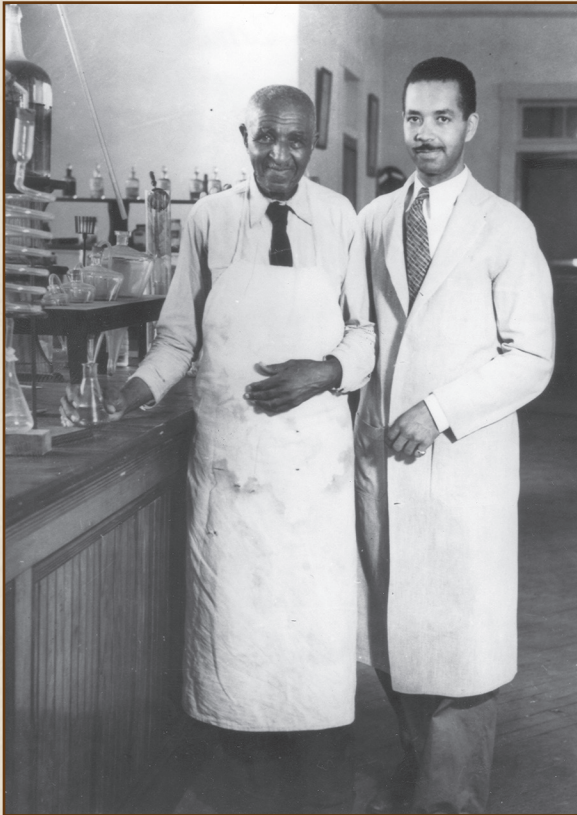


AUSTIN W. CURTIS, JR.



Dr. Austin Curtis, right

“He seems to me more like a son than a person who has just come to work for me.”

— George Washington Carver

Austin W. Curtis graduated from Cornell University with a degree in chemistry. In 1935, he was offered a job as Carver’s assistant. When George Washington Carver was getting older and his health was not as good as it used to be, Mr. Curtis worked in Carver’s lab. He did many routine duties, but he also did his own research. For eight years, he helped Carver with some of his research and writing and also accompanied him when traveling.

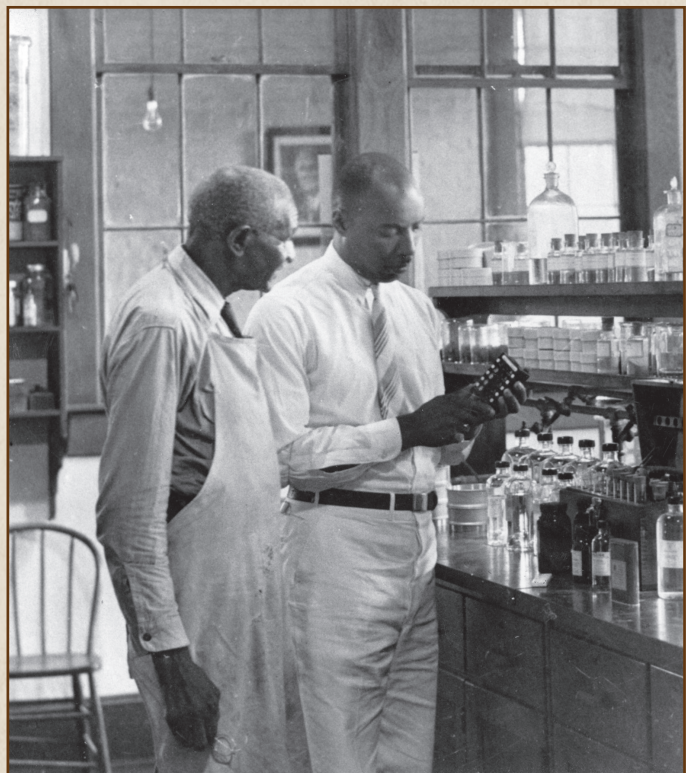
Carver grew to rely on this young man. Curtis even started calling himself “Baby Carver!”

Austin Curtis was greatly influenced by his years spent working with George Washington Carver. One thing he learned was that whatever work or task needed to be done, he should do it to the best of his ability. Mr. Curtis remembered that Carver always wore a flower or a piece of evergreen in his lapel, depending on the season of the year. He might choose to wear berries or a twig, but if flowers were available, that is what he chose.

Mr. Curtis was impressed by Carver’s motivation to help people. He called George Washington Carver “a true humanitarian” because he tried to help other people overcome their problems. When Carver died in 1943, Austin Curtis helped establish the George Washington Carver Research Foundation and the Carver Museum at Tuskegee Institute.



AUSTIN W. CURTIS, JR.



*Carver and Curtis in Science Lab,
Tuskegee Institute, AL*

Curtis stayed at Tuskegee until 1944, even after Carver's death. He became Director of Agriculture, the same position George Washington Carver held.

Then he moved to Detroit, Michigan and opened his own business, the A. W. Curtis Laboratories. He carried on with the work of creating products from peanuts and sweet potatoes. He also continued working on **dehydrating** fruits and vegetables. He researched how to make inexpensive paints. He once prepared a banquet made completely with peanuts: soup, chicken, ice cream, and coffee, just like George Washington Carver had. He started the business to help provide job opportunities for African Americans and he carried on the humanitarian work, just like George Washington Carver.

GLOSSARY

Dehydrating – A way of preserving food by removing some of the water.

TIME LINE • THE TUSKEGEE YEARS: 1896 –1943

