

UNIT FOURTEEN

New Frontiers

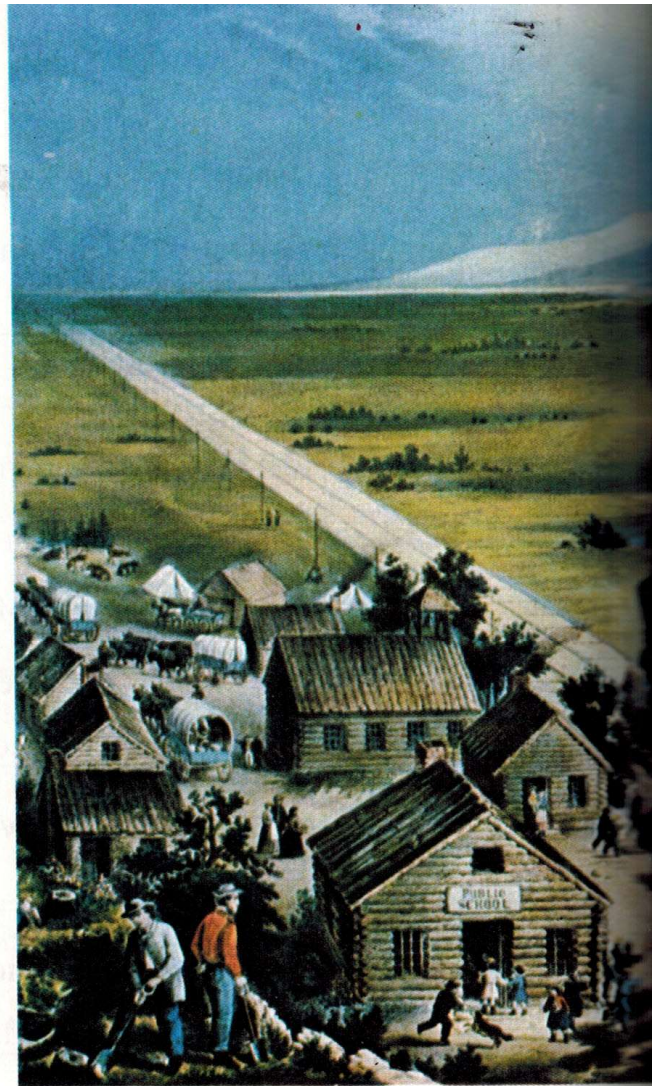
Rebuilding the South

After the Civil War, much of the South was desolate. Many farms had been ruined. Worst of all, millions of slaves had been freed who had no jobs, no property, no homes, no education.

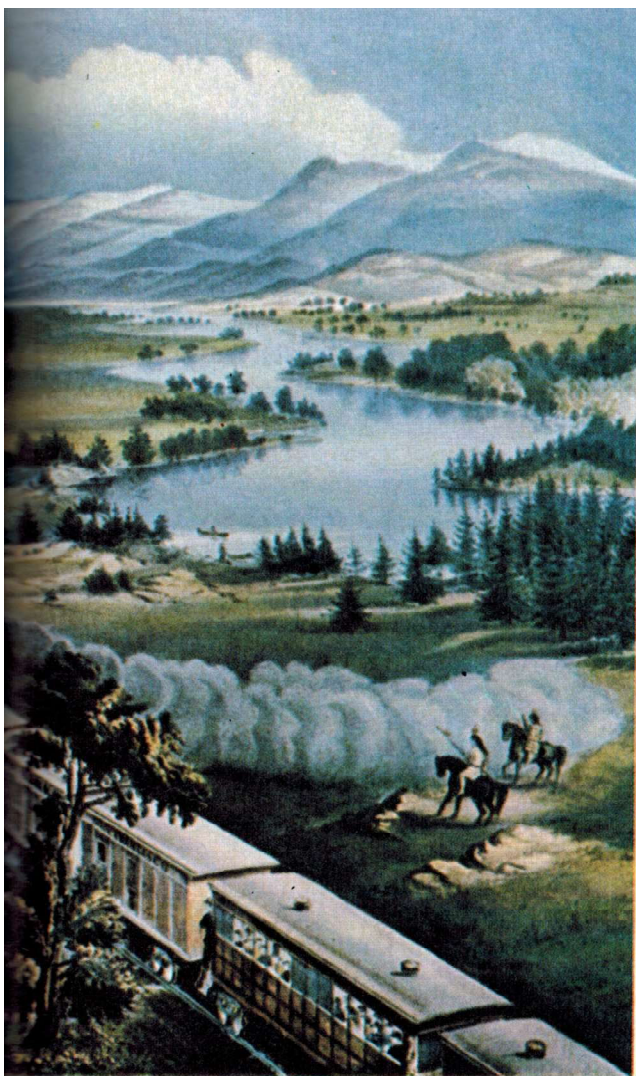
Two men spent their lives trying to improve conditions for the blacks in the South. The first was **Booker T. Washington**. Booker grew up with a deep love of learning. As a boy, he taught himself to read by using an old, battered copy of Webster's Blue-backed Speller. Booker was tremendously excited when he heard that a teacher was coming to his town to teach the children. That first day at school was one of the greatest days of Booker's life.

