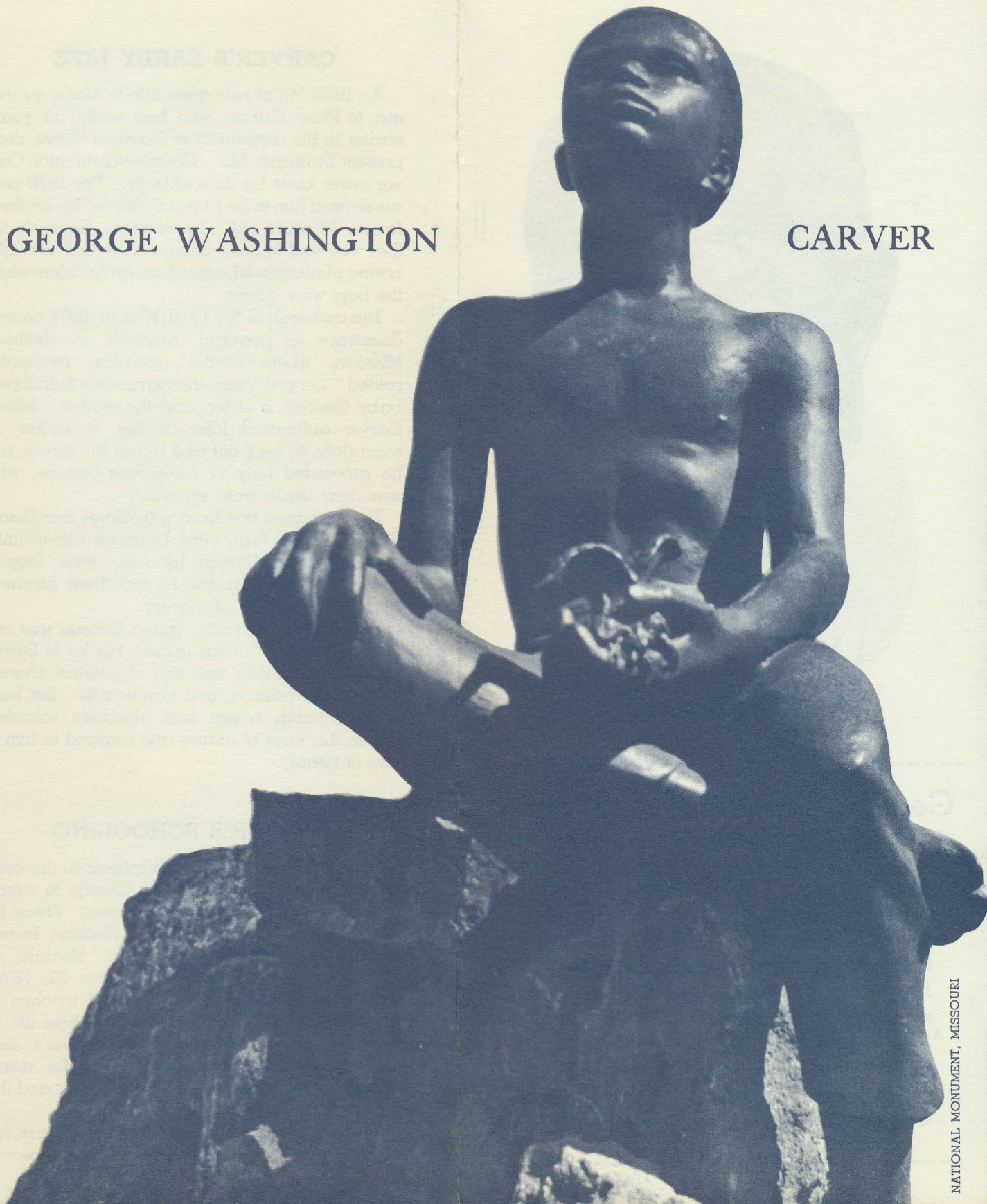


GEORGE WASHINGTON

CARVER



CARVER'S EARLY LIFE

An 1855 bill of sale gave title to Mary, a slave girl, to Moses Carver, who had settled 17 years earlier in the community of Diamond Grove, near present Diamond, Mo. George Washington Carver never knew his date of birth. The 1870 census showed him to be 10 years old and his brother, James, 12 years old. By tradition, George's father was said to have been a slave from a neighboring plantation who died from an accident when the boys were young.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 proved disastrous to peaceful residents in southern Missouri, where border guerrillas frequently raided. On one foray, the marauders kidnapped baby George, a sister, and the mother. Moses Carver authorized John Bentley, a soldier on scout duty, to seek out and return his slaves, but he succeeded only in recovering George, who was near death from exposure.

