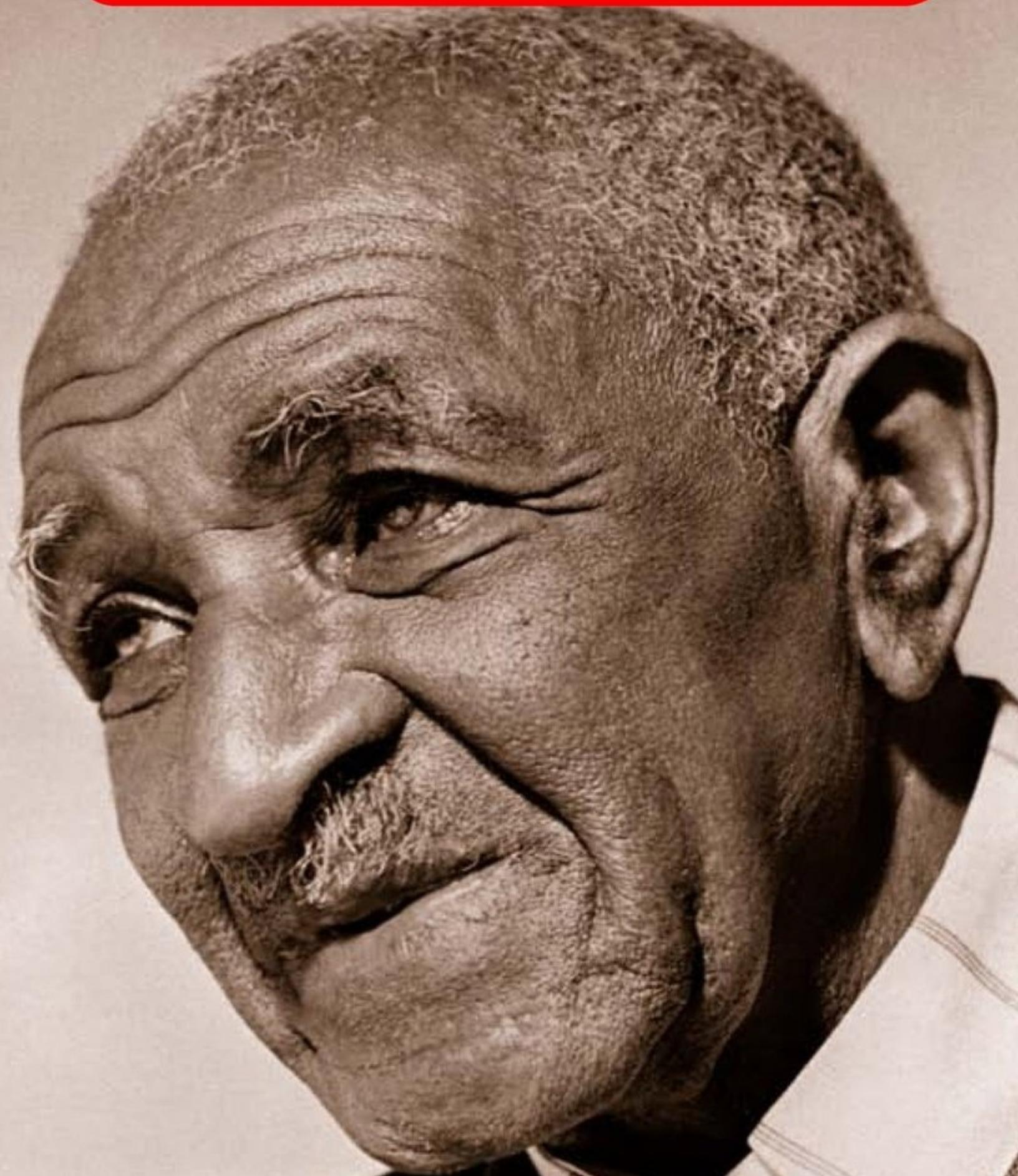


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# George Washington Carver

