

*In these two articles, a short biography and a news article from a newspaper, you will learn about George Washington Carver. Pay attention as you read to how George improves the lives of others.*

## George Washington Carver



Born: July 12, 1864, in Diamond Grove, Missouri (though birth date may be uncertain)

Died: January 05, 1943, in Tuskegee, Alabama

Occupation: Agricultural scientist

George Washington Carver was a famous agricultural scientist who revolutionized the way we farm. He also discovered that the humble little peanut could be made into 300 products! Born a slave around 1860, he lost his mother to kidnappers. Slavery ended, and his former master, Moses Carver, raised him in Missouri and got him an education.

Juggling homework with full-time farm work all through high school, he graduated and applied to college. However, he got rejected because he was African-American. Fortunately, he was accepted at Simpson College, where he studied piano and art. Then he transferred to Iowa State College. He earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural science plus a master's degree.

His teaching career continued at the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. By 1896, he directed the school. He researched how to help Southern farmers improve the overworked soil. Soil, like you and me, needs nutrition and rest. Carver discovered new ways to provide these things. He taught farmers to rotate the crops by planting different crops in different years. This fed the soil, which produced food that fed hungry mouths.

If you think peanuts are just for PB & J sandwiches, you'll be surprised to learn that Carver discovered they could make over 300 products, from plastics to paint. He also discovered 60 uses for pecans. Carver's innovations earned him many awards and the respect of presidents.

In 1940, he donated his savings to Tuskegee's Carver Research Foundation. As his tombstone says, *He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world.*

## Press Release: ‘Peanut Man’ Carver Restores Soil... and Hope

**TUSKEGEE, ALABAMA,** Dec 9, 1935

*Known as the “farmer’s best friend,” George Washington Carver’s love of plants started as a boy, nursing neighbors’ plants back to health. It continued as he completed a Master’s degree in science at Iowa State College of Agriculture. Today, he helps local farmers. He has just been appointed to help the U.S. Department of Agriculture.*

### **Soil Solution**

Many African American farmers run into problems due to growing cotton season after season. This leaves the soil depleted of nutrients so farmers cannot any longer grow their most important cash crop: cotton. These farmers relied on cotton to support themselves.

This is where Carver enters. Affectionately called, “the plant doctor” by all those he helps, he advised farmers to plant certain crops, like peanuts, to restore nutrients to the ‘worn out’ soil. Carver also said that growing peanuts will provide these struggling farmers food for cattle, and protein for their families. He has taught them that this doesn’t mean giving up cotton, but to alternate their crops each year. One year they can grow cotton, and then the next peanuts, or other soil-restoring plants like peas or sweet potatoes.

### **Peanut Possibilities**



As a result, local farmers now make a better living, using their healthier, nutrient-rich soil to grow not only cotton, but also peanuts. But Carver didn’t stop there! The farmers have been left with more peanuts than they needed. The “farmer’s best friend,” has come up with over 300 uses for the peanut, including peanut milk, paper and soap. Now the farmers can make products they would otherwise have to buy. And furthermore, if other people knew they could make such things from peanuts, they will want to buy peanuts from the farmers.

### **Carver Lives Up to His Nickname**

Thanks to George Washington Carver, many farms are doing much better now. His work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture will further spread good crop care. “Farmer’s best friend” indeed!

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**Prompt: Describe how George Washington Carver overcame challenges and made a difference toward improving the lives of others. Cite evidence from the text to support your response.**