

George Washington Carver

George Washington Carver
National Monument
Missouri

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



1 George Washington Carver as a young boy. 2 Moses Carver, George's owner and foster father. 3 Carver at

Simpson College, 1891. 4 Carver in his lab at Tuskegee Institute. 5 Carver teaching agriculture at Tuskegee.

"It is not the style of clothes one wears, neither the kind of automobile one drives, nor the amount of money one has in the bank, that counts. These mean nothing. It is simply service that measures success."

George Washington Carver

"To Be of the Greatest Good"

He was born a slave and rose to national prominence by age 55. George Washington Carver's legendary achievements not only speak of the man but also represent an important chapter in the story of America. Educator, botanist, agronomist, "cookstove chemist," and artist, he was and still is to many an encouraging model who set standards to which they could aspire.

Potent symbol that he was, Carver's importance went beyond his public image as "the peanut man." Throughout his career, he refused to respect the "boundaries" between science, art, and religion, drawing from one realm to strengthen concepts in another. Perhaps his greatest gift was a talent for drawing others into the spirit of his research. He was a charismatic speaker and interpreter, but even more persuasive with individuals. His gentle but compelling manner charmed seemingly everyone he met. Young people, especially, were deeply influenced by Carver. Many of them advanced their education or moved in new directions because of him, and throughout their lives followed principles he had instilled in them.

Carver first received national attention because of his work in extracting an array of products from the peanut and sweet potato plants. This celebrated accomplishment brought to light the years at Tuskegee during which he had labored in obscurity. He resolved early in life "to be of the greatest good to the greatest number of 'my people'." The first step had been to leave a promising career as a research botanist at Iowa Agricultural College (now Iowa State) to work with Booker T. Washington at the then less prestigious Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. He taught botany and agriculture while working to improve the lot of "the man farthest down," the poor, one-horse farmer at the mercy of the market, chained to land that had been exhausted by cotton.

Unlike other agricultural researchers of his time, Carver saw the need to devise farming methods practical for this kind of farmer. He wanted to coax him away from cotton to such soil-enhancing, protein-rich crops as soybeans and peanuts and to teach him self-sufficiency and conservation. He achieved this through an innovative series

of free, simply written bulletins that included information on crops, cultivation techniques, and recipes for nutritious meals.

Both his earlier, less-publicized work and his well-known search for commercial uses for the South's native resources were part of a lifelong effort to help his people and his region break from what amounted to a colonial status. It is not so much his specific achievements as the humane philosophy behind them that define the man. His work was always done with its potential benefit to people in mind. His practical and benevolent approach to science was based on a profound religious faith to which he attributed all his accomplishments. Always modest about his success, he saw himself as a vehicle through which the natural bounty of the land could be better understood and used for the good of all people.

Carver's Boyhood Years

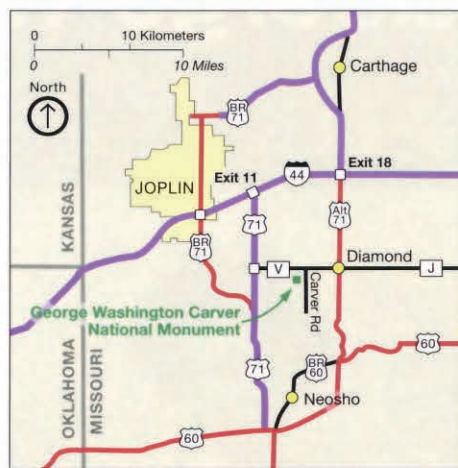
The Civil War brought devastation to southwest Missouri. Born on the Moses Carver farm in the early 1860s, George Washington Carver was caught up in the turmoil. Shortly after his birth, he and his mother were kidnapped by Confederate bushwhackers. He was found in Arkansas and returned to the Carvers, but his mother was never seen again. The identity of his father remains unknown, although Carver believed he was a slave on a neighboring farm. George and his brother Jim were reared by Moses and Susan Carver as their own children. Carver often recalled in later years the love and guidance they showed him.

Carver's imagination had room to expand on the Moses Carver farm. His frail health freed him from many daily chores, and he had time to wander, spending "day after day...in the woods alone in order to collect my floral beauties and put them in my little garden I had hidden in

brush...." The flowers thrived under his care, and George acquired the nickname "the Plant Doctor" in his community. The rocks he collected from the woods and streams were "treasures" he kept throughout his life.

