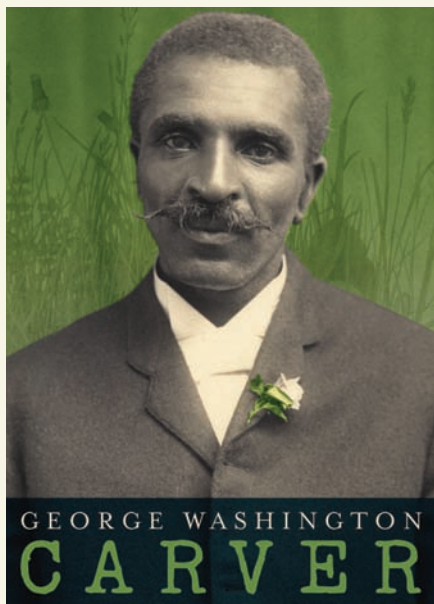


## GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

Shampoo from peanuts? Writing ink from sweet potatoes? With imagination and scientific skill, George Washington Carver (1864-1943) developed hundreds of unexpected products from everyday plants. Although Carver is best known for his work on a common product—the peanut—a new Field Museum exhibition reveals that he was an exceptionally uncommon man: **trail-blazing scholar, innovative scientist, pioneering conservationist, and impassioned educator.** Through rich imagery, historical artifacts, audio-visual programs, and hands-on interactives, this exhibition traces his life, discoveries, and legacy.

### EXHIBITION OVERVIEW



Developed in collaboration with Tuskegee University and the National Park Service, this is the largest and most comprehensive traveling exhibition ever created about George Washington Carver. Beginning with a glimpse of the perilous events of Carver's childhood against the backdrop of Civil War and Emancipation, visitors will follow Carver's inexorable quest for knowledge, his decision to dedicate himself to those in need, and the wealth of discoveries that resulted from that decision.

Though George Washington Carver has long been a celebrated figure in African American history and the world of science, he has special relevance today amid concerns about climate change and energy resources. His teachings promoted the use of agricultural products over fossil fuels and the adoption of nature's

model of zero waste. In an exploration of Carver's inspiring legacy, visitors will meet "modern Carvers," scientists exploring new technologies such as hydroponics in space, biofuels, and plant-based medicines.



## EXHIBITION THEMES

### 1) Carver's Mighty Vision



How did George Washington Carver accomplish so much with so little? The exhibition's introduction emphasizes that Carver's famous peanut research was just one of many different scientific endeavors designed to realize his "Mighty Vision" – health, beauty, and prosperity for all. Here, visitors encounter a special artifact, Carver's spectacles, a symbol of both his "Mighty Vision" for humanity and his keen and disciplined use of observation in his search for facts. An introductory video provides an insightful overview of Carver's groundbreaking life and work.

### 2) From Slave to Scholar



In the tallgrass prairies and woodlands surrounding his rural Missouri home, Carver's sharp observation skills, reverence for the natural world, and deep faith took root. Born a slave and orphaned as an infant, Carver overcame enormous social and financial hurdles, refusing to let racism stand in the way of his hunger for education. Through perseverance and keen intellect, he blazed a trail for scientists of color, becoming the first African American student and later, faculty member, at Iowa State College, and then Director of Agriculture at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. In 1943, a National Monument—the first to honor a non-president—was established at his birthplace.

### 3) The People's Scientist



Whether working with peanuts or pests, the theme of humanitarian service lay behind all of Carver's research. He strongly believed that his work should improve the lives of 'his people'—poor African American farm families whose soils were exhausted from centuries of cotton cultivation. From the back of Carver's Jesup Wagon—his laboratory on wheels—Carver's students and staff toured the South, testing their soils, demonstrating farming techniques, publishing simply written bulletins with conservation tips and recipes, and speaking at schools and conferences. A gifted communicator, Carver shared his vast knowledge in accessible and often humorous terms. Back at Tuskegee, Carver experimented with crop rotation, composting, and integrated pest management. His work and writings shaped the organic agriculture movement in the United States, and they continue to offer solutions to problems today.

