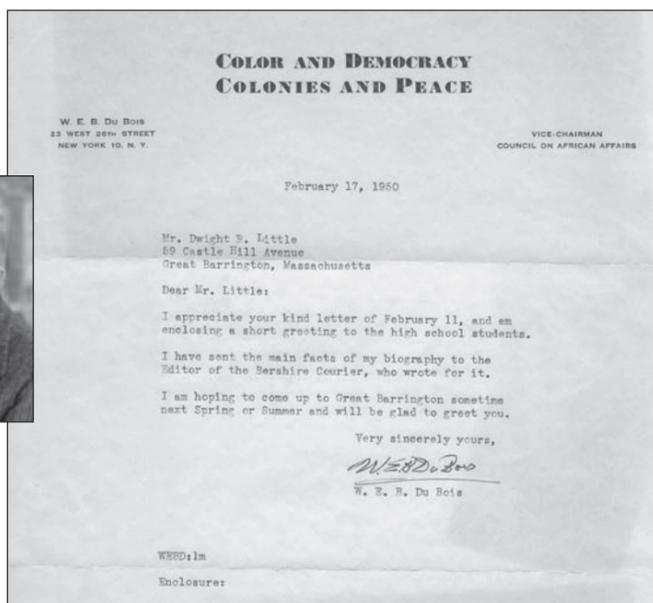


The weekly newspaper on Du Bois's birthday, Feb. 23, 1950, ran "Great Barrington's Illustrious Son," nearly a column plus photo.

Thanks to a fan, Du Bois made a brief and pleasant reconnection with his beloved hometown. — Bernard A. Drew



Dwight R. Little's letter, above, and 1950s photo of Du Bois are courtesy University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archive; W.E.B. Du Bois's reply, below, and image of Little are courtesy Kyle Pierce.



FRIENDS OF THE DU BOIS HOMESITE

Working with University of Massachusetts Amherst to restore and maintain the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite, a National Historic Landmark

Building a Master Plan for Heritage Tourism

The story of William E.B. Du Bois is a fascinating one, his legacy multifaceted. The W.E.B. Du Bois Library at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst holds the enormous collection of Du Bois Papers. Library and faculty members and others as part of a Du Bois Legacy effort are working to restore the Du Bois presence in the activist's hometown of Great Barrington through several initiatives.

Someday, the Du Bois Memorial Park will have enhanced offerings; there will be a downtown Great Barrington Du Bois Walking Tour with informational kiosks; there will be a place for visitors to town to see exhibits and hear programs about the town native and his achievements.

A workshop was held April 17, 2009, companion to an earlier session September 27, 2008, both funded through a University of Massachusetts President's Grant and Friends of the Du Bois Homesite, Upper Housatonic Valley National heritage Area and National Trust for Historic Preservation, brought together a nucleus of interested people to shape a direction for heritage tourism. A final report will come out this autumn.

Here's what's shaping up:

- The Homesite on Route 23, newly opened to the

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Jack Rogala and a UMass crew spent a day at the Homesite in June, putting up a bright red sign at the entrance to Du Bois Boyhood Homesite, mowing the grass, planting prairie fire crabapple trees, cleaning storm damage, installing two granite benches on the trail and reinstalling one interpretive sign at Memorial Boulder, with a stronger base. (Berkshire Record photo)

STEERING COMMITTEE

Chairwoman Elaine S. Gunn, 1969 DuBois Memorial Committee • Rachel Fletcher, Great Barrington Land Conservancy • Wray M. Gunn, Clinton African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Great Barrington • Bernard A. Drew, Great Barrington Historical Society • Frances Jones-Sneed, Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail

FRIENDS OF THE DU BOIS BOYHOOD HOMESITE

Post Office Box 1018, Great Barrington, MA 01230 • www.DuBoisHomesite.org • info@DuBoisHomesite.org

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public with a parking lot, signs and a meandering trail, thanks to the work of a University of Massachusetts grounds crew led by Jack Rogala, would gain a small restroom station; an additional interpretive trail loop; a woodland amphitheater around the boulder that was placed at the rear of the property in 1969, when the park was dedicated; and a boardwalk trail to the archaeologically sensitive Burghardt-Du Bois family homesite. There was considerable discussion about whether to build a replica of the old Burghardt house, with issues being a lack of information about the building's interior, and the inability of the property itself to accommodate large groups of visitors. Instead...

- A 6,000-square-foot visitor orientation facility with exhibit space, meeting/classroom space, office and gift shop would be established downtown, could at first be in an existing storefront, then ultimately in a building, either new or existing.

