

# *Booker T. Washington*

NATIONAL MONUMENT • VIRGINIA



*"He lifted the veil of ignorance from his people . . .*

# Booker T. Washington

## NATIONAL MONUMENT



**T**HIS is the birthplace of a man who became a recognized leader of his race in America. The life of Booker T. Washington—from slave cabin to national and international fame and respect—demonstrates that a man's origin need not determine his destiny.

### EARLY LIFE

Jane Ferguson, a Negro slave and cook on the plantation of James Burroughs, gave birth on April 5, 1856, to a son she named Booker. For 12 years he was known by this name only.

The infant child grew up in a one-room cabin with a dirt floor, a fireplace, and a

"potato hole." There were no glass windows in the cabin and Booker T. Washington could not remember sleeping on a bed until after emancipation. Food for the slaves was a ". . . piece of bread here and a scrap of meat there. It was a cup of milk one time, some potatoes at another." On Sundays a "treat" came from the "big house"—two spoonfuls of molasses.

Despite the poor conditions, a remarkable amount of warmth and respect existed between the Burroughs' slaves and their owners, who themselves probably lived in but little better conditions. The Burroughs' home was not a multicolonnaded ante bellum mansion lavishly surrounded by magnolia-scented grounds. On the contrary, the 207-acre farm was poor. Nonetheless, in size and productivity, it was typical of pre-Civil War mountain and Piedmont plantations. The main crops were tobacco, corn, oats, wheat, and flax. In the fields the Burroughs worked side-by-side with their slaves.

As a slave boy too small to do heavy work, Booker was kept busy most of the time doing the lighter tasks. He took corn to the mill, carried water to men in the field, and shooed flies from his master's table.

One day, not many months after Booker's ninth birthday in 1865, all the slaves were told to gather the next day in front of the "big house." Excitement ran high for

*. . . and pointed the way to progress through education and industry."*

something big was in the wind. And big it was indeed, for, whether or not they realized its full significance, the 10 slaves of the Burroughs plantation were about to take their first breath as free people.

Next morning from the "big house" porch they heard the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation. The announcement brought great jubilation. They were free.

But emancipation created problems as well as bringing physical freedom. For many slaves freedom meant bewilderment and confusion. For Booker T. Washington it was opportunity to pursue a place of respect in society.

For Booker, the next 5 years were filled with hard work and a struggle to learn. Having moved with his family to Malden, W. Va., Booker worked at a salt furnace and in coal mines, and at the same time tried to educate himself. Painstakingly, he learned the alphabet from "Webster's Blueback Spelling Book." Later he managed to gain the rudiments of an education at an elementary school by working at the furnace 5 hours before school and returning to work in the mine in the afternoon. It was on his first day of school that he gave himself a second name. When the teacher asked his name, he calmly replied, "Booker Washington."

**"One Negro boy (Booker)" . . . This property inventory of the Burroughs plantation also lists his mother, Jane; his brother, John; and his sister, Amanda.**

1 Lot chimney cables		
2 sacks salt		
Carplines & contracts		1 00
20th Bble Key etc		10 00
10th jars guys & other		2 50
		5 50
	And found	\$15 33 50
	And bro's forwards	15 33 50
1 Negro man (Melinda)		600 00
1 Negro woman (Sophia)		250 00
1 Negro woman (Janet)		250 00
1 Negro man (Silas)		1000 00
1 Negro boy (Lewis)		500 00
1 Negro girl (Mary Jane)		500 00
1 Negro girl (Sally)		700 00
1 Negro boy (John)		550 00
1 Negro boy (Booker)		400 00
1 Negro girl (Amanda)		200 00
		<u>\$7083 50</u>

Later he added the T. when he learned that his mother had named him Taliaferro.

In the mine he overheard fellow workers talking about Hampton Institute, a school for Negroes, and made up his mind to attend. Before starting on the 500-mile journey, he worked for a year and a half in the home of Gen. Lewis Ruffner, owner of the mine. From Mrs. Ruffner, he learned the spiritual values of cleanliness, systematic hard work, and punctuality, which he practiced throughout his life.

When he was 16 years old, Booker set out on foot for Hampton, accepting rides when they were offered. In Richmond he slept beneath a wooden sidewalk, working briefly as a laborer, saving his earnings to cover his expenses at Hampton. Once there, his "entrance examination" consisted of sweeping a classroom; subsequently he worked as a janitor to pay his way through school.

After graduation, he worked as a waiter in a summer hotel in Connecticut, taught school in Malden, W. Va., for 2 years, and studied for 8 months in Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C. After this period he was invited to deliver the "postgraduation address" at the 1879 commencement at Hampton. His speech, "The Force That Wins," plus the fact that some of his pupils from Malden were so well prepared when they got to Hampton won him a faculty position there.

