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THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

1860 - 1943

BY GETAHUN DILEBO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, HOWARD UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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PART I

Preface

I owe more than I can say to many individuals and institutions for their active support and participation in this work. Dr. Lorraine A. Williams, Chairman of the Department of History, Howard University, appointed me Research Assistant in the summer of 1972 to work for the National Park Service in the United States Department of the Interior. Many historians of the National Park Service in the Washington, D.C. Office, have been very accommodative and cooperative in the process of this research. They gave me the research topic and facilitated the means and methods for me to conduct the research at George Washington Carver National Monument in Missouri and at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Especially I am very grateful to Historian David Clary for familiarizing me with the objectives and programs of the Park Service.

Superintendent E. J. Colbert and Historian Eldon E. Kohlman of George Washington Carver National Monument facilitated my research at the park. Mr. Kohlman made available many research materials on the early life of Carver in the Monument Archive and assisted me in my survey and study of the historical sites on the monument ground.

At Tuskegee Institute, many individuals, including President Luther H. Foster, kindly offered personal assistance and encouragement during my research on the campus. Mrs. E. Belton of the Development Office very kindly left her active assistance at my access throughout my stay on the campus. She gave me a tour of the campus and arranged my interview appointments with many individuals who knew Dr. Carver personally. She introduced me to many persons in charge of materials on my subject and led me to the persons who identified for me some unidentified places, buildings, rooms, etc. connected with the life and works of Carver.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. George Washington Carver was a well known but little understood person. He was well known because of his slave background and scientific contributions. These two aspects of his life have been romanticized by his popular and admiring biographers. All his biographers, including Dr. Carver himself, committed many chronological errors while discussing the first 36 years of his life. In fact, now we know, as we shall see below, that Carver was four years older when he died than he and his biographers believed he was.

Dr. Carver was scarcely understood by his biographers and their readers; for he was an introvert and a mystic of high degree. Moreover, he had not written much about himself. Therefore, to understand and evaluate the real Carver and his theology of nature, man, work, universe, and God, the key is understanding his hidden personality and value system beyond the apparent slave background and scientific innovations.

In this work I give special attention to his life. In the first part, I explore Carver the wanderer in his first 36 years of life between 1860 and 1896, while he was wandering in search of education in Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa. In this period his wanderings are investigated in chronological, historical, geographical perspectives.

In the second part, I examine his scientific innovations and contributions in the fields of agriculture in many former slave states of the South and his interactions with the Southern businessmen and the United States Senate to promote markets for his new agricultural products. He spent his life at this period, 1896 to 1943, in experimenting and extracting soil, plant, and animal products for human uses. Ceaselessly and singularly he advocated the safety and conservation of our environment and proclaimed the hope and promise of synthetics for mankind on our earth of limited natural resources. He said that God "gave us three kingdoms, the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral. Now he has added the fourth -- the kingdom of synthetics."¹

In the last chapter, I try to investigate the real Carver and his personality in relation to his theology or ethics of work, man, money, time, God, nature, family, etc. However, because of the limited goal and scope of this research, I have not gone in great depth into this difficult aspect of Carver's life in the hope that others will be encouraged to continue the investigation.

1. L. Elliott, George Washington Carver: The Man Who Overcame (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 158.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER THE WANDERER 1860-1896

Birth Place:

In Diamond, approximately ten miles north of Neosho, Newton County, Missouri, two county highways, Highway "V" and Highway "KK," intersect at right angles. The latter runs north-south, while the former heads northwest. A 240-acre farm, once owned and operated by a slave master named Moses Carver, is situated along the western side of Highway "KK," just a few minutes drive from the intersection.

Moses Carver and his wife Susan settled on that farm in the late 1830's. Like all nineteenth century westward migrants and pioneers of the United States, Moses and Susan experienced initial trials and toils in Missouri. They lived in log cabins until the late 1880's, when they managed to build a frame house with glass windows. They were childless. However, in one of their cabins, designated for the slaves, one of America's foremost scientists was born on July 12, 1860.

Moses outlived Susan and sold the farm in his age of infirmity before his death in 1910. The demolition of Carver's cabins preceded their disappearance from the farm. Finally in 1918, the new owner of the farm removed their

frame house from its location. The memory of their names and lives was left on their silent tombstones, ironically, before their former slave boy, George, made their names and farm a place of national interest. In the following paragraphs, I will give a brief portrayal of George Washington Carver's childhood world, with its creek, spring, cabins, woods, and cemetery, preserved by the National Park Service in his honor.

In 1943¹, after a historian of the National Park Service confirmed by research the authenticity of Moses Carver's farm as the birthplace of Professor George Washington Carver, the United States Congress authorized the establishment of George Washington Carver National Monument. However, the Congressional Act posed to the historians and archaeologists of the National Park Service in the Department of the Interior the problem of identification of the site of the demolished cabin in which Professor Carver was born.

According to Robert Fuller, the former historian of George Washington Carver National Monument, two aged eye-witnesses of the Moses Carver's cabins indicated the possible exact location

1. U.S. Congress-House, "Providing for the Establishment of the George Washington Carver National Monument," 78th Congress 1st Session-House of Representatives (April 1, 1943), Report No. 337, p. 1.

of the cabin under investigation. "A rather thorough archaeological search was made," he says, "for the cabin site in 1953 by Paul Beaubien, Region Two Archaeologist, based on historical testimony supplied by Elza Winter, and the late James Robinson. There was found a concentration of early period artifacts and structural debris which strongly suggest that the historic site has been identified."²

Meanwhile, the government acquired by purchase 210 acres of Carver's 240-acre farm from the occupant owner. The remaining 30 acres contain zinc ore and, according to my informant, the government has not purchased this portion of the farm because of its high purchase price.³

The 210-acre ground of the Monument is dissected by a creek of clear and fresh water, which runs from the east to the west. Now the creek is called the "Carver Branch." When one enters the Monument ground from the Highway "KK," there is, on the left side along the highway, an attractive residential area decorated by beautiful and well kept trees. In the middle of the Monument ground, there is the Visitor Center, where the Museum and the

2. R. Fuller, "The Early Life of George Washington Carver," I, Unpublished Manuscript (Diamond, Missouri: George Washington Carver National Monument, 1957), p. 19.

3. I was told by the George Washington Carver National Monument Historian, Eldon Kohlman, at the Monument ground on August 12, 1972.

Archive of the Monument are located. In the Museum section of the center, there are well identified objects, pictures, maps, documents, and statements, which give at a glance a panoramic summary of the history of the Monument and its subject, Carver. In the Archive section, there are well classified films, tapes, pictures, and artifacts on such things as the history of the Monument and of the Civil War.

Behind the Visitor center there is the bust of Professor Carver. At about 100 yards northwest of the Museum is the site of the cabin of Carver's birth. From the cabin site, at about 70 yards northeast in the woods along the Carver Branch, there is the Boy Carver, a statue built by Robert A. Mendola on the top of an eight-ton boulder. About 50 yards northwest of the cabin site, there is a spring which flows into the Carver Branch from a hillock. The distance from the spring to the statue is about 40 yards. Two lines drawn from the cabin site to the spring and statue would form a triangle of which the cabin site and the Carver Branch are the vertex and the base respectively. It was within the area of this triangle that the child George Carver began his love and study of plants until he was reputed as the "plant doctor" in the community. About 300-400 yards southwest there is the Moses Carver family cemetery where the Carvers are resting.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER IN MISSOURI 1860-1876

Dr. George Washington Carver was an introvert and a mystic of the first degree. He expressed his character, deeds, ideas, and scientific discoveries in actions and practices, not in words or theories. He gave us practically no processes of his many scientific findings. He did not say much in words about himself, either. In this research I found only a brief holographic autobiography of Carver in about 1000 words written and addressed to an unidentified person some time in 1897.¹ Besides this, there are short notes, letters, statements, remarks, etc. he left behind here and there.

