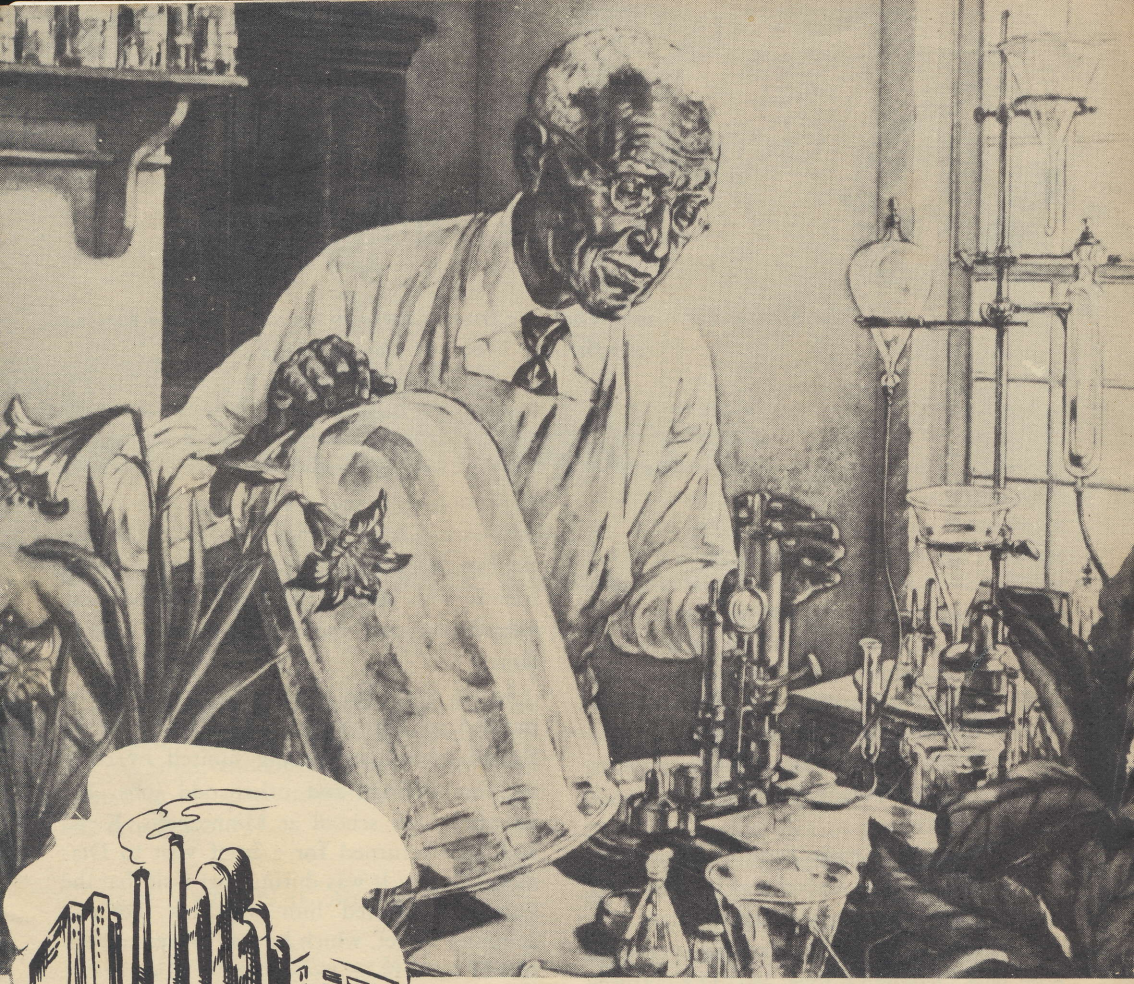

George Washington
CARVER

NATIONAL MONUMENT • MISSOURI

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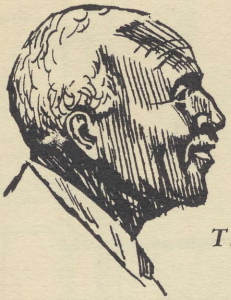


George Washington Carver

NATIONAL MONUMENT

The birthplace of one who rose from slavery to become a world-famous scientist and benefactor of mankind

The Congressional act which authorized the establishment of George Washington Carver National Monument insures a lasting memorial to this humble man. His practical and momentous achievements in the field of scientific agriculture and chemurgy led to his worldwide fame. This was a signal triumph of the human spirit, for Carver rose to eminence from a lowly beginning as a sickly, penniless, orphaned slave boy, endowed only with a thirst for learning and abiding sense of kinship with his Creator.