### *TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE*

In 1881, when he was asked to recommend a man to establish a Negro normal school in Alabama, Gen. Samuel C. Armstrong, President of Hampton Institute, knowing Booker's character and ability, immediately recommended him for the job. Washington saw that the plight of the freed Negroes was

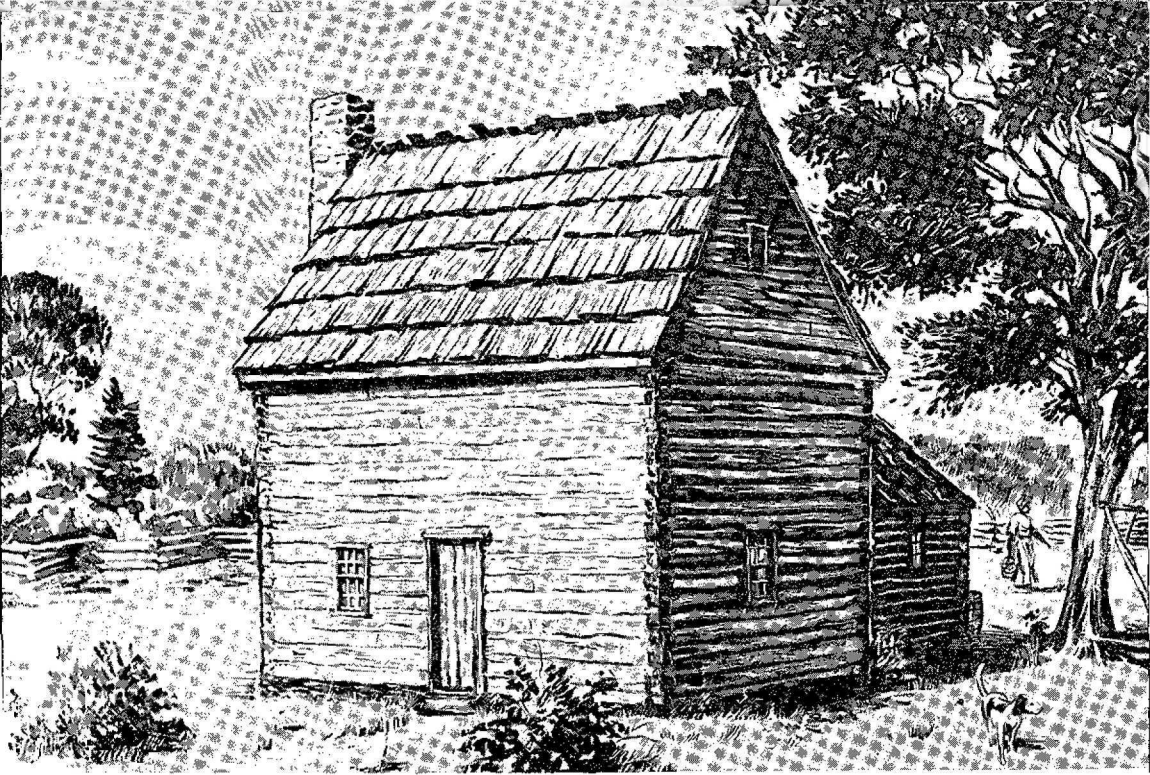
desperate; he believed that the solution lay in helping them to become economically independent. Spurred by that belief, he began the job with \$2,000 for teachers' salaries, 40 pupils, and a shanty near a Negro Methodist Church. Using the church as an assembly hall, he opened the doors of Tuskegee Institute on July 4, 1881. The school embodied Booker T. Washington's spirit and ideas and ultimately became the Nation's leading and most influential advocate of industrial education for the Negro.

### *THE ATLANTA SPEECH*

In 1897 Washington made his epochal "Atlanta Speech," one of the more notable speeches ever delivered in the South. In it he made the allusion to "separateness" which set forth a "separate but equal" doctrine of race relations: "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." It won the praise of many, and condemnation from others. It also brought Booker T. Washington into national prominence. To three presidents in succession—William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Howard Taft—Washington soon became unofficial adviser on racial matters and political appointments.

### *HIS MANY PURSUITS*

Besides his time-consuming job as administrator and fundraiser for Tuskegee, Booker T. Washington had many other activities. He initiated organizations to aid Negroes. Among them were the annual Negro Conference at Tuskegee and the Negro Business League. Because of his outstanding ability as an orator, he was in frequent demand, and made hundreds of speeches, usually to raise money or to plead for racial understand-



*In the "Big House" lived Booker's owner, James Burroughs, with his wife Elizabeth, and their children. Conjectural painting by Sidney King.*

ing. He wrote 13 books, the most famous being his autobiography, *Up From Slavery*. When he died in 1915, Tuskegee Institute included 107 buildings and over 2,000 acres of land, representing an assessed value of more than 1½ million dollars.