Of course, he wrote, mainly for Alabama farmers, 44 bulletins and 7 circular leaflets² between 1898 and 1943 on various topics of soil conservation, crops, and dairy productions and their practical human uses. In these he said very little either about himself or about his methods of research.

1. G.W. Carver, Undated Holographic Brief Autobiography of Carver preserved in the George Washington Carver National Monument in Missouri in a photo-static form.

2. W.R. Carroll and M.E. Muhrer, "The Scientific Contributions of George Washington Carver," Unpublished Manuscript (Department of Agricultural Chemistry, University of Missouri, Missouri, 1962) Enclosure 1, pp. 36-37.

Critical works are yet to be done on the life and works of Professor Carver. Of course, there are many popular works on him. Among these, Mrs. Rockham Holt's George Washington Carver: An American Biography, published in 1943, is more comprehensive but full of chronological and methodological errors. Early life and works of Carver are well reconstructed by the Carver National Monument in Missouri. L. Elliott's George Washington Carver: The Man Who Overcame is a good work on Carver at Tuskegee.

In 1962, W. R. Carroll and M. E. Muhrer of the University of Missouri conducted research and gave a report on "The Scientific Contributions of George Washington Carver" for the National Park Service. This study tried to find unfindable things on Carver--processes of his laboratory works--in order to determine commercial contributions of his scientific findings. Disappointed investigators gave disappointing reports³ in a confidential fashion. They failed to understand how Carver wrought economic, social, and scientific effects on the nation without scientific or social theories. Any one who tries to evaluate Carver and his works by conventional, so-called scientific methods is destined to frustration and disappointment.

3. Ibid., pp. 27-29.

In this report, I tried as much as possible to make indirect contact with Carver through people who lived and worked with him. I came to understand that he was an inward-turned man, with no desire for money or fame. An understanding of his personality is the key to a fair evaluation of his contributions to mankind.

In October 1855, Moses Carver bought a thirteen year old female slave named Mary from William P. McGinnis for a sum of seven hundred dollars.⁴ Besides this data, the bill of sale for Mary has no other explanations. However, Mrs. Holt, without further details, states that Mr. Carver purchased Mary from Colonel James Grant⁵ and that George's father⁶ was also Grant's slave. Even though Mrs. Holt has not documented it, Grant is a historical personality. The Federal Census recorded on July 9, 1860, a certain James Grant who had two male slaves whose ages were 20 and 35.⁷

4. R. Holt, George Washington Carver: An American Biography (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1943), Bill of Sale for Mary between pp. 26 and 27.

5. Ibid., p. 3.

6. Ibid., p. 1.

7. Fuller, I, op. cit., p. 7.

In his aforesaid holographic autobiography, Carver stated that he had three sisters and one brother. However, the Professor was uncertain of the year of his birth. But by indirect evidences it is clear that he was born on July 12, 1860. Three consecutive Federal censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880 recorded the number and ages of slaves and ex-slaves in the house of Mr. Moses Carver, the master of Mary.⁸ The first census taken recorded on July 9, 1860, that Carver had a 20 year old female slave and a seven month old male slave. The census of 1870 stated that Carver had two boys whose ages were 12 and 10. The census in 1880 recorded that a 21 year old person was living with the Carvers.

We know that Professor Carver had a brother named James whose grave marker, discovered in Seneca, Missouri, by the Carver Monument historians in 1953, states his birth date as October 10, 1859. He died of smallpox on June 14, 1883. On the basis of this data it is believed that Carver's 20 year old female slave and the seven month old male slave were Mary and James respectively on July 9, 1860, and on this date George was still unborn.

According to the census of 1870, Carver had two foster boys aged 10 and 12. These boys were none other than James

8. Ibid., pp. 7-8.

and George, the parentless brothers. However, here, while we are able to say that the 10-year old George of 1870 was born after the first census of July 9, 1860, we are not so certain to explain James' being 12-years old in 1870 instead of 11 years old or less, unless we explain in terms of statistical errors committed either by the informant or recorder of the boy's age, since the census of 1880 states that James was 21 years old.

We have said previously that Dr. Carver was uncertain of the year of his birth. However, he was not so uncertain of the date of his birth. In his letters, more than once, Dr. Carver said that he was born on July 12. Therefore we might say that he was born on July 12, 1860.

Yet, this poses a genetic question. On the basis of his grave marker, we have stated that James was born on October 10, 1859. From October 10, 1859, to July 12, 1860, however, is a period of only nine months. Is it possible for the same woman to give two births in a period of nine months? Historian Fuller carried this problem to the School of Medicine, University of Kansas on October 14, 1957. According to Dr. L. A. Calkins, M.D., Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics, it is not impossible for the same woman to give two births in a period of nine months. This is what Dr. Calkins has to say on the issue, "It is, of course,

possible for two births to occur to the same woman in a nine months period, even though the second one is not markedly premature. The sickly state as a child might result from prematurity, but not necessarily so."⁹ This might be also the explanation for the frail, sickly condition of George Washington Carver in his infancy and boyhood.

In 1860, the Civil War flared up. The war successfully ended the legal status of slaves in America. During the war, in southwest Missouri, slave kidnapping by terrorists became common. George and his mother were kidnapped. After the event, Moses Carver made a bargain with John Bentley, a Union soldier, for rescue of the mother and the son. In October 1955, in an interview with the Carver Monument historian, W. S. Bentley (1862-1956), John Bentley's son, gave the following account of the bargain between his father and Mr. Carver:

A bargain was made between my father John Bentley (who was a Union Soldier on Scout duty) and Moses Carver for return of his slave girl Mary and her son, George. My father accepted the offer. He was unsuccessful in his effort to find trace of the mother, but found George, who had been abandoned by the raiders and finally returned to Moses Carver who gave him one of his horses valued at \$300.00.¹⁰

9. Ibid., p. 9.

10. Ibid., pp. 12-13.

After emancipation George and James became foster sons of the Carvers, carrying the master's name for their surnames. George stayed on the Carver farm until he left for Neosho, about ten miles south of the farm of his birth, to attend a school for Blacks, sometime in the late 1870's.

In his holographic (hand-written) autobiography, Dr. Carver gave the following reminiscence of his childhood experiences on the Carver farm:

From a child, I had an inordinate desire for knowledge, and especially music, painting, flowers, and the sciences, algebra being one of my favorite studies.

Day after day, I spent in the woods alone in order to collect my floral beauties, and put them in my little garden I had hidden in a bush not far from the house, as it was considered foolishness in that neighborhood to waste time on flowers.

And many are the tears I have shed because I would break the roots or flowers of some of my pets while removing them from the ground, and strange to all sorts of vegetation seemed to thrive under my touch until I was styled the plant doctor, and plants from all over the country would be brought to me for treatment. At this time I had never heard of botany and could scarcely read.

