



OCTOBER NEWSLETTER
2014-2015 NUMBER 2

Editor: Shirley Baugher
Designer: Norman Baugher

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO


www.fawchicago.org

President's Message

CHRISTINE BERN, *President*

Friends of American Writers honors its Past Presidents in October for their dedication to FAW and appreciation of talented writers. I thank Angie Higginson, Corrine Morrissey, Pat Mose, Vivian Mortensen, Betty O'Toole and Corene Anderson for their service to FAW. Your leadership has strengthened our mission of encouraging high standards and promoting literary ideals among American writers.

Also in October, we honor our Sustaining Book Clubs: Flossmoor Book Club, Ogden Dunes Book Club and Women's Reading Club of Riverside. Through our sustaining book clubs will are able to expand our reach and the scope of our membership.

It is with sadness that I tell you of the passing of longtime Flossmoor Book Club member Rosemary Ballies. Rosemary is an example of the importance of our Sustaining Clubs to FAW. Rosemary's support of FAW through her regular attendance is one of the reasons FAW has endured for more than 90 years. 

Listening to the Still, Small Voice The George Washington Carver Story

Presented by PAXTON WILLIAMS

By Shirley Baugher

PAXTON WILLIAMS is a true Renaissance man. An actor, playwright, and graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, Paul holds master's degrees in public policy from the University of Michigan and the University of Birmingham (UK). He has traveled throughout the United States portraying George Washington in a one-man play he authored while a student at Iowa State University.

Paxton is a graduate of Dr. Carver's alma mater, Iowa State University. While he was a student there, he took an honors seminar on Carver and was so inspired that he started an in-depth research project on the great man's life. He combed the archives at Iowa State and the George Washington Carver Museum in Diamond, Missouri. His research resulted in a play, "Listening to the Still Small Voice: The George Washington Carver Story," which he performed during his senior year at Iowa State. As an actor, he has also appeared in the independent feature "Reel Competition." He has taken on the roles of the abolitionist writer William Wells Brown, Tom Robinson in "To Kill a Mockingbird," and Hoke Colburn in "Driving Miss Daisy". He starred in his own adaptation of Shakespeare's "Othello", for which he received rave reviews.

After earning a master's degree in public policy. He became a legislative intern in Washington, D.C. Not content with doing one thing, he wrote articles and presented workshops on diversity in the workplace. In 2003, he left Washington to spend a year at the University of Birmingham in England as a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholar where he earned a second masters degree. He joined the staff of The Drum, the UKs largest arts center devoted to the promotion of African American, African Caribbean, and Asian arts and culture.



▲ Paxton Williams

OCTOBER PROGRAM

Continued on next page ►

When he left England, he returned to Iowa where he became an inaugural member of the Young Alumni Council for the Iowa State University Alumni Association. He also assumed the position of executive director of the George Washington Carver Birthplace Association, a group that supports the historical, scientific, educational and interpretative programs of the National Park Service. None of this kept him from pursuing his other true love, acting. He took "Listening to the Still, Small Voice" to 24 states and to England, playing to packed houses. Everyone wanted to see the George Washington Carver story through Paxton's eyes and hear it through his words.



Williams. He had to climb higher. He went off to the University of Chicago Law School because he loved the subject, and because he wanted to use the law to improve society. Sound familiar?

We might wonder at the connection between the theater and the law. Paxton says his love for the arts and humanities makes him a more effective attorney. He believes he can use the arts to create a more just and empathetic society. Knowing him, he will do just that.

After spending the summer portraying George Washington Carver on the Chautauqua circuit, Paxton Williams is bringing that portrayal to the Friends of American Writers. When he leaves here, he will return to Iowa where he will become the Assistant Attorney General for the State of Iowa. George Washington Carver would be proud.

But, like Dr. Seuss' Yertle the Turtle and like his hero George Washington Carver, all of these activities and achievements weren't enough for Paxton

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the October 8 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 5. Please note that this deadline is firm, and no reservations will be accepted following this date and time. To reserve, please call only Lorraine Campione (773-275-5118) or Vivian Mortensen (847-827-8339).

Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 E. Bellevue Place. The cost of the luncheon is \$40 payable by cash or check to FAW in the front lobby on the day of the luncheon. Discount parking for FAW luncheon guests is available in the lot just west of the Fortnightly at 100 E. Bellevue Place. If you are reserving for a group, we ask that only one person make the group request to avoid confusion. Please note: if you make a reservation and find you cannot attend, you

must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations not cancelled must be paid for by the member.

Dues Reminder

We know it's an oversight, but many of you have not yet paid your 2013-14 dues. If you have not already done so, please send your payment to the FAW treasurer Eileen McNulty, 4450 N. Kostner, Chicago, IL 60630-4102. The annual dues are \$45. The absolute deadline for receipt of payment is October 1, 2014.

Directory Distribution

The **2014-15 FAW Directories** will be distributed to members in October.

FAW Honors

October is **Past FAW Presidents and Sustaining Clubs Members Month**. Past presidents of FAW and presidents of Sustaining Clubs will be invited to attend the luncheon on

October 8 and will be acknowledged by the membership.

Tanya Klasser, **Juvenile Awards Committee Chair**, announced that the committee has already received 13 books for award consideration with more on the way. Their first meeting is set for October 15.

The Literary Committee has received 18 books for review to date. With many more to come, the committee would welcome additional readers. Please contact Tammie Bob, Literary Awards Committee Co-Chair if you are interested.

FAW Officers

President, Christine Bern
Vice President and Program Chair,
Roberta Gates
Secretary, Christine Spatara
Treasurer, Eileen McNulty

Newsletter Editor, Shirley Baugher
Newsletter Designer, Norman
Baugher

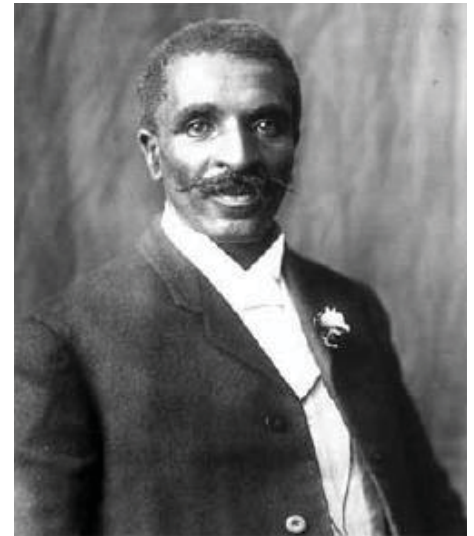
FEATURE **GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER:**
He Learned to do Common Things Uncommonly Well

an educator, an artist, an agricultural innovator, and an inventor. In short, he was a genius, a man *Time* magazine called “A Black Leonardo” in 1941. He did not use his gifts to become a millionaire—although he could easily have done so—or an international celebrity, which he became despite himself. He aimed much higher. He wanted to serve the poor and impact the world.

When you can do the common things of life in an uncommon way, you will command the attention of the world.

— GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

George Washington Carver was many things: a scientist, a botanist,



▲ George Washington Carver.

No individual has any right to come into the world and go out of it without leaving behind him distinct and legitimate reasons for having passed through it. — George Washington Carver

George Washington Carver: A Life

George Washington Carver’s life was far more than the sum of the facts of his biography—although knowing those facts offers an insight into understanding this brilliant man. He was born a slave on a small plantation in Diamond, Missouri in 1864. His master was Moses Carver, a German immigrant who purchased George’s parents and his entire family—10 sisters and a brother—for \$700. When George was only a week old, he was abducted from his home along with his mother and a sister. The kidnapers sold them in Kentucky. Moses Carver hired an experienced slave hunter to find his property and return them to him. He was only able to find and return George, however.

