

DuBois Area High School Student Contributors



Front Row: (left to right) Lily Brubaker, Sarah Whitaker, Monica Sheffo
Second Row: Jenny Reese, John Jacobson, Ella Glabicki, Aaron Lines,
Catherine Sheffo, Drew Drum (Not photographed: Alli Mosco)

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Downtown DuBois *Pennsylvania* Now & Then



A WALKING TOUR



A Collaborative Project:

DuBois Area High School Students & DuBois Area Historical Society, Inc.

About the Walking Tour

By: Sarah Whitaker

This walking tour booklet was created and developed by DuBois Area High School student volunteers as part of a community service project. Sarah Whitaker, a DAHS sophomore, was the student leader for this project. She helped Mrs. Anne Young, the Secondary Pupil Enrichment Program teacher, to facilitate this project as part of her Girl Scout Gold Award Project. On this tour you will learn about the hotel where Thomas Edison once stayed; the opera house that once featured John Philip Sousa; the monumental Great Fire of 1888; and many more intriguing DuBoisian landmarks and events. Mrs. Young, Sarah, and the high school volunteers would like to thank Mrs. Laura Read, Mr. Daniel Minns, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Schott, Mr. Galen Kilmer, Mr. Todd Thompson, members of the DuBois Historical Society and Jeff Tech for their help with this booklet.

Quick History of the Great DuBois Fire

By: Sarah Whitaker

At 1:00 PM on June 18, 1888, a fire was discovered in John Baker's Hotel, currently the railroad crossing on West Long Avenue. The fire-fighting apparatus in DuBois at that point consisted of a single hose cart, which only trickled when turned on and whose water line was broken. Strong winds blew the fire toward Main Street and everything was consumed from there to State Street and south to Weber Avenue. At 3:00 PM the wind direction changed and the fire spread further down West Long Avenue. It was thought to have stopped at the brick Windsor Hotel, now the Ft. Worth Hotel & Restaurant. Trying to stop the fire with dynamite only made the fire spread more quickly. The wind ceased at nightfall and the fire eventually burned itself out, leaving fourteen blocks completely leveled and thousands homeless. Every building that was still standing was used as shelter. Cities immediately sent money and supplies, leaving no one hungry for long. Miraculously, no one was killed. The city of DuBois was then rebuilt from scratch.

17 Now/Then: First United Methodist Church: 100 West Long Ave. By: Lily Brubaker

While the purpose of the United Methodist Church has not changed over the years, its structure has. This building used to have a beautiful tall spire and steep stair case until the spire was struck by lightning and the exterior structure had to be renovated. Residents of DuBois reminisce about the original structure, which provided an outdoor location for bands to play for passersby going to the theater and other downtown locations; occasionally bands still play there today.



18 Now: Gray Foundation Apartments/Then: Courier Express 54 West Long Avenue By: Lily Brubaker and John Jacobson

Gray's Apartments now stand at the location of the local newspapers—the DuBois Weekly Courier, the morning paper, and the DuBois Daily Express, the afternoon paper. They merged to form the Courier Express in the 1940s. This merger came about because of the trying times of World War II. The way reporters received information changed from wire service to a satellite in the 1980's. The Courier Express started as a three-story building, but was later renovated into a five-story building, which then included apartments and a fine-dining restaurant. The building also had large windows that allowed passersby to see the newspaper presses in operation. The Courier Express is still in operation today and is located on Jeffers Street.



19 Now: St. Michael's Terrace/Then: The Avenue Theater III West Long. Ave By: Ella Glabicki

Looking down West Long Avenue, one will see St. Michael's Terrace. Surprisingly enough, one of DuBois' finest movie theaters, The Avenue Theater used to stand in its place. Built by a partnership known as Patton and Way, it opened on September 2, 1902, with its first showing being the Messenger Boy. This theater even contained an in-house orchestra to perform the music for the silent movies. In 1929 the theater showed its first talking movie titled The Follies of 1929. The movies of Tom Mix, a hometown movie star, were shown here. It was long considered the finest place to bring your special someone.



20 Now: Ben Rossi's Jewelry/Then: The Carlton Theater 46 West Long Avenue By: Ella Glabicki

Where the fine jewelry store of today, Ben Rossi Jewelry, now stands used to be the Carlton Theater. This was the place to go see thrilling vaudeville shows. Acts that one could see included dancing, clowning, juggling, animal training, and opera. DuBois was a hopping town when it came to entertainment, and the Carlton Theater was a great contributor to live performances.

**12 Now: Spherion/ Then: Federal Building:
127 North Brady Street By: Catherine Sheffo**

The Federal Building, now the Spherion building, housed the post office and social security office. The building itself was decorated with murals and built by the WPA. Several buildings and a livery stable were moved to make room for its groundbreaking in 1914. However, because of World War I, it remained unfinished until 1925.