Booker continued to learn. When he was fifteen, he left home to go to a school named Hampton Institute. It was there that Booker learned to love the Bible. He also learned many skills.

In 1881, a town named Tuskegee in



Alabama asked Booker T. Washington to teach school there. Washington was thrilled. His own school building, his own books, his own students! But when Washington reached Tuskegee, he received a shock. There was no building. There were no books. And there were just a handful of students. So Washington went to work to build a school. He worked harder than he ever had before in his life, but he didn't mind, because he knew that his hard work was worthwhile. "Nothing ever comes to one,



Booker T. Washington, the great educator who founded Tuskegee Institute.



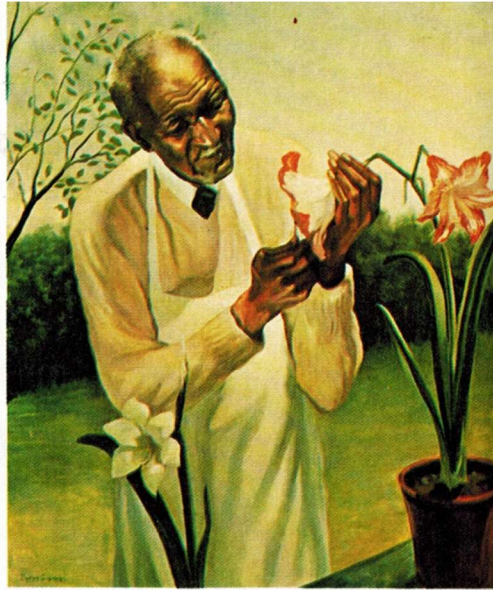
that is worth having, except as a result of hard work," he said.

The Tuskegee school started out in a leaky, ramshackle old building. But it grew rapidly. More and more students came to be taught by Booker T. Washington. Washington wanted to teach his students that they should work hard to support themselves. He and his students worked to plant a garden at the school. They used the crops for food and sold whatever was left over to get money for books. When more buildings were needed, Booker taught the students to make bricks and build their own buildings. Extra bricks were sold to get money. The school, which came to be known as Tuskegee Institute, prospered and grew. It still provides excellent training for men and women.

In 1896 Booker T. Washington was looking for a good chemistry teacher for his school. He wrote a letter to a man who had just gotten a degree from Iowa State College and invited him to come down to Tuskegee for a lifetime of "hard, hard work." The man's name was **George Washington Carver**, and he was not at all afraid of hard work. He had been born a slave, but his masters were very kind. They let him read and study all he wanted. He was fascinated by nature, and he taught himself all about the plants of the

forest. His knowledge of trees and plants amazed his teachers in college. He decided that he could put his knowledge to good use at Tuskegee, so he accepted Washington's invitation to teach there.

George Washington Carver amazed the world with his accomplishments. It seemed that he was a genius who could do anything with plants. He studied the chemistry of plants very thoroughly and knew what could be done with them. For example, he found 118 uses for the sweet potato. He made flour, starch, paste, vinegar, ink, rubber, chocolate, dyes—all from sweet potatoes! From the peanut he made over 285 products, including milk, butter, cheese, candy, coffee, shaving lotion, lard, soap, shampoo, and ink! One time Carver served a delicious meal to a group of visitors. After the meal, the guests complimented Carver on his cooking. Only then did Carver reveal that all the food in the meal had been made from peanuts!



George Washington Carver's knowledge of plants helped rebuild farms in the South.

But we do not remember Carver simply because he stayed in his laboratory and did amazing tricks with peanuts and sweet potatoes. He did far more valuable work when he helped poor farmers in the South become prosperous. For years, cotton was practically the only crop planted by Southern farmers. But cotton wears out the soil and makes the soil unable to grow crops. Carver found crops which

helped the soil, and he traveled around the South convincing farmers to plant them. He encouraged farmers to plant peanuts, which nourished and enriched the soil instead of wearing it out. He urged farmers to grow soybeans, which today is one of the most profitable crops a farmer can grow. Years and years of growing cotton had exhausted the soil and had made Southern farmers poor. George Washington Carver encouraged farmers to diversify their crops and helped the South get on the road back to prosperity.