



W. E. B. Du Bois

February 23, 1868 - August 27, 1963

Great Barrington, Massachusetts

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois died in Accra, Ghana, on August 27, 1963. He was ninety-five. The news reached the March on Washington the next day; the speakers paused over a man who had left the country that would not let him finish his work in peace. Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, on February 23, 1868, he became the first Black man to earn a Harvard doctorate, wrote *The Souls of Black Folk*, and helped found the NAACP.

He argued with Booker T. Washington over tactics, edited *The Crisis* into a national instrument, and in old age joined the Communist Party and took Ghanaian citizenship after the United States had treated his passport as a problem. *The Philadelphia Negro* and *Black Reconstruction* are still books a serious reader has to meet. He was exacting, sometimes impossible, and unwilling to pretend that patience was a strategy.

This memorial names Great Barrington, the New England town that formed him and now keeps a house site as a pilgrimage. He did not die there. The grave is in Accra, at the memorial centre that was once a presidential residence. The double consciousness he named did not end at either border.

He wrote into his nineties as if retirement were a European idea. Ghana gave him a house and a funeral the United States would have complicated. Great Barrington keeps a boulder and a pilgrimage. *The Crisis* bound volumes are the American grave, if a journal can be one. Accra buried a New England scholar who had decided the Atlantic ran both ways. The March on Washington named him the next morning and then went on with the work he had spent a life refusing to call finished.

Services

Died in Accra, Ghana, on August 27, 1963. Interment at the former home of Ghana's first president in Accra. Great Barrington, Massachusetts, is the birthplace this page names, not the place of death.

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