When slavery was abolished in 1863, the Carvers raised George and his older brother James. They taught him to read and write, and encouraged him to go to school. That was not going to be easy. Black children were not allowed to attend white schools, and the closest school for black children was ten miles away in Neosho. Nonetheless, George was determined to go. He walked to Neosho and arrived in the evening. The school was closed, so he slept in a barn. The next morning, he was discovered by a local woman, Mariah Watkins. “Who are you?” she asked. As he had done all his life he replied, “I am Carver’s George.” “No.” she said. “You are nobody’s George. From now on, your name is George Carver.”

George rented a room with Mrs. Watkins and paid his way by doing chores. He even ran home at recess to help with the laundry—but he took a book with him and read while he worked. Mariah Watkins became a foster parent to the boy, and encouraged him to learn all he could, then go out into the world and give back what he had learned.

Carver left Mrs. Watkins when he was 13 to attend an academy at Ft. Scott, Kansas where he became part of another foster family. He hoped to earn his high school diploma, but when he witnessed a group of white men kill a black man, he could no longer stay there. He traveled on to Minneapolis, Kansas where he finally received his high school degree.

Carver’s dreams went far beyond high school. He applied to several Kansas colleges. Because of his excellent academic record, he was accepted at Highland College, but was turned away when he arrived because of his color. He gave up on education for a while and became a farmer in nearby Eden Township. It was there his life as a botanist began. By himself, he maintained 17 acres of land, planting corn, rice, fruits, and vegetables. He also started a conservatory of plants and flowers. These enterprises didn’t bring in enough to support the young man, so he worked at odd jobs in the town and as a ranch hand. His hard work and dedication were not lost on the townspeople and businessmen. When he

Continued on next page ►

applied for a \$300 loan from a local bank to further his education, he got it. In 1890, he went to Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, where he studied art and piano. George's art teacher recognized his talent at painting plants and flowers, and she encouraged him to study botany at Iowa State Agricultural College. In 1891, he became the first black student ever accepted there. He earned both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree and became the college's first black faculty member.

His work at the experiment station in plant pathology and mycology brought national recognition. Many colleges vied for his services, but it was the offer from Booker T. Washington, president of the Tuskegee Institute, that attracted him, even though it was not the most lucrative one. Why? Because Washington wanted to establish an agricultural school to help former slaves who had taken up subsistence farming. He hoped to empower blacks by helping them become an integral part of the economy. Carver agreed with this philosophy, writing to Washington, "It has always been the one ideal of my life to be of the greatest good to the greatest number of my people possible...feeling as I do that this line of education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom to our people." He became head of the Agriculture Department, a position he held for 47 years.

A Most Unusual Man

George's work impacted lives far beyond the African American community. His research played a part in transforming agriculture in the South, a land so dedicated to growing cotton it was called "King Cotton." Carver knew that cotton depleted the soil and would eventually prove destructive. Farmers needed to adopt crop rotation and grow crops with restorative powers, such as peanuts, sweet potatoes, and soy beans. But getting them to change wasn't easy. After all, cotton and slave labor had been so profitable in the ante bellum South, its adherents were willing to destroy the Union to perpetuate it.

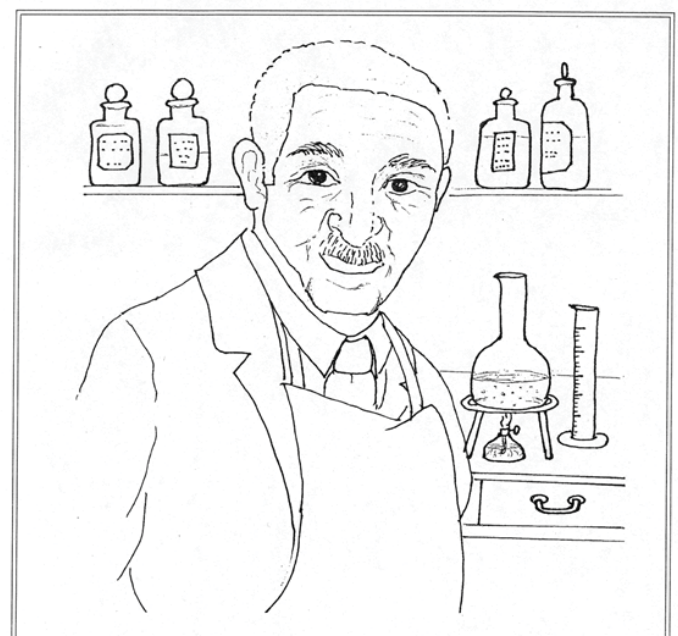
But Carver was persistent. Because many poor farmers could not come to him, he came up with the idea of a mobile classroom and took education to them. He taught them how to alternate cotton production with other crops that would

