

STEPHEN FROST



Mr. Stephen Frost

“As we lived in the country no colored schools were available so I was permitted to go 8 miles to a school at town (Neosho). This simply sharpened my appetite for more knowledge.”

— George Washington Carver

Before the Civil War, it was against Missouri law to teach African Americans to read, whether they were free or enslaved. After the Civil War, African Americans in Missouri were allowed to go to school, usually in racially segregated schools. Many of these black schools had very little funding, and teachers often had little training.

The only African American school near where George lived was in Neosho. It was called the Neosho Colored School, which opened in 1872. Around 1877, George left the Carver farm and walked about eight miles so he could live there and attend school.

Stephen Frost, born in Tennessee around 1850, had moved to Missouri before 1870 when the census recorded him as a resident of Springfield, Missouri. The 1870 census record described Stephen as unable to read or write. At the time he was living with a white lawyer named William Baker. Mr. Baker’s 22-year old daughter Emma was a school teacher. By 1874 Stephen Frost had become a teacher and began teaching in Neosho.

He was a good teacher with the power to influence and inspire students, sharing his knowledge and wisdom. He was respected by parents and citizens in both the black and the white communities of Neosho.

Around 1876, George left the Carver farm and walked about eight miles so he could live and attend school in Neosho. He described the school like this: “The first school was simply the small, crude



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Carver's Sketch of Neosho School

town school poorly equipped in every way ...with its crude wooden benches and other rickety furniture..."

One week, Carver earned a special "Reward of Merit" from Mr. Frost for perfect studies and good conduct. Mr. Frost also taught George's brother, Jim, who may have attended the school for a while.

George loved studying math, and he said that Algebra was "one of my favorite studies."

Mr. Frost was a **dedicated** teacher. But after about a year, because he wanted to learn even more, George moved to Fort Scott, Kansas.

GLOSSARY

Dedicated - committed, hard working.

TIME LINE • GAINING AN EDUCATION: 1876 – 1896

