

Man's Slave to World's Greatest Scientist

George Washington Carver is a fascinating and thoughtful person to study. I enjoyed reading about George Carver in various books. It was interesting to read about all the things he made with the peanut and the sweet potato. As I read I realized I have some things in common with George. For example, we both play piano, grow plants, like flowers and painting. These are some things I liked about George Washington Carver. The first was the way he faced segregation. He never fought back. The second was the way he worked to help other blacks and children with polio. This is why I wrote about the scientist George Washington Carver.

Sometime around 1864 in Diamond Grove, Missouri, on a cold winter night, a little baby was born. His name was George. He was born to a slave, so his exact birth date is unknown. His Mother's name was Mary and his Father had died sometime before. He also had a brother Jim and a sister Melissa.

One cold winter night on the Moses Carver farm where George and his family were slaves, bushwhackers came to steal slaves. Moses Carver hid with George's brother Jim. George and his mother and sister did not hide fast enough and were stolen. Little George was found, but his mother and sister were not. The baby that was brought back to the Carvers was very sick. When the Emancipation Proclamation became law, Susan and Moses Carver adopted George and Jim. Now George and Jim can have the last name of Carver.

As a boy George was often sick, so he could not work as hard as Jim. He helped Aunt Susan with the housework. George also had a lot of time to do whatever he liked. Often he was in the forest tending his garden of sick flowers. One day when Mrs. Baynham saw Aunt Susan's flowers, she learned that George was the one who made them look nice. She asked him to

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come to her house and help her roses. At age nine people started calling him the Little Plant Doctor. Mrs. Baynham invited him to Sunday School. He went and loved it. But he wanted to go to school. Aunt Susan gave him a spelling book to learn from.

Finally when George Carver was ten years old, he went to Lincoln School for blacks in Neosho, Missouri. He stayed in the home of Andy and Maria Watkins. To earn his keep, George did the laundry for Maria. While he was in Neosho he went to an African Methodist Church with the Watkins. That Christmas the Watkins gave George a Bible, which he read everyday for the rest of his life. He stayed at the school until he know more than his teacher. So George Carver moved to Fort Scott, Kansas, to go to high school. He graduated from high school at the age of twenty-one.

Then he wanted to go to college; but no blacks ever went to college. Yet he applied at Highland College. At first he was accepted; but when he got to the college, he was turned down because of his skin color. Following that big disappointment, he decided to try homesteading in Ness County, Kansas. However, he still wanted to go to college. Five years later, he applied at Simpson College and was accepted. He was the school's first African-American Student.¹ He studied art at Simpson College and he loved to paint. But he wanted to help his people; and to do so, he had to study agriculture. So he transferred to Iowa State Agricultural College. The more he learned, the more he wanted to teach his people about the soil and growing plants. In 1894, George received a Bachelor's Degree; and two years later he graduated with his Master's Degree in Agriculture.

¹Adler; pg. 17.

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After receiving his Bachelor's Degree, George Carver taught at Iowa State Agricultural College. Besides being the first black person to graduate from Iowa State, he was also the school's first African-American teacher. In addition to teaching, he cared for a greenhouse of plants.

On April 1, 1896, George received a letter from Booker T. Washington asking him to come and teach agriculture at Tuskegee Institute, a college for black people. Immediately, George sat down and wrote back to accept the offer. At Tuskegee, George started out with very few students in his classes. But word soon got out that his classes were interesting and more students wanted to take his classes.

While at Tuskegee, George started a Bible class for the students. At first not many students came, but soon others learned that his Bible class was very exciting and enjoyable. More students were gobbling up their supper so they could attend the Bible class.

George liked teaching his students, even calling them his children. But there were many more black farmers who could not come to school. The idea came to George of using a wagon to go to the black farmers to teach them. The wagon, called the Jesup Agricultural Wagon, was Tuskegee's school on wheels. In the wagon was a plow, plant specimens, seeds, and other things needed to teach.

One thing George needed to help the farmers learn was that cotton was taking nutrients out of the soil. Other crops could be grown to put the nutrients back in the soil. George persuaded some farmers to plant goobers, sweet potatoes, or cowpeas. Goober is the African word for a peanut. The farmers had a hard time selling their new crops because there weren't many uses for them. Therefore, George W. Carver came up with over three hundred

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products from the peanut. He also made over 100 types of products from the sweet potato.

George W. Carver helped a lot of people. He helped poor black farmers make a living by teaching them agriculture. He also helped white people to respect the black people through his experiments and speeches. George helped children with polio by massaging peanut rubbing oil on their legs.

On Tuesday, January 5, 1943, at 7:30 PM, George Washington Carver died at the age of 79. He is buried at Tuskegee Institute. George is still remembered for his work with the sweet potato and the peanut. Although he was a baby without hope, he became a great scientist who was guided by God. "George Washington Carver, with his goodness and devotion, helped not only his own people, but all peoples of the world."²

² Alik; pg. 29.

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