1994 Paynter Hautaniemi and Muller Landscapes of the W. E. B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite

Robert Paynter, University of Massachusetts - Amherst
Susan Hautaniemi, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
Nancy Muller, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/robert_paynter/35/
RACE

Edited by
STEVEN GREGORY and
ROGER SANJEK

Rutgers University Press
New Brunswick, New Jersey
The Landscapes of the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite: An Agenda for an Archaeology of the Color Line

Next to a highway in the Berkshires of Massachusetts is a National Landmark/National Register site, the Boyhood Homesite of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois. Du Bois was born in Great Barrington in 1868, became one of the foremost scholar-activists of the twentieth century, and died at the age of ninety-five in Ghana. He spent some early years of his life at this site, and in the 1930s he vacationed here. During the nineteenth century this homesite was part of a small neighborhood of African Americans, people who by the twentieth century were dispersed throughout North America and Africa. This place and these people, and some of their white neighbors, nurtured the young Du Bois, inspired some of his philosophical commitments, and were among his reference points throughout his life.

A stop at the site today teaches one little about Du Bois or his life in Great Barrington or in any of the many other places around the globe that he influenced. The visitor sees an abandoned field encroached upon by shrubs and brambles, pines, cedar, and sugar maples, a land parcel now undergoing New England old-field ecological succession. Attached to a wooden fence post is a small plaque proclaiming official National Landmark status, but giving virtually no other information. Walking through the parcel one encounters poison ivy; an abandoned cellar hole; a chimney base; shards of white and rose decorated dinner plates and of blue, green, and brown glass; and the metal pieces of tools, barrels, fences, hardware, and household appliances.

A place of historical significance on the contemporary landscape should be a site for remembering. Places like Independence Hall in
Philadelphia or the Washington Monument in the District of Columbia or Mount Vernon in Virginia exist today to remind people of the individuals and groups who shaped history and gave birth to the present. Historical places exist to teach our world about the past in a different way from textbooks. They tempt us to experience the past, to touch, feel, and connect with the past, to try to imagine eating, washing, raising a family, debating issues great and small, in short to identify with people in the past. The learning that happens at historical sites is among the most powerful for signaling the significant people, groups, and events of this culture’s history and thereby underlining the dynamics driving the unfolding drama of American life.

The Du Bois Boyhood Homesite, albeit duly listed on the National Register of Historical Places, does none of this. It is not a place to learn about Du Bois and his numerous contributions to American life, to remember his relatives, to confront the long history of African Americans in New England, to inquire about the historical depth and distinctive shape of northern racism. Instead, the Du Bois Boyhood Homesite is, for the majority of the American citizenry, a place of forgetting, yet another site on our contemporary landscape that by omission of African Americans from the historical record contributes to a racially constructed ignorance about the place of African Americans as transformative agents in the history of the United States. It is only a poison ivy patch by the side of the woods.

How is it that the Du Bois Boyhood Homesite stands mute to Du Bois’s significance in U.S. history? This is a complex question about the dynamics of remembering and forgetting in the racial formation that is U.S. culture (see, e.g., Wallace 1990). It has, in part to do with the conjunction of the character of Du Bois, the texture of northern racism, and the depths to which white racism is rooted in the practice and ideas of historical disciplines, such as our own historical archaeology. Along with colleagues at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, we are engaged in a project to bring the Boyhood Homesite of W.E.B. Du Bois to a prominent place on the landscape of historical places, to help realize the potential power of this place to challenge racist constructions of Du Bois and African-American life in the North.

As archaeologists our task is to call attention to the site and its objects and thereby the people responsible for them. The first step involves establishing the historical presences, including Du Bois’s, who built, transformed, and eventually abandoned this landscape. What we have learned about these people and how we have used objects to come to these conclusions are the subjects of much of this essay. But to truly unlock the potential of the site requires deeper readings of the objects that disclose the workings of the color line in the past and present of western Massachusetts. Achieving such readings is hampered by the blind spots white racism imposes upon the practice of archaeology. In our conclusion we point to some of these and develop caveats, drawn from Du Bois’s work, for scholars seeking to work through these issues. The essay is thus part of a work in progress, and it documents some of the forces and struggles that have shaped the formation of the Du Bois Boyhood Homesite.

Our encounter with the site began in 1983 when Ernest Allen, chair of the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Homer Meade, a lecturer in the department, approached Robert Paynter with artifacts from the site. They asked if archaeological investigations might provide more information. Utilizing as a documentary base the extensive holdings of Du Bois’s papers in the University of Massachusetts Archives, and Du Bois’s own voluminous writings, Paynter organized two archaeological summer field schools at the site. Nancy Muller joined the project as a student in one of these field schools. Susan Hautaniemi later helped analyze some of the twelve thousand shards recovered in the two field seasons.

As archaeologists seeking to understand African-American lifeways, we have tried to identify biases we bring to our study. For us, the biases include the personal and institutional ignorances of the white sector of a racially divided society, and the difficulties that archaeologists encounter in moving from identifying the functions of recovered objects to understanding what they mean to the people who used them. For the historical archaeologist looking at things not so different from those in our own everyday life, the step to interpretation can occur too quickly if the significance of racial identity and racism is not probed carefully. Did patent medicines advertised with exclusively white models have the same meaning and use for white American women and African-American women in the Jim Crow nineteenth century? Does the use of European housing forms and mass-marketed commodities point to the social or cultural assimilation of African Americans into white New England society? A moment’s reflection should suggest quite probably not, but without reflection a white historical archaeologist might misinterpret or reinforce misunderstandings. A strategic pause is needed to consider how “race” may mark an interpretive divide in the way one approaches material records. Unfortunately, studies that consider the implications of “race” in historical sequences and theoretical perspectives are not central in the literature of archaeology.

The absence of such viewpoints in our disciplinary common sense has
to do, in part, with essentialist constructions of the notion of "race." Barbara Fields (1990:97) points out that for most Americans implicitly "there is really only one race, the Negro race." Hence, studies of "race" in the historical archaeology of the United States are, in effect, studies about African Americans, and not about the overarching significance of racism and racial identity for Euro-Americans and for Asian Americans, Native Americans, and all others. The importance of a system of racial inequality is rarely raised in interpretations of Euro-American sites.