- A downtown walking tour spotlighting key locations from Du Bois's youth (birthsite, location of Great Barrington High School, Town Hall, Kellogg Terrace, the locations of three later homes where Du Bois and his mother lived, Clinton African Methodist Episcopal Zion and two other churches and more). Those walking the trail could carry informational devices, or stop at cer-



Rachel Fletcher, left in photo left, co-director of the Upper Housatonic Valley African-American Heritage Trail and member of the Friends of the Du Bois Homesite Steering Committee, conferred with Michael Singer, artist and designer with Michael Singer Studio of Wilmington, Vt. (Bernard Drew photos)



Participants at the second Du Bois workshop, right, included Dolores Root, museum program specialist, seated left, and David Glassberg, history professor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Standing are Rob Cox, acting director, W.E.B. Du Bois Center, UMass Amherst, and Jay Schafer, director of libraries, UMass Amherst, and chairman of the Du Bois Legacy Committee.

tain locations for modest exhibits and recorded messages about Du Bois and the community.

Participating in the visioning process have been UMass Amherst faculty and administrators Amilcar Shabazz, chair, Du Bois Department of African American Studies; William Strickland, professor, Department of African-American Studies; Robert Paynter, professor, anthropology; Whitney Battle-Baptiste, assistant professor, anthropology; David Glassberg, professor, history; Jay Schafer, director of libraries, and Rob Cox, head of the archives. Members of the Friends of the Du Bois Boyhood Homesite Steering Committee took part, as did former Great Barrington Selectman Peter Fish and architect and historic preservationist John A. James of Sheffield. Distinguished experts offered advice, including Rex Ellis, associate director for curatorial affairs, Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African American History and Culture;

Catherine Turton, historian, National Historic Landmarks Program; and Veronica Jackson, founding partner and senior exhibit designer, Jackson Brady Design Group.

A COMMITMENT TO DU BOIS

Established in February 2009, **The W.E.B. Du Bois Center** based at the W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, will work to generate opportunities for the direct support of younger scholars to engage in challenging scholarship and public discussion of critical social issues in race, equality, and democracy.

Du Bois, a pioneer in urban sociology and history, was always more than just an academic. He was among the nation's most prominent public intellectuals, using insights drawn from his academic research to spur social action, according to center organizers. His analysis of the legacy of slavery and racial injustice sparked the formation of the Niagara Movement and its successor, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and his understanding of the international dimensions of the race problem formed the foundation of the Pan-African Movement and the anti-colonial struggles of the second half of the twentieth century.

The Du Bois Center will offer fellowship program; instigate seminars, colloquia, and publications; develop educational initiatives, encourage interdisciplinary curriculum and provide online education; it will continue to examine archeology at the Great Barrington Homesite and surroundings; and it will work to further develop the Great Barrington Homesite, a Du Bois Heritage Trail and a Du Bois Heritage and Interpretive Center to take the UMass, Amherst, Center's research and findings beyond the academic audience. (See the announcement on the opposite page about the digitization of the Du Bois Papers held by UMass, Amherst, Libraries.)

Digitization will make Du Bois Papers available over Internet

Papers and artifacts from William E.B. Du Bois's decades at the fore of the modern civil rights movement will over the next two years be digitized and made available over the Internet. The archive at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, which holds the Du Bois Papers, will undertake the copying of upwards of 100,000 items ranging from letters and diaries to photographs and ephemera, thanks to a \$200,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation.

Rob Cox, head of the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at UMass Amherst, as well as acting director of the university's Du Bois Center, said the site will be the largest free, online archive of primary material available. It will cover the entire scope of the activist movement, as well as Du Bois's career.

"We will also offer a Du Bois-apedia," Cox said, "with articles on a variety of topics. We will start with forty or fifty articles, and hope to get up to several hundred. The first will become available in the fall."

Du Bois was an indefatigable letter writer and corresponded with such familiar figures as Booker T. Washington and Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes.

Curiosities in the Du Bois collection, according to Cox, include a paper menu that attendees of the first meeting of the Niagara Movement held in Ontario — the group couldn't find a Buffalo, N.Y., restaurant willing to host the group.

While much of the Du Bois collection has already been



Du Bois stands with delegates to the 1929 Junior NAACP gathering in Cleveland in 1929. (Courtesy University of Massachusetts, Amherst, W.E.B. Du Bois Library Special Collections and Archives)

copied to microfilm, digitization will bring the collection into the modern technical age — and make it more accessible than ever before.

For a preview, visit <http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/digital/digitaldubois.htm>

Want to help?

Friends of the Du Bois Boyhood Homesite serves as property steward, eyes and ears (and occasionally hands) for UMass Amherst. There's lots to do at the homesite. Donations will help purchase a few trees and a bench for the boulder and to print publications such as this newsletter to keep everyone informed. You can help by sending tax-deductible financial contributions to the Friends of the W.E.B. Du Bois Homesite. Our project sponsor is the Great Barrington Land Conservancy, a 501c3 organization.

Group guided tours of the property can be arranged.

Friends of the Du Bois Homesite has a Web site

www.DuBoisHomesite.org

e-mail info@DuBoisHomesite.org.

regular mail P.O. Box 1018, Great Barrington, MA 01230

telephone 413-528-3391