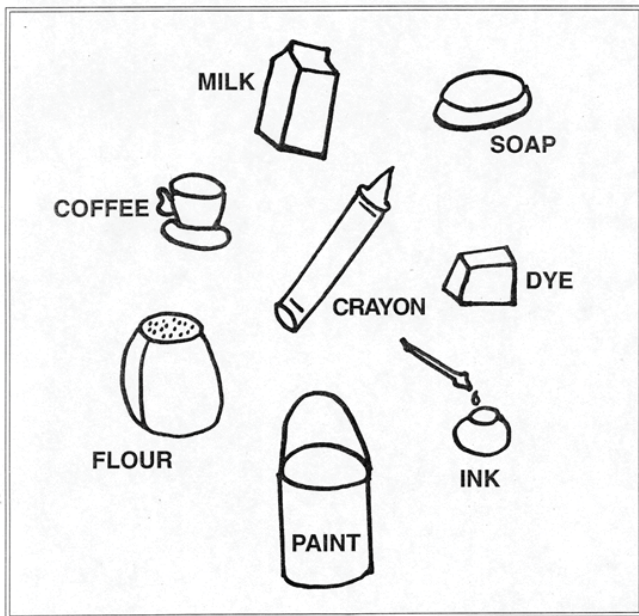
save the soil. And, he didn't stop with using the crops themselves. George Washington Carver went green long before it was fashionable. He developed by-products from cotton waste. He founded an industrial research laboratory where he and his assistants developed hundreds of new applications, including recipes, for using the alternative crops. Carver distributed this information through a series of agricultural bulletins. The team also extracted blue, purple, and red pigments from local clay—pigments American dye companies clamored for. Many companies used his advice for producing dyes during the Second World War when other resources became scarce.

George Washington Carver: in a [Pea] Nut Shell

In 1916, Carver was made a member of the Royal Society of Arts in England, an honor only a handful of Americans had ever achieved. He was most famous for his work with peanut and peanut by-products. During his lifetime, he discovered nearly 300 uses for peanuts, and hundreds more for soybeans, pecans, and sweet potatoes. Among his peanut products were a patent medicine for respiratory diseases, an antiseptic hair dressing, and a rubbing oil for massages. From sweet potatoes he derived dyes, wood fillers, candies, library paste, breakfast food, starches, flour, and molasses. He also came up

▼ Doctor Carver was not just a scientist and a teacher. He was very religious, artistic, musical, and talented.





▲ These are some products George Washington Carver developed.

with formulas for vinegars and instant coffee. Some of his patents were commercially successful; most were not.

Unlike today's entrepreneurs, Carver was willing to share his knowledge for free with anyone who asked for it, or, as he was fond of saying, "for the price of a postage stamp." The world took him up on his offer. Theodore Roosevelt was a big fan and appointed several of Carver's former students to high government positions. National leaders and heads of state from Mahatma Ghandi to Joseph Stalin sought his advice on how to combat widespread starvation in their countries. Calvin Coolidge and Franklin Roosevelt met with him. The Crown Prince of Sweden studied with him for three weeks. He became a close friend of Henry Ford after speaking at a conference on developing new crop products in Dearborn, Michigan. Ford built a replica of the cabin where Carver was born at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, and when Carver's health declined, the auto industrialist installed an elevator in the Tuskegee dormitory where Carver lived so that he wouldn't have to climb the stairs. The British government contacted him in the early days of World War II asking how they should prepare for the possibility of severe food shortages.