YOUNG CARVER

Records of the Census Bureau indicate that George Washington Carver was born in 1860, the son of a slave woman named Mary. She was owned by Moses Carver who operated a farm near Diamond Grove, Mo. The outbreak of the Civil War, in 1861, proved disastrous to peaceful residents near the southern Missouri border where border guerrillas made frequent raids. On one of these forays, the marauders kidnapped the slave mother and her baby. A neighborhood posse was authorized by Carver to exchange his horse for his slaves, but they succeeded in recovering only the child, who was near death from exposure.

Under the care of the kindhearted Carvers, who adopted him as their son, the frail boy was nursed back to health. Until his early teens he remained with them at Diamond Grove, helping with the household chores and taking long rambles through the woods. Then he went to nearby Neosho for 9 months of schooling, being taken in by one of his own race, "Aunt Mariah Watkins." She was the first of a succession of generous and loving friends who sensed the boy's ambition and helped him over the pitfalls on the road to fame.

In his quest for knowledge, young Carver traveled to Fort Scott, Kans., where he attended school, supporting himself by cooking, laundering, and other odd jobs. He attended high school at Minneapolis, Kans., and then returned for a brief visit to Diamond Grove. It was during that visit that the Carvers presented him with his mother's spinning wheel, which he was to treasure the rest of his life.

After a misadventure in homesteading in western Kansas, Carver gave thought to his further education. Through the intervention of friends, he was enrolled at Simpson College at Indianola, Iowa. Here his remarkable talents as painter, pianist, and vocalist flourished, but he felt that art and music were not his real destiny. He wanted most of all to make things grow! Accordingly, in 1891, he entered Iowa State College at Ames, renowned for its excellent departments in botany and agriculture. He was the first Negro to enroll there. It was there that his true genius, his wizardry for nurturing flowers

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 enjoyment of its people.

and plants and converting their fruits into a multitude of useful products, first revealed itself. But Carver did not devote all his time to studying. In the Iowa Agricultural College Corps he rose to be an officer. Upon receiving his master of science degree in 1896, he had the distinction of being appointed to the faculty as an assistant in botany.

CARVER AT TUSKEGEE

Although Iowa State seemed to offer Carver everything he had dreamed of, he now received an appeal which was to determine the course of his remaining 47 years. Booker T. Washington, head of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute for Negroes in Alabama, asked him to join his staff, not only to pursue his experiments, but to aid his people to achieve stature and dignity. With his own background of deprivation, discrimination, and struggle, Carver, knowing that he could help, answered the call. No one could have estimated the illimitable extent of this help. He was to be instrumental in greatly improving Southern agricultural methods and creating a better balanced economy to end the reign of "King Cotton." He was also destined to become a great single force in creating racial understanding.

What Carver saw at Tuskegee when he first arrived was enough to challenge the most dedicated soul, for poverty and erosion were everywhere upon the land. Patiently, he began to build a Department of Scientific Agriculture and Dairy Science. He worked to overcome the ingrained inertia and resistance of his people, to whom "farming" meant bitter unrewarding toil in the cotton fields.

From a rubbish heap in a gully came the materials and tools for the first primitive laboratory, symbolic of Carver's lifelong campaign against the waste of resources. In 1897, a large brick building erected by students and faculty was proudly dedicated by James G. Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture and Carver's former professor at Ames. Here Professor Carver quietly began to perform his seeming miracles. He developed fertilizers from swampy muck and pigments and pottery from Alabama clays. He praised the value of the tomato, then scorned as inedible, the sweet potato, the peanut, and the soybean—then new and strange to America. He preached for crop rotation, and a balanced diet, and against the burning of the brushlands. He organized Farmers' Institutes and a "School on Wheels"—perhaps the earliest home demonstration unit in America—and inspired dozens of young teachers to go out into the world and carry his message of wise conservation. He even made a piano concert tour to raise funds for his laboratory.

Eventually, Carver taught less and less, devoting much of his time and energy to endless experiments. From his perpetually cluttered laboratory came word of scores of new ideas for the utilization of plant products, which formed the bases for whole new industries and established his reputation as one of the world's great chemurgists. For the guidance of the small farmer he issued a series of bulletins with such titles as "The Pickling and Curing of Meat in Hot Weather" and "How To Grow the Tomato and 115 Ways To Prepare It for the Table."