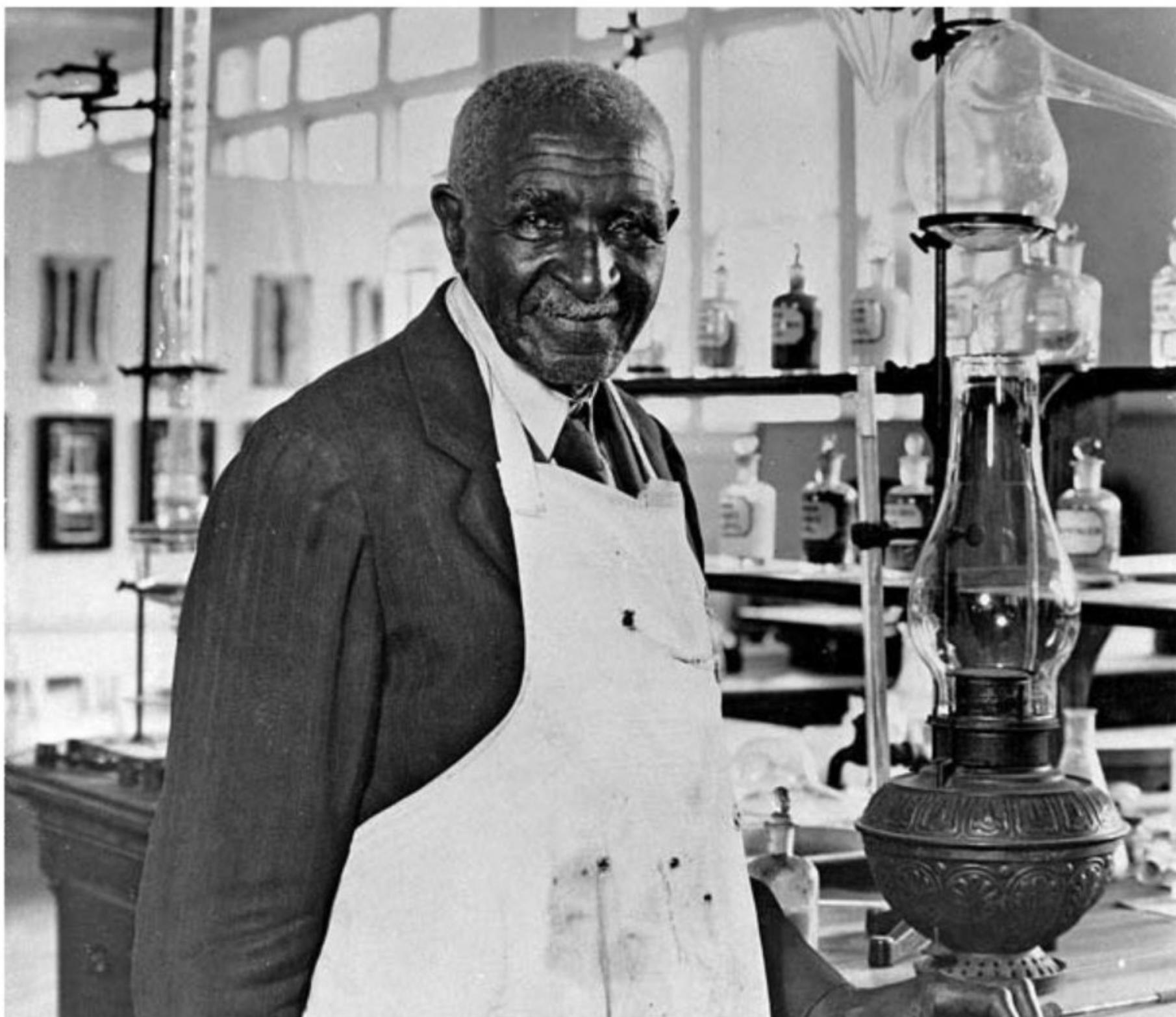
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Written by Cynthia Kennedy Henzel

