

Tuskegee Institute

National Historic Site
Alabama

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



“In Industry the Foundation Must Be Laid”

In his famous Atlanta Address of 1895, Booker T. Washington set forth the motivating spirit behind Tuskegee Institute. In a post-Reconstruction era marked by growing segregation and disfranchisement of blacks, this spirit was based on what realistically might be achieved in that time and place. “The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now,” he observed, “is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera house.” Because of Washington’s extraordinary ability to work within the system and to maximize the possible, Tuskegee flourished to an extent only dreamed about when he met his first students on July 4, 1881.

The school’s beginnings were indeed inauspicious. At the urging of Lewis Adams, a former slave, and George W. Campbell, a former slave owner, the State of Alabama had provided \$2,000 for teachers’ salaries but nothing for land, buildings, or equipment. Classes began in a dilapidated church and shanty. Although the 30 students in the first class may not have known what to expect from the new school, Principal Washington knew exactly what he intended to do. Guided by the model of Hampton Institute, Washington set three objectives for Tuskegee. Students in the first class already had some education and showed potential as teachers. Throughout the school’s history, many graduates became educators. Washington urged these teachers “to return to the plantation districts and show the people there how to put

new energy and new ideas into farming as well as into the intellectual and moral and religious life of the people.” A rural extension program took progressive ideas and training to many who could not attend classes on the campus. Smaller schools and colleges founded and taught by Tuskegee alumni sprang up throughout the South, and teacher training remained a primary objective of their alma mater.

A second and perhaps more famous objective was to develop craft and occupational skills to equip students for jobs in the trades and agriculture. The needs of the school provided a ready laboratory for instruction. Buildings were needed, so the students made and laid bricks. Hungry students ate the products of the school’s farm, acquiring in the process a knowledge of progressive agricultural methods. Thus they learned by doing while earning compensation toward tuition. Even in traditional academic courses, practical problems were interwoven at every opportunity. “In industry the foundation must be laid,” Washington explained. Industrial education was to be the basis on which “habits of thrift, a love of work, ownership of property, [and] bank accounts,” would grow.

As a third objective, Washington hoped to make Tuskegee what he called a “civilizing agent.” Education was to be total; certainly it would occur in the classroom and workshop, but also it would

take place in the dining hall and dormitories. Washington insisted on high moral character and absolute cleanliness for both students and faculty. Dormitory rooms and table manners were critically scrutinized. Washington himself kept close watch over the appearance of Tuskegee’s buildings, grounds, students, and faculty. “I never see a filthy yard that I do not want to clean it...or a button off one’s clothes, or a grease-spot on them or on a floor, that I do not want to call attention to it,” confessed Washington. To enable the Institute to undertake such a program of total instruction, the school moved, in 1882, to 100 acres of abandoned farm land, purchased with a \$200 personal loan from the treasurer of Hampton.

Tuskegee prospered as it did in part because Washington won widespread support in both the North and South. He traveled extensively and spoke convincingly, making the Institute known and respected among people of wealth and influence. The first building erected on the campus, Porter Hall, was named for the Brooklyn donor of \$500. Andrew Carnegie, Collis P. Huntington, and John D. Rockefeller were among the benefactors whose names appeared on major campus buildings. By the time of Washington’s death in 1915, Tuskegee had become an internationally famous institution. The main campus has since grown to include 161 buildings on 268 acres and an academic community of nearly 5,000 students, faculty, and staff.

The success of Tuskegee has not always been greeted with acclaim. Many felt that vocational training for blacks would tend to keep them in a subordinate role. Instead, greater emphasis on traditional higher education was advocated, notably by W.E.B. DuBois. While each side in this debate recognized the need for both kinds of education, the concern was with the disproportionate emphasis on vocational training that Washington’s approach and Tuskegee’s popular success were fostering. Growing racial discrimination heightened the urgency of the debate. Although Washington combated racial injustice behind the scenes, his critics knew little or nothing of his activity and criticized what they saw as inaction.

In the decades after Washington’s death, Tuskegee moved into a new era. The controversy over educational philosophy diminished as a more balanced approach arose. Washington’s successor, Robert Russa Moton, led Tuskegee into a college degree-granting program with the establishment of the College Department in 1927.

The struggles and triumphs of those early years, the support and attention that was garnered for Tuskegee, its survival and growth, combine into a fascinating, spirited saga. History will always grant a special significance to the name Tuskegee Institute.