RISE TO FAME

Among the many visitors attracted to Tuskegee by the magic of his name were Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt; Thomas A. Edison, who offered him a large salary to join his staff; and Henry Ford, who foresaw a new industrial empire based on plastics. He testified convincingly before Congressional committees on the economic potential of Southern crops. He was appointed a collaborator in the Bureau of Plant Industries of the United States Department of Agriculture.

However, the first public acknowledgment of his unique talents came not from his own country but from England, where, in 1916, he was elected Fellow of The Royal Society

Birthplace cabin site.

of Arts. Among the many high honors subsequently bestowed upon him by universities, societies, and foreign governments, perhaps none pleased him more than the doctor of science degree conferred in 1928 by Simpson College, which had unhesitatingly admitted the shy young Negro student many years before.

Death came to the aging scientist-educator on January 5, 1943, after a fall on the ice. He was buried at Tuskegee, beside Booker T. Washington. One of the finest tributes to his memory was contained in a telegram received by the Institute from President Franklin D. Roosevelt: "All mankind are the beneficiaries of his discoveries. The things which he achieved in the face of early handicaps will for all time afford an inspiring example to youth everywhere."

Dedicating himself wholly to his work, Carver never married. His entire savings of some $30,000, consisting largely of uncashed salary checks, he bequeathed to Tuskegee. Of retiring disposition and often plainly dressed, Carver startled those who had preconceived notions of how a great scientist ought to look; but careful observers noted his striking profile, his piercing eyes, and his delicate sensitive fingers. Henry A. Wallace, who knew Carver as a youth at Ames, has perhaps best explained his secret: "His outstanding characteristic was a strong feeling of the eminence of God." There could be no more appropriate epitaph for this man than the Biblical quotation used by one of his several biographers: "The Earth Is the Lord's."

CARVER'S ACHIEVEMENTS

A list of the marvels of Dr. Carver's creative research in the field of chemistry would fill several pages. From peanuts alone he derived more than 300 products, such as milk, cream, buttermilk, cooking oil, coffee, paper, stains, insulation, and flour. Over 100 products were synthesized from the sweet potato, such as starch, tapioca, mock coconut, sirup, breakfast food, and wood stains. He made cotton yield not only fine fabrics but also such unlikely things as paving blocks, boards, cordage, paper, and rugs. It seemed that Carver could convert almost any waste material to some useful article. He created artificial marble from wood shavings, beautiful wall hangings from feed sacks and wrapping strings, rugs from okra fiber, charming landscapes from watercolors derived from coffee grounds and orange peels.

In 1938, a building was set aside at Tuskegee Institute as a Carver Museum to house his priceless personal collections and to preserve the laboratory where so many of Nature's secrets were unfolded. In the museum were exhibited many of the innumerable domestic and commercial products of his creative skill, as well as the Carver Art Collection. Dr.

Moses Carver family cemetery.

Carver's versatility was demonstrated by his brush paintings in oil and Alabama clay, finger paintings, and intricate needlework—all created in his spare moments. The museum was rebuilt in 1947.

THE NATIONAL MONUMENT

George Washington Carver National Monument, although authorized by Congress in 1943, was not formally established until June 1951, after Congress appropriated sufficient funds to purchase the property from private owners and title was vested in the United States. The national monument was formally dedicated on July 14, 1953, the tenth anniversary of the act of authorization. Douglas McKay, Secretary of the Interior, gave the principal address.

The monument consists of 210 acres, comprising the substantial part of the old Diamond Grove Plantation. All of the masonry structures on the modern farmstead were erected about 1916 and are being utilized temporarily for administrative purposes. However, there are several features of historic interest which you may see on a walking tour of the grounds. These include the traditional birthplace log cabin site; the second Moses Carver dwelling, or plantation; the recently rehabilitated Moses Carver family cemetery; and the walnut grove, including the tree from which, according to legend, Moses Carver was suspended by guerrillas in an effort to make him disclose the hiding place of his gold.

At present, the development of the monument has been limited to improvement of the circle trail and erection of signs, markers, and memorials. A visitor center is planned to contain exhibits, records, and suitable historic objects.