# George Washington Carver



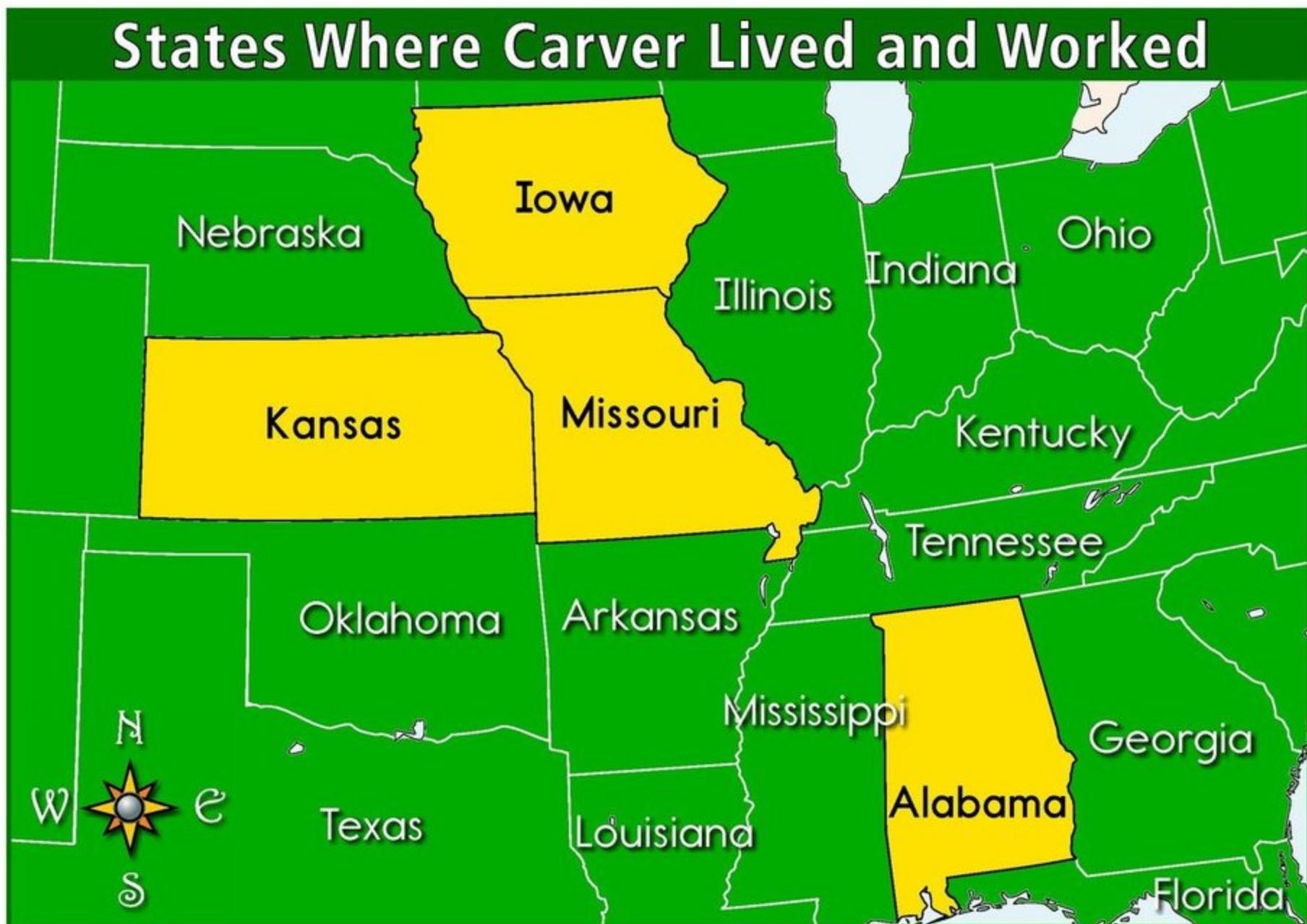
Written by Cynthia Kennedy Henzel



George Washington Carver in the lab, 1940

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Carver grew up in Missouri, studied in Kansas and Iowa, and worked in Alabama.