In 1954, the National Monument collected more information on Carver's early life on the farm by interviewing the late C. P. Hedges (1862-1956). Hedges as a teenager worked for a St. Louis grain firm known as Fischel and Company. The Newton County farmers including Moses Carver used to sell their grains to this firm at its local station. According to Hedges, George Carver, a youth of approximately 18, used to bring wheat for sale on a two-horse wagon for Moses Carver. Hedges recalls:

I bought many loads of wheat belonging to his master Moses Carver, which was brought to Grandly, Missouri, by George Carver. He used a two-horse wagon in bringing the wheat to me ... I'd give George a receipt for the wheat and paid him off in silver and money. He was alone each time he came.

Near the Carver farm in Diamond Grove, Missouri, there was a one-room log cabin, to which the Methodist, Baptist, Campbellite, and Presbyterian preachers came at intervals on Sunday mornings on horseback from Neosho to minister the word of love and God from the Bible to their frontier bretheren. On the other days of the week, the cabin was used as a school for the community children. The community opened the cabin door for George on the Lord's day and closed it behind him on the other days of the week because of his color.

Therefore, he left the Carvers and the community for Neosho, Missouri, where he found a school for black children. In the Neosho school there was a black teacher named Stephen S. Frost. According to the Neosho Daily Times, Frost taught in that school from 1875 to 1884. On December 22, 1876, George Carver took a School Certificate from Frost to go to Fort Scott in Kansas. This means that George Carver was in the Neosho School for a year or less.

In Neosho, George lived with a childless black couple, the Watkins. Mrs. Watkins was a midwife and washer-woman and a devoted Christian. In his short stay in Neosho, George acquired from this woman his Christian devotion and domestic skills like

cooking, knitting, and laundry work, which became great assets for him in Kansas and Iowa. It is said by his biographers that Professor Carver, until his death in 1943, daily read the Bible he got for a Christmas present from Mrs. Watkins. She was taught to read when she was a slave by another slave girl named Libby. Once she exhorted George to be another Libby to his people:

"And that's what you must do, George. You must learn all you can, then be like Libby. Go out in the world and give your learning back to our people. They're starving for a little learning."¹¹

Moreover, she changed his name from Carver's George to George Carver when he went to the Neosho School.

After he left Missouri for Kansas, George Carver was not unmindful of the Carvers and the Watkins. He came back to visit these two families in 1885 from Kansas and in 1908 from Alabama.

11. Elliott, op. cit., p. 34.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER IN KANSAS 1876-1888

In 1876, George Carver left his brother James, the Watkins, and the Carvers for Fort Scott, Kansas, where he lived until March 8, 1879. In this town he worked in three places and attended a school. First, he was employed by Mrs. Payne as a cook. He worked for her until he earned money for books and other school expenses. When he ran out of money for school, George took another job at a hotel called Wilder House. Then he began to work for a blacksmith.

One day two white men saw him with his books in town and demanded where he got the books. When he told them that he bought them at school, they beat him and got away with the books. He was then unable to attend school without the books.¹ On March 27, 1879, he was terrified at the sight of a mob hanging a black man, William Howard, 25, on a lamp post in the market square.² Before his death, Professor Carver related to his biographer Mrs. Holt how he was forced to leave Fort Scott for Olathe, Kansas, in 1879 after the lynching of Howard.

"I remained here until they linched [sic] a colored man, drug him by our house and dashed his brains out onto the sidewalk. As young as I was, the horror haunted me and does even now. I left

1. Elliott, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

2. Fuller, op. cit., II, p. 53.

Fort Scott and went to Olathe, Kansas. Here I did odd jobs and went to school. From Paola, Kansas, I cannot tell where I wandered to, many small places."

Between March 27, 1879, and June 14, 1880, there are both geographical and chronological confusions in Carver's wanderings. He says that he went from Fort Scott, Kansas, to Olathe,³ Kansas, and attended school there. However, according to the June 14, 1880, Federal Census Report of Miami County, Paola, Kansas, Carver "was shown to have been 15 years old."⁴

Besides this statistical information, we do not have further evidence on Carver's activities at Paola. It is likely that he made a visiting or transitory residence of some weeks or months at Paola between the spring of 1879 and the summer of 1880, while he was staying in Olathe where he went to school.

According to a biographer of Carver, L. Elliott, Carver first stayed with a barber in Olathe before he began to live with a black couple, Christopher and Lucy Seymour.⁵ When he joined the Seymours, Carver had started the Seventh Grade. Mrs. Seymour was an exacting and strong lady. She was, like Mrs. Watkins, a washerwoman and a devoted Christian. With the

3. Carver, *Holographic Autobiography*, op. cit.

4. Fuller, op. cit., II, p. 55.

5. Elliott, op. cit., p. 49.

Seymours George Carver began to attend the Presbyterian Church, of which he remained a member until his death.

It is said that he moved with the Seymours to Minneapolis, Kansas, from Olathe, Kansas. Here again we face geographical and chronological confusions on Carver's restless wanderings. While Carver was registered with Mr. Moore in Paola, Kansas, on June 14, 1880, Federal Census, the Seymours were registered in the June 17, 1880, Federal Census of Ottawa County, Minneapolis, Kansas.

Is it reasonable to believe that Carver within a period of three days got registered in Paola (Olathe) and moved to Minneapolis with the Seymours? It is unlikely. On the basis of the following business transactions in Minneapolis, it seems that Carver followed the Seymours later, sometime in July of 1880.

Between July 29, 1880, and January 31, 1882, he made five financial transactions with Citizens National Bank of Minneapolis, Kansas. On January 2, 1884, he purchased two lots of real estate in Ottawa County for \$100.00 and on October 29, 1884, he sold them for \$500.00.⁶ Besides this he started "George Carver's Laundry" and attended a school in Minneapolis where he completed the 8th and the 9th grades.

6. Fuller, op. cit., p. 62.

In the 1950's, Mrs. W. D. Cawey, a former schoolmate of Carver in Minneapolis, Kansas, described Carver's life and works in Minneapolis in a letter as follows:⁷

...Carver was in school with me in 1883-1884. He was here two years, being in the eighth and ninth grade. Carver was very different from other colored children we knew. He was quiet and did not mix with others in the playground. He would just stand and look around.

He quit the job in the early part of September to visit the Carvers, Watkins and the grave of his brother in Missouri. On September 20, 1885, he went to Highland to attend college. But when he arrived at the college, Reverend Brown, the President said to him, "You didn't tell me you were a Negro. Highland College does not take Negroes."⁸

In the summer of 1886, the disappointed George W. Carver befriended and lived with the John Beeler family at Highland. In August of 1886, he went to Ness County, Kansas and tried for two years to develop a 160-acre homestead. His stay there was toilsome and creative. While he was developing his homestead, Carver was living with the Steeley family. Furthermore, according to the Mess City Times of December 15, 1887, he was elected assistant editor of a literary society before he was forced in the summer of 1888, by adverse weather conditions, to mortgage his homestead for \$300.00 and leave Kansas for Iowa.

7. Ibid., p. 64.

8. Elliott, op. cit., p. 55.

Today on his Ness County homestead a plaque is erected
with the following inscription:

Dedicated to the Memory of
George Washington Carver
1864-1943

Citizen - Scientist - Benefactor
Who rose from slavery to fame and
gave to our Country an everlasting heritage
Ness County is proud to honor him
and claim him a pioneer.
This stone marks the Northeast corner
of the homestead on which he filed in 1886.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER IN IOWA 1888-1896

George W. Carver lived for eight years in Iowa as a college student and instructor between 1888 and 1896. He began his Iowa residence as head cook at the Schultz Hotel in Winterset, Iowa. One Sunday morning at a Baptist Church in Winterset, by his high-pitched tenor voice, Carver captured the attention of the choir director--Mrs. Milholland, wife of a young doctor. In his brief holographic autobiography he says, "many thanks here for acquaintance of Mrs. & Dr. Milholland, who insisted upon me going to an art school, and chose Simpson College for me."¹

On September 9, 1890, under the persuasion and assistance of the Milhollands, Carver entered Simpson College. His transcript of grades indicates that he attended the college for only three terms in the school year of 1890-1891 and took courses² in algebra, elocution, English, language, history, livestock, military, grammar, arithmetic, art, essay, etymology, voice, and piano.

