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### Historian seeks to fulfill dream

*Derek Gentile, Berkshire Eagle Staff*

Monday, September 12 GREAT BARRINGTON — Every summer, local historian **Randy Weinstein**, the owner of North Star Books on Main Street, encounters several dozen visitors who want to know where the W.E.B. DuBois Museum is. "They get into town, and they go over to the Chamber of Commerce and ask about DuBois," he said. "And the chamber always says, 'Go see Randy.' "

There is no DuBois Museum, of course. Weinstein gets the referrals because he has in his store a comprehensive map of all the local sites in town that are historically significant to DuBois, an internationally acclaimed civil rights activist and author.

But Weinstein plans to change all that. The space adjacent to his bookstore became available a while back, and he has decided to expand his store by adding about 2,000 square feet to the east.

That expansion, he said, will house a small museum that will contain Weinstein's already impressive collection of historical items connected to DuBois.

These include books, letters, pamphlets and photographs, including a letter written by DuBois to Funk and Wagnall's Co. that politely explains how his name is pronounced ("dew-boys," according to the letter).

In addition, Weinstein said, he plans to feature works of other African Americans in the room.

The items in the museum will be available for researchers. Weinstein also hopes to have regular lectures and seminars about DuBois and other famous African-Americans.

He said he was moved to think about some kind of centralized showcase for DuBois in the wake of several years of hearing people's requests.

"It became obvious to me that people are crying out for something like this. There are plenty of good people doing plenty of good things to showcase DuBois. This is not an attempt to compete with that. This is something I think the community needs."

Weinstein is referring to various historical markers and sites around town, sponsored by local organizations. He said he emphatically supports the efforts of these groups.

He concedes that he could have looked to rent space on Main Street, to create a more centrally located facility. But the bookstore sits just to the south of the Mahaiwe Cemetery, which is "sacred ground" for DuBois, he said.

"The fact that he buried his son (Burghardt) here in 1899 and then came back 50 years later and buried his (first) wife (Nina Gomer), says to me that W.E.B. DuBois thought a lot about this community during his life."

Weinstein is in the process of obtaining designation of the museum as a nonprofit entity and hopes to raise about \$20,000 for the conversion of the space. He already has pledges from local supporters, he said, and anticipates that the money will be raised fairly quickly.

He said he is hoping to have the facility open by the end of the year and to host a formal opening in February. DuBois was born on Feb. 23, 1868.

Besides opening a museum for supporters of the famed activist, he also hopes to attract those who are curious about DuBois' life and may not know the whole story.

"I'd like to educate people about this man," he said. "He was a giant."