## Born a Slave

George Washington Carver was born in Missouri in 1864, during the Civil War. Because his mother was a slave, he was born a slave, too.

### The Civil War (1861–1865)

The Civil War was a fight between two sides of the United States, the North and the South. When it began, slavery was legal in fifteen “slave states” in the South and illegal in seventeen “free states” in the North. After the North won the war, all the slaves were freed.



The Carver home in Diamond, Missouri

When the Civil War ended, George became free. He stayed with the people who had owned him, Susan and Moses Carver. Susan taught George to read and write. More than anything, he liked to garden and explore the world outside.



## Learning on His Own

George taught himself about plants and animals. He wanted to go to school to learn more. In many places, black and white students could not attend the same schools. George could not go to the school nearby because he was black. When he was twelve, he left home to go to another school. A year later, he left for Kansas.



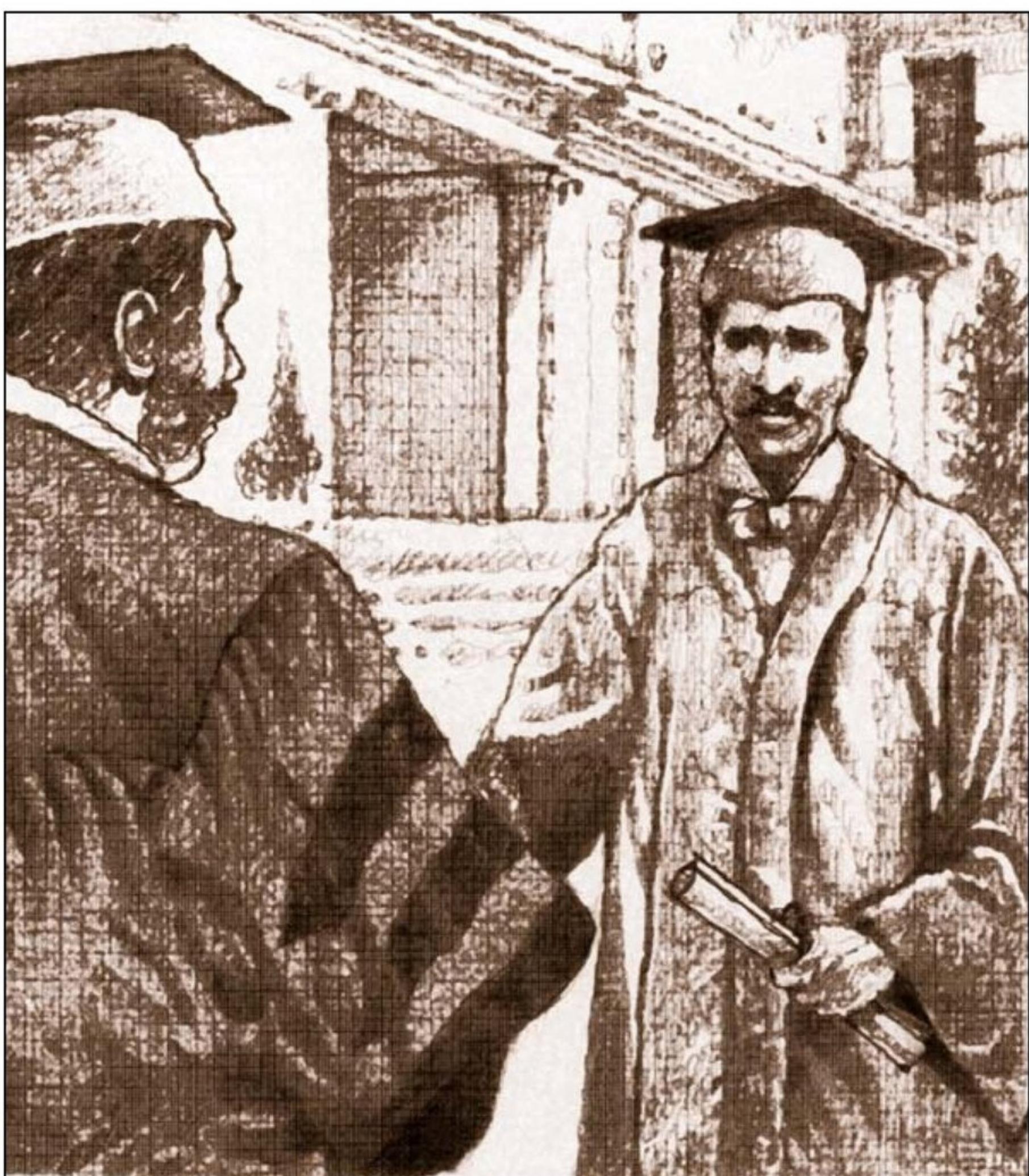
A school for black children in Kentucky, 1916



