

EDITORIAL DIGEST & MANUSCRIPT FILE

PROJECT: Negroes of ...  
 EDITOR: \_\_\_\_\_ FILE TITLE & NO.: Biographies  
 REPORTER: Curtwright ART. NO.: 13  
 DATE: - COPY TITLE: George Washington Carver  
 WORDAGE: 1200  
 REWRITE: \_\_\_\_\_ INDEXED BY: *Carroll* DATE: 7-2-42

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By Wesley Curtwright

Assigned by Charles B. Cumberbatch  
Group XVI,

1200 words

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#### BRIEF HISTORY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

George Washington Carver, Director of Agricultural Research and Professor of Chemistry at Tuskegee Institute, 1922 recipient of the Spingarn Medal, Fellow of Great Britain's Royal Society of Arts, also known as the "Peanut Wizard" and "Sweet Potato King," was born of slave parents in a one-room log cabin in 1864 at Diamond Grove, Missouri. At the time of his birth his mother already had two little daughters and another son. His father was a slave on a neighboring plantation.

The Civil War was just drawing to a close when Carver was born, but slavery and kidnapping of Negroes for sale were still rampant. While Carver was still a baby, a band of marauders from Arkansas entered the cabin where Mary Carver lay sleeping with her four children, and carried off the mother and babe. Their master, Moses Carver, a German by birth, sent a messenger in pursuit with a race horse and some money to repurchase the captives. The mother was never found, but George was found, where he had been left with some people, half dead of whooping cough. He was repurchased with the horse, valued at \$300, and returned to the Carvers.

A series of misfortunes left George an orphan completely alone. His father had fallen from an ox team and died while he was yet a baby. Shortly afterwards his two little sisters died. His brother, nine years

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his senior, died when George was 19.

The Carvers adopted George and his brother and were kind to them. However, they gave them little training and left them largely to themselves. George became a great nature-lover, working with plants and pets. He was called George Washington because he was so faithful and truthful. He was a boy of quiet temperament and poor health, and became skilled at the domestic arts of cooking, sewing, washing, etc.

Carver studied a blue-back speller which was available and expressed an ardent desire for an education. Mr. & Mrs. Carver assented, but offered him no financial help. So the boy set out for a school for Negroes in Keosho, a settlement 8 miles away. Here he was befriended by other Negroes, who themselves had very little. Though suffering many privations he remained until he had exhausted the possibilities of the crude little school.

Next, at the age of 12, he went to Fort Scott, Kansas, where his formal education began in 1876. Here, as always thereafter, he earned all his expenses by cooking and washing, at both of which he was expert. No matter what his need he would never overcharge for his work, and would never accept charity. From Fort Scott he went to Minneapolis, Kansas, where he finished high school.

After finishing high school Carver saved his money

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and journeyed to a college in Iowa which had accepted him by mail. When the president saw that the applicant was a Negro he refused him. His money being exhausted, the boy opened a laundry. He again saved money and went to Winterset, Iowa, where he obtained a job as cook in a hotel. Here, at a white church which he attended, <sup>he attracted</sup> the attention of a kind lady who gave him singing lessons.

Carver attended Simpson College at Winterset, earning his way by laundry work. He also studied music and painting, and became skilled at musical composition. After three years at Simpson he went to Iowa State University, where he graduated with a B.S. degree in agriculture in 1894. He was then 30 years old. Two more years and he obtained his M.S. at the same school. He was retained on the faculty of the university, doing laboratory work in bacteriological and systematic botany, and placed in charge of the greenhouses.

That same year Booker T. Washington visited Iowa and asked Carver to come to Tuskegee. Carver accepted, and was given room for a laboratory, time to work in, and charge of agriculture and science classes.

At Tuskegee Carver's greatest object has been to help the Southern farmers. To this end he has taught them to use muck and leaves from the forest for fertilizer. From the common clays of the South he has developed shades of dye unknown since the days of the ancient

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Egyptians. And he has developed from the common peanut more than 200 different products, and from the sweet potato 178. He advocated the cultivation of these two crops, easily grown in poor soil, to take the place of the cotton destroyed by the boll weevil. Before ~~1922~~ 1928 he had issued 39 bulletins on agriculture.

Following is a partial list of the products Carver has developed from the peanut: 5 kinds of breakfast-food, 2 grades of flour, all flavors of ice cream, cheese, candy, salad oil, instant coffee, face powder, leather, 19 shades of dye, metal polishes, axle grease, toilet and laundry soaps, ink, glycerine, medicine, mixed pickles, face bleach, washing powder, milk, wood stains, chocolate bars, caramels, butter, flour, meal, lard, stock food, brittle, candies, bisque, sprouts, relishes, salve, tan remover, shampoo and printer's ink.

From the sweet potato he has made dyes, tapioca, crystallized ginger, flour, meal, starch, library paste, mock cocconut, cereals, ink, shoe blacking, coffee, chocolate compound, bisque powder, dyes, candies, rubber compound, stock food, molasses, wood fillers, caramels, etc.

Carver spoke before the Ways & Means Committee of the U.S. Senate on a proposed tariff for peanuts. Originally allotted 10 minutes, he was kept talking for 1 and 1/2 hours. He has lectured at white and Negro colleges all over the country. By his appearances at white Southern universities, rotary clubs, etc., he is

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educating the South on the race problem, although he never mentions race in his speeches. He is greatly loved for his knowledge, modesty and quiet bearing.

Carver has turned down all offers to work elsewhere than at Tuskegee. One of these offers, according to Miss Ovington, amounted to a salary of 6 figures. When Thomas A. Edison sent a special representative to secure his services in Edison's laboratories, he said that his work in the South was not yet finished, and he did not feel worthy of the offer.

Carver has patent rights on his discoveries, but very little has been done to commercialize on them. "The monetary side interests me least," he says. "I believe that the biggest contribution my work will make is that of education. I have only scratched the surface of the uses of these products."

Following are the names of a few of the Tuskegee bulletins published by Dr. Carver: "Some Ornamental Plants of Macon County," "How To Grow The Peanut," "How To Grow The Cow Pea," "How the Farmer Can Save His Sweet Potatoes," "How To make & Save Money On The Farm," "Feeding Acorns," "Experiments With Sweet Potatoes."

In addition to his work in the peanut and sweet potato, Carver has developed products from scuppernongs and pecans. He is recognized here and abroad as an artist, one of his paintings having been valued at \$4,000 at Chicago's World Fair. His name was submitted

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without his knowledge to the British Royal Society of Arts, and he was elected there in 1917.

In appearance Carver is very dark, with no apparent white blood. He is tall, but thin and stooped. Mild in manner, he is modest almost to a fault. He assumes no credit for his discoveries, calling them "direct revelations of God," and he desires not to be made the subject of any biography.

He is deeply religious. To him there is no conflict between science and religion. He is a student of the Bible, and one of his favorite paraphrases is "Ye shall know science and science shall make you free."

After perusing several accounts of Dr. Carver, two things remained puzzling to the writer. One was the conflicting descriptions of the wizard's height. All agreed that he is small, or thin. One said that he is "very tall," and another that he is "about six feet." Others referred to him as a "little man," and two eye-witnesses have called him "very short" and "of medium height" respectively.

The other remarkable thing was the complete absence of any reference to Dr. Carver's marital status, or to his lack of it. I have heard that he is a bachelor, but his biographers do not state that much. It is said that as a bachelor he has upset a popular fallacy by being skilled in domestic arts.

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