



Gale : [Free Resources](#) : [Black History](#) : [Biographies](#) : George Washington Carver

Black History Month

[Activities](#) [Biographies](#) [Key Titles](#) [Links](#) [Literature](#) [Quiz](#) [Timeline](#)

George Washington Carver



(1864-1943)

Educator, Agricultural/Food Scientist, Farmer

George Washington Carver devoted his life to research projects connected primarily with Southern agriculture. The products he derived from the peanut and the soybean revolutionized the economy of the South by liberating it from an excessive dependence on cotton.

Born a slave in the spring of 1864 in Diamond Grove, Missouri, Carver was only an infant when he and his mother were abducted from his owner's plantation by a band of slave raiders. His mother was sold and shipped away, but Carver was ransomed by his master in exchange for a race horse.

race horse.

While working as a farm hand, Carver managed to obtain a high school education. He was admitted as the first black student of Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa. He then attended Iowa Agricultural College (now Iowa State University) where, while working as the school janitor, he received a degree in agricultural science in 1894. Two years later he received a master's degree from the same school and became the first African-American to serve on its faculty. Within a short time his fame spread, and [Booker T. Washington](#) offered him a post at Tuskegee.

Carver revolutionized the southern agricultural economy by showing that 300 products could be derived from the peanut. By 1938, peanuts had become a \$200 million industry and a chief product of Alabama. Carver also demonstrated that 100 different products could be derived from the sweet potato.

Although he did hold three patents, Carver never patented most of the many discoveries he made while at Tuskegee, saying "God gave them to me, how can I sell them to someone else?" In 1938 he donated over \$30,000 of his life's savings to the George Washington Carver Foundation and willed the rest of his estate to the organization so his work might be carried on after his death. He died on January 5, 1943.

Awards

Fellow of the British Royal Society for the Arts, 1916; Spingarn Medal from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 1923; D.Sc. from Simpson College, 1928; Roosevelt Medal for distinguished service to science, 1939; D.Sc. from University of Rochester, 1941; Thomas A. Edison Foundation Award, 1942; inducted into Hall of Fame for Great Americans, 1973, and National Inventors Hall of Fame, 1990.

Sources

Contemporary Black Biography, Volume 4. Gale Research, 1993.

Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2009.

<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>

Document Number: K1606000443

The African American Almanac, 7th Ed., Gale.

Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center*. Gale.

[Photo credit](#)

© 2009 Gale.