George could not attend college in Kansas because of his skin color.

When George finished high school in Kansas, he tried to go to college there. Once he arrived, though, the college told him he had to leave. It did not allow black students.

He didn't give up, though. Instead, he went to college in Iowa. There, George learned all about farming. He was the first black student to finish and to become a **professor** at his college.



George received his diploma from Iowa State Agricultural College.

## Making a Difference

In 1896, Carver went to Alabama to help the poor farmers there. These farmers had a big problem. Their cotton **crops** were smaller every year, so the farmers had less and less money.



Children helped pick cotton on a Mississippi plantation in the late 1800s.



Carver held a chunk of soil from a worn-out field.

Carver knew that growing the same crop again and again had worn out the **soil**. He taught the farmers to add dead leaves and plants to the soil to help it. He also taught them to plant sweet potatoes, peas, or peanuts. These crops put things back into the soil that plants need to grow well.

Farmers needed a way to sell these new crops. Carver invented more than a hundred ways to use sweet potatoes and three hundred ways to use peanuts!

New uses meant new products.  
New products meant new items  
for farmers to sell.



Carver at work

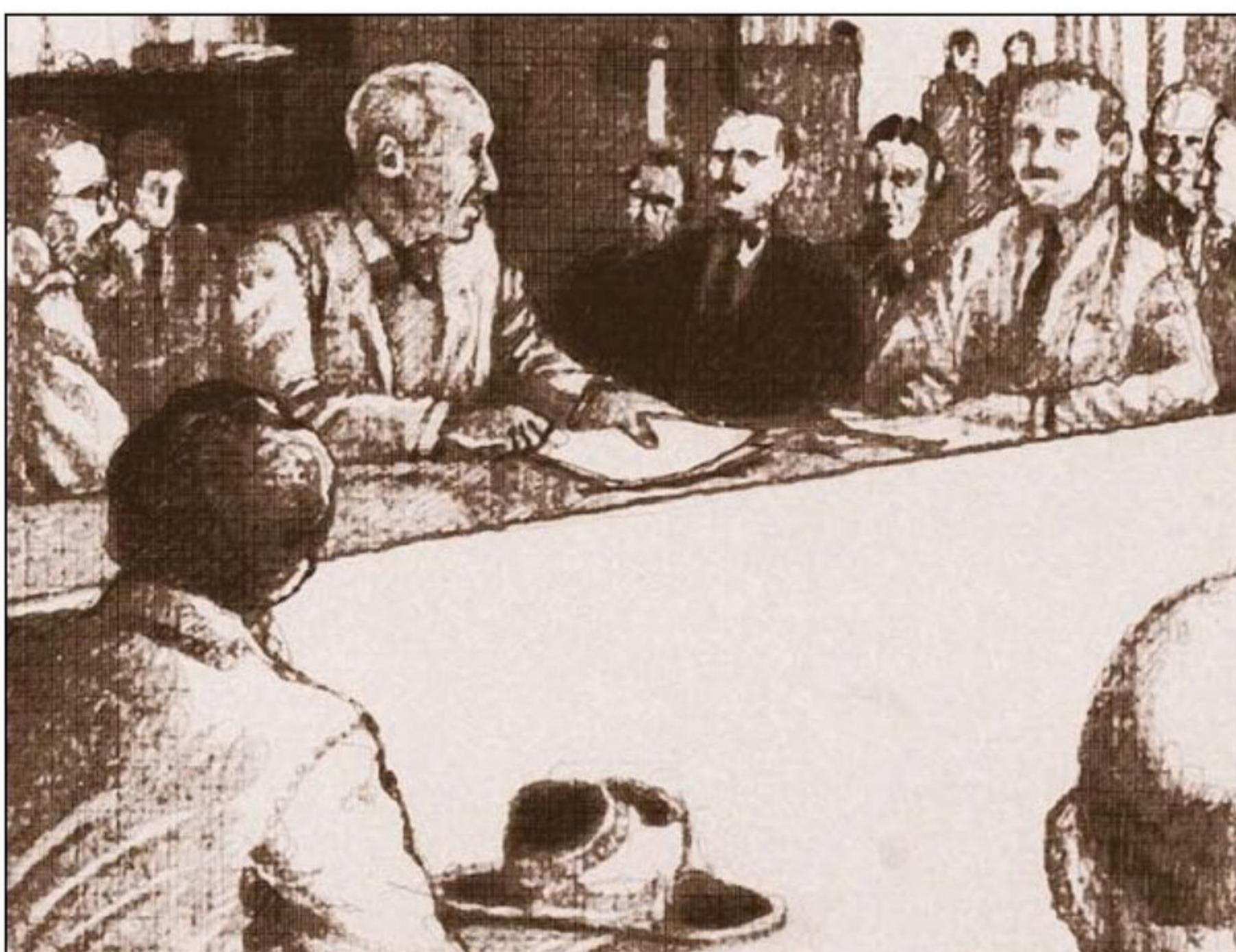
## The Truth About Peanut Butter



Carver invented up to 300 uses for the peanut: pavement, grease, medicines, peanut coffee, peanut mayonnaise, peanut flour, peanut milk, shoe polish, bleach, sandpaper, and more. Contrary to popular belief, however, he did not create peanut butter. A Native American tribe is known to have eaten a paste made from peanuts more than 500 years ago. It wasn't as creamy as the tasty goo we eat today, though.