Race, as a social construct, operates within a context of concepts and actions. St. Clair Drake's (1987, 1990) historical overview of racial discrimination demonstrates that no simple causal chain leads from color symbolism to social prejudices based on skin pigmentation and to socially structured inequality. The concept of race as we know it today—appearing within a system of significant social division, based indirectly on, and sometimes explained by, ancestral biological traits—arose in the ideological structures of plantation production and the Atlantic slave trade. From there it worked its way into the hegemonic ideologies of the political economies of the Western Hemisphere (see also Cox 1948; Robinson 1983; Smedley 1993). Political economies in which race figures as an important social division, such as the United States, are racial formations, or sets of ongoing relations in "which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meaning" (Omi and Winant 1986:63).

Appiah parses the ideologies of such societies with a series of related concepts. Racialism is the conviction "that there are heritable characteristics possessed by members of our species, that allow us to divide them into a small set of races, in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any other races" (1990:4–5). Such racialist understandings can be the foundation for more elaborate notions of the significance of biological differences and their implications for social practice, policy, and morality. These are referred to by Appiah as racisms. Believers in racism hold racial prejudice, "the deformation of rationality in judgement that characterizes those whose racism is more than a theoretical attachment to certain propositions... [and is characterized by] an inability to change your mind in the face of appropriate evidence" (1990:8).

In the United States, the racist, racist, and racially prejudiced ideology of white superiority has been a continually transmuting set of ideas seeking to justify Euro-American political and economic dominance (Epperson 1990, N.d.; Gossett 1963; Jordan 1968). One of the dominant effects of this racism on subordinated subjects was captured by Du Bois in his notion of the veil: "[T]he Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (1969:45). The veil is imposed by white racism and makes the experience of African Americans opaque to mainstream white culture. Stereotypes inform the dominant group, which remains ignorant of life beyond the veil. Reports by African Americans about life on their side, or about how the dominant culture appears to them, have no place in hegemonic white discourse (Valentine 1968; Wallace 1990). Invisibility and ignorance are especially marked when studying African-American communities in New England, a region that historically has been the home of relatively few African Americans, and in which scholarly studies only infrequently pierce the veil (Greene 1942; Kaplan and Kaplan 1989; Pierson 1988).

Historical archaeology as a discipline aims to bring to light lives (across all "races") that are invisible, or only barely visible, in the documentary record (Deetz 1977:7–8; Singleton 1990). Deetz argues that material culture holds "the promise of being more democratic and less self-conscious in its creation than any other body of historical material... Although relatively few [persons] wrote, and what was written captured the personal biases of the recorder, in theory almost every person who lived in Anglo-America left behind some trace, however slight, of their passing" (1988:219).

A major goal of African-American historical archaeology has been to uncover lifeways of people whose presence in historical documents is distorted by white racism (Cowan-Ricks 1991; Singleton 1988:348). 1 The plantation colonies have been prime areas for work seeking to extricate the lifeways of African Americans and African Caribbeans under slaveholding regimes (Orser 1988, 1990; Singleton 1985). Such research has brought to light "detailed information on topics such as the existence of a [distinctive African-American] pottery tradition, building technologies, food procurement techniques, culinary practices, household equipment and personal possessions. Such topics have received little or no attention in the historiography of slavery and emancipation" (Singleton 1988:348).

At the Du Bois site there is no problem of documentary invisibility. Du Bois wrote two autobiographies, tape recorded his reminiscences, and composed short articles on life in the Berkshires. If we seek to read objects as well as texts, it is because documents and objects do not always tell the same story; we benefit from treating the material and the documentary records as independent, distinctive, sometimes complementary, and
sometimes contradictory sources of evidence on elusive pasts (Leone and Crosby 1987; Leone and Potter 1988:14–19). For Du Bois, there is also the reality that document-based biographical studies (Lester 1971; Ramperhasd 1990; Lewis 1993) lead away from Great Barrington and follow their subject around the globe. We pursue the historical archaeology of the homesite to make more visible the presence of Du Bois and the African-American community of which he was a part.

Recreating the Homesite

On the day after Du Bois’s death in Ghana in August 1963, Roy Wilkins informed the 250,000 people assembled for the March on Washington “that at the dawn of the twentieth century, [Du Bois’s] was the voice calling you here today” (Lester 1971:147; Marable 1985:93). The Du Bois Boyhood Homesite commemorates a person of local, national, and international import.

After graduating from high school in Great Barrington, Du Bois received a bachelor’s degree from Fisk University and a B.A., M.A., and doctorate degree from Harvard; but for racist academic politics, he would have received another doctorate from the University of Berlin (Du Bois 1968:146, 149, 175). His dissertation, The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870 (Du Bois 1896), was the first number in Harvard’s Historical Studies series. The Philadelphia Negro (Du Bois 1899) is arguably the first urban ethnography in the United States. As a professor at Atlanta University, he oversaw one of the earliest and most systematic sets of studies of African-American life, ranging over fifteen volumes.

Du Bois was a founder of the Niagara Movement, an important African-American civil rights organization that shaped the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He served as the director of publications and research for the NAACP from 1910 to 1934 and edited and contributed to its monthly periodical, the Crisis, a widely distributed publication. Du Bois’s ideas on most topics touching the lives of African Americans—from a description of the Alhambra in Spain, to critiques of Marcus Garvey, to considerations of Black separatism and of Marxism—were read by African Americans throughout the land. By the end of his life, Du Bois had written innumerable pamphlets and articles, more than ten scholarly books, numerous major works of fiction, and two autobiographies (Du Bois 1968, [1940] 1984; Lester 1971:55–113; Lewis 1993).

This all too brief synopsis of Du Bois’s life calls attention to his significance for U.S. history. It is also a story derived largely from the study of documents by and about Du Bois. Coming to Du Bois through the objects at the Boyhood Homesite in Great Barrington brings other people and other struggles into view, people and struggles that have largely disappeared from historical memory.

To get to the stories locked in the things of the Boyhood Homesite requires some understanding of what the things of the homesite are and how they are studied by archaeologists. This excursus on methodology does have the benefit of also showing how the discipline itself highlights some issues and ignores others, thereby contributing in its own way to the perpetuation of a silence about the position of African Americans in U.S. history.

In the summers of 1983 and 1984, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst’s Anthropology Department’s summer field school conducted preliminary archaeological surveys of the Du Bois homesite to assess the extent and condition of its archaeological remains. We sought to determine which features associated with the farmstead were still visible, to locate extant caches of artifacts and to estimate their number, and to gauge whether full-scale excavation was warranted.