### WASHINGTON THE MAN

Booker Washington's greatness lay in both his personal achievement and his influence. His rise from slavery to leadership was an object lesson. Preaching the gospel of the dignity of work, and the helping of oneself, he did more than any other person to help the Negro of his day in a practical way. He demonstrated to his fellow men the value of

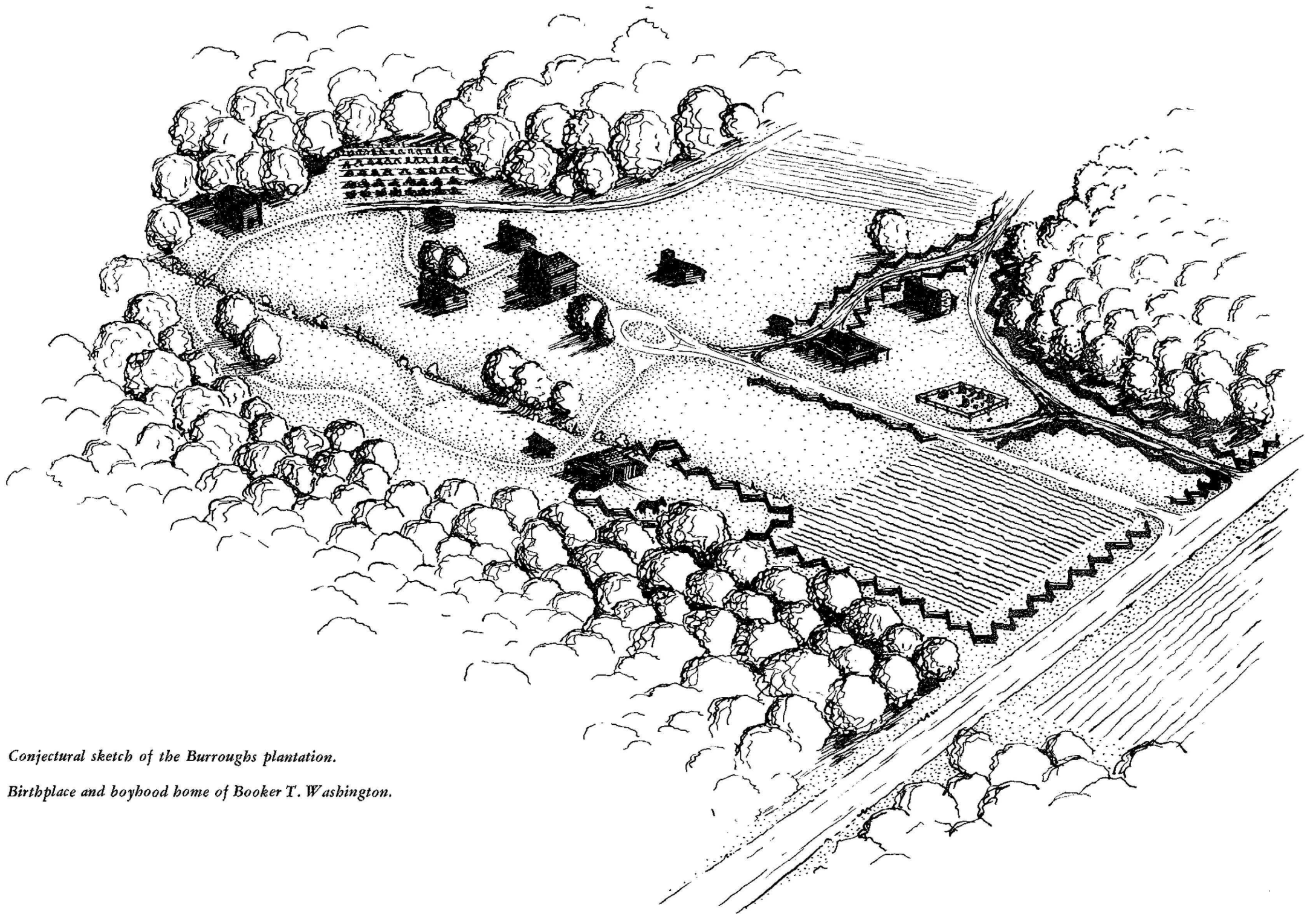
gaining economic stability as the most effective step upward for the race. He devoted his life to helping his people on the long, hard road from dependence in slavery to independence in freedom.

### THE BURROUGHS FAMILY

James Burroughs, and his wife, Elizabeth, had 14 children. All six of the boys served in the Civil War. Two of them, Frank and Billy, died in it. Billy is buried in the family cemetery beside his father.

### THE MONUMENT

Booker T. Washington National Monument contains 200 acres, comprising the



*Conjectural sketch of the Burroughs plantation.*

*Birthplace and boyhood home of Booker T. Washington.*



*Booker T. Washington*

original Burroughs plantation. Located here is a replica of the slave cabin similar to the one in which Booker was born. The spring from which Booker drew water continues to flow, and the catalpa and juniper trees that were growing when he was a boy still stand today.

The area was established as a National Monument on June 18, 1957, and became a part of the National Park System.

#### **HOW TO REACH THE MONUMENT**

The monument is 16 miles east of Rocky Mount, Va., on State Route 122, and 22

miles south of Roanoke by County Road 634 or State Route 116.

#### **ABOUT YOUR VISIT**

You may visit the monument at any time during daylight hours. The self-guiding trail, which you may enjoy walking, tells of life on the Burroughs plantation and of Booker's part in it while he was a slave. Those who plan to visit in a group may contact the superintendent in advance and arrange for a guided tour.

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

Booker T. Washington National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is P.O. Box 1710, Roanoke, Va., is in charge of the monument.

#### **MISSION 66**

Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Fred A. Seaton, *Secretary*  
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