George Washington Carver could have had any number of high paying jobs, including a six-figure

offer from Thomas Edison. He turned them all down. He was not interested in acquiring a financial fortune. He pursued a different kind of wealth—knowledge. And not just knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but knowledge used to help the less fortunate.

Unlike many of today's scientists, Carver believed it was possible to marry science and religion. While he believed that science could unlock the universe, he also believed that without God to draw aside the curtain he was helpless. He had become a Christian at the age of ten, fully expecting to die before his 21st birthday because of his poor health. When he lived well beyond 21, he knew that God had given him long life.

He saw religion as a means of destroying social barriers and racial intolerance. In a Bible class at Tuskegee, he taught his students that character development was as important as intellectual development. He even drew up a list of eight cardinal virtues to guide their lives:

- Be clean inside and out
- Neither look up to the rich nor down to the poor
- Lose without squealing
- Win without bragging
- Be considerate of women, children, and older people
- Be too brave to lie
- Be too generous to cheat
- Take your share of the world and let others take theirs

George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington

When George Washington Carver chose to go to Tuskegee over all of the other universities bidding for his services, he made a lifelong friend of its president, Booker T. Washington. Through the years, the two would argue and disagree, but Washington had Carver's back from the beginning. He gave him a salary far beyond what other faculty members were making, as well as two rooms for his personal use. Because Carver had received a master's degree from a white college, and because of the perks Washington gave him, his colleagues perceived him as arrogant. It took time for Carver to win them over.

Washington came to his protégé's defense on other occasions. While Carver was a brilliant teacher and researcher, he was a poor administrator. He

Continued on next page ►




▲ Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.

complained that all of the physical work and letter-writing required were too much. When the governing committee complained that he was exaggerating in his reports on various projects, Carver threatened to resign. When the administration reorganized the agriculture programs, he threatened to leave. When he

was given an unwanted assignment to manage an experiment station off campus, he said he was quitting. When he did not get the summer teaching positions he wanted, and when Washington refused Carver's request for a new laboratory, research supplies for his exclusive use, and a lessening of his teaching duties, he headed for the door (although he did not walk through it.) Each time, Washington smoothed things over, and they remained good friends and colleagues.

At the end of his life, Washington said of Carver, "he was one of the most thoroughly scientific men of the Negro race with whom I was acquainted." When Washington died in 1915, he was buried on the grounds of the Tuskegee Institute. Twenty-eight years later, Carver returned to Tuskegee for the last time and was buried next to his old friend.

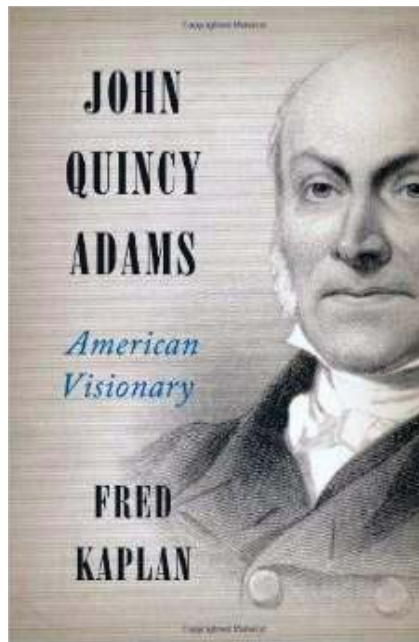
George Washington Carver established a museum of his work and the George Washington Carver Foundation at Tuskegee to continue agricultural research. As he had been frugal all his life, he was able to donate \$60,000 to create the foundation. 

The Reading Corner

John Quincy Adams: American Visionary Fred Kaplan

Reviewed by Norman Baugher

John Quincy Adams, the first son of John and Abigail Adams, was born before the beginning of the American Revolution. He lived during America's crucial struggle to find itself and its place in the world and was a participant in the invention and development of American democracy. At the



age of seven he heard the guns on Bunker Hill, and he died just a dozen years before the beginning of the Civil War. He was a published poet and an extraordinary

diarist who diligently recorded his observations during his entire adult life. Kaplan wrote that Adams' diary was "...his most varied, brilliantly observed writing achievement, a record of political activities personalities; theatrical performances and religious reflections; his reading, thoughts, and meditations". It remains today a valuable historical resource.