The orphaned boy lived with Moses and Susan Carver on the farm near Diamond Grove until his midteens. Though he was never legally adopted by the Carvers, he took their surname after the abolition of slavery.

Because of his frailty, young George was not expected to do arduous labor. His lot in Susan Carver's household was one of general chores: cooking, laundering, and handicrafts. But long walks through woods and meadows schooled him in the ways of nature and inspired in him a love of beauty.

CARVER'S SCHOOLING

Since there were no Negro schools in the community, Moses Carver allowed George to attend school for a time in nearby Neosho. There he lived with Andrew and Mariah Watkins, known to all as "Uncle" Andy and "Aunt" Mariah. A certificate of merit, dated December 22, 1876, and signed by S. S. Frost, his first teacher, is the only known document from his school life in Neosho. (Personal effects from Carver's stay with the Watkins are displayed in the visitor center. They include his bed, wardrobe, and the large family Bible.)

"From a child I had an inordinate desire for knowledge, especially music, painting, flowers,



George Washington Carver

NATIONAL MONUMENT • MISSOURI

Born into slavery on this small farm in southwestern Missouri, George Washington Carver rose to become an eminent teacher and humanitarian. His fame as a botanist, agronomist, and pioneer conservationist has spread worldwide. Carver's life demonstrates the opportunities afforded in the United States to men of ability and energy, regardless of their origin, and his accomplishments are today a living part of America's heritage.

and the sciences, algebra being one of my favorite studies," Carver once said. In his quest for an education, he later attended schools at Fort Scott, Olathe, Paola, and Minneapolis, Kans., supporting himself by cooking, laundering, and other odd jobs. After finishing high school at Minneapolis, Carver entered a business college in Kansas City, taking courses in shorthand and typewriting. For a brief period he was employed at the Union Depot in Kansas City as a stenographer.

At the age of about 26, after failure to gain admission to Highland College, Highland, Kans., Carver entered a homestead claim on 160 acres in Ness County, Kans. He built a one-room sod house and, with a few meager farm implements, planted rice, corn, and fruit trees.

Successive droughts drove him out in June of 1888, and in 1890, on the advice of friends, he enrolled at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, where his talents as a painter, pianist, and vocalist flourished. One of his paintings won honorable mention at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

But Carver felt that art and music were not his real destiny. With the bent of a naturalist, his talent asserted itself in a compulsion to "grow things" and to teach and lead his people. To pursue his inclinations, he entered Iowa State College at Ames, renowned for its departments of botany and agriculture. He was the first Negro to enroll there, and, scholastically, he excelled.

After earning a degree in science in 1894 (his bachelor's thesis was entitled "Plants as Modified by Man"), he was appointed to the faculty as an assistant in botany. Two years later he received his master of science degree, majoring in botany.

CARVER AT TUSKEGEE

Though Carver seemed happy at Iowa State, immersed as he was in work, he was invited in March 1896 to join Booker T. Washington's staff at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Both founder and head of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute for Negroes, the famous Negro educator brought Carver to Tuskegee to set a good man experimenting in agriculture for the larger purposes of helping the Southern Negro achieve

dignity and stature and of raising their standard of living. Since most of Alabama's Negroes were poor farmers, advances in practical agriculture could not fail to help them significantly. In 1896 Carver was appointed director of the newly formed Agricultural Department of Tuskegee Institute.

Carver's career at Tuskegee falls into three parts: from 1896 to 1915, when Booker T. Washington died; from 1916 to 1921, a period during which Carver remained obscure; and from 1921 until his death on January 5, 1943, the years of publicity and fame.