From documentary sources, we first mapped the prominent surface features (fig. 1). We laid in a grid in meters (indicated by ticks along the borders of the landscape maps) with concrete datum points at the origin of the grid (N00, E00) and at the point we entered the site (N00, E42). Our subsurface testing concentrated on the area north of the house foundation to locate home-lot features, such as trash pits, middens, privies, fields and gardens, and outbuildings. We used magnetometer, resistivity, and soil phosphate survey remote sensing methods to identify these features. We further studied areas of interest identified by these techniques with .5m × .5m test pits. In addition to finds in these subsurface exposures, many artifacts were visible on the surface; we collected these, primarily to deter the interest of unauthorized amateur collectors. We also tried to retain much of the surrounding underbrush to avoid calling attention to what was shaping up as a rich archaeological site.

Figure 1 shows some of the major features identified during the archaeological survey. The foundations for the house and a well to the southwest were uncovered but not excavated at this stage. The test pits disclosed a plow zone to the rear of the house, at some points as near as fifteen meters from the house. Three trash pits were identified with the test excavations. And, finally, surface artifacts from the two large middens, approximately fifty to one hundred square meters each, were collected, although the middens were not excavated. These midden collections yielded most of the twelve thousand artifacts recovered from the site.

The focus of our studies has been on the artifacts from the two surface
middens, Midden A adjacent to the barn foundation, and Midden B next to the remains of the burned house. What activities led to the deposit of these artifacts? When were the artifacts deposited? Answers to these questions would enable us to fit these middens into a general reconstruction of the landscape that would include the less enigmatic house foundation and plow zones.

The middens are to the north of the site, behind what would have been the house. Artifacts appear quite densely on the surface of the middens, hundreds per square meter. The gap between them of some twenty meters has virtually no artifacts on the surface. This separation suggests that the middens were created by different activities at different times. In fact, we have found no pieces of any artifact that occur in both middens.

Closer analysis bears out this suspicion and leads us to interpretations of the middens. Midden A is the remains of a barn used in the 1800s for agricultural activities. Gradually, the barn became more of a depository for old and worn-out things (shoes, coal-stove refuse, and garbage from meals), and by the 1920s it had collapsed on itself and virtually disappeared from the landscape. Midden B is the remains of the superstructure of the house itself, the place where the dilapidated frame was bulldozed and burned in the 1950s. The objects in this midden were most likely used by Du Bois in his visits to the site between the 1920s and the 1950s.

We studied the question of the activities represented by the middens by comparing and contrasting the assemblage from the two middens (Hautaniemi 1989; Prunier 1983). The inventory of 10,430 objects was assigned to various functional types (table 1) (Orser 1988:233; South 1977). The frequency of different kinds of objects—say, kitchen utensils versus horse harness pieces—inform one about the kinds of activities that people on the site were engaged in and, in this case, the places on the site where the trash from these activities found its resting place.

Most of the objects in Midden A are related to foodways activities (33 percent) with storage-related objects (pieces of crows, canning jars, etc.) comprising the most frequent of these. Objects associated with food service (plates, platters, etc.) and food remains (bones) are also found in Midden A. Clothing comprises almost 14 percent of the objects in Midden A, almost all of which are shoe parts. A surprisingly large percentage of objects in Midden A is related to household activities and parts of the structure of a building; almost 40 percent of these are waste from coal stoves. Personal objects comprise a very small percentage of the shards in Midden A, three-quarters of which are parts of patent medicine bottles and other medicinal receptacles. Tools related to agricultural activities (e.g., barbed wire, horseshoes) are another very small percentage, as are the objects associated with bicycle transportation.

Midden B has some interesting contrasts to Midden A. Foodways objects comprise 58 percent of the shards in Midden B; though storage vessels are most frequent, food service objects make up more than a third of the foodways objects, and virtually no food remains were found in Midden B. Clothing is a very small percentage of the objects in Midden B; though shoe parts predominate, the forty pieces in B are far fewer than the nearly nine hundred pieces in A. Household/Structural objects are about 13 percent of Midden B. As with Midden A, window glass, bricks, and nails are found, indicating a structure. However, in Midden B we found plaster, floor tile, roofing paper, and wallboard, as well. Personal items are a small percentage of Midden B, with cosmetic
Table 1. Functional Analysis of material from Middens A and B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Midden A</th>
<th>% of Category</th>
<th>Midden B</th>
<th>% of Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foodways</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>14.89</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>33.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>1567</td>
<td>72.68</td>
<td>1471</td>
<td>64.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remains</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>10.58</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,156</td>
<td>(33.24%)</td>
<td>2,294</td>
<td>(58.16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fasteners</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other (shoe)</td>
<td>885</td>
<td>99.10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>86.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>(13.77%)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>(1.17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household/Structural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arch/const</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>47.81</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>55.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furnish/access</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>11.55</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>38.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furnish/access (heat)</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>39.54</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,186</td>
<td>(18.29%)</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>(13.21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicinal</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>77.94</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetic</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>62.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monetary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (weapon)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>(2.10%)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>(1.27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>(2.04%)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(0.71%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite

Table 1. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Midden A</th>
<th>% of Category</th>
<th>Midden B</th>
<th>% of Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3 (0.05%)</td>
<td>4 (0.10%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1,980</td>
<td>(30.53%)</td>
<td>1,001</td>
<td>(25.38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>6,486</td>
<td>(100.02%)</td>
<td>3,944</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

rather than medicinal items predominating. A very small percentage is agricultural-related items and an even smaller percentage is automobile parts.

Both middens appear to be the remains of structures and their associated trash. Midden A is the simpler structure and seems to have been the repository for objects associated with agricultural practices, foodways objects representing an emphasis on storage rather than service, and general household trash (worn-out shoes, coal-stove refuse, and garbage from meal preparations). Midden B is the more complex structure in which food service was emphasized and is a site that did not attract the refuse from everyday life.

The problem of dating these middens becomes critical. Who wore out and deposited the shoes? Who ate from the dinner service? And who used the patent medicines? We know from documents that the property passed out of the hands of the Wooster family (Du Bois's maternal relatives) and into Du Bois's hands in 1928. So we were interested to see if any of the middens related more to the Woosters' use of the property before 1928, and the other to Du Bois's use after 1928.