Miss Etta Budd was Carver's art teacher and Carver attributed his later success to her help and influence at Simpson College. "From Simpson College," says Carver, "I went to Ames

1. Carver, *Autobiography*, op. cit.

2. Carver's transcript of grades from Simpson College in Fuller, op. cit., p. 93.

Iowa to take a course in Agriculture, persuaded to do so by my Art teacher, Miss Etta M. Budd, to whom I am greatly indebted for whatever measure of success that has come to me. Miss Budd helped me in whatever way she could; often going far out of her way to encourage and see that I had such things as I needed."³

G. W. Carver's life and work at Simpson College is vividly narrated in a letter addressed to the Carver National Monument in 1956 by his former schoolmate, Dr. P. Morley. This is Dr. Morley's account of Carver's activities at Simpson College:⁴

When George Washington Carver came to matriculate at Simpson College at Indianola, Iowa, in September 1890, I was there at the beginning of my sophomore year. As he was the only Negro who had ever enrolled at our College, he was the center of interest to the student body. Like many of the other students, I was anxious to meet him and form his acquaintance. I had no feeling of superiority to him because of his race, and I am sure all the College and community accepted him in full equality. There were a few colored people living at Indianola, and they were all accepted and respected members of the community. And in young Carver, as we came to know him, we saw so much beyond the color that we soon ceased to sense it at all.

At that time, and not until much later, did I know anything of his history, that he was born a slave, with his mother, stolen by slave rustlers, rescued by his master and had overcome many seemingly unsurmountable obstacles before his appearance on our campus. Had I known all that, doubtless my interest would have been greater. But then I saw

3. Quoted from Carver's letter to Dr. L. Pammell of the Iowa State College in Fuller, op. cit., p. 94.

4. Fuller, *ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

him simply as a Negro and as a fellow student and one who has his own to make his way in securing an education. I felt a special interest in him, realizing how lonesome he must be as the only one of his race and among so many who had such numbers of acquaintances and friends.

Carver and I were not assigned to any classes together where we might meet as I was beginning my sophomore year and he could only enroll as a special student in the preparatory department. But I lost no time in seeking a meeting and bidding him welcome. I sought him out in the little shack which he had been permitted to occupy rent free. He had no furniture so we sat on boxes the merchants of the town had permitted him to take. I saw the old battered and broken cook stove which he had retrieved from a dump, and the boiler and wash board and tubs which he had secured on credit. I may have been the first to take him my laundry. And as I was making my way, in part, by running a boarding club for boys, I may have been of some help in advertising his laundry in my group.

As numbers came to take him their laundry and saw his scant furnishing, a collection was taken among the boys with which to provide him with an outfit of table, chairs and bed. Knowing his spirit of independence, these were slipped in when they knew he was away. All the donors remained anonymous as far as Carver was concerned. He suspected who they were, but all strongly denied it.

I well remember that in taking my laundry and in going for it, I always took occasion to sit awhile and visit with him. I could tell him of College customs and sports and things of former days and high interest on the campus and something about the advanced studies, and he could tell me of his experience and of his insight into nature and into his fellow beings.

Iowa State College, perhaps, was the leading agricultural school in the United States between the later years of the last century and the first three decades of the 20th century. It furnished the Secretaries of Agriculture during the Presidency of McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, Coolidge, Harding, and

Franklin Roosevelt. In the 1890's Miss E. M. Budd's father was a professor of horticulture there. Dr. Louis H. Pammel was the most eminent botanist of the College, perhaps of the nation. James G. Wilson was the Dean of Agriculture and Director of the Experimental Station. Henry C. Wallace was also an outstanding scholar of agriculture. Wilson and Wallace later became Secretaries of Agriculture. To all these scholars, Carver became student and friend.

He began study at Iowa State in the spring of 1891 and graduated in 1894 with the degree of Bachelor of Science. His thesis was entitled Plants as Modified By Man. Included in the list of Carver's undergraduate courses were botany, chemistry, zoology, bacteriology, entomology, and geometry. Furthermore, Carver took military training in the Iowa State College Cadet Corps and was promoted to the rank of captain.

However, in Iowa State also Carver was subject to color prejudice. "Being a colored boy," he recalled "and the crowded condition of the school, made it rather embarrassing for some, and made the question of a room rather puzzling. Prof. Wilson said, as soon as he heard it, 'send him to me, I have a room,' and he gave me his office and was very happy in doing so.... I did odd jobs of all kinds for a number of the professors; such as cutting wood, making gardens; working in the field;

helping clean house; taking care of the green house and the chemical botanical and bacteriological laboratories."⁵

After the graduation, Dr. Pammel hired Carver as his assistant in charge of the greenhouse on the campus. While he was working, Carver continued studying for his master's degree in Agriculture and Bacterial Botany. He earned the degree in 1896 and left Iowa for Alabama.

However, we have neither the transcript of grades nor the thesis topic of Carver's M.A. degree. According to the former Carver National Monument historian, Fuller, the absence of this academic data on Carver's work for the second degree is explained in terms of the College's organization and policy. The institution did not have a systematically designed graduate work curriculum before 1916. Prior to that time a committee on graduate study together with any student who wished to undertake graduate work would design his special curriculum. Perhaps Carver worked for his M.A. under Dr. Louis Pammel, the head of his department.

5. Quoted in ibid., p. 98.

PART II

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER IN ALABAMA, 1896-1943

Agricultural Innovations in the South:

General Samuel Chapman Armstrong was a Union officer in the Civil War. After the war he founded and directed Hampton Institute in Virginia to train ex-slaves in industrial and agricultural arts.¹ In 1872,² Armstrong received as his student an energetic young man by the name of Booker Taliaferro Washington from West Virginia.

Washington attended Hampton Institute from 1872 to 1875 and became an ardent and dynamic advocate of Armstrong's educational philosophy of industrial and agricultural arts for blacks. After his graduation from Hampton, Washington taught for eight months and pursued further study at Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C. In 1879 he was employed by General Armstrong at Hampton to teach Indian youths. In 1881,³ he founded Tuskegee Institute in Macon County, Alabama.

Tuskegee is 40 miles east of Montgomery, Alabama, and 133 miles west of Atlanta, Georgia. In 1881 it was a small town

1. Holt, op. cit., p. 140.

2. B.T. Washington, Up From Slavery (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1963), p. 32.

3. Ibid., p. 85.

of 1000 blacks and 1000 whites.⁴ At that time the blacks had not yet been disfranchised in Tuskegee. They were still exercising their voting rights to exert pressure on white politicians to get what they wanted done from the State.

Colonel Wilbur F. Foster was a former confederate officer in Macon County. Lewis Adams had been an ex-slave but was then the spokesman for blacks in the country. Foster and Adams made a political bargain of lasting effects in a State legislative election. "What can I do," Foster asked Adams, "for your people in exchange for their support?"

