

Grants launch next phase: a visioning process for the property

The new parking lot and walking path to the memorial boulder make the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite accessible to the public for the first time in many years. It's only a beginning. Through grants from the University of Massachusetts President's Creative Economy Fund, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Berkshire-Taconic Community Foundation, work has begun on a project called "Developing a Plan for Heritage Tourism at the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Home Site and Other Areas in Great Barrington." In announcing the UMass grant, President Jack M. Wilson wrote to David Glassberg, Professor of History and author of the grant proposal, "Your proposal meets the criteria for the program and holds, I believe, great potential for success. I am particularly cognizant of the fact that Chancellor Cole recently authorized \$50,000 to build a parking and interpretive area at the Du Bois site; so that visitors can more easily have access and learn more about Du Bois, and I am pleased to support further planning for this important site."

Glassberg along with Jay Schafer, director, Du Bois Library, UMass; Rob Cox, Special Collections, Du Bois Library; Amilcar Shabazz, African-American Studies, UMass; Robert Paynter, Anthropology, UMass; Rachel Fletcher and Bernard Drew, Friends of the Du Bois Homesite, met at UMass July 25 with landscape designer Michael Singer to map plans for a visioning session to be held in late September. Other participants will be drawn from the Great Barrington and UMass communities and nationally recognized experts in historic preservation and the interpretation of African American heritage sites.

This group's task is to shape a plan that can be taken to the next level, a major national educational and fundraising campaign.

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 while the visioning process is going on. There's landscaping to be done, a trail to be monitored and maintained. Donations will help purchase a few trees and a bench for the boulder and to print publications to keep everyone informed. We need to have a sign near the highway. You can help by sending tax-deductible financial contributions to the Friends of the W.E.B. Du Bois Homesite. We are a 501(c)3 organization under the umbrella of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy.

Group guided tours of the property can be arranged.

Friends of the Du Bois Homesite now 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



Dr. Edmund Gordon and Dr. Susan Gordon examine a poster on the new path at the Du Bois Boyhood Homesite.

Want to learn more?

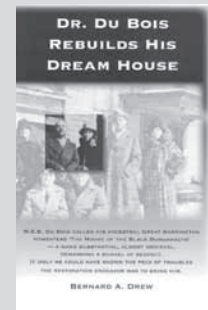
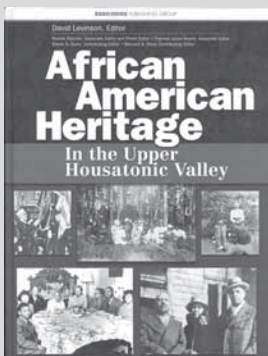
African American Heritage in the Upper Housatonic Valley, edited by David Levinson (Berkshire Publishing Group, 2006), 230-page hardcover, illustrated, \$24.95 plus \$4 postage