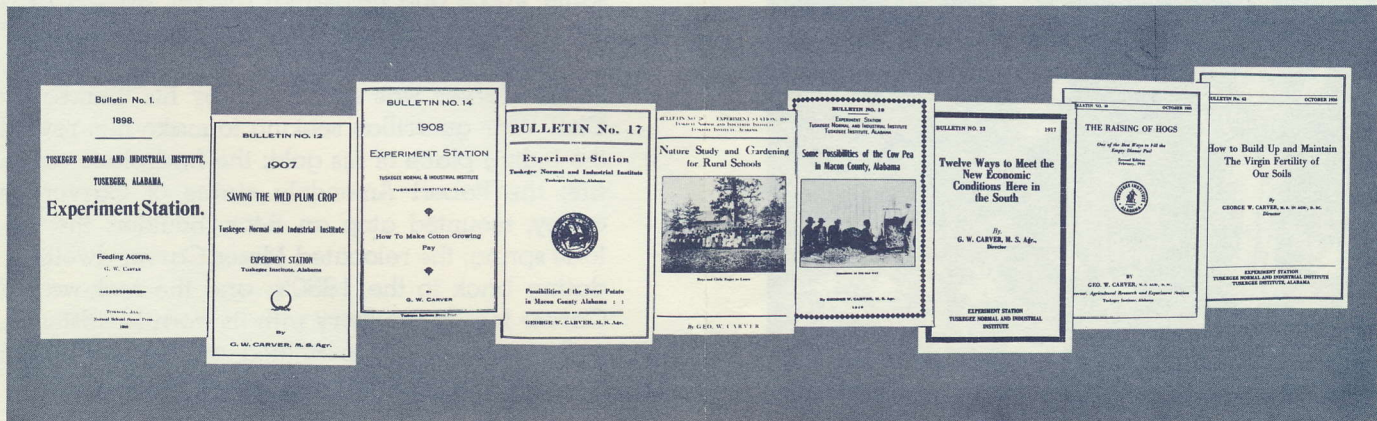
Most of Carver's contributions to the Negroes of Alabama and nearby States came in the form of bulletins published by Tuskegee Institute. In all he wrote 44 of these informational reports in an effort to spur the practical application of the latest agricultural chemistry knowledge to the endemic farming problems of the Deep South. The first bulletin appeared in 1898, and between that time and 1915 thirty more came out. Eight were published in the next 2 years, but from 1927 to 1943 Carver issued only six more. He also published seven circulars of a practical nature on farming and the home use of agricultural products. His only patents were for two paint pigments and a cosmetic derived from peanuts.

The bulletins and circulars presented in simple language a host of solid information about good farming methods, most of which was quite new to the Negro farmers and others in Alabama for whom the information was intended. The message of the bulletins was soil building, crop rotation, property improvement, and use of natural fertilizers. Other key measures that he advocated were utilization of local natural resources and expanded industrial use of farm products. Macon County, Ala., was Carver's test area. There he experimented to find the crops and species best suited to that area's soil and climate.

Carver had a marked capacity for recognizing and applying good ideas. He once stated his philosophy: "Look about you. Take hold of the things that are here. Let them talk to you. You learn to talk to them." In a similar vein, his faith was allied to his science: "I like to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting system, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in." From his efforts there went out to the small farms and hamlets of Alabama and the Deep South practical agricultural knowledge adapted to the region's needs.

Carver's friends and well-wishers included such prominent men as Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Henry Ford, Thomas A. Edison, and

Perhaps Carver's greatest contribution lay in his efforts to help the poor farmers of Alabama wrest a living from an indifferent soil. His bulletins, with one exception, were directed toward practical ends: feeding the wild acorn and lowly cowpea to livestock; using peanuts and wild plums in a hundred recipes; improving the soil; heralding the sweet potato. Simply and concisely written, they made the work of the laboratory available to the plowman. It is from this early concern for the disadvantaged that Carver's fame grew.