Like his father he was a public servant most of his adult life. Adulthood in his day arrived early. He traveled to Europe with his father at the age of 10. At fourteen Adams became private secretary to Francis Dana, the U.S. Minister to Russia. He served as secretary to his father during the negotiations of the Treaty of Paris. During his life he was first minister to the court

of Russia and later to the Court of St James. He was a US Senator, a brilliant Secretary of State, a President of the United States, and a distinguished Representative in the U. S. Congress. As a lawyer he defended the *Amistad* prisoners before the Supreme Court. He translated books from Latin, Greek, and French and could read Dutch and Italian.

Kaplan's book would be valuable if it were just a political history, but it is also a biography of a great, if overlooked, man. The book memorably takes us into a very different time and culture than our own. I was struck by how difficult life was then. There was little of what we, in our time, consider to be primary necessities. Giving birth was dangerous. Women endured many pregnancies and many miscarriages. Parents grieved over early childhood death that was common. John Quincy was not spared this pain.

Light came from candles and heat from open fireplaces. Transportation was by foot or on horseback. Most early education was home schooling. Books were expensive, and currency was hard to come by. A particular hardship for John Quincy was the arduous, dangerous, and boring crossing of the Atlantic. It took weeks. Most people who crossed did not return for months or years and Adams did it many times as a public servant.

I was surprised that Adams and Lincoln served together in the US House of Representatives—not so surprised that both voted against Polk's invasion of Mexico. Slavery was of great concern to John Quincy Adams, and from very early on he spoke against it. He was prescient in that he feared that this issue would either result in the end of the Union or cause a civil war. He perceived that the addition of the stolen Mexican territories would exacerbate the

conflict between slave and non-slave states. His anxiety increased as time passed and the South's view changed from recognition of slavery as a dubious institution to advocacy of it as a superior economic system.

The book not only chronicles the lives of several generations of the famous extended Adams family, but because Adams served so many years abroad, we get a view of European intrigues and of Adam's relationship with an incredible number of historic European figures, including kings, emperors, artists, poets, and scientists.

As I read Kaplan's thorough and lively biography, I couldn't help but wonder why this great intellect and patriot has been so long in the shadows. The author has performed a great service by giving us a readable, informative book about a genuine American hero and by finally giving him the recognition he deserves.

Nelson Algren, 2014 Short Story Award Runner Up Selection,

Once Removed

Colette Sartor

Reviewed by Shirley Baugher

Colette Sartor's runner-up piece for the 2014 Nelson Algren Short Story Award is a fascinating story called "Once Removed". The title can be interpreted on many levels, because the characters in the story are all connected to each other and all once removed. There is Sylvie, who is in love with Kyle, but has reservations about their relationship. Kyle loves Sylvie, but is tied to his disabled son, Aiden,

who is struggling to return to a normal life after a horrific ac-



▲ Colette Sartor

cident but is afraid to let anyone get close to him. And there is Izzy, the elderly owner of the greenhouse where Sylvie works who is too old and too ill to remain in charge but is once removed from acknowledging it. They weave in and out of each other's lives flirting with and walking away from commitment. Sartor lays bare their fears, their longing, and their hopes, leaving us wanting those hopes to be realized, but never quite sure that they can or will be. You can download this story from the September 7, 2014 issue of the "Printers Row Journal", and I strongly recommend that you do.

Continued on next page ►



CHRISTINE BERN
1028 S. Butternut Circle
Frankfort, IL 60423

Colette Sartor's work has appeared or is upcoming in the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *Five Chapters*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Colorado Review*, *Harvard Review*,

and several other publications. She has won a Writers@Work Fiction Prize, a Nelson Algren Award, a Fugue Prose Award, a Glenna Luschei Prairie Schooner Award, a Reynolds Price Short

Fiction Award, a Press 53 Open Award, and an honorable mention in Best American Short Stories. She teaches writing at UCLA Extension Writers' Program.

