

George Washington Carver

Celebrate the Century 1910-1919

Scott #3183c

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Designed by Dennis Lyall



George Washington Carver was born on a farm in Newton County, Missouri in the spring of 1865. The exact date is not available and Carver, himself was not sure of the date. He was born on the plantation of Moses Carver and his mother was a slave named Mary. Near the end of the Civil War, Mary and George were stolen and taken to Arkansas by Confederate raiders. George was later returned to Moses but his mother was never found. He was raised by Moses and Susan Carver.

George developed his interest in plants while very young. He would spend hours exploring the woods and fields around the farm. He collected, studied, and raised many of the plants he found nearby. He became known by his neighbors as the "Plant Doctor" for his work in restoring diseased and sickly plants.

Carver received his early schooling at home as there were no schools for African Americans in Newton County, Missouri. In 1890 he enrolled at Simpson College to study music and art. He switched his major to Agriculture and enrolled at Iowa State University in 1891 graduating in 1894.

Carver was hired as the head of Iowa State's Bacterial Laboratory in the Systematic Botany Department. He earned his Master's Degree in 1896 and accepted a position at Tuskegee Institute. He developed over 118 products and over 500 dyes from agricultural products such as peanuts, sweet potatoes, and soybeans, however he is best known for his work with peanuts. Carver also developed crop rotation and a new type of cotton hybrid. He established the George Washington Carver Foundation at Tuskegee in 1940. Carver remained at the Tuskegee Institute until his death in 1943. On July 14, 1943 he was honored by President Franklin D. Roosevelt with a National Monument in recognition of his accomplishments in the field of Biochemical Engineering.

Some of his many awards and honors include:

1923 - NAACP Spingarn Medal

1941 - Roosevelt Medal

1948 - Great Americans Stamp Issue

1977 - Great Americans Hall of Fame

1990 - National Inventors Hall of Fame

1998 - Celebrate the Century Stamp Issue

Carver produced a variety of products from the peanut. These include:

Tofu Sauce, Shampoo, Peanut Brittle, Peanut Butter, Antiseptic Soap, Salad Oil, Worcester Sauce, Laxatives, Shaving Cream, Shoe Polish, Paints, Plastics, Printer's Ink, Vanishing Cream, and many others.

George Washington Carver died at Tuskegee on January 5, 1943.

Sources:

Encyclopedia Britannica

Encyclopedia Africana