Carver's desire to understand his natural surroundings was more than a childhood fancy. He left the farm with the perceptions of a naturalist and the inquiring spirit of a scientist. Barred from the local church school at the age of 12, he moved to a nearby town to attend a school for blacks—the beginning of a 20-year struggle for an education. He never again lived with the Carvers, but many of his values and beliefs were shaped during his years with them. His contribution as a man was rooted in his ability to retain a child's wonder before nature: "My work, my life, must be in the spirit of a little child seeking only to know the truth and follow it."

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From Exit 11 on I-44, take U.S. 71 to Highway V. Go east 4 miles on Highway V, then south ½ mile on Carver Road.

From Exit 18 on I-44, take U.S. Alt. 71 to Diamond. Go west 2 miles on Highway V, then south ½ mile on Carver Road.

Walking the Carver Trail



A Carver Bust

Born into slavery and orphaned as an infant, George Washington Carver was affected by the violence and racism of his time. Overcoming several hardships, Carver came to believe he could achieve anything he set out to do. Press the button on the statue to hear Dr. Carver read the poem "Equipment," which expresses his belief that we can all achieve the goals we set for ourselves. The Carver Bust was sculpted by Audrey Corwin.

B Birthplace Site

George was born at this site in a one-room cabin that sheltered him, his mother, and his brother Jim. After the kidnapping, the brothers moved into the nearby cabin with Moses and Susan Carver, who reared them as their own.

C View of Boy Carver Statue

George was intensely curious about nature and wondered why things were the way they were.



As you walk toward this statue, imagine being a young child full of wonder, marveling at the expanse and diversity of the natural world around you. George felt he was part of nature, not separate from it. These feelings stayed with him throughout his life and fueled his quest for knowledge.

D Boy Carver Statue

This statue by sculptor Robert Amendola depicts a moment from Carver's childhood. Carver later wrote: "Never since have I been without this consciousness of the Creator speaking to me through flowers, rocks, animals, plants, and all other aspects of His creation."

E Carver Spring

A spring house for storing perishables stood here. One of George's daily chores was to collect water from the spring for household use.

F Spring & Pond

This spring was named after the Williams family. Sarah Jane Williams, a niece of Moses Carver lived on the Carver farm north of the spring. The pond was formed in the 1930s after a dam was built downstream.

G 1881 Moses Carver House

Built by Moses Carver in 1881 near the birthplace cabin site, this house was moved to its present

location by the second owner of the farm. While George never lived in the house, he did visit Moses and Susan Carver here before going to college.

H Ash Hopper

This wooden V-shaped structure northeast of the Moses Carver house was common to settlers. Ashes from heating and cooking fires were placed within it and water poured over them. This produced lye, an ingredient for making soap.

I Persimmon Grove

Moses Carver planted persimmon trees in this area. As youths, George and his brother Jim often got in trouble for sneaking out to eat persimmons after dark. Over time, hackberry and elm trees have crowded out the persimmons.

J Walnut Fence Row

Before the wide use of barbed-wire fencing, farmers planted walnut tree rows to differentiate between fields and keep

livestock out of the crops. These trees also provided a food supplement to the settlers.

K Carver Cemetery

Moses Carver set aside this small plot of land for a family cemetery shortly after the farm was established. Moses and Susan Carver are buried here, but George is buried at Tuskegee Institute. The range of ages on the tombstones reflects the perilous nature of life in the early settlement period.

L Prairie

Less than 200 years ago this land was untouched by plow and the encroachment of European settlers. The Osage people made their home here, utilizing the prairie for food and textiles. Preserving prairie helps prevent erosion, adds the beauty of flowers, provides habitat for many animals, and helps maintain diversity.

About the Park

George Washington Carver National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The visitor center offers a museum, a sales area, and films on Dr. Carver's life. The Carver Discovery Center provides interactive educational exhibits that incorporate fun and learning for children. Picnic tables are available, but camping within the park is not permitted.

You can contact the superintendent at 5646 Carver Road, Diamond, MO 64840; by telephone at 417-325-4151; or via e-mail at gwca_superintendent@nps.gov.