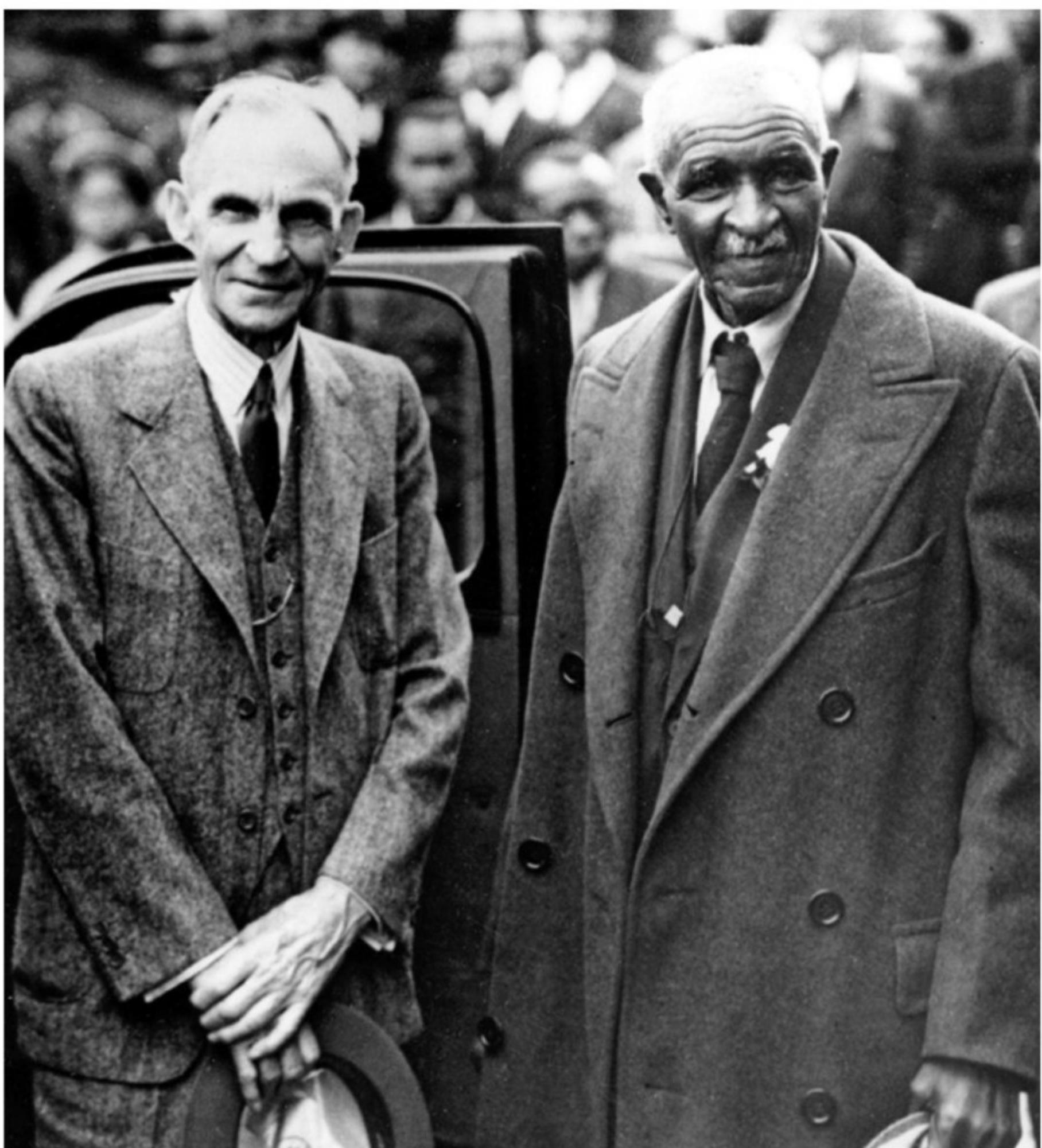
## Ideas Are Free

In 1921, Carver was asked to speak for ten minutes before the U.S. Congress—the country's lawmakers. Some of them didn't want him to speak because he was black. After his ten minutes, however, they asked him to speak more. In the end, Congress passed a law to help U.S. peanut farmers.



Carver spoke to members of Congress.

Carver became very **famous**, and crowds gathered to hear him speak. He could have made lots of money, but he thought helping people was more important. He believed ideas should be free and freely given.



Once Carver became famous, he met other famous men. Here he stood with Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company, in 1938.



Not long before he died, Carver donated \$33,000 to the Tuskegee Institute to carry on the research he began. (That would be about \$450,000 today!)

## A Lasting Message

George Washington Carver believed that people should treat each other with **respect**. In time, he won the respect of a whole country.

Carver also believed that people should care for the Earth. If they did, Earth would provide what they needed. Now, many years later, we are learning that he was right.

## Glossary

<b>crops</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	plants grown for food or other uses; the amount of plants or plant products gathered in one season (p. 9)
<b>famous</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	well known (p. 14)
<b>invented</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	created, designed, or built something that did not exist before (p. 11)
<b>professor</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a college or university teacher (p. 8)
<b>slave</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person who is legally owned and completely controlled by another person (p. 4)
<b>soil</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the top layer of the ground, in which plants grow; dirt (p. 10)

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