

MARCH · 1896

¹ William Miller Beardshear (1850-1902), minister and educator, was president of Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts from 1891 until his death.

² George Washington Carver (1861-1943) became Tuskegee's most famous faculty member and a partly mythical symbol of black achievement in science. Born a slave in Diamond Grove, Mo., he was kidnapped as an infant along with his mother and sister. Their owner, Moses Carver, sent a man to track the abductors. The other slaves were not found, but when the tracker returned with the sickly George, the owner paid for him and reared him with kindness. George Carver left home at fourteen to attend school in Neosho, Mo., and later worked and studied in wanderings through Kansas, Minnesota, Colorado, and Iowa. After attending Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa, he studied at Iowa State College in Ames, graduating in 1894. Ames was an important center of agricultural education, and Carver knew there three future U.S. secretaries of agriculture, James Wilson, Henry C. Wallace, and Henry Agard Wallace. He spent two more years studying for a master's degree, meanwhile working in the botany department at the greenhouse. While at Ames, Carver also was co-author of two articles describing experiments with rust inoculation and parasitic fungi, with one exception the only technical publications of his career.

When BTW wrote Carver in the spring of 1896 seeking to secure him for Tuskegee, he anticipated by almost a year the establishment at the institute of a federal/state agricultural experiment station. Carver began at Tuskegee also as a teacher and head of the agriculture department. He quickly proved his ineptitude as an administrator, however, and later indicated little interest in teaching classes, so gradually BTW delegated these responsibilities to others and allowed Carver free rein to experiment, to publish bulletins on applied agriculture as related to conditions in rural Alabama, and to teach some students informally as they worked under his direction. Carver was also considered an eccentric local character, and he played the part, knitting his own socks, living on the second floor of a girls' dormitory which he entered by the fire escape, singing in a high voice at Sunday school, and wearing various flowers and weeds in his buttonhole to advertise their properties. He had in his career acquired skill as a painter and pianist, and at Tuskegee he painted many watercolors and oil paintings, most of them still lifes. He donated several pianos to the school out of his salary, which as a reclusive bachelor he did not spend, and he fiercely defended BTW and the school whenever it was attacked.

Carver had what he once called "a passion for flowers," but it was his association with the peanut that made him famous. In 1916, the year following BTW's death, he published a Tuskegee experiment station bulletin, *How to Grow the Peanut and 105 Ways of Preparing It for Human Consumption*. Little in it was new; the Department of Agriculture had issued two more comprehensive bulletins on peanut cultivation and consumption, and Carver freely acknowledged his debt to numerous cookbooks. He continued his interest in the peanut. In 1920 he appeared before the convention of the United Peanut Association of America to talk about "The Possibilities of the Peanut," exhibiting substitute milk, coffee, stains, and others of the more than 145 applications he claimed for the peanut. In 1921 he testified before the House Ways and Means Committee for the United Peanut Association's effort to include peanuts in the Fordney-McCumber tariff bill. Over the years he developed other peanut products, including a vanishing cream that he used to massage victims of infantile paralysis. His fame as a masseur spread,