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Three years after publishing *The Future Emerges from the Past: Celebrating 200 Years of Alabama African American History and Culture*, **alafricanamerican.com** continues to honor and highlight past, present, and future Alabama African American history makers.

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Because Alabama African American history can't be taught in a single month, we will continue to share short articles along with links to videos, photos, reference material, and additional information for all to enjoy on a monthly basis. The website's goal is the same as the book's: To inspire the young and young at heart to dream big and celebrate Alabama's rich African American history and culture.

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# TUSKEGEE'S VILLAGE of *Greenwood*



**In 1881, Booker T. Washington built Tuskegee Institute on an abandoned plantation.**

**In 1890, Charles W. Green, the agriculture director, built a home in a wooded area west of campus.**

**Over the years others followed, and Washington would name the settlement the “Village of Greenwood” to honor Green.**

**In the midst of the Jim Crow era, this all African American city grew and thrived.**



# TUSKEGEE'S VILLAGE of *Greenwood*

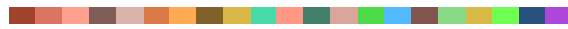


*Guy Trammell*

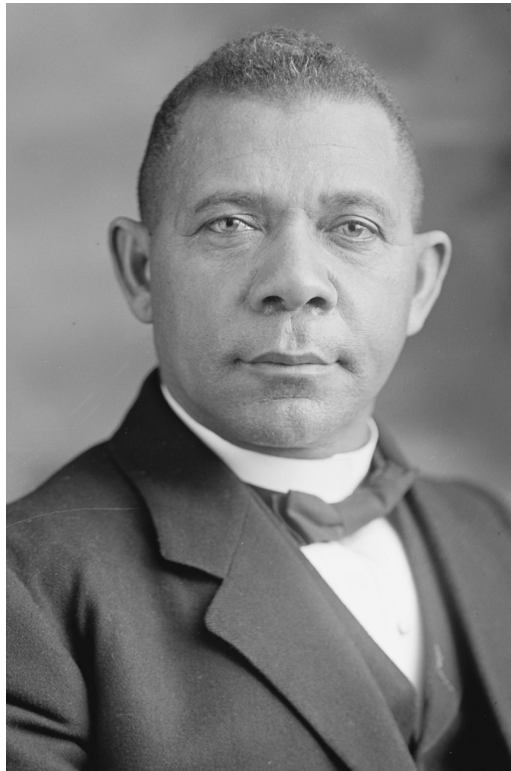
**In 1881, Booker T. Washington built Tuskegee Institute on an abandoned plantation.**

His Hampton Institute roommate, **Charles W. Green**, became agriculture director (before George Washington Carver arrived in 1896). In 1890, Green built a home in a wooded area west of the campus. Graduates and faculty followed him, and Booker T. Washington named the settlement the “Village of Greenwood” to honor Green. This all African American community grew and thrived in the midst of Jim Crow.

**The community was advanced in technology.** Alabama Power was established in December, 1906. Greenwood had the world’s first African American-owned and operated electric company in the 1890’s. Greenwood sold electric power to Tuskegee’s white businesses and homes.



**It also had a telephone exchange.** This produced the first Black telephone operator, **Ophelia Cooper**, and she trained other Black operators. Greenwood's streets were named after Washington's inner circle, including Clark Avenue, for **Jane E. Clark**, his Dean of Women. These dirt streets had sidewalks, steps, curbing and street lights. The homes had indoor plumbing, electricity and many had a piano.



Booker T. Washington.