We are able to date the middens by close study of the ceramics and the glassware. The vast majority of the ceramics from both middens were plain whitewares, difficult to date on the basis of stylistic patterns. However, thirty ceramic shards contained maker's marks with identifiable dates of production. Study of these confirms that Midden A is the earlier of the two. Of ten ceramic lines with identifiable maker's marks found in Midden A, eight ceased being produced prior to 1928. The two remaining lines terminate in the 1930s or continue into the present; both of these begin by 1909. Thus, the Midden A maker's marks were from
ceramics most likely available before 1928. For Midden B, only five of twenty identified ceramics maker's marks terminate production before 1928; the remaining fifteen were produced after 1928, and nine of these are produced up to the present. Thus, Midden B has many lines of pottery available after 1928 and only a few from before that period. (Of course, working with dates of termination is problematic, because people can still be using a piece after its line has ceased being produced. But studies by South [1977:226] show that there is usually no lengthy curation of all common items, a result that supports associating Midden A with pre-1928 inhabitants and Midden B with post-1928 people.)

Thousands of glassware shards were recovered from the site, of which only a very few could be associated with dates of manufacture. Still, analyses of various datable marks on glassware provide additional information on the dates and associations of the middens. Generally there is considerable overlap in the date ranges of the two middens: the earliest possible production date in Midden A is 1850 and in Midden B is 1820, with both middens containing objects that might have been made quite recently. The overlap in part results from the extremely wide production ranges for glassware, some spanning a century. Despite the similarity in date ranges for the two middens, there is evidence that supports associating Midden A with pre-1928 occupations and Midden B with post-1928 occupations.

Of the twenty-eight datable types of glassware in Midden A, only one begins its manufacture after 1928; so virtually all of the datable glassware in Midden A was available before 1928. Of the thirty-five datable types in Midden B, only three ended their production runs prior to 1928, so virtually all of the datable glassware in Midden B was available for Du Bois without lengthy curation. An average date for the glassware that takes into account the prevalence of shards from various times also yields a temporal separation. The mean date for Midden A is 1919, and for Midden B, 1928 (Hautaniemi 1989).

In sum, the ceramics and the glassware suggest that the material from Midden A was deposited beginning in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, with most of it being manufactured in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Midden B contains objects deposited from the second quarter of the twentieth century until recently. Thus, not only are the middens distinct in function (barn versus house), they are distinct in time.

The middens also tell us something about the historic landscapes of the site. A barn (Midden A) was part of an agricultural way of life during the 1800s. Toward the end of the twentieth century, like many barns and attics, it began to collect the detritus of everyday life—remains from meals, worn-out clothing, coal-stove ash, and so on. All this marks the demise of an agricultural way of life and the continuance of domestic activity at the site. Domestic life in the house persisted sporadically through the 1950s. Objects of daily life in the house awaited the return of W.E.B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois and remained there when it was sold and demolished in the 1950s.

But how did the house come to rest so far from the foundation itself? And how did the barn come to fall into disrepair? These are issues about the middens that can best be understood by turning to documents about the site. Combining the insights from the documents and the objects creates a more complete picture of home-lot change over time.

The site's National Register nomination document (Parrish 1981) drew on local oral history and a site walkover to identify the approximate locations of a house foundation, barn, and well. The barn area correlates with Midden A. Indeed, the evidence of a structure with relatively few furnishings, lacking interior decorative items, and holding a number of agricultural items, seems consistent with the remains of a barn.

The National Register form also notes that the house was reported as "collapsing" in 1954. The structure was bulldozed to the rear of the site and the remains burned, forming Midden B. The artifacts in this midden are indeed those of a demolished and burned house with more complex architecture than the barn's and with the remains of cosmetics bottles and without the daily refuse, such as coal stove waste or food remains, one would expect from a site under continual occupation.

A second documentary source is Du Bois's own remembrance of the site, which he recorded in "The House of the Black Burghardt" (1928).

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 Burghhardt clan. Up and to the east of 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 beyond. Steep, strong stairs led up to Sleep, while without was a brook, a well and a mighty elm.

The neighborhood inhabited by the Burghardt clan extends along Route 23 between Great Barrington and South Egremont. An 1876 atlas (Beers 1876) identifies Harlow's, and Ira's houses, as well as Othello's (today's Du Bois site), then owned by W. Piper.

We also consulted newspapers, vital statistics, maps, the U.S. Manuscript Census for Great Barrington at the Great Barrington Town Hall
and the Du Bois Archives in the University of Massachusetts library. Finally, we conducted a title search of the property, which revealed the names of the principal owners. Apart from persons who held the land in mortgage or acted as intermediaries in transfers, these are listed in table 2. The 1830 to 1910 U.S. Manuscript Censuses provided the names of the past residents of the property and often included household members’ ages, race, sex, and occupations (table 3). A genealogy of the Burghardts (fig. 2) is based on Du Bois’s first autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn* ([1940] 1984:113), supplemented by our research (Pomerantz, Gumaer, and Paynter 1984).

The data on site owners, residents, and their kin can be woven together with the archaeological data on the barn, the house, and the agricultural fields to construct a land use history of the site. There is still much we would like to know in greater detail, but we can now sketch the general contours of change at the site as affected by shifting race, class, and gender lines in Great Barrington over a century and a half.

Historical Landscapes of the Du Bois Homesite

*Period 1 (1820–1873).* Land use at the site can be divided into five major periods. The first begins in the early 1820s when James Freeman and Lucinda Burghardt Freeman, Du Bois’s mother’s uncle and aunt, purchased the land from Horace Church. It ends in 1873 with the sale of the property to William Piper. About these years Du Bois recalled, “[I]n my family, I remember farmers, barbers, waiters, cooks, housemaids and laborers” (1968:63). He described the farmers living in his neighborhood on Egremont Plain as people who “long earned a comfortable living, consorting usually with each other, but also with some of their white neighbors” (1968:63). During this time the site was occupied to the 1850s by James and Lucinda Freeman, and afterwards by Lucinda’s brother Othello Burghardt and his family.
The contemporary manuscript censuses disclose that African Americans in Great Barrington were then employed in a variety of jobs, including servant, freeholding farmer, laborer, and tradesperson. Both women and men sold labor power or the products of their labor, and women also did the work of maintaining households with boarders. When Lucinda and James Freeman first appeared in the public records, James was employed in agriculture, as was Lucinda's brother and neighbor, Harlow Burghardt. Brother Othello, who later moved to the site, was identified in 1840 as a whitewasher, a poorly paid trade at that time. The 1850 census was the first to list by name all household residents, and in that year Lucinda was keeping house for herself, James, and a boarder, Robert Blake. On the 1860 census, Othello was listed as an agricultural laborer, as were his African-American neighbors. By 1870, eighty-year-old Othello had no listed occupation, and his wife, Sally (or Sara, now seventy-eight), was in charge of a household that included her granddaughter Inez, grandsons Adelbert and William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (listed as Burghardt in the census), and the Buckley family of white boarders (table 3).