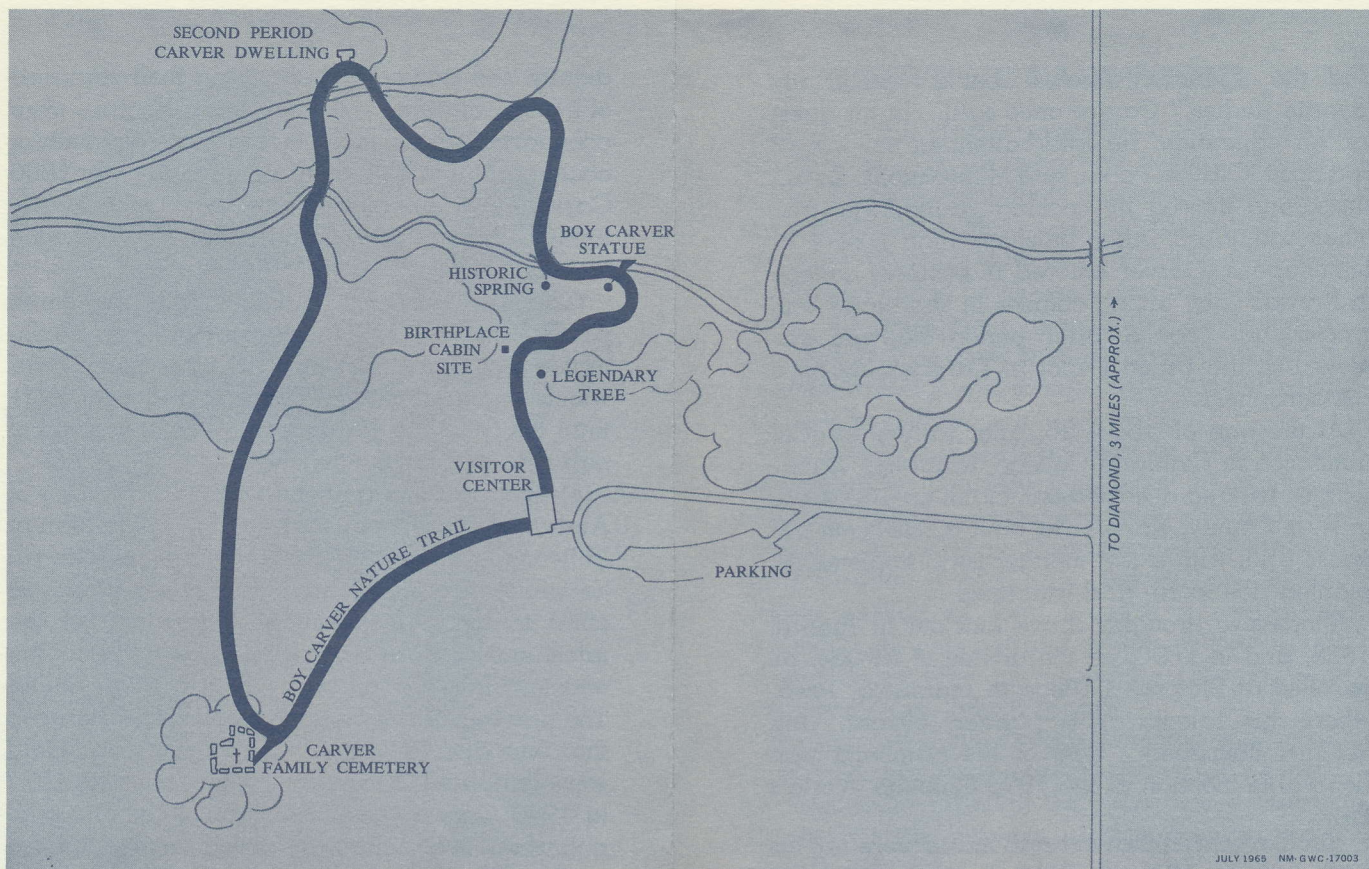
Henry C. and Henry A. Wallace. Among the honors he received were the Theodore Roosevelt Medal for Distinctive Service to Science; the Spingarn Medal for Distinguished Achievement by an American Negro; appointment as Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, London; honorary doctor of science degrees from Simpson College and the University of Rochester; the Honorary Birthday Award, Thomas A. Edison Foundation; and appointment as a collaborator in the Bureau of Plant Industries of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

When Carver died on January 5, 1943, after a fall on ice, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent a telegram to Tuskegee that read in part: "The things which he achieved in the face of early handicaps will for all time afford an inspiring example to youth everywhere."

He bequeathed to Tuskegee Institute an art collection and his lifetime savings of about \$33,000 for scholarships.

The tree from which Moses Carver is said to have been hung by his thumbs by Civil War guerrillas seeking his gold cache.





ABOUT YOUR VISIT

From either Neosho, south of the monument, or Carthage, north of the monument, take U.S. 71 Alternate to the town of Diamond. From there travel west for 2 miles on County Highway V and south for almost a mile on a county highway to the monument entrance.

A self-guiding trail starts at the visitor center and winds along the stream and through the same woods and fields that Carver walked as a boy. On this ¾-mile trail are: the old walnut "hanging tree," from which, according to legend, Moses Carver was suspended by his thumbs by Civil War guerrillas seeking to make him reveal the hiding place of his gold; the birthplace cabin site; the Robert Amendola statue of Carver as a boy, mounted atop an 8-ton boulder; the historic spring; the relocated Moses Carver dwelling, dating back to the 1880's; and the rock-walled Carver family cemetery with its worn headstones.

Camping is not permitted on the monument grounds, and picnic facilities are limited.

ADMINISTRATION

George Washington Carver National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this monument is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, historic, and recreational heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of the people.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 38, Diamond, Mo., 64840, is in immediate charge of the monument.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—The Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Revision 1965

GPO : 1965—O-784-957