In response, Adams promised the colonel the black vote on condition that the latter would introduce a bill for the establishment of a school for blacks in the State Senate after his election. The colonel won the Senate seat and faithfully introduced a bill which appropriated \$2000 for staff salaries and authorized the establishment of "a Normal School for Colored teachers." After this legislative act, by Armstrong's recommendation, Washington was appointed the founder-teacher of the Institute.

Washington admirably organized dislocated blacks. He began to teach them despite the financial and personnel problems he faced. However, he partially solved the financial difficulty

4. Elliott, op. cit., p. 94.

by hard work and solicitude among the sympathetic and wealthy northern whites. When equally dedicated persons of duty like Lewis Adams, Miss Olivia A. Davidson, Warren Logan, and John Washington, his older brother, joined him, Washington found a solution to the personnel problem of his pioneer work. Moreover, in 1896, surprisingly, Washington and Tuskegee Institute secured Professor George Washington Carver from Iowa State College.

Carver lived and worked in Tuskegee from 1896 to 1943, experimenting and extracting soil and plant products for human uses. On April 1, 1896, Washington, in a letter promised him neither money, position nor fame; only a challenge in which he said, "I offer you in their place work - hard, hard work, the task of bringing a people from degradation, poverty and waste to full manhood."⁵

In response to this challenge the Iowa chemurgist arrived in Tuskegee by train on the morning of October 8, 1896, as the Director and Instructor in Scientific Agriculture and Dairy Science; even though then Tuskegee, and for that matter the entire Southern states, had neither scientific agriculture nor dairy sciences. In fact, Professor Carver started his job from scratch using an axe, a hoe, and a blind horse as his main implements.

5. Ibid., pp. 88-89.

At his arrival Carver was given a single room at Porter Hall for his living quarters, where he stayed until 1903. He began his experimental agriculture with 13 reluctant students without necessary funds or proper implements, except his new microscope, a present from the students and teachers of Iowa State College on his departure for Tuskegee Institute.

At the beginning of the program Carver led his students to the campus and town junk piles and collected useless bottles, pans, jar lids, sauce pan handles and scraps of metal and from these waste materials he fashioned workable tools.⁶ He used a horse shoe for his classroom bell, an old kerosene lantern for a lamp, an ink bottle for a Bunsen burner, and a heavy teacup as a mortar. He fixed pieces of tin as implements to sample and grade soils.

On February 18, 1897, the State Legislature of Alabama authorized the establishment of "Agricultural Experiment Station for the Colored race and to make appropriations therefore to be located at Tuskegee and run in connection with the Normal and Industrial Institute."⁷ Professor Carver was appointed Director and Consulting Chemist of the Station. Now the Director-Instructor Carver with his 13 students and crude implements set

6. Ibid., pp. 114-115.

7. Holt, op. cit., p. 134.

up an equally crude laboratory and started his historical agricultural experimentation on a 20-acre plot of land.

Each of Carver's agricultural and chemical innovations were responses to situational or environmental challenges. For example, at his arrival in Alabama, Carver noticed the bad effects of the one-crop system and the depletion of soil minerals by the singular dominance of nitrogen-depleting cotton. In short, cotton planting in the South was not only the major factor in the spread of slavery before the Civil War and the misery of the ex-slave laborers, peasants and tenants, but it depleted soils of the Southern states. As remedies to these economic and social problems Carver taught and promoted diversification and rotation of crops and soil conservation against seemingly insurmountable white racism and black apathy and hopelessness. In the first year, Carver ran his experimental farm at a net annual loss of \$16.50 and learned that the exhausted soils of the Station need fertilizer.

Furthermore, he successfully persuaded Mr. Washington to ask an Atlanta fertilizer company for a donation of phosphates. However, when Washington requested fertilizer, the company wrote him: "We sympathize with your desire but we want to be frank with you. There is only one colored man who is capable

of conducting such scientific experiments on Southern soils. His name is George W. Carver and he is, unfortunately, in Iowa."⁸

"We have Carver right here at Tuskegee" wrote back Washington, "and it is he who is conducting the experiment." The company sent the fertilizer within the week.

In the initial stage, Carver's new agricultural teachings and techniques were appreciated neither by the teachers nor by the students nor by the community. "We don't need," said John Washington, "what they call a scientific agriculturalist. We need a dairyman." Before he convinced and converted them, the students were also skeptical of the strange teachings of the Yankee scientist. "How come you smarter'n me? You just as black," wondered a Macon county farmer. "If we need a nigger," said a member of the United Peanut Associations of America in 1920, when Carver was invited by the Associations to instruct them on the peanut, "to tell us how to run our business then we're in the wrong business."

Carver, in order to be successful in his mission, had to overcome these obstacles by patience and insight. Gradually, he demonstrated in action his resourcefulness to the campus community first. To communicate with the peasants and tenants

8. Elliott, op. cit., p. 117.

of Macon County he started a bulletin in which he began to explain his scientific discoveries and concepts to the semi-literate common people in a language they could read and understand. However, even then, many people were too illiterate to read his simple bulletin.

To overcome these and many other problems, Carver established the Farmer's Institute on the campus.⁹ In this Institute the farmers of the community, on the third Tuesday of every month, came to get objective or demonstrative instructions on the means and methods of farming. Here farmers who were able to come, learned and gradually accepted Carver's instructions on rotation and diversification of crops. But still many farmers were unable to attend the monthly demonstrative instructions in the Farmer's Institute. This meant that Carver had to go to the farmers themselves.

To this end Carver established a weekend agricultural evangelism. Every Friday of the week after the school work, he went on a weekend tour to the farmers, on a wagon drawn by a mule.¹⁰ He walked and talked with farmers on fields, on streets, distributing bags of seeds he got from the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. He taught them sanitary

9. Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

hygiene, new dietary rules, soil conservation and crop rotation and diversification. He taught people on the street corners and on church yards after church service.

However, on his village campaigns also, Carver often got mixed receptions. Many of the hearers gladly listened to and accepted his teachings while some warned against him as preacher and promoter of worldliness contrary to the soul-saving gospel of salvation. "I see the Tuskegee wagon outside" warned a black minister with pastoral watchful eyes to his congregation, "and am obliged to tell you that we can't afford to engage in worldly affairs while we are busy saving souls."

In 1899, Professor Carver got a student named Thomas M. Campbell from Georgia and trained him in his heresy--agricultural evangelism. Furthermore, he designed a new and better wagon and started to take a cow on his village farm tours. When he stopped for demonstrations in fields and villages, he began to milk the cow as an objective illustration to his new dairy education to illiterate peasants. In 1906, moreover, Carver's wagon became Jesup Agricultural Wagon, better equipped by funds given by Morris K. Jesup, a New York philanthropist.

The Jesup Wagon and Mr. Campbell helped bring agricultural transformation to the South. In 1906, the U.S. Department of Agriculture appointed Tom Campbell Agricultural Collaborator for Macon County. In 1918, the State of Alabama gave a big

automobile truck to replace the Jesup Wagon. By the 1920's, Campbell was in charge of this movable school in seven Southern states. In the later decades of the century, Carver's rural movable school idea and techniques were adopted in China, India, Macedonia, Rhodesia, Albania, and many other countries. It is said that Carver believed until his death that this program of movable school was the most successful innovation of all his programs to help farmers.

On one of his wagon tours, Carver saw some clay of many hues--red, yellow, and blue, and took a sample of it along to his laboratory. In the laboratory he mixed it with water in a bucket. When he poured off the water Carver found at the bottom of the bucket a durable and bright yellow wash paint.¹¹ After that he began to teach and show people how to use the native clay of Alabama to whitewash their houses.