Booker T. Washington



Washington with his wife Margaret and his children Ernest Davidson, Booker T., Jr. and Portia M.



Left: The Oaks, student-built home of the Booker T. Washington family

Booker T. Washington with Theodore Roosevelt during his visit to Tuskegee Institute in 1905.

When the Civil War broke out in April 1861, a 6 year old child who would later call himself Booker Taliaferro Washington was a slave valued at \$400.00 on the small tobacco farm of James Burroughs in Virginia. Freed at the close of the war, Booker and his family migrated to Malden, West Virginia, where the child went to work in the mines. His spare moments were spent learning to read. While serving as a houseboy, he received strict indoctrination in the virtues of hard work and cleanliness from Viola Ruffner, wife of a mine owner. At 16, Booker entered Hampton Institute, worked his way through as a janitor, and graduated in 1875 with honors and a definite perspective on life. After periods of teaching at Malden and further study at Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C., he returned to Hampton in 1879 to teach Native American students.

Washington’s great life work really began in 1881 when he went to Tuskegee, Alabama, to create the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. Pragmatic, optimistic, and energetic, Washington was a man eminently in tune with his time, and he guided the development of Tuskegee with considerable success. By the

time he made his Atlanta Exposition speech in 1895, spelling out his pragmatic philosophy of race relations in the United States, Tuskegee already held a place of pre-eminence in the field of education for blacks. The founder himself was about to become a leader of his race and advisor to presidents.

Washington’s first two wives died young. Fanny N. Smith was the mother of Portia, and Olivia A. Davidson, Washington’s assistant and a tireless fund-raiser, was the mother of sons Booker T. and Ernest Davidson. Margaret James Murray, his third wife, served effectively for many years as Tuskegee’s Director of Industries for Girls. The family home, “The Oaks,” played an important role in Washington’s life. There guests were frequently entertained, and there he returned eagerly from his extensive travels to the welcome of his beloved family. Washington died at The Oaks in 1915, as did his wife 10 years later.

George Washington Carver



Brown Brothers, Sterling, PA

“My very soul thirsted for an education. I literally lived in the woods. I wanted to know every strange stone, flower, insect, bird, or beast.”

Born a slave of Moses and Susan Carver, probably during the Civil War, George Washington Carver had a burning desire for education that was fed by a strong natural curiosity. In childhood his health was poor, and he was orphaned at an early age. Yet he worked his way through school and earned a master’s degree in agriculture from Iowa Agricultural College, later Iowa State. Upon graduation, he joined the faculty at Iowa where he supervised research in botany and bacteriology. He was well on the way to a promising scientific career.

In 1896, however, Carver chose a much less certain future by accepting Booker T. Washington’s invitation to come to Tuskegee Institute as head of the new Department of Agriculture. Here, for 47 years, Carver taught, wrote, and worked in his laboratory. His scientific ability, reinforced by his love of nature and God, his basic curiosity, and his desire to help his fellow man, led him



Carver with students in his laboratory classroom, about 1903.



Left: The George Washington Carver Museum.

George Washington Carver with Franklin D. Roosevelt.

to develop numerous uses for Southern agricultural products. His work brought fame and honor to Tuskegee Institute, and won him a reputation as an outstanding American scientist.

In 1938, the Institute honored Carver by establishing the George Washington Carver Museum on the campus. Here Carver, who was also talented in the arts, found a home for his paintings and needlework, his vegetable specimens, and his samples of products derived from peanuts, sweet potatoes, sand, and feathers, to name a few. The museum was dedicated on March 11, 1941, at a ceremony attended by Henry Ford, who came to pay tribute to the aging professor-scientist. Carver lived at Tuskegee until his death on January 5, 1943. His legacy lives on in the museum and in the Carver Research Foundation, which was begun with a bequest from Carver himself.

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Tour of the Historic Campus District

Many of the Institute buildings constructed while Booker T. Washington was alive still exist. Most are built of brick made on the campus by students. Architect R. R. Taylor, the first black graduate (1892) of MIT, and a Tuskegee faculty member, designed most of the historic buildings and supervised construction by students. The Institute has been involved in architectural training since 1893.

As you tour the campus, either by car or by foot, use this list to see Tuskegee's oldest buildings. The current name of each is given first, then the historic name, if different, is in parentheses, followed by an approximate date of completion.