**13 Now: Small Building Then: City's 2nd Lock-up Jail
By: Alli Mosco**

The small building across from today's DuBois Municipal Building is what remains of what was thought to have been a temporary lock-up from 1898 until 1906 after the first jail was destroyed.



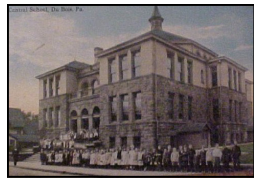
14 Now: DuBois City Building/Then: Volunteer Hose Co. #1, Doctor's Hospital, Old YMCA: 16 West Scribner By: Alli Mosco

The area where the DuBois Municipal Building now stands previously housed three other businesses. In the late 1800s, the Doctor's Hospital and the Volunteer Hose Company #1 stood there. The Volunteer Hose Company, built in 1888, was rebuilt after a fire started in the kitchen in 1947. The Doctor's Hospital, added to the area in 1897, was the town's first hospital, caring for 151 patients during its first year. A Board of Directors was formed in 1898 and a Nursing School was started. In 1936 the hospital was converted to the old YMCA, which was there until moving to its current location in 1979.



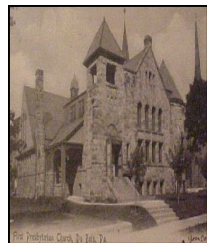
**15 Now: S & T Parking Lot/ Then: Central School Building
35 West Scribner Ave. By: Sarah Whitaker**

S & T Bank now stands where there was once a two-room schoolhouse on West Scribner Avenue, then known as William Street. It became a junior high school and later the public high school of DuBois. Informally called the "White School" in 1883, the school was moved across the street and an eight-room, two-story New Central School Building was built on the site. That building was later known as Scribner 7th.



**16 Now/Then: First United Presbyterian Church
43 West Scribner Avenue By: Sarah Whitaker**

The DuBois First Presbyterian Church, once called Bethany Presbyterian, was introduced by Huntington Presbyterian. First organized in DuBois on May 9, 1876 in a barn called the New Hotel Barn of Rumbarger House, it was renamed in 1885 its present name. This building is one of the few buildings to survive the fire of 1888.



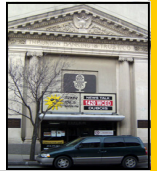
**1 Now: Peaceable Kingdom/Then: DuBois Weekly Courier
24 West Long Ave. By: John Jacobson**

Today's Peaceable Kingdom was once the site of the morning paper, The DuBois City Courier, which later changed its name to the DuBois Weekly Courier. In January 1879 Butler and Horton began this seven-column paper. In 1882 the firm was sold to J.A Johnson who dropped the word "weekly". Then in 1884 Edwin and Ezra Gray acquired interest in the newspaper. Edwin's employment at the DuBois Courier was meant to be short-term but turned into a lifelong involvement and commitment when he, along with his brother Ezra, purchased the entire newspaper in 1886. After this transaction the Gray brothers changed the paper from an independent to a Republican Weekly.



**2 Now: Sunny 106 /Then: The Union Bank Building
12-14 West Long Ave. By: John Jacobson**

The DuBois Union Bank has a history of movement. Started by Benjamin McCreight in 1900 with a \$125,000.00 credit, it opened on North Brady and West Scribner. In 1903, the bank moved to 12-14 West Long Avenue and stayed there until 1993. The first president was A.R. Van Tassel. One of the most prestigious and remembered aspects of the bank in its West Long incarnation was its professionally carved stone eagle. A tunnel runs under Long Avenue from the bank vault to an outside secured location.



**3 Now: Hockman Candy/Then: Hays Drug Store:
2 West Long Ave. By: Jenny Reese**

Located at the corner of West Long Avenue and North Brady Street, the store was used for the medical practice of Dr. S.H. Pettigrew in 1880. The building burned in the fire of 1888, after which the remnants were bought by George Vosburgh and his brother. In 1901, Charlie Hays bought the building and opened Hays Drug Store in 1913. The building was home to Shenkles Pharmacy and is remembered for its wooden Native American statue in the storefront as well as having the first telephone in the city. The building is now home to the Hockman Candy Store.



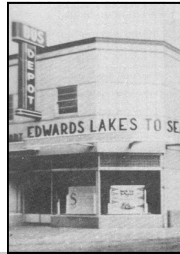
**4 Now: Giancarlo's/Then: First National Bank of
DuBois: 1 West Long Ave. By: Jenny Reese**

The DuBois National Bank, founded by John E. DuBois, first opened its doors in November 1904. After the death of John E. DuBois the bank closed. The bank eventually reopened and managed to grow during the Great Depression, and in 1950 it merged with Deposit National Bank. For a while the building was the office of Bell Telephone of PA.