## Exhibition Details

### SIZE:

Approximately 4,500 ft<sup>2</sup> (418 m<sup>2</sup>)

### RENTAL FEE:

\$125,000 USD for 3 months

*Discounts available for African American museums*

### AUDIENCE:

Families, school groups, and adults

### APPROPRIATE FOR:

Natural history museums, science centers, African American history museums, cultural centers

### SHIPPING:

One-way, inbound, paid by host venue

### LANGUAGE:

All text in English

### SUPPORT:

At least one experienced Field Museum staff technician leads onsite installation and de-installation

Educators' Guide, including information for teacher, student, and public programs

Exhibitor Toolkit, including logo, installation shots, rights-free images, and sample press release

Range of wholesale products developed for the exhibition

Installation and Design Manual detailing exhibition layout, installation, and maintenance

### WEB SITE:

[www.fieldmuseum.org/carver](http://www.fieldmuseum.org/carver)

*This exhibition was created by The Field Museum in collaboration with Tuskegee University and the National Park Service.*



## EXHIBITION THEMES (CONT'D)



### 4) Plant Power

Carver's research originated in the garden of his own backyard, but his groundbreaking experiments with peanuts, cotton, soybeans, sweet potatoes, and dozens of other plants sparked a nation-wide movement to identify plant-based products. This movement—recognized today as economic botany—involves botanists, chemists, anthropologists, and industrialists. From Henry Ford's use of soy in automobile construction to the anti-cancer agents found in the bark of a willow tree, the promise of plants still drives research around the world—more than a century after Carver conducted his first experiments.

### 5) Carver's Legacy

Carver's research is just as relevant today as it was a century ago. Experimenting with new plant-based products and land-use techniques—such as biofuels, organic farming, and soy-based plastics and inks—involves scientists across the globe. Find out what promises “modern Carvers” and economic botany hold for the future, and meet some of the scientists and humanitarians who have been motivated by Carver's example. Read letters from Carver's students and hear Carver himself in one of the many audio recordings that continue to inspire us today.

## EXHIBITION EXPERIENCE



### 1) Important Artifacts

- Study the brilliant naturalist through his field notes, correspondence, and artwork
- Delve into Carver's experiments by examining his laboratory equipment (some of it handmade), peanut specimens, plant-based paints, and first-draft products
- Examine delicately preserved botanical specimens that demonstrate the difference between healthy and overworked soil
- Explore Carver's many honors and powerful admirers through portraits, archival press clippings, photographs, and commemorative coins and stamps
- Connect with Carver the man through his spectacles, guitar, clothing, diplomas, and other personal possessions
- Understand Carver's passion for accessible education through his teaching materials: pamphlets, equipment, and insect and soil specimens



## EXHIBITION EXPERIENCE (CONT'D)

### 2) *Appealing Interactives*



- Learn about Carver's outreach to farmers through a life-size, touchable replica of a Jesup wagon used as a moving classroom throughout the South, and through interactives that simulate Carver's home and farm makeovers
- Discover the connections between plants and you by matching food, clothing, and medicines in your everyday life to their sources in the natural world
- Listen to Carver's unusual voice as he describes his work as a "cook-stove chemist"

### 3) *Compelling Media*



- Learn about land-use practices such as crop rotation and erosion prevention through an engaging animation
- Come face to face with the scientist himself through photographs, sound recordings, and black-and-white and color video footage
- Gain insight into Carver's life and legacy through an introductory video that provides an overview of his gripping life story and contributions to science
- Read correspondence and see video interviews recounting the broad influence of George Washington Carver on today's scientists, humanitarians, and educators



*For an exhibition prospectus, please contact:*

#### GRETCHEN BAKER

Traveling Exhibitions Manager

Phone: (001) 312-665-7370

Fax: (001) 312-665-7324

E-mail: [gbaker@fieldmuseum.org](mailto:gbaker@fieldmuseum.org)

#### WHITNEY OWENS

Traveling Exhibitions Director

Phone: (001) 312-665-7332

Fax: (001) 312-665-7324

E-mail: [wowens@fieldmuseum.org](mailto:wowens@fieldmuseum.org)