1. Park Headquarters
2. The Oaks, 1899
3. Carver Museum (Laundry), 1915
4. Dorothy Hall (Girls' Industrial Building), 1901
5. Margaret Murray Washington Hall (Slater-Armstrong Memorial Agricultural Building), 1897
6. Booker T. Washington Monument, 1922
7. Chapel and Graves
8. Tatum Hall, 1907
9. Little theater (Creamery), 1899

10. Carnegie Hall (Carnegie Library), 1901
11. White Hall, 1910
12. Douglass Hall, 1904
13. Huntington Hall, 1900
14. Tompkins Hall, 1910
15. Administration Building (Office Building), 1902
16. Collis P. Huntington Academic Building, 1905
17. Mary Scott Cottage, 1897
18. Rockefeller Hall, 1903
19. Phelps Hall (Bible Training School), 1892
20. ROTC Armory (Boys' Bath House) 1904

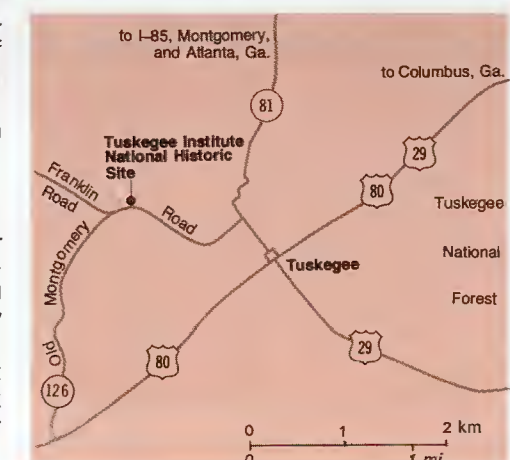
21. Thrasher Hall (Science Hall), 1893
22. Band Cottage (Foundry and Blacksmith Shop), 1889
23. Power Plant, 1915
24. Early Hospital Buildings, 1912-1916
25. Emory Dormitories, 1903-1909
26. Milbank Agriculture Hall, 1909
27. Carver Research Foundation, 1940

For your safety
Natural and historical features sometimes present unexpected conditions. Be especially careful on old walkways and steps. Our natural areas have steep slopes, poisonous or spiny vegetation, and animal life that stings or bites. **Remember that pedestrians have the right-of-way on campus roads.**

Visitor Information

Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site is located on Old Montgomery Road (State Route 126) and is adjacent to the city of Tuskegee, AL. When approaching via Interstate 85, exit onto State Route 81 South. Turn right at the intersection of 81 and Old Montgomery Road. Proceed to the second stoplight and turn right, then follow signs.

We suggest that you begin your tour at the visitor orientation center located in the George Washington Carver Museum. Audio-visual programs and items for sale are located there. Guided tours of the Booker T. Washington home, The Oaks, are available. You may take a walking tour of the campus historic district by following the map included in the folder. While we encourage you to take a close look at the Institute's daily activities, we ask you not to interfere with the students' academic pursuits or privacy. Check at Carver Museum for suggestions on what to see during your visit.



Administration
The Oaks and the George Washington Carver Museum are administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The historic district is jointly administered by Tuskegee Institute and the National Park Service. The Superintendent's address is: Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site, P.O. Drawer 10, Tuskegee Institute, AL 36088.

Tuskegee Album



Left, above: Students in the Creamery Division learn to process butter, cream and cheese from the large dairy herd owned by the Institute, 1913-1914.

Left, below: White Hall, a girls' dormitory, built by student masons and carpenters in 1910.

Right: Principal Booker T. Washington, mounted on his horse, Dexter, frequently made inspection tours of the Institute's grounds.

Below: Students learn the best agricultural methods of the day while growing food for the school on the Institute's farms.



Left: Students in George Washington Carver's class study the inter-relationship between the soil, plants, animals and people.

Right: Some students learn the art of basket-weaving.

Below, right: Thrasher Hall, built in 1893 was the science building at the original institute.



Far left: Students make bricks for campus buildings in 1902.

Left: Other students learn to lay bricks, further applying Booker T. Washington's philosophy of practical education.

Right: Campus Avenue in 1906. The Administration Building (built in 1902) is in the foreground. To the extreme right is Carnegie Hall, funded as a library by Andrew Carnegie and built in 1901. Most of the historic buildings were built by students.