Carver's most important and lasting innovation in the Southern states was in the area of peanut cultivation. Peanut cultivation brought both economic and social changes. The peanut was brought in slave ships in the eighteenth century to America from Africa, for it was the cheapest of all possible foods for slaves. Of course, slaves were needed for the existence of cotton plantation. The Civil War ended legal slavery

11. Ibid., pp. 140-41.

in America. However, the war had neither means nor intentions to free ex-slaves from the tyrannical bondage of King Cotton. The cotton labor problem which brought both slaves and peanuts to America, was left for Carver to solve in his crude laboratory, not on a battlefield.

In his laboratory, Carver discovered that cotton ruins soils, for it takes too much nitrogen from the ground. On the other hand, he found that the peanut is easy to grow and rich in nutrients. Thus he began a campaign against cotton and for the peanut at Tuskegee Institute, in Macon County, across the Southern states, and in the U.S. Senate until he brought both economic and social changes in the former slave states of America.

In his merciless campaign against cotton, Carver was aided by the "weevil," an insect less than a quarter of an inch in length, which invaded and destroyed cotton plantations in the South between the 1890's and 1910's. During this period of agricultural disaster, Carver urged southern farmers to replace cotton with peanuts.

"And slowly pushed by the weevil and pulled by Carver," says Elliott, "the people began to do as he said.... Soon peanuts were the number one crop in a great farming belt that

ran from Montgomery to the Florida border, then began pushing North as whole communities abruptly abandoned cotton."¹²

Yes! people listened to and accepted Carver's instructions and advice on the peanuts, then they produced the peanut surplus. However, the dietary functions and commercial values of the crop were yet to be known at that time in America. But the farmers needed cash for their peanuts anyway. Carver saw that need and began to have a guilty conscience when he saw rotten peanuts in storehouses. "He saw barns and storehouses filled with the surplus, and in many places peanuts rotted in the field--what was the sense in harvesting them? And farmers came to ask him what to do; and some cursed him. He returned to the laboratory racked with gloom and guilt."¹³

In the later years, Carver told a huge audience of 1000 boys and girls in the Macalester Chapel, Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota, how he found many different synthetic uses of peanuts after he had a mystical communication with God.

And then I asked my last question, Mr. Creator,
Why did you make the peanut?

That's better! the Lord said, and He gave me a
handful of peanuts and went with me back to the
laboratory and, together we got down to work.¹⁴

12. Ibid., p. 154.

13. Ibid., p. 155.

14. Ibid., p. 156.

In School Bulletin number 31, Carver listed 105 peanut recipes. He made candy, peanut butter and flour, ink, dyes, shoe polish, creosote, salve and shaving cream from peanuts in his laboratory. Yet, making synthetic products from peanuts in the laboratory did not solve the peanut surplus problem. There must be mass production and consumption. Toward this end Carver came out of his laboratory and began to instruct the United Peanut Associations of America and the U.S. Senate.

In 1919, Southern planters organized themselves as the United Peanut Associations of America. On September 13, 1920, the members of the Association held a meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, and after a long heated debate humbled down to invite Carver "to come and tell them about some of the things he had done with the peanut."

They decided to meet with him on September 4, 1920, in the Exchange Hotel in Montgomery, Alabama. When Carver arrived at the hotel laden with boxes and bottles full of peanut products, the Associations delegates had gone over to City Hall. Carver followed them there just to be told that they had returned to the hotel. When he came to the hotel the doorman stopped him and said, "Sorry old uncle.... There's no colored in here."

Carver paused and sighed before he set his boxes down on the sidewalk and said to the doorman, "My name is Carver

and I am expected at the United Peanut Associations meeting. Would you be kind enough to tell them I am waiting here?"

After the doorman and the bellboy exchanged conversation, the latter went inside before he came to lead Dr. Carver around to the service elevator. However, just before the meeting room Carver "was stopped and told that peanut men were starting their luncheon." He waited outside until they ate their meal. Finally, he was introduced at about 2 P.M. and after he demonstrated his peanut products, the delegates were almost humbled down to thank him for his enlightenment on their business. Finally, Alabama Congressman Henry B. Steagall concluded with the following remarks and suggestion:

"Following the speaker who has just addressed this meeting," began the congressman, "I certainly would feel greatly embarrassed if I attempted to talk about peanuts in a way to instruct anybody. No man who has heard this address here today could stand in the face of the argument that here is an industry that touches the necessities of life throughout every nook and cranny of the nation. Certainly, here is an infant industry that could plead a case of protection for itself and when the time comes that this question must be thrashed out before the American Congress, I propose to see that Professor Carver is there in

order that he may instruct them a little about peanuts, as he has done here on this occasion."¹⁵

Accordingly, on January 21, 1921, Carver instructed the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of representatives in Washington, D.C., about production and synthetic uses of peanuts. At that time the Peanut Associations were trying to get a protective tariff against the Japanese and Chinese peanut importers. Congress, however, was hesitating even to hear about the peanut men's case before it gave Carver ten minutes to talk on their behalf.

When Carver appeared before the Committee, Chairman Joseph W. Fordney said, "I think, considering the lateness of the hour, sir, that we can allow you only ten minutes." As he began to demonstrate his peanut products, Carver heard a question from his senatorial audience, "What do you know about the tariff?" He answered, "Not a thing--I came to talk about peanuts. I have been asked to tell you something about the possibilities of the peanut and its extention. But we'll have to hurry if we are to extend it because in ten minutes you will tell me to stop." When he said this the congressman took three minutes of the ten in laughter before Dr. Carver

15. Ibid., p. 168.

delivered the following lecture in the case of peanuts, as it was recorded in the Congressional Record of January 21, 1921.¹⁶

I am engaged in agricultural research work and have given some attention to the peanut. I can tell you that it is one of the very richest products of the soil, rich in food values, rich in properties of its chemical constituents, and wonderfully rich in properties for utilization. If I may have a little space to put these things down--thank you. Now I should like to exhibit them to you. I am going to just touch a few high places here and there because in ten minutes you will tell me to stop. These are a few of the products which we have developed from the peanut. This is a breakfast food containing peanut and sweet potato. It is wholesome, easily digested and delicious in flavor. The peanut and sweet potato are twin brothers. If all other food were destroyed, a person could live on peanut and sweet potatoes. They contain all nutriments necessary to man.

Here is ice cream powder made from the peanut. Simply mixed with water, it produces an unusually rich delicious ice cream, not to be distinguished from ice cream made with pure cream. In these bottles are dyes extracted from the skin of peanuts. I have found 30 different dyes. They have been tested in the laboratory and found to hold their colors and to be harmless to the skin. Here is a substitute for quinine. We can hardly overestimate the medicinal properties of the peanut. They are many and varied. These are various kinds of food for livestock. You will find that cattle thrive on them and the increase in milk is produced. I have two dozen or so others, but I see my time is about up. I should like to say that the soil and climate of the South is particularly suited to the cultivation of peanuts and that they could be produced in much greater quantities if a larger market for them were developed. It would seem a great pity if this crop were lost to us and our people forced to depend on foreign and inferior peanuts. Thank you.