The reconstructed landscape for the period (fig. 3) includes agricultural fields in the plow zone areas, a barn work area for agricultural and craft production, and the house area, with activities of self-presentation, play, food preparation, washing, and heat provision. Othello may have practiced his trade of whitewashing near the barn (shell is found in the early Midden A), and Lucinda or Sally may have participated in service outwork as laundresses. This landscape reveals the agriculturalists, artisans, and homemakers of a small New England farmsite.
Period 2 (1873–1928). Though early in period 1 the residents of the house retained a degree of control over the means of production, by the end of it they were increasingly involved in the sale of their labor power. By 1880, occupations had changed; the men of the site and the neighborhood were all laborers, and the women were laundresses and servants, as well as wives and caretakers of boarders. To quote Du Bois, “The living to be earned on the farms gradually became less satisfying, and the group began to disintegrate: some went to the Connecticut Valley; some went West; many moved to town and city and found work as laborers and servants” (1968:63).

Great Barrington was a growing commercial and industrial town in the mid-nineteenth century. A firm, if not overtly hostile, color line (Du Bois 1968:94, 96; [1903] 1969:44) excluded African Americans from the professions, better paying trades, and factory work. As wage work became more common for all residents, African Americans found paid service work in the houses of the professional classes and well-to-do farmers, in the hotels, dining rooms, and laundries serving the growing summer trade, and in vacation homes of the nation’s elite.

An 1886 guidebook (Bryan 1886:100) notes that Great Barrington “is coming into greater prominence than ever as a summer and autumn resort; and while it is sought more than ever by appreciative tourists . . . it is also becoming highly valued, by people who retire from work or leave the city, as a most perfect location for Country Homes.” William Cullen Bryant helped to spark elite interest in the Berkshires by writing about his frequent visits beginning in 1825. The Berkshire House was built in 1840 to receive guests, and David Leavitt, a New York merchant, bought what was reputed to be the area’s first “country home” in 1852. In the 1880s, Mrs. Mark Hopkins, wife of the San Francisco railroad builder, oversaw the building of the Searles Castle mansion at a cost of $1 million, and Du Bois himself worked as a timekeeper on its construction (Bryan 1886:82–90; Du Bois 1968:102).

The class divisions in Great Barrington by the later nineteenth century included those between agrarian workers and landowners, and between industrial workers and factory owners, all indigenous to Great Barrington. In addition, because the area had attracted the country’s newly rich, a division between those who enjoyed the “comfortable life” and their servants existed along with the other two class divisions. Racist constructions of African Americans by whites relegated them to service either for the local well-to-do or for vacationing white elites.

The occupation of the site by the Wooster family during period 2 was a product of the changing class, race, and gender relations of the late nineteenth century. In 1873 the estate of Othello Burghardt sold “the house of the Black Burghardts” to William Piper, scion of an African-American family from Sheffield, one town south of Great Barrington. Piper had married into the Burghardt family, to Martha, daughter of Harlow and Althea. Though owners of the site from 1873 to 1909, the Pipers resided in Sheffield, according to the manuscript censuses. During these years censuses list the Wooster family as residents of the site. In 1909, title to the house and land was sold by Martha Burghardt Piper to Lena Wooster.

The relationship between Woosters and Pipers is of some interest. Martha Burghardt Piper (wife of the post-1873 owner of the site and later its owner herself) was the sister of Lucinda Burghardt Wooster (wife of
Edward Wooster). This couple, with their children, resided at the site during period 2 (fig. 4). Upon Othello Burghardt's death in 1872, the title passed to Harlow, Henry W., and Albert D. Burghardt, in accordance with Lucinda Freeman's will. It is likely that Harlow, now over age seventy, was too old to keep up two farmsteads. Henry W. and Albert, in their late thirties and forties, no longer resided in Great Barrington. The sisters Martha Piper and Lucinda Wooster, however, were still in the area, and apparently in need of land. Husband William Piper was (we suppose) in a position to buy out the Burghardt men's interests in the land and then rented it to his brother-in-law Edward Wooster.

We would like to know more about why this particular course was taken. Was it the only available and affordable property at the time? Was the sale easily arranged because it was in the family? Was the Burghardt family connection to the property an overriding consideration? When Du Bois received the property as a gift in 1928, the "House of the Black Burghardts" had tremendous significance to him. Did this earlier transaction point to a similar symbolic significance of the family property for his ancestors and especially his great aunts? And, what role did the sisters, Lucinda and Martha, play in the arrangements between the Pipers and the Woosters? We suspect that it is because of these two Burghardt women that the property stayed in possession of Burghardts into the twentieth century. (When we inquired in 1983 of Great Barrington white residents about the Pipers and Woosters, we were told that Piper, the site's 1873 purchaser, was a poor white farmer; at least some had forgotten the historical association of the property in Great Barrington with the Black Burghardt family.)

The black Wooster men listed at the site in the 1900 and 1910 censuses are Edward and his son Edward. Both are shown as renting a house, rather than renting a farm. In 1900 Lucinda Wooster kept house for her family as well as for an African American, Howard Darling, a boarder (see table 3). Like her neighbors, Lucinda Wooster may have done service-related outwork during period 2, or her daughters may have been servants. One clue that suggests such scenarios is the large number of hotel-ware ceramics found in late-nineteenth-century Midden A.

Although we do not know how these ceramics arrived on the site, there are several possibilities. First, they may have been purchased to use in either the course of domestic life or catering. Du Bois indicates that his relatives included waiters and people who operated dining rooms. Bower and Rushing's (1980) work on the African Meeting House in Boston discloses that early nineteenth-century African-American caterers owned the dining ware they used in their trade. Second, the ceramics may represent a form of compensation to persons employed in the area's hotels, paternalistic in-kind "gifts" from employers of out-of-style or incomplete set items to workers or "fringe benefits" pilfered by these underpaid employees.

The reconstructed landscape for this period (fig. 4) is one in which the land may have carried symbolic value for Burghardt family continuity. It certainly was a site of the reproduction of domestic life and may have been a location of service industry outwork by women. As agricultural production at the site became less important, the barn became a place to store or dispose of seldom used objects, such as the shoes and ceramics found in Midden A. Du Bois, writing in 1928, describes many features of the site but does not mention a barn. By then the barn had already collapsed.
Not all the Burghards remained in Great Barrington or worked in the service industry. Du Bois notes, "The fate of my various relatives among the black Burghards I do not know very well. . . . Others have prospered as western farmers, one became a singer and teacher of music and another was head of the home economics department in the colored school system of a large border state city" (1968:96–97). Most notably, Du Bois himself left.

In 1885, with savings from work at Searles Castle and the assistance of four local churches, Du Bois traveled to Nashville and enrolled in Fisk University. There he observed the color line of the South. The lynchings, personal insults, rigid segregation, and lack of education for African Americans were horrifying to this Black Yankee. But he enjoyed his discovery of the cultural integrity that a large and thriving African-American community offered. His understandings of the richness of African-American culture, of its African foundation, of the history and contributions to world civilization of people of African descent, and of the struggle against the brutalities of white racism all crystallized during his years at Fisk (Du Bois 1968:101–131; [1903] 1969:96–108). He went on to earn degrees at Harvard, to study at the University of Berlin (Du Bois 1968: 146, 149, 438), and to teach and do research at the University of Pennsylvania, Wilberforce College, and Atlanta University. By the early decades of the twentieth century, Du Bois had become an increasingly prominent leader in the emerging Civil Rights movement.

Period 3 (1928–1954). During Du Bois’s NAACP years a committee of benefactors and admirers, including Clarence Darrow, John Hurst, Mary McLeod Bethune, James A. Cobb, Lillian A. Alexander, and Arthur B. Spingarn, raised funds to purchase and present to him on his sixtieth birthday in 1928 the homesite of Lucinda and James Freeman, Sally and Othello Burghardt, and the Woosters. Du Bois, a world traveler, a sophisticated member of New York’s African-American literati, and a social activist, wanted something quite different from the homestead in Great Barrington than his ancestors had. The house represented a tie to his past, a retreat from the city, and a symbol of his position in society. In a 1928 article in the Crisis he wrote that “riding near on a chance journey I suddenly was homesick for that house. . . . [However] country estates and limousines are not adapted to my income” (360–361).

Left out of his description in that article, “The House of the Black Burghards,” was any reference to production: the barn, fields, or work areas for craft production. Du Bois was primarily interested in the house and its bucolic setting as a site of past and future social reproduction. Thus, the reconstructed landscape for this period (fig. 5) includes the house, the well, and the field in early stages of ecological succession. The area of the former barn may have still been a midden for trash disposal, or perhaps merely an overgrown part of the landscape. Some additional evidence of Du Bois’s interest in the site are blueprints found in Du Bois’s papers in the University of Massachusetts Archive. Drawn by the architect J. McA. Vance of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in response to Du Bois’s instructions, they reveal the cottage of a person of letters, with bedrooms for family and guests, and a library—music room.

How many of these planned improvements were completed is not clear. Du Bois received the site at the beginning of a period that would take him away from the Northeast. He differed with the board of the

Du Bois remained active in public life. “In 1950 he became chairman of a new organization, the Peace Information Center, whose purpose was ‘to tell the people of the United States what other nations were doing and thinking about war’ ” (Lester 1971:121). Banning the atomic bomb was a goal of the PIC, a politically dangerous one in McCarthyite America. In 1951, Du Bois and other PIC officers were indicted for failing “to register as agent for a foreign principal” (Lester 1971:123). Defending himself taxed Du Bois’s resources and tried his patience, even though he was acquitted and the judge declared that the prosecutor had failed to support the charge (Du Bois 1968:385–386). Time and funds to improve the Berkshire homestead must have been subordinated to more pressing issues. Although the chimney was restored, and reroofing and some interior work had been ordered in the late 1920s, what improvements were made can only be determined by future excavation of the house area.

**Period 4 (1954–1968).** In 1954, Du Bois sold the property. He left Great Barrington as a part-time resident, though photographs show him at the site even after he sold it. During the later 1950s, Du Bois remained active in intellectual and political life. In 1961, he joined the Communist party (Du Bois 1968; Robinson 1983). That same year he accepted Kwame Nkrumah’s invitation to move to newly independent Ghana and oversee the production of the proposed *Encyclopedia Africana*. Du Bois died in Ghana on August 27, 1963, ninety-five years after his birth in a rural New England town.

Sometime during the 1950s the new owners of the homestead demolished the rundown house (Parrish 1981). New England old-field succession set in, and the home-lot reverted to shrubs and trees. The house of the Burghards now underlay a copse of trees beside a New England highway (fig. 6).

**Period 5 (1968–present).** Though the house was gone, its significance was not forgotten. In October 1969, a year after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., a dedication ceremony was held at the site. In attendance were, among others, Julian Bond, Horace Mann Bond, Ossie Davis, and the ambassador from Ghana. The meaning of this new cultural landscape was contested, however, for not all believed that Du Bois deserved this honor. Residents of the town sought to block the dedication ceremony and even threatened physical violence. Town officials delayed the dedication by questioning the legality of the use of the site as a park. Police and dissenters were formidable presences at the ceremony.

The mood of some in the town was captured in the Berkshire *Courier’s* editorial of October 16, 1969, which supported the stand of a neighbor who sought to block the ceremony.
We agree with his arguments and we admire the Selectmen for standing up and attempting to ward off this honor being bestowed on a Communist. . . . [However] blocking the dedication now would only mean trouble. . . . A cool head must be kept in dealing with the situation, for the slightest spark could touch off an inferno which would bring the town into the focus of the rest of the nation as have New York, Chicago and Detroit. Any attempt at blocking the actual ceremonies through physical efforts would certainly mean a confrontation and that is one thing which surely no one wants. . . . Let the memorial committee have its day and leave the monument to those who will undoubtedly take out their wrath on it in the weeks to come.