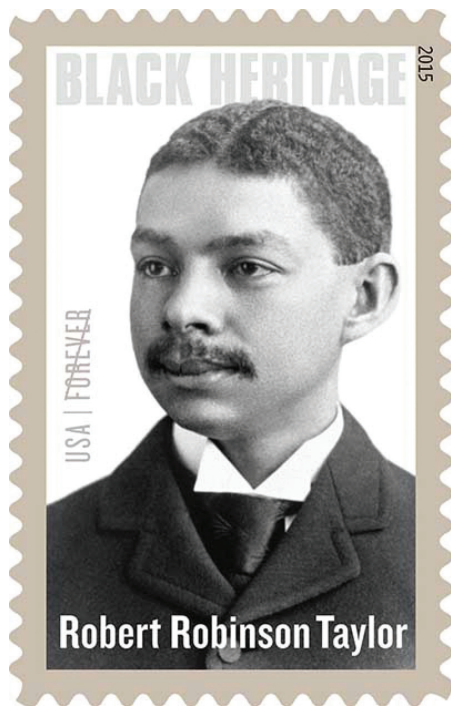
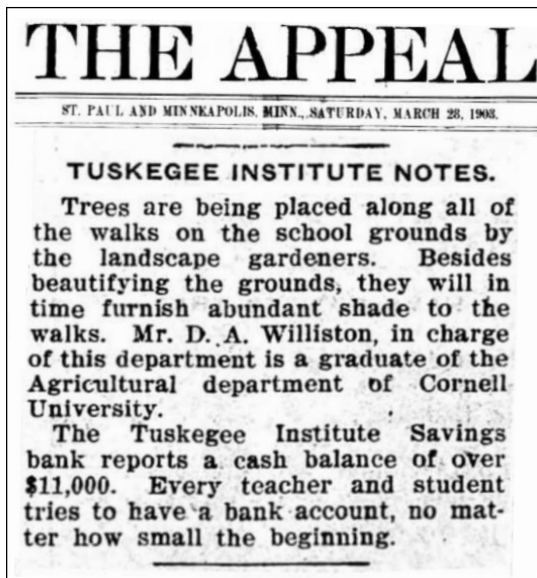


Charles W. Green (bottom row, second from left) seated next to George Washington Carver (center), c. 1902.

The Institute's 47 trades made Greenwood a self-sufficient community. Local services available were: locksmithing, tailoring, upholstery, typewriter repair and sewing machine repair.

Manufacturing included: canning, furniture making, and book printing. The Tuskegee train ran from Greenwood to the Chehaw West Point railroad depot, carrying products across the country. One year's receipts showed 14,000 passenger tickets sold.

**Tuskegee Savings and Loan**, and **Tuskegee Federal Credit Union** were created to assist residents in purchasing property.



Top: Snippet from *The Appeal* Newspaper (St. Paul, MN) featuring notes from happenings at Tuskegee and the Village of Greenwood (Associated Press)

Above: U.S. postage stamp issued in 2015 in honor of Robert R. Taylor. Considered the first academically-trained and credentialed African American architect in America, Taylor was recruited by Booker T. Washington to help establish Tuskegee Institute, where he would design more than 20 campus buildings.

The homes and buildings were designed and constructed by African American residents, including **Robert R. Taylor**, the first Black graduate from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He formed the first African American architectural firm with **Louis Persley**.

Greenwood had every denomination of church, it's own school system, nursery to college, and one of Alabama's largest libraries. Except for the Catholic priest and nuns, all business owners, teachers, pastors and contractors were African American. From laundries, clothing and shoe shops, to groceries, restaurants, cafes and night spots, the community had it all. Greenwood's Poolville Motel, with it's cottages, restaurant and nightclub, was listed in *The Green Book*.

With Alabama public parks closed to Blacks, residents created private lake recreation areas, for family and church cookouts. Community teams competed on Greenwood's golf course and 14 lighted tennis courts. The Lincoln Drive-In showed movies, and concerts were on campus. Greenwood parents created the Carver Boy and Girl Scout District, and built **Camp Atkins**, one of the first Black Scout camps. It had a mess hall, three cabins, hiking trails, and a six-acre lake, on 200-plus acres of forest. It was regularly attended by scouts from surrounding states.



Greenwood had the only African American staffed and administered United States veterans hospital, as well as Alabama's first African American hospital, **John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital**, the first full-service U.S. hospital for African Americans, which in 1937 created the world's first children's polio center. Medical services were provided only by African American professionals, who were the best in the medical field at that time. Many were pioneers, such as **Dr. Charles Drew**, creator of blood banks, and **Dr. Raymond R. Adams**.



Above: Plaque commemorating the Tuskegee VA Hospital, the first VA hospital in the U.S. administered by an all Black medical staff.

Far right: Boys ward, John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital.

There was also the only HBCU College of Veterinary Medicine, with its small and large animal hospitals. Most of the children never had a white physician or white teacher. The only professionals and people in leadership, they saw, were African American.

**In July 1923, 700 Ku Klux Klan members burned a 40-foot cross on the town square**, then marched to destroy Tuskegee Institute and Greenwood. They wanted to stop the hiring of an all African American staff at the recently constructed Tuskegee Veterans Hospital. Their plans ended abruