

# Friends of the Du Bois Homesite

## Mission

Friends of the Du Bois Homesite is a community-based organization that supports the restoration, maintenance, stewardship and awareness of the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite, a National Historic Landmark, as a public memorial to the Great Barrington native who became a leading scholar and activist in the civil rights movement in the United States and around the world.

## Statement of Purposes

The W. E. B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, is a National Historic Landmark owned and maintained by the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Friends of the Du Bois Homesite works within guidelines established by the university and serves as the university's stewards of the homesite.

The Great Barrington Land Conservancy is our 501c3 sponsoring organization. All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make any donations payable to Friends of the Du Bois Homesite.

## Write us:

Friends of the Du Bois Homesite  
Post Office Box 1018  
Great Barrington, MA 01230  
413-528-3391

Visit the Web site <http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/duboishome/virtualtour.htm> for a virtual tour of the Du Bois Childhood Homesite.



# 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

## Du Bois Memorial Park in Great Barrington re-opens, thanks to UMass Amherst

**A**WARENESS of W.E.B. Du Bois in the Great Barrington community is high. Town voters in May 2005 endorsed the installation of marker signs at the highway entrances to town, proclaiming this the birthplace of the famed civil rights activist. The time couldn't be better for the Friends of the Du Bois Boyhood Homesite to become stewards of the property, as the result of an agreement reached in February 2008.

The Steering Committee of Friends of the Du Bois Homesite in the last several years has had frequent discussions with key administrators and faculty of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst about ways to restore the National Historic Landmark property on Route 23 as a fitting public memorial and destination. The University's Du Bois Center



Dr. Thomas Cole, Chancellor, and William Strickland, political science professor, UMass Amherst, toured the Du Bois site. (Rachel Fletcher photo)

is dedicated to aggressively promoting the legacy of Du Bois, and the Homesite is one of several endeavors to emerge.

The University's staff, under the direction of Bruce Thomas and John Matthews, is clearing a small portion of the eastern side of the property so a few cars can safely pull off the highway and park. There will be signage, a kiosk and a light foot trail to the memorial boulder.

The profound and complex nature of Du Bois's life and works warrant an equally complex and politically astute visioning and design process for the site, one that will involve local, national and international constituents of the Du Bois legacy.

Our mission and statement of purposes on the back page outline the activities and responsibilities we envision for this organization. Thomas Cole, Chan-

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## Clues in the Soil

**SUMMER FIELD SCHOOL** UMass anthropology Professor Robert Paynter directed archeological activities in summer 2003 at the Burghardt farmstead site on Route 23 in Great Barrington. In the photo (bottom right) he examines the chimney Du Bois had constructed in 1929. Student diggers carefully removed shards and other artifacts

from the soil (left), then sorted and catalogued them at a field laboratory set up at Clinton African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (right). The cellarhole has been filled with sand for security; the sand in no way impairs future archaeological work.

PHOTOS BY RACHEL FLETCHER & BERNARD A. DREW



### 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

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UNIVERSITY of  
MASSACHUSETTS  
Amherst, MA 01003

**UMass Amherst and the Friends of the Du Bois Homesite**  
**LETTER OF INTENT**  
February 12, 2008

The University of Massachusetts Amherst (University) is dedicated to promoting the legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois. One major focus of these efforts is to place an appropriate memorial to Dr. Du Bois at the Boyhood Homesite of Dr. Du Bois in Great Barrington, a National Landmark property owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and administered by the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The profound and complex nature of Du Bois' life and works warrants a complex and comprehensive planning process that will involve local, national, and international constituents of the Du Bois legacy. The University recognizes that an important partner in such a plan is the community of Great Barrington.

Friends of the Du Bois Homesite (Friends) is a community-based effort that supports the restoration, maintenance, stewardship and awareness of the W. E. B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite as a public memorial to the Great Barrington native who became a leading scholar and activist in the civil rights movement in the United States and around the world. The Friends' leadership represents institutions with longstanding interests in promoting the legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois in the town and region, including the 1968 Du Bois Memorial Committee, the Great Barrington Historical Society, the Great Barrington Land Conservancy, the Clinton African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Great Barrington, and the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail. The Friends is a formally adopted project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy, which is a non-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization.

The University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Friends of the Du Bois Homesite agree to the following:

We intend to work together in developing a memorial to the life and works of W. E. B. Du Bois at the W. E. B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite, a property of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts overseen by the University of Massachusetts Amherst. We intend to accomplish safe and informative access to the Homesite, in the short term, as well as to realize ultimate goals for the site.

The nature of our relationship includes:

- 1) The University shall take responsibility for the conceptual development, capital improvements and maintenance of the Homesite.
- 2) The Friends shall be regarded as the University's stewards of the Homesite.
- 3) In their stewardship role, the Friends shall have access to the Homesite, keep the University apprised of the physical condition of the Homesite, and act on behalf of the University for purposes of promoting the Homesite in Great Barrington and Berkshire County (tours, interpretive materials, newsletters, educational programs, etc.).
- 4) The University shall involve the Friends in the capital and conceptual development of the Homesite by keeping the Friends informed about plans, inviting their participation and comment concerning these plans, including, but not limited to, the formulation of long-term conceptual plans and raising funds for these projects.

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution.



Visitors view documentary footage of the 1969 memorial dedication at the Route 23 property that took place around the very boulder on which the laptop computer is perched. (Rachel Fletcher photo)

you have questions, please write or e-mail or get in touch with one of the Steering Committee members. We will keep you posted on activities through this publication and through the media.

Du Bois has twice appeared on United States commemorative postage stamps. He has been the subject of a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography by David Levering Lewis. Now it is time to complete work on one of the few physical locations identified with the civil rights activist and possibly the first landmark to civil rights in New England. The Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce in Great Barrington fields more and more inquiries each year from tourists regarding the Homesite. Local programs about Du Bois are widely attended. The Boyhood Homesite is recognized as a key destination on the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail.

cellor of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Jay Schafer, Director of Libraries, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, have expressed excitement at the potential of the Du Bois Homesite. Dr. Cole toured the wooded site in September 2007, within weeks of his arrival at Amherst to fill his interim post.

Many at the University have worked hard toward this endeavor, including Robert Paynter, professor, Department of Anthropology, who has conducted three archaeological field schools at the Route 23 property; William Strickland, professor, and Amilcar Shabazz, chairman, Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies; Esther Terry, vice chancellor for student affairs and campus life; Robert S. Cox, head of Special Collections, University Archives; David Glassberg, professor, Department of History; and Whitney Battle-Baptiste, assistant professor, Department of Anthropology. State Senator Ben Downing and Representative Smitty Pignatelli have wholeheartedly endorsed the effort.

The five-member steering committee, which will direct Friends of the Du Bois Homesite activities and monitor the property, draws members from four supporting community organizations as well as the original W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Committee, which organized in 1968. That steering committee, with Elaine S. Gunn chairwoman, has met with Mr. Schafer and others from the University since January 2006 to discuss the property. Other Steering Committee members are Rachel Fletcher, representing the Great Barrington Land Conservancy; Wray M. Gunn, representing Clinton African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; Frances Jones-Sneed, history professor at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, representing the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail; and Bernard A. Drew, representing the Great Barrington Historical Society. The Rev. Esther Dozier, pastor of Clinton African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, was enthusiastically involved in the project until her death in 2007, and she remains a guiding spirit.

Friends outlined plans for modest site improvements to the Great Barrington Board of Selectmen in April 2008, and received that board's commendation and recognition that "some have been working for 40 years to make this happen."

"As a friend and supporter of the original DuBois Memorial Committee of 1968," Mrs. Gunn said, "I am excited to be a part of the new initiative to restore the boyhood home of Du Bois in Great Barrington... It is my sincere hope that this new effort with perseverance, dedication, and help from friends of U Mass, friends of Du Bois and the Steering Committee, will succeed in this long overdue endeavor."

Friends welcomes tax-deductible donations for Master Planning, or to create a more durable elevated pathway to the boulder. We anticipate that people from Great Barrington to Atlanta, Philadelphia to Ghana who appreciate the Du Bois legacy will join our effort. If you have material suitable for this newsletter, please send it. If

- 5) The University shall consult the Friends about the best ways to bring development plans to fruition in Great Barrington.
- 6) To these ends, the Friends shall engage in fundraising on behalf of the University's activities at the Homesite and their own.
- 7) The University shall ensure the maintenance of any capital improvements that are the result of funds raised by the Friends on the University's behalf.
- 8) The University shall authorize the Friends to coordinate and monitor public and contracted visitations to the site on its behalf, when the site is inaccessible during construction periods.
- 9) Term of this Agreement is five (5) years, and may be renewed thereafter by the mutual agreement of the parties.
- 10) This Agreement may be terminated, in whole or in part, on advance written notice of 60 days when such action is deemed by either party to be in its best interest.

Formal institution of this relationship as pending greater specification in a Memorandum of Understanding, being pursued by both parties at this time.

Thomas W. Cole, Jr.  
Chancellor,  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Elaine S. Gunn  
Chairman,  
Friends of the Du Bois Homesite  
Du Bois Memorial Committee

Jay Schafer  
Director of Libraries,  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Rachel Fletcher  
Great Barrington Land Conservancy  
(project sponsor)

## In the Long Term

**O**ur long-term goal is to create a significant memorial and cultural center appropriate to W.E.B. Du Bois's national and global significance. The first step in this process is the development of an illustrated Master Plan that articulates the vision and strategies for celebrating Du Bois at his boyhood homesite and throughout Great Barrington.

The plan will be developed by landscape artist Michael Singer and a committee of distinguished community leaders, educators and museum professionals, and will include cost estimates for the various components of improvements to the site; strategies for communicating and marketing the Homesite as a regional tourist destination; and recommendations for an organizational structure that would implement the various phases of the plan and raise the funds necessary to move the project forward.

We hope planning and fundraising documents are ready in time for the centennial celebration of the NAACP in June 2009. In a letter to the Chancellor of UMass Amherst in May 2007, Julian Bond, Executive Director of the NAACP, declared that the celebration of the NAACP centennial "offers a superb opportunity for the University to raise funds nationally and internationally to create a memorial and educational center at the Homesite and to provide Du Bois with the public recognition he deserves."