Those seeking to honor Du Bois prevailed, and the dedication was held. Mention of Du Bois can provoke hostility among some residents to this day (Johnson 1993). Others have changed their minds. The October 18, 1979, issue of the Berkshire Courier carried a rather different editorial written by the same editor:

Ten years have passed. We have learned that this country’s involvement in Vietnam was questionable at best. We have lived through Watergate and our faith in the country’s leaders has been drastically changed. . . . Today we recognize Dr. Du Bois for the contribution he made in his writings and through education for the betterment of mankind. The people of Great Barrington should be proud that their home town was the birthplace of this remarkable man.

It would be encouraging to report that such recognition is reflected in the creation of a cultural landscape that carries the message of Du Bois’s place in U.S. history to the general public. It has attracted archaeological and historical scholars, and the site has been purchased by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, as custodian. But otherwise it remains neglected, presenting no message to any but persons knowledgeable about Du Bois’s personal history who seek out this site in the Berkshires.

Reading Objects from Multiple Points of View

We have been able to mesh artifacts, archaeological features, documents, and reminiscences to establish the history of the W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homeste. Any such history is necessary to unlock the potential of historical places to inform the present. Beyond such chronology, however, lies the texture of life at the site: what was it like to live there as a member of the Burghardt family, a member of the African-American community of Great Barrington, and within the political economy of Western Massachusetts? Du Bois’s writings provide one source of insight. Particular objects at the site provide another.

Archaeological method is most likely to fall afoul of embedded racism at the level of reading objects to render meanings. One striking characteristic of the artifacts from the Du Bois site is their similarity to objects from Euro-American sites. The late 1800s was the period of the explosive growth of the mass market and its accompanying consumer culture. The objects of that expanding market cover all archaeological sites of the period. But did participation in the same market, in the purchase, use, consumption, and deposition of the same kinds of items, have the same meaning for people on both sides of the color line? In other words, does participation in the same market result in participation in identical cultures of consumption (Mullins 1993)? This is one more aspect of racialism, that different meanings may be masked by a veil of material similarities. Race thus can limit archaeological interpretations if they are made only from the vantage point of white consumer culture. Though we do not have the key that unlocks the multiple meanings of material life for participants in a mass culture, we would like to consider a common object of the turn of the century, the patent medicine bottle, to disclose how multivalency must be taken into consideration when looking for the meanings material objects held for residents of historical places.

We found nine identifiable types of patent medicine bottles in Midden A, and eight in Midden B. The patent medicines used at the Du Bois site included “Ayer’s Sarsaparilla,” a blood renovator that also claimed to cure “scurvy affections and diseases arising from changes of the season, climate or of life.” Three “Warner’s Safe Diabetes Cure” bottles were recovered. Warner stressed the safety of its product in both its brand name and in its advertising copy. A “Fink’s Magic Oil” bottle was also discarded at the site. Fink’s promised to cure, among other things, “colic, cholera, sore throat and neuralgia.” “Pe-ru-na,” a cure for catarrh, was also represented, as was “Musterole,” a commercial mustard plaster for colds and congestion.

Today, we tend to think of such patent medicines as hoaxes and cons. However, at the time that patent medicine use boomed, it was one response by the general public to very real increasing morbidity and mortality rates. In the late nineteenth century, these rates were increasing with the rise of laissez faire industrial capitalism, and attendant social conditions of contagion, contamination of water sources, industrial work-related hazards, and malnutrition (see Eyer and Sterling 1978; McArdle 1986; Starr 1982). At that time no one, including physicians, understood fully the cause and treatment of disease (Rosenberg 1962; Starr 1982). The germ theory was not very well understood by
researchers, physicians, or the general public and was of no practical use in the treatment of disease until the early twentieth century (Preston and Haines 1991:8-9).

One response was a strong movement for health reform as people turned to self-care—from diet and life-style changes, to relegitimation of traditional methods of care, to widespread use of patent medicines (Donegan 1986; Ehrenreich and English 1978; Nissenbaum 1980; Starr 1982). Patent medicine proprietors capitalized on the public's concern about disease, distrust of doctors, general misunderstanding about the germ theory, and traditions of self-care and community healing. Some companies offered herbal and vegetable compounds and used imagery of Native Americans to symbolize traditional, natural healing. Some stressed claims of safety in their advertisements, in response to fear about the effects of medicines prescribed by doctors. Other companies played on newfound fears of germs by advertising that their products would eliminate these unseen but deadly enemies. Many advertisers sought to establish a shared sense of identity between the purchaser and the individuals portrayed in their advertisements.

Who, specifically, were the people responsible for self-doctoring? Usually women, who were targeted by patent medicine advertising as the persons responsible for their families' health. The cult of "true womanhood" defined white middle-class women as primary health consumers and administrators. However, high morbidity and mortality also drove poor white and black women to self-care remedies. We know that many African Americans used these patent medicines. We have recovered the bottles from the Du Bois site, just as pharmaceutical bottles have been recovered from other African-American sites (Mullins 1992; Orser N.d.). Du Bois also mentions patent medicines when discussing the health of African Americans in The Philadelphia Negro (1899).

The patent medicine companies, however, portrayed only whites in their advertisements; images of African Americans did not appear. Even personal care products marketed specifically for African Americans were advertised with images of refined white women. Yet at the same time, racist, negative, African-American stereotypes were widespread in the advertising industry and were used to sell many other products. Helâın Page suggests that such advertising was a constant reminder to whites of their racial superiority, and to African Americans that their race rendered them unacceptable and demeanable (personal communication 1992). Advertising helped construct monolithic racist identities in the post-Emancipation United States that were increasingly legitimated by job, housing, and social discrimination, and by violence.

From the presence of patent medicine bottles in the Du Bois Homestie middens, we can infer that some of its residents experienced ill health and resorted to self-care. But we must resist the easy step to assuming that we already understand all that the presence of these medicines means. Here we must pause and ask questions intended to help us past the limits of our discipline's current understandings. Did Lucinda Wooster, as wife and mother, purchase the patent medicines? How did she respond to the Peru-na, Ayer's Sarsaparilla, and Warner's Safe Diabetes Cure advertising, which featured idealized white women? Did these images evoke for her the "double-consciousness" that Du Bois speaks of in his writings, "this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (1903] 1969:45)? Did Lucinda Wooster receive the message that she was invisible or an unacceptable caricature; did she resist this essentialization?