Following this speech, the congressmen forgot the lateness of the hour and in unison asked Carver to continue and in the

16. Ibid., pp. 173-74.

process of continuation, when Carver tried to stop the Chairman said, "Go ahead brother. Your time is unlimited." They detained him by asking questions for nearly two hours. As he was departing, they asked him to come again. After he returned to the Institute he wrote these remarks to the congressman on the subject: "I have nothing to sell. I manufactured nothing and I feel sure you gentlemen will guard and put proper restrictions upon every interest that arises in harmful competition with ours without any suggestions of mine."

In the following year, Congress passed the Fordeny-McCumber Tariff Bill in which domestic peanuts were protected by a duty of three cents a pound on all unshelled imports and four cents a pound on the shelled and, after the January 21, 1921, Congressional Testimony, Professor Carver climbed to global fame and became a popular subject for public and press as the "Peanut Man." Honors and letters began to come like showers of rain. Besides ceaseless telegrams and long distance telephone calls he began to receive about 1500 letters a month for which the Government set up a sub-post office for Tuskegee Institute. Today, in the Archive of the Institute there are 131 boxes each containing folders of letters, newspapers, etc., written by and to Professor Carver, the "Peanut Man."

THE PERSON--LIFE AND LEGACY

Professor Carver lived, moved, and worked for 47 years with and among people as an odd person in the small world of Tuskegee Institute experimenting in his crude laboratory on soil and plant products for human use.

In this research, of limited goal and scope, I tried to understand the person Carver and his value orientation. I tried to learn and know his concepts of man, nature, and the supernatural powers and the effects of these concepts in his relationship and interaction with nature and man, and I found him to be a very unusual person and a very difficult one to be understood; for he was both a mystic and a scientist. Any effort to understand Professor Carver without knowing these two features in his personality and conduct is doomed to frustration and unfair evaluation.

The Montgomery-Atlanta Highway passes through Tuskegee Institute. When one enters the campus on this road from the east, there is a short brick wall which reads, "Tuskegee Institute Founded in 1881." This is the eastern corner of the campus. More or less in the center of the campus is Booker T. Washington's statue. Most residential and office buildings of the Institute are located roughly east of the statue. The places where Carver conducted his agricultural experiments on soils, plants, and animals are west of the

Washington statue. In this small area at least there are twelve spots which were connected with Carver's life and work between 1896 and 1943. Strangely, of these places of historical importance only Carver's Museum Foundation and his grave are easily noticeable to visitors and researchers. Other places are not identified. Many people on the campus are no more familiar than the tourists with the location of the rooms, buildings and places where Carver spent days and years. It took me two weeks to find a person who could identify the rooms in Dorothy Hall where Carver was living until his death on January 5, 1943.

From 1896 to 1903, Carver lived in a single room in Porter Hall on the eastern edge of the campus along the Atlanta-Montgomery Road. The hall has been demolished. In 1897, Carver described the condition of his room in his report to Washington: "At present, the room is full of mice and they are into my boxes doing me much damage, I fear."

In 1903, he moved with male students into the newly built Rockefeller Hall where he lived for the next 35 years of the most productive period of life. Mr. Ross C. Owen of 318 Bibb Street, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, is a semi-retired athletic coach of the Institute.¹ As a student, he lived in Rockefeller

1. The author is indebted to Mr. R. Owen for identifying Carver's room in the Rockefeller Hall.

Hall on the second floor of the eastern corner, while Carver was living on the first floor on the western corner. He was kind enough to show me Carver's room on July 25, 1972.

It is a rectangular long and narrow room divided by a wall into two small rooms about 12 feet by 14 feet each in dimensions. Besides these two rooms there is a very small storage room. All rooms have undergone renovation and they are used presently as dormitory bedrooms for boys. In front of the rooms there is a lobby.

Moreover, Mr. Owen showed me a woody place a few yards east of the hall behind Phelps Hall, which is presently R.O.T.C. Headquarters. He said that Carver got up from his bed daily between 4 and 5 A.M. and went to the woods to "talk" with God and the flowers before he returned to his room at daybreak. All my informants who knew Carver are unanimous that Professor Carver went to the woods early in the morning.

At the time of my visit in July 1972, west of the present administrative building, there is an old building undergoing renovation. It is called Carnegie Hall. In this building, I found no one who could tell me in which room Carver taught Sunday Bible class for years. Some of his Biblical views are kept and published by his admiring student, A. D. Smith, in his George Washington Carver: Man of God. Carver was a fundamentalist in Biblical views. He interpreted the confrontation between two Biblical characters, Goliath and David, as

a confrontation between evil and the Universal Law of Good and he insisted that good triumphs over evil, at least in the long run.

In September 1918, Carver called his Sunday Bible class students, who came back from military training in Washington, D.C., "young warriors." His young warriors told him how they were subjected to racial prejudice in Washington and on the train and wondered on the meaning of President Wilson's slogan, "a war to make the world safe for Democracy." He said they they should defend their country regardless of racial prejudice or the morality of Wilson's slogan. "This means that we," Carver taught his class, "regardless of color or race, must protect our country on the battlefield against a shooting enemy or [refrain from] resorting to violence against our fellow Americans despite any obstacle which at the time seemingly confronts us. In reality, it does not."²

Beyond the Washington statue at the western end of the campus, there is the agricultural experiment center where Carver performed his successful experiments on soils, crops, and animals. Here on the second floor in the eastern corner of Milbank Hall, he used three rooms--two as laboratories and one for his office, for years. Today, the rooms have undergone

2. A. D. Smith, George Washington Carver: Man of God (New York: Exposition, 1954), p. 30.

renovation and Carver's crude laboratory tools are removed. However, according to Dr. K. B. Paul,³ an Indian scientist using Carver's former rooms for agricultural research, six huge tables in the two laboratory rooms were used by Carver and are still in operation.

Next to Milbank Hall on the eastern side, there is a building called the dairy barn. In this building Carver conducted experimental research on dairy animals. Opposite the Milbank Hall and dairy barn buildings, between the married students' apartments and Russel Nursery School, there is an open field which Carver used as the Experiment Station. Now the field is a playground, without any sign of historical importance. I am very grateful to Elvin T. Miles for identifying the station.⁴

In the late 1930's, Carver moved to Dorothy Hall from Rockefeller Hall. Dorothy Hall is separated from the Carver Museum by a narrow passage. Carver spent the last few years of his life in these two buildings. Mrs. L. A. Locklair, the former manager of Dorothy Hall, very kindly told me that Carver stayed in rooms 225 and 226 on the second floor.⁵ While he

3. I am indebted to Dr. K. B. Paul for showing me Carver's laboratory rooms and tables in the Milbank Hall on August 24, 1972.

4. If it were not for E. T. Miles it would have been impossible to ascertain Carver's famous Experiment Station.

5. I am very grateful for Mrs. E. Belton and Mrs. L. A. Locklair. The former led me to the latter who ascertained for me that Carver used in later years until his death rooms 225 and 226 in Dorothy Hall.

was living in Dorothy Hall, Carver continued his experimental researches on both the ground and first floor of the Carver Museum. His laboratory equipment is still on the ground floor, while his paintings and laboratory products are on the first floor of the building.

There is a raised stage of brick blocks adjoining the museum building from behind. The stage is raised to the level of the first floor windows of the museum. This stage was Carver's greenhouse in the years of his infirmity. The stage is raised to a level to make it more easily accessible for Carver from the museum through windows, for he was almost too infirm to go there from outside, and the plants at that level also had more access to the sunlight.

