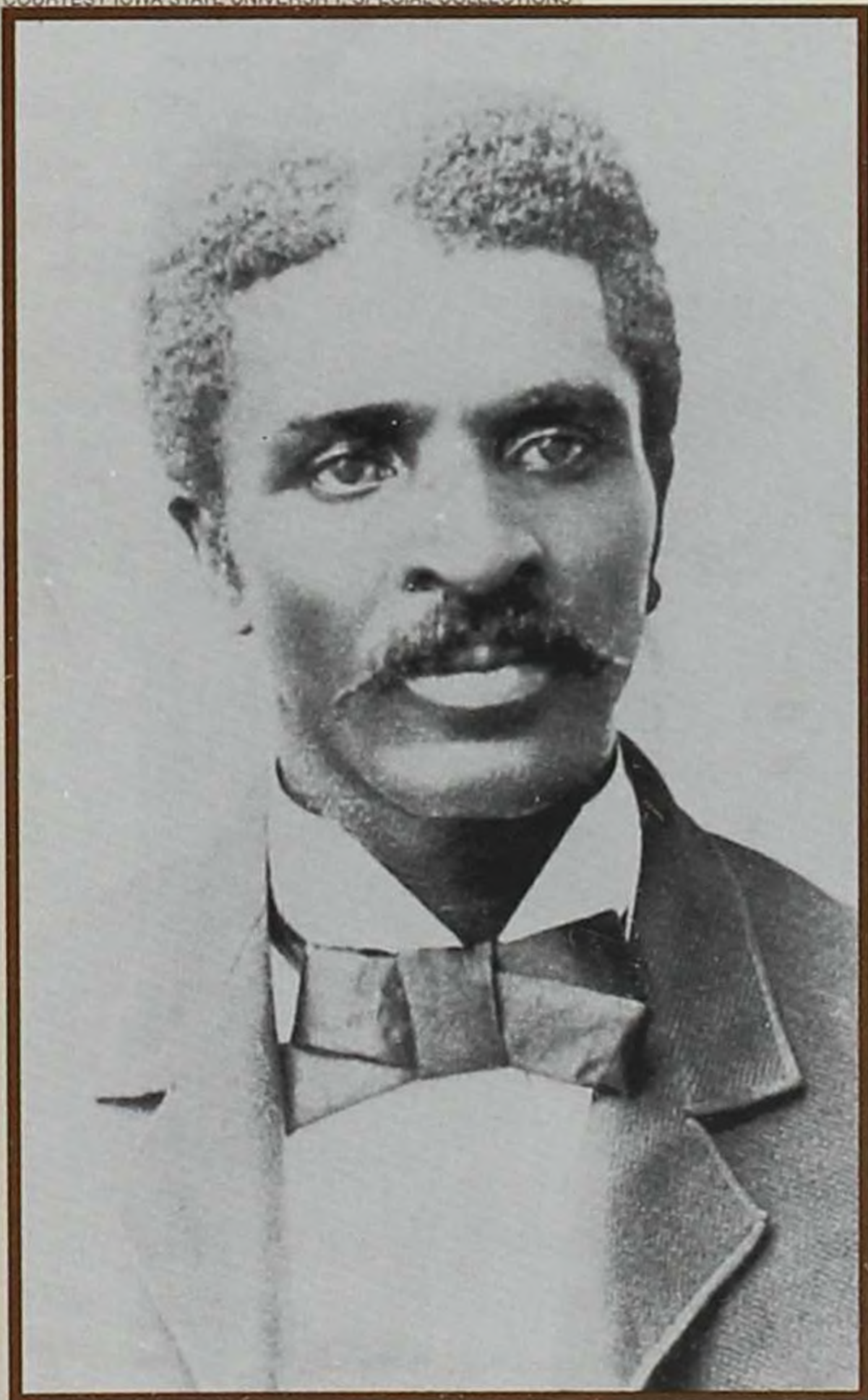


# George Washington Carver,



BOTH SPECIMENS: COURTESY ADA HAYDEN HERBARIUM, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY



Herbarium Iowa Agricultural College  
Ames, Iowa  
Accession No.  
*Rudbeckia hirta*  
Ames, Iowa.  
Coll. Geo. Carver. Date 1894

Herbarium Iowa Agricultural College  
Ames, Iowa  
Accession No. 13438  
Ames, Iowa.  
Coll. Geo. Carver. Date

# a life wrapped up in flowers

IT IS WELL KNOWN that at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, George Washington Carver's work brought about major economic and agricultural improvements in the rural South, through erosion control, crop rotation, composting, and research (especially with peanuts and cotton).

But it was at Iowa State College in Ames where his career began. He was the college's first African American student and faculty member and an assistant botanist at the College Experiment Station before he left for Tuskegee in 1896.

While Carver's scholarship and research at Iowa State focused on pathology and breeding of plants, he saw spirit as well as science when he looked at nature. It is not difficult to imagine Carver strolling with supreme pleasure and respectful curiosity through fields and woodlands, gathering plants to mount as herbarium specimens. And, as the 1896 article on the right suggests, we can almost hear him lecture, with quiet passion, to women whose "hunger for flowers is keen, and [whose] desire to learn regarding the sciences that relate to flowers, is pronounced." The Adams County Union summed it up: "Prof. Carver's whole life is wrapped up in flowers."  
—Editor

Carver's strong connections to Iowa are made clear in a traveling exhibit from the Field Museum. Titled "George Washington Carver," the exhibit is at the State Historical Building in Des Moines through November 2, 2008.

Plant specimens mounted by Carver over a century ago are in the collections of the Ada Hayden Herbarium, Iowa State University.



## Our Farmers Institute.

The coming Farmer's Institute Feb. 25, 26, 27, could have no feature more interesting or profitable than the talks of Prof. Geo. Carver, of the Agricultural college, on flowers and gardens. Perhaps you read what Prof. Wilson said in the Union's farm notes, last week. The novelty of it is that Prof. Carver is a colored man; perhaps that is an objection on the part of some. But Prof. Budd recently told the writer Mr. Carver was the highest authority in the United States on some lines of floriculture, particularly cross-fertilization. As Blind Boone is wholly devoted to music, so Prof. Carver's whole life is wrapped up in flowers. Yet he is a graduate of the four year's course of the college. Prof. Tama Jim Wilson says:

"The West Liberty Farmers' Institute added a new feature that was very successful and crowded an extra hall. Mr. George Carver, of the college was there to talk to the ladies about flowers. He is a graduate of the four-year course in agriculture, and has tastes along botanical lines that have been finely developed in the college laboratories. He spoke to the ladies of flowers in the home, in the window, the green house, the conservatory, the lawn and the garden. He elaborated fully and in an instructive manner, on ornamental bedding, growing exhibit plants, the way to originate new varieties, including cross-fertilization, etc. He explained how plants are grown from seeds, and from cuttings. Then he told them how to build a greenhouse, and manage an ordinary window. The ladies crowded the hall, from town and country, and became so interested that they formed an association, to meet monthly, for discussion. They first had in mind a cooking school, but failed to get a leader. We doubt whether that will succeed, for most Iowa matrons and maids, especially on the farm, are already expert cooks, but their hunger for flowers is keen, and their desire to learn regarding the sciences that relate to flowers, is pronounced. This kind of entertainment interests the city lady as much as her sister of the country. We suggest to the Institute organizers that they consider this feature. Florists can be found in most towns who could help. We predict that it would be a drawing card. Mr. Carver was there on trial. The West Liberty folks have engaged him again, a year in advance. College men attend for expenses of the trip and the state pays them.

Adams County Union, February 1896