Born into slavery, George Washington Carver gained freedom with the abolition of slavery in 1865. Carver studied botany, graduated from Iowa State University, and went on to teach agriculture at the Tuskegee Institute.

Carver introduced crop rotation, teaching cotton growers to also cultivate peanuts and other foods. Rotating crops improved the soil and made farms more productive and sustainable. Carver invented hundreds of products using peanuts and sweet potatoes, from flour to medicines.