When Carver's health began to decline, Henry Ford installed an elevator for him connecting Carver's room on the second floor of Dorothy Hall with its ground floor. The elevator on which Carver rode is still in occasional operation when someone is sick or unable to walk from the first to the second floor. Dorothy Hall is the guest house of the campus now. Carver's grave is just across the street from Dorothy Hall on the northern side.

Not very long before his death, Carver invested his life savings of about \$33,000 to establish the George Washington Carver Foundation. Currently, there is an army of scientists

engaged in 78 different research projects in different fields of natural, applied and social sciences designed and administered by the Carver Foundation. Dr. J. H. M. Henderson, Director of the Foundation, rightly calls the institution Carver's legacy.⁷

These are major places, buildings, and institutions connected with Carver's life and creative works. Yet these objective features alone are insufficient to measure the person Carver without taking a closer look into his personal life and daily activities. Here we have his schedule of work reported to Washington on January 20, 1904, as follows:⁸

Today my classes run thus: from 8:00 to 9:00, agricultural chemistry; 9:20 to 10:00, the foundation and harmony of color to the pointers; 10:00 to 11:00, class of farmers, and one period more in the afternoon. In addition to this, I must try and rather imperfectly overlook seven industrial classes scattered here and there over the grounds. I must test all the seeds, examine all the fertilizer--based upon the examination of the soil of the different plots. I must also personally look after every operation of the experiment station and write up our work, distribute it, and keep in touch with all experiment stations. I must endeavor to keep the poultry yard straight. In addition to the above, I must daily inspect 104 cows that have been innoculated, looking carefully over the temperature of each one, making comparisons and prescribing whatever is necessary, besides looking after the sickness of other animals.

7. After Mrs. Belton of the Development arranged the appointment, on July 18, 1972, Dr. James Henderson very kindly granted an interview in his office in the Foundation.

8. Elliott, op. cit., p. 145.

He did not have time for many practical human affairs like making money and raising a family. He worked and lived for 47 years earning \$125 dollars monthly in Tuskegee Institute. Moreover, he often forgot to cash his pay checks, leaving them in drawers. Once when the campus teachers were asked for contributions, he plunged into a dresser drawer and flung out a year-old pay check. "Here, this will help!" He once found in the drawer many old uncashed pay checks to a sum total of \$625.00.⁹ He neither kept private his scientific discoveries nor accepted fees for them.

When Thomas Edison's chief engineer told Carver that Mr. Edison wanted him to work in the Edison laboratories in Menlo Park, New Jersey, for a salary of \$100,000 a year, he replied, "I will write my thanks to Mr. Edison, but I cannot accept."¹⁰

Once Tom Huston of Tom's Toasted Peanuts, Columbus, Georgia, visited Carver in his laboratory and exclaimed, "My God, Carver, you've got to come to Columbus and work for me."¹¹

"He isn't only," Carver answered Huston, "your God, Mr. Huston, you can't expect him to devote himself exclusively to the problems of Tom's Toasted Peanuts--and you can't really

9. Ibid., p. 194.

10. Ibid., p. 233.

11. Ibid., p. 163.

expect it of me, either. I'll help you all I can, but my place is here."

One Christmas, Carver brought a toy to Thomas Campbell's children and began to play with them. At that moment Mrs. Campbell suggested to him, "You have a good way with children, Professor Carver, you ought to have a family of your own." He replied to her suggestion by asking, "What woman would want a husband forever dropping soil specimens all over her parlor? How could I explain to a wife that I had to go out at 4 o'clock every morning...."

His dressing manner is described by a lady, who had been assigned as a student to serve him a meal, in one word-- "terrible." James H. Woodson is the Director of Alumni Affairs at Tuskegee now. He met Carver as a freshman in 1937 and recalls his first encounter with him.¹² "The first time I saw him. . . walking through the Campus alone," says Mr. Woodson, "seeming to observe the landscape, I remember my surprise at the way he was dressed, wearing an old cap on his head that appeared slightly weather beaten. His clothes--a pair of pants and an unmatched coat were not pressed.... More than that, he was all to himself at the time and would have been

12. On July 25, 1972, the author gratefully received J. W. Woodson's recollections of Carver in typeprint, under the title of "My Recollections of Dr. George Washington Carver."

unnoticed, except that here and there students recognized him from his pictures and past experiences and they looked at him."

His love of sciences and religion was boundless. "The great Creator," he says, "gave us three kingdoms, the animal, the vegetable and the mineral. Now he has added a fourth-- the kingdom of synthetics."¹³ However, lifeless geometrical theorems and historical data were meaningless to Carver, perhaps because he did not find in them chemical changes. He earned a zero on the geometry test at Iowa State College.

Carver's table manners were simple and regular. Mr. Ramsey of 323 West Lee Street, Tuskegee, Alabama, is a retired former Director of Commercial Dietetics at Tuskegee Institute. He was with Carver for 22 years, 1921-1943, as a student and worker in the Institute. He graduated with the A.B. degree from the Institute. He recalls only one lecture of Carver in his chemistry class.¹⁴ At the invitation of Ramsey's instructor, Carver came and gave a lecture on the law of indestructibility of matter based on the theory of fermentation, fermentation as caused by yeast. Carver emphasized that a baker should know both practical and technical aspects of bread.

13. See Note 1, p. 2.

14. I am indebted to Mr. Ramsey, the former Director of Commercial Dietetics of Tuskegee Institute for granting me an interview and notes on Carver at his home on July 18, 1972. I made more indirect contact with Dr. Carver and his personality and value orientation after I held lengthy and most enlightening talks with Mr. Ramsey.

As the Director of Commercial Dietetics, Mr. Ramsey was in charge of food for Carver. He not only gave the names of Carver's favorite dishes, but very kindly let me quote from a personal note that Carver wrote to him on the subject of food. Carver loved port. He ate sausage meat--meat made of ears, head, feet, tongue, and jaw of pigs. He also ate fish and was fond of bread. He drank coffee, tea, and other soft drinks. Milk? Ramsey does not remember when he saw Carver drinking milk. He never ate between meals. His eating manner was regular--always on time--"just like a clock" in Ramsey's phrase. He was fond of dried fish, biscuits and bacon. He ate food of ordinary people and was not a heavy eater, Ramsey assured.

On November 5, 1942, Professor Carver, months before his death, wrote the following personal note to Mr. Ramsey.

My dear Mr. Ramsey:

I was disappointed yesterday very much because you did not come by as I wanted to see you. You know I have not seen you in a long time and I can't hollo up to the road now so you get by.

I want you to know, and you will never be able to appreciate how much I am enjoying that delicious pumpkin pie. I don't think in all of my experience I have ever eaten a pie so delicious. It had just enough sugar, butter, flavor, shortening, and was baked to a turn. I want you to come by sometime and I will tell you how much I appreciated it. I thank you again and again for this delicious treat.

With every good wish, I am

So sincerely yours,

G. W. Carver

I asked Mr. Ramsey what he considered the most important lesson he learned from Carver in the years of their close relationship. He paused for a while before he remarked, "We did not learn enough about him" and said that Carver convinced him that there is no inherent conflict between science and God, nature and man, etc. The apparent conflicts we see are caused by men and their beliefs.

Carver died on January 5, 1943. Today there is his statue in the ground floor of the Carver Museum where he extracted many products from peanuts. In this statue he still holds a handful of peanuts and appears to be still alive. While I was on the campus, about 40 black high school students came in a bus from Chicago to visit Tuskegee Institute. These inquisitive and enthusiastic children became excited when they saw Carver's statue. After they got their pictures taken, while they were touching the statue, many of them were heard saying, "He is alive."

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