Knowledge about African-American women's perspectives on such specific objects as medicine bottles is not yet part of an archaeological disciplinary matrix, nor can we now do more than raise questions about their meanings to the women of the Du Bois homestie. But we need to remember that the archaeological "facts" do not speak for themselves. We lack important understandings of how identity formed among African Americans in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century New England, and of how mass consumption was experienced in the African-American community at a time when insult and debasement were a major feature of product advertising (Mullins 1993).

That we are only partially able to bring the Du Bois site to life exemplifies the power of racism in structuring the scholarship and everyday common sense in a racially divided society. Du Bois offers a chilling image that may assist archaeologists of all colors to remember the power of the veil of race in America as they attempt to bring African-American consciousness into the mainstream of culture history. In Dusk of Dawn, written some forty years after he offered the metaphor of the veil in Souls of Black Folk, he presented the metaphor of the cave.

It is as though one, looking out from a dark cave in a side of an impending mountain, sees the world passing and speaks to it; speaks courteously and persuasively, showing them how these entombed souls are hindered in their natural movement, expression, and development; and how their loosening from prison would be a matter not simply of courtesy, sympathy, and help to them, but aid to all the world. One talks on evenly and logically in this way, but notices that the passing throng does not even turn its head...
gradually penetrates the minds of the prisoners that the people passing do not hear; that some thick sheet of invisible but horribly tangible plate glass is between them and the world. They get excited; they talk louder; they gesticulate. Some of the passing world stop in curiosity; these gesticulations seem so pointless; they laugh and pass on. . . . Then the people within may become hysterical. . . . They may even, here and there, break through in blood and disfigurement, and find themselves faced by a horrified, implacable, and quite overwhelming mob of people frightened for their own very existence. ([1940] 1984:130–131)

The plate-glass wall of racism is not impenetrable, Du Bois explains, and at times people from the outside seek to communicate with people in the cave, and to try to champion their cause in the outside world.

But this method is subject to two difficulties: first of all, not being possibly among the entombed or capable of sharing their inner thought and experience, this outside leadership will continually misinterpret and compromise and complicate matters, even with the best of will. And secondly, of course, no matter how successful the outside advocacy is, it remains impotent and unsuccessful until it actually succeeds in freeing and making articulate the submerged caste. (132)

The lack of historical places on our contemporary landscape that remind all persons of the omnipresence of African Americans throughout U.S. history, even in rural New England, helps create a cultural amnesia and contributes to the recreation of racism. Even with such sites identified, without rich and textured stories these places will realize only a small portion of the power historical sites have to inform the public, create identifications, and combat racism. These stories will be recovered only as scholars reflect on the limits racism has imposed on their discipline, and seek, as part of their everyday scholarly business, to invent antiracist methods and theories that recover liberating understandings of the past. When the color line runs less deeply in our disciplines, when the theoretical imperatives that arise from a fuller appreciation of African-American existence in a racially divided society are accepted, and when one readily and regularly wonders about how places, people, and things were experienced by the full variety of structurally differentiated people who lived in the past and built the present, then veils may be pierced, and caves exited and entered.

Notes

We thank Roger Sanjek and Steve Gregory for their assistance with this paper. Paynter especially thanks Homer Meade, Jim Parrish, Linda Seidman, Ken

W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homesite

Fones-Wolf, John Kendall, Helán Page, Rita Reinke, Rick Gumaer, Paul Mulins, Jim Delle, Jim Garman, John Bracey, Ernie Allen, Bill Strickland, Kevin Sweeney, Tom Patterson and the many students who worked on the Du Bois collection, especially those in the 1983 and 1984 summer field schools. Hautaniemi thanks Helán Page, Alan Swedlund, and Paul Mulins. Muller thanks the folks mentioned above and includes Terry Epperson and Faye Harrison for their ongoing support in our work.

1. Singleton (1988:348; 1990) notes that another major focus of African-American archaeological studies has been the identification of Africanisms, culture traits found in the Western Hemisphere traceable to African cultures (see also Deetz 1988a; Emerson 1988, N.d.; Ferguson 1991, 1992; Mouer et al. N.d.). Though important, the search for Africanisms can obscure African-American creativity in a wide array of material constructions (Howson 1990; Paynter 1992; Perry and Paynter N.d.).

2. In a study of the relationship between historic houses and legitimating legends for local families, Anne Yentsch (1988:12–17) finds a similar pattern of “forgetting” patronymic family associations when continuity is through women, and when residents are African American.

References


R. Paynter, S. Hautaniami, N. Muller


Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Deirdre English. 1978. For Her Own Good. New York: Doubleday.


W.E.B. Du Bois Boyhood Homestite 317


---. N.d. Proprietary Medicines and Archaeological Meaning. Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Typescript.


---

Racism, Language Variety, and Urban U.S. Minorities: Issues in Bilingualism and Bidialectalism

Divergence from "standard" English is easily perceived. Dialect differences are frequently the instrument or excuse for discrimination along racial, ethnic, geographic, and educational lines. For two U.S. populations in particular, African Americans and Latinos, physical differences and socioeconomic indicators reinforce linguistic stigma, and all three are used to rationalize separation, prejudice, inequality, and more blatant forms of racism that are expressed in or linked to language. Among African Americans, dialect differences in English speech, writing conventions, and communication styles are used both to explain away differential treatment by outsiders, and to strengthen the group's cohesion in the face of devaluation and separatism. Similar language-based stigma and resistance are found among Latinos through Spanish and Latino varieties of English. In this essay I explore several aspects of language discrimination, especially its educational dimensions, and offer perspectives on the dynamics of clashes between vernacular and standard language forms in relation to Latino and African-American groups. Balanced against the external discrediting of linguistic varieties, subordinate group resistance and self-respect help maintain ethnolinguistic vitality.

Verbal expressions accompany oppressive policy and acts. Persons are dehumanized when referred to as "those people," "males," or "females." Terms such as underprivileged and non-English proficient perpetuate a deficit theory regarding cultural diversity. The insistent anglicization of unusual names and the corrective repronunciation of accented speech send messages of devaluation regarding vernacular and non-native speech varieties.

In education, neglect and illegality are linked to race when funding for desegregation efforts is misdirected to receiving schools in "white" neighborhoods, leaving overcrowded and inner-city schools with Latino and African-American majorities underfunded and unchanged (Hess and Warden 1988). Using compensatory monies to bolster a bureaucracy