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A Landmark New Biography of George Washington Carver
LSU Press to Publish First Scholarly Biography of Carver in 30 Years

“Since Carver’s own early autobiographical stories often proved unreliable, Vella uses both official records and a multitude of anecdotes from his close friends to flesh out his story. . . . Carver’s genuine warmth shines in this story, as he navigates both white and black societies while producing scientific achievements that benefited all.”—*Publishers Weekly*

Baton Rouge—This September, LSU Press will publish *George Washington Carver: A Life*, the first comprehensive scholarly biography of America’s best-known black scientist in over thirty years. Born into slavery, Carver earned a master’s degree at Iowa State Agricultural College and went on to become the university’s first black faculty member. His research into peanuts and sweet potatoes—crops that replenished the cotton-leached soil of the South—helped lift multitudes of sharecroppers out of poverty. Scores of children’s books celebrate the contributions of this prolific botanist, but his personal life, his romantic interests, and the intersection of both with his professional career have remained largely unexamined until now.

Christina Vella offers the most thorough biography of George Washington Carver, including in-depth details of his personal relationships with family, colleagues, lovers, and friends, set in the context of the early twentieth century. Despite the exceptional trajectory of his career, Carver was not immune to the racism of the Jim Crow era or the privations and hardships of the Great Depression and two world wars. Yet throughout the tumult of this period, his scientific achievements aligned him with equally extraordinary friends, including Teddy Roosevelt, Mohandas Gandhi, Henry A. Wallace, and Henry Ford.

In pursuit of the man behind the historical figure, Vella discovers an unassuming intellectual with a quirky sense of humor, striking eccentricities, and an unwavering religious faith. She explores Carver’s anguished dealings with Booker T. Washington across their nineteen years working together at the Tuskegee Institute—a relationship so fraught with jealousy that it contributed to the tragic suicide of a woman Carver loved. This affair was followed, years later, by Carver’s unrequited passion for a white man.

Carver was a prodigious and generous scholar whose life was shaped by struggle and heartbreak as well as success and fame. Vella’s extensively researched biography offers a complex and compelling portrait of Carver, one of the most brilliant minds of the last century.

Christina Vella received a PhD. in Modern European and U.S. history from Tulane University, where she is a Visiting Professor. A consultant for the U.S. State Department, she lectures widely on historical and biographical topics.

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Biography / U.S. History / African American History

To request a review copy or set up an interview with the author,
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