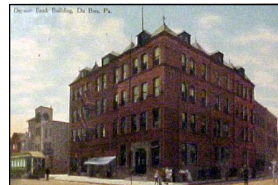
5 Now: DuBois Public Library/ Then: Edwards Lake to Sea System Bus Terminal: 31 South Brady Street By: Drew Drum

The DuBois Public Library now stands at the former location of Edwards Lake to Sea System Bus Terminal. Wes and Ferris Edwards opened this terminal in the 1920s. When it first opened, the buses traveled only from DuBois to Clearfield, but one of their trusted employees, Chuck Denny, persuaded the Edwards' to let him extend the bus routes to include destinations such as New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.



6 Now: First Commonwealth Bank / Then: DuBois Deposit Bank: 2 East Long Ave. By: Drew Drum

The First Commonwealth Bank was formerly known as the DuBois Deposit National Bank. This building, like many others, suffered severe damage as a result of the Great DuBois Fire of 1888. However, officers thought that this building would be spared from the fire because of its location. Since this bank was thought to be in a secure area, officers from the First National Bank moved everything of value to the vault of the DuBois Deposit Bank. Sadly, the officers were wrong and the fire hit, causing extensive damage to the vault's door. After the door was finally opened, money was found pasted and embedded in the door as a result of the intense heat which turned leather cases into liquid glue. Officers worked endlessly to literally chisel every dollar from the door. Until new banks were built, the First National Bank and the DuBois Deposit Bank shared a temporary home along with other businesses and firms in the old Central Opera House that was located on the corner of Brady St. and Long Avenue.



7 Now: Bethany Covenant Church/ Then: Fuller Opera House: 26 East Long Avenue By: Monica Sheffo

Bethany Covenant Church was formerly known to early residents of DuBois as the Fuller Opera House. This Baptist church located on East Long Avenue foreclosed and was reopened as the Fuller Opera House in 1897 by Sidney Fuller. As a present to his wife, the Opera House hosted numerous performances, including a show by John Philip Sousa, The March King. A year later Sidney Fuller died, the building was repurchased, and in 1906 was transformed into the First Regular Baptist Church of DuBois.



8 Now: Luigi's Parking Lot /Then: The Commercial Hotel later renamed the Pershing Hotel By: Monica Sheffo

The Commercial Hotel first opened its doors in 1889 at a time when DuBois was experiencing great economical growth. Many railroad travelers stayed there because there were 19 passenger trains arriving every day until 1912.

(Location 8 Continued)

The hotel changed owners multiple times and also underwent numerous renovations. In 1937 two of the three storerooms were replaced by Harris Theater, a movie theater that showed classics like Gone with the Wind. The hotel was later named the Pershing Hotel.



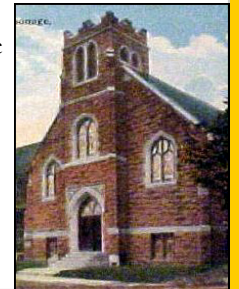
9 Now: Rindosh State Farm Insurance/ Then: L.E. Weber Clothier Building 43 North Brady Street By: Aaron Lines

The State Farm Insurance building was formerly known as the L.E. Weber Clothier Building. Everything from a furniture and appliance store to a pet store resided here at one time. It has been noted by DuBois residents, that during Prohibition, a speakeasy was located on the upper floor. A welcomed guest would approach the door, give the codeword or password, and be watched through a peek hole. Here they could "speak easy" about alcohol and drink.



10 Now: Reitz Theater/ Then: St. Paul's Evangelical Church also known as The Cornerstone Church 36 East Scribner Ave. By: Aaron Lines

In 1884 St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church was built on Scribner Avenue. After surviving the 'Great Fire of 1888', this church became the first DuBois public building to have electric lights, which were installed in 1892. In 1992, this building also known as the Cornerstone Church, was purchased by Cultural Resources Inc. and named "The Paul G. Reitz Theater". Today, one of the most prominent features of the downtown is the Reitz Theater's newly renovated steeple. Stage performances are still held in this former church multiple times a year.



11 Now: Sheetz Parking Lot/ Then: Logan Hotel/Cherry Shoe Repair: 124 North Brady Street By: Catherine Sheffo

Considered one of the great hotels of DuBois, the Logan Hotel was built in the early 20th century on what is now the Sheetz parking lot. A four story addition made it a prominent feature of the downtown skyline until it was destroyed by fire in the 1970s. The hotel was visited by Thomas Edison who was invited by John E. DuBois to observe the DuBois Traction Passenger Railway, a power trolley system. He reportedly slept in the lobby because he was afraid of a possible fire. The location was also occupied by Cherry Shoe Repair, owned and operated by Italian immigrant James Vincent Cherry.

