

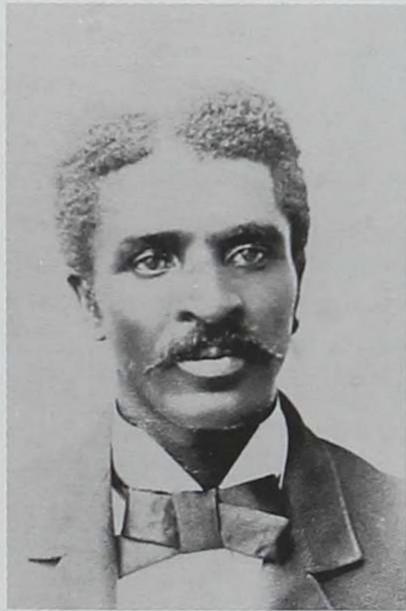
Four Iowans Who

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The American Relief Administration's efforts in 1919 fed these Polish children. The work was overseen by Herbert Hoover. Iowa has played a major role in combating world hunger, through wartime relief, scientific advancements, and farm production.

o Fed the World



Iowa has a well-earned reputation as the world's foremost producer of food. The state's soil and climate and the industry of its farmers have won Iowa the enviable title of the world's breadbasket. Less well known, however, is the role played by individual Iowans in sustaining the rest of the world. George Washington Carver, Herbert Hoover, Henry A. Wallace, and Norman Borlaug all made significant contributions to improving food production and distribution in the 20th century.

Food is among the most compelling of human needs, yet it has always been a struggle to feed the world. We have developed high-yield grains and worldwide distribution networks, yet one billion of the world's population of six billion still suffer from chronic malnutrition. With global population increasing by 100 million each year, ensuring adequate food for all people will be a continuing challenge.

Wars, revolutions, and climatic changes have often disrupted networks of food production and distribution. Throughout the 20th century, famines have developed in times of crisis. In these crises, Iowans have stepped up to meet the challenge of feeding the world.

George Washington Carver's work enabled southern farmers to shift from single-crop farming to diversified agriculture. Herbert Hoover led relief

efforts that fed one billion people during and after two world wars. Henry A. Wallace developed hybrid seeds and worked to make them available to all. Norman Borlaug devoted his professional life to creating high-yield, disease-resistant grains. These four men epitomize what Iowa has done for the world.

The following four essays relate the contributions of these four Iowans in their historic contexts. But this is more than a look back at past achievements. It is also a clarion call to the next generation of Iowans and Americans to step up and relieve world hunger. It is our duty to act on the legacy we have inherited from Carver, Hoover, Wallace, and Borlaug, and to do what we can to ensure the equitable distribution of food throughout the world.

—by Matthew Schaefer

Matthew Schaefer is an archivist at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum in West Branch, Iowa. Our thanks to the Hoover Library-Museum for permission to publish the following four essays, first presented at its October 2002 symposium, "Four Iowans Who Fed the World." (Copyright held by the Hoover Library-Museum.)

—The Editor