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Slave, Scholar, Scientist: Explore the History and Legacy of George Washington Carver in New Henry Ford Museum Exhibit

*Discover the Life and Work of This Extraordinary American,
November 6, 2010 through February 27, 2011 at Henry Ford Museum*

Exhibit Highlights

Best known for his experiments with peanuts, George Washington Carver and his work encompassed so much more. His research on the peanut plant was just one chapter in a diverse and prolific scientific career.

Carver's discoveries spanned numerous disciplines, but shared a singular vision: to discover nature's secrets and harness their power for the good of all mankind.

Born during a time of slavery and extreme racial prejudice, Carver overcame almost unimaginable challenges in pursuit of his "mighty vision." The power and clarity of this vision enabled George Washington Carver to open a world of discovery that scientists continue to explore today.

Through original documents and artifacts, hands-on displays and Carver's own personal possessions, explore his life and legacy in more detail through the following areas of the *George Washington Carver* exhibit:

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. Other personal objects on display include Carver's guitar, clothing, portraits and diplomas. An introductory video provides an insightful overview of Carver's groundbreaking life and work.

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.

In this section of the exhibit, trace Carver's path and passions as he survived a dramatic childhood and worked his way through school to become a researcher and teacher at the Tuskegee Institute (now

Tuskegee University). See a diorama of Carver's childhood home, a map charting his journey from Missouri to Iowa and the laboratory bench and instruments he used – some handmade from junkyard scraps – to make that “mighty vision” real, including items from The Henry Ford's collection such as an apothecary jar and a 1900 Bausch & Lomb microscope used by Carver in his lab.

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.

In this section, discover how Carver pursued his calling to “help the man farthest down” by developing and teaching organic farming and home improvement practices to those less fortunate. Check out Carver's horse-drawn “movable school” – the Jesup wagon designed to spread his methods to farmers in their fields and homemakers in the home. From seeds and soil samples to recipes, sewing supplies, and simple farm equipment, the wagon is stocked with reproductions of the kinds of plants and products that Carver used in his demonstrations.

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 nationwide 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.

This section recreates the laboratory where Carver unleashed the power of his humble plants – for food and health products, for household items and even for industry. View some of his lab equipment, including his peanut grinder, hydraulic press, scale and weights and much more. Examine Carver's ideas on chemistry and learn how he blazed a trail for the development of products made from plants, such as laundry soap, linoleum, wallboard, and more. Study Carver's field notes, correspondence and artwork to see how he laid the groundwork for organic farming and today's research on plant-based fuels, medicines and everyday products.

Carver's Legacy

Carver's research is just as relevant today as it was a century ago. Scientists from around the globe continue to experiment with new plant-based products and land-use techniques, such as biofuels, organic farming and soy-based plastics and inks.

Read letters from Carver's students and hear Carver himself in one of the many audio recordings that continue to inspire us today. Meet people whose lives were inspired by Carver and find out how today's accelerating research on plant-based fuels, medicines and other products is rooted in Carver's work. Hear oral histories from scientists, humanitarians and more whose lives were touched by Carver, and meet some “modern-day Carvers” working to develop the potential of plants in modern medicine and space exploration.

The Henry Ford is open seven days a week, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission to Henry Ford Museum is \$15 for adults, \$14 for seniors and \$11 for youth; members and children under five are free. For more information please call (313) 982-6001 or visit www.thehenryford.org.

The Henry Ford, in Dearborn, Michigan, is the world's premiere history destination and a National Historic Landmark that celebrates American history and innovation. Its mission is to provide unique educational experiences based on authentic objects, stories and lives from America's traditions of ingenuity, resourcefulness and innovation. Its purpose is to inspire people to learn from these traditions to help shape a better future. Five distinct attractions at The Henry Ford captivate more than 1.6 million visitors annually: Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village, The Ford Rouge Factory Tour, The Benson Ford Research Center and The Henry Ford IMAX Theatre. The Henry Ford is also home to Henry Ford Academy, a public charter high school which educates 485 students a year on the institution's campus and was founded in partnership with The Henry Ford, Ford Motor Company and Wayne County Public Schools. For more information please visit our website thehenryford.org.

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The *George Washington Carver* exhibit is organized by The Field Museum in collaboration with Tuskegee University and the National Park Service, and is supported at Henry Ford Museum by Ford Motor Company Fund. Entry to this limited-engagement exhibit is free with Henry Ford Museum admission or membership.