LOCATION

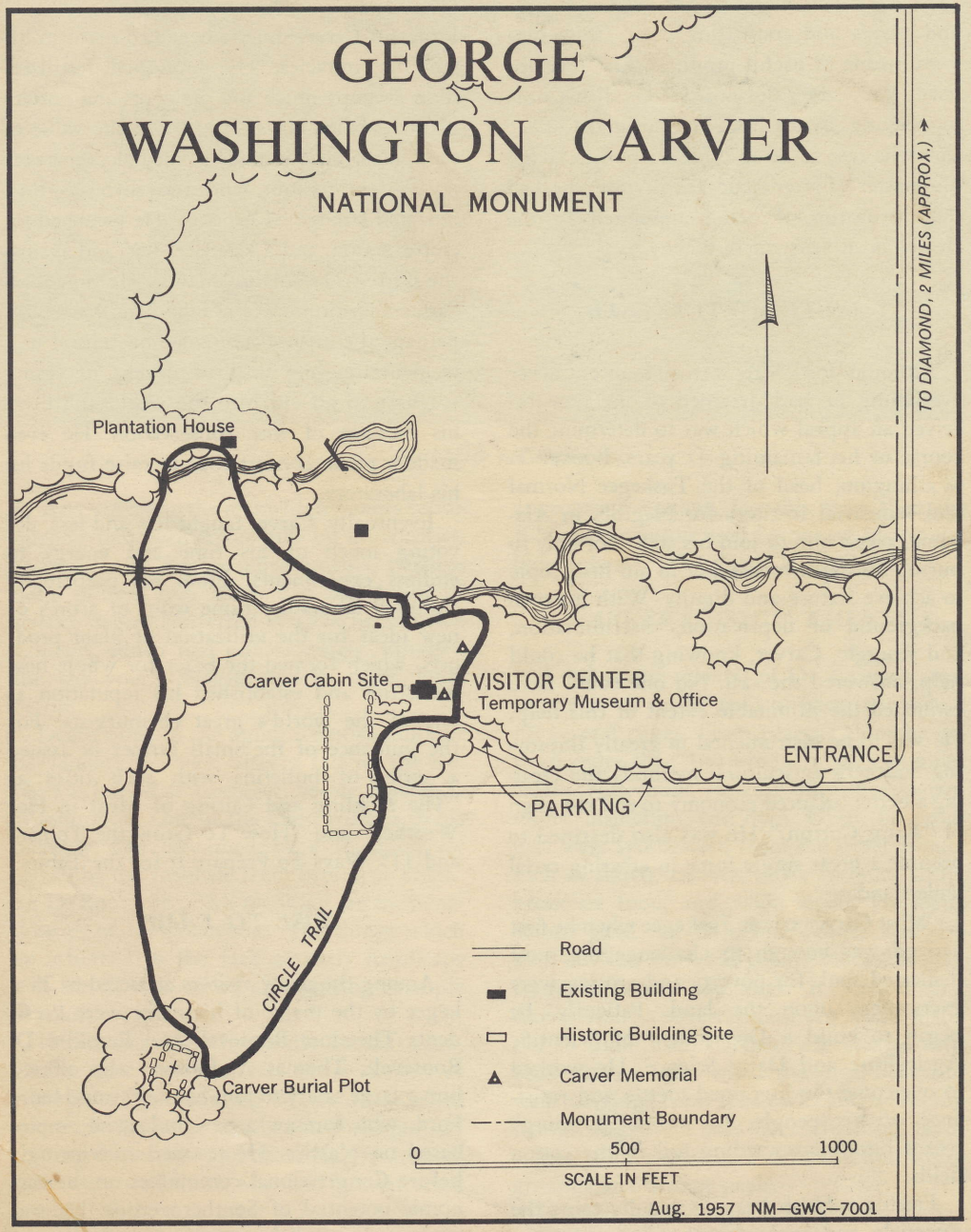
The monument is about 2½ miles southwest of Diamond, in Newton County, Mo. It may be approached from Joplin, Neosho, or Carthage via U. S. 71 Alternate and County Highway V intersecting at Diamond.

ADMINISTRATION

George Washington Carver National Monument is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent whose address is Diamond, Mo., is in immediate charge.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

NATIONAL MONUMENT



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fred A. Seaton, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE — Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*

Cover: Dr. Carver in his laboratory. Courtesy of the McCleery-Cummings Co., Washington, Iowa.

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