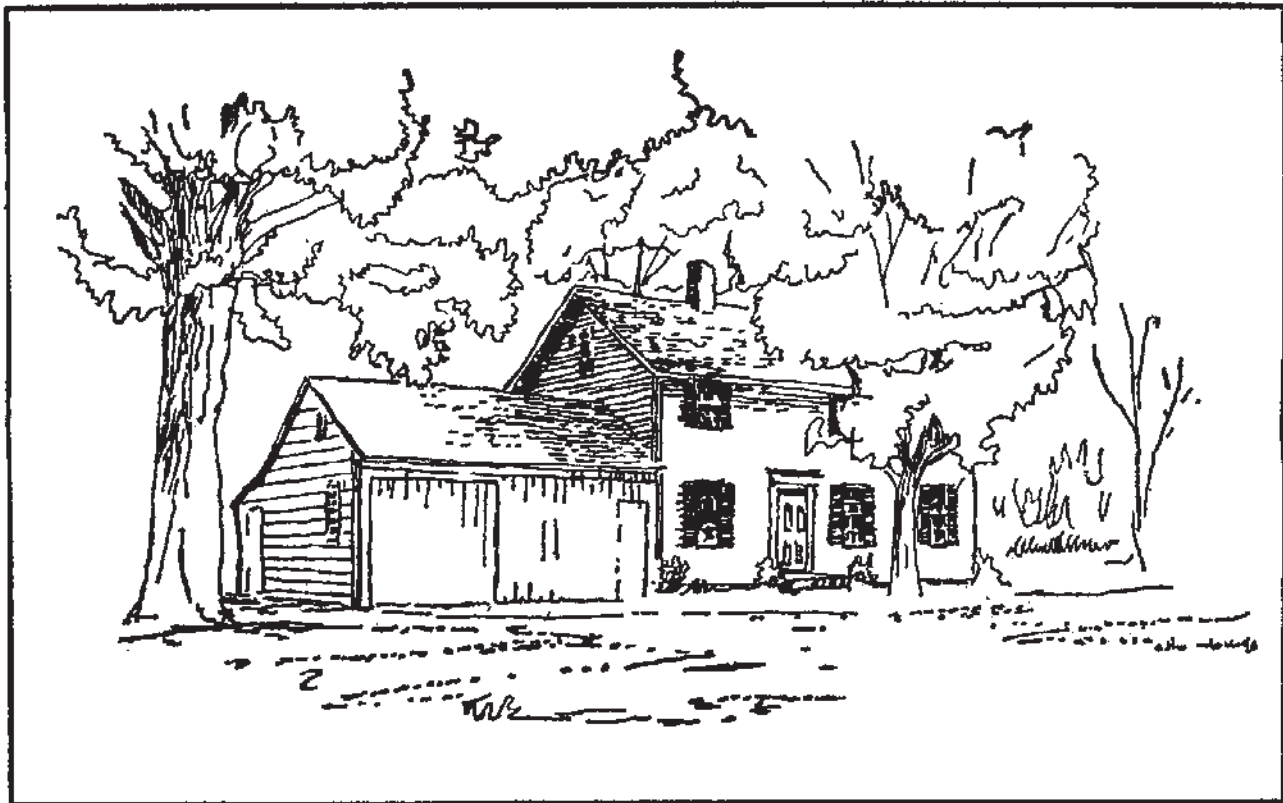
Visit www.AfricanAmericanTrail.org

Dr. Du Bois Rebuilds His Dream House by Bernard A. Drew (Attic Revivals Press, 2006), 128-page paperback, illustrated, \$17.50 plus \$2.50 postage

Send mail orders to **Friends of the Du Bois Homesite**
PO Box 1018, Great Barrington, MA 01230

A portion of the proceeds will benefit the maintenance of the park at the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite





ARTIST'S CONCEPTION OF THE HOUSE OF THE BLACK BURGHARDTS—DU BOIS' BOYHOOD HOME.

THE HOUSE OF THE BLACK BURGHARDTS

IF one slips out the northern neck of Manhattan and flies to the left of the silver Sound, one swoops in time onto the Golden River; and dodging its shining beauty, now right, now left, one comes after a hundred miles of lake, hill and mountain, in the Old Bay State. Then at the foot of high Mt. Everett one takes a solemn decision: left is sweet, old Sheffield; but pass it stolidly by and slip gently right into tiny South Egremont which always sleeps. Then wheel right again and come to Egremont Plain and the House of the Black Burghardts.

"It is the first home that I remember. There my mother was born and all her nine brothers and sisters. There perhaps my grandfather was born, although that I do not know. At any rate, on this wide and lovely plain, beneath the benediction of gray-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; down and to the south was Uncle Harlow in a low, long, red house beside a pond—in a house of secret passages, sudden steps, low, narrow doors and unbelievable furniture. And here right in the center of the world was Uncle Tallow, as Grandfather Othello was called:

"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 be-

yond. Steep, strong stairs led up to Sleep, while without was a brook, a well and a mighty elm. Almost was I born there myself but that Alfred Du Bois and Mary Burghardt honeymooned a year in town and then brought me as a baby back to Egremont Plain.

"I left the home as a child to live in town again and go to school. But for furtive glimpses I did not see the house again for more than a quarter century. Then riding near on a chance journey I suddenly was homesick for that house. I came to the spot. There it stood, old, lonesome, empty. Its windowless eyes stared blindly on the broad, black highway to New York. It seemed to have shrunken timidly into itself. It had lost color and fence and grass and up to the left and down to the right its sister homes were gone—dead and gone with no stick nor stone to mark their burial.

"From that day to this I desperately wanted to own that house for no earthly reason that sounded a bit like sense. It was 130 long miles from my work. 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 that—

"Why the stairs don't even creak!" said She, climbing gingerly aloft.

"But I fought the temptation away. Yachts and country estates and limousines

are not adapted to my income. Oh, I inquired of course. The replies were discouraging. And once every year or so I drove by and stared sadly; and even more sadly and brokenly the House of the Black Burghardts stared back.

"Then of a sudden Somebody whose many names and places I do not know sent secret emissaries to me on a birthday which I had firmly resolved *not* to celebrate. Sent emissaries who showed me all the Kingdoms of this World, including something in green with a cupola; and also The House; and I smiled at the House. And they said by telegram: *The House of the Black Burghardts is come home again—it is yours!*

"Whereat in great joy I celebrated another birthday and drew plans. And from its long hiding-place I brought out an old black pair of tongs. Once my grandfather, and mayhap his, used them in the great fireplace of the House. Long years I have carried them tenderly over all the earth. The sister shovel, worn in holes, was lost. But when the old fireplace rises again from the dead on Egremont Plain, its dead eyes shall see not only the ghosts of old Tom and his son Jack and his grandson Othello and his great grandson, me—but also the real presence of these iron tongs resting again in fire worship in the House of the Black Burghardts."

W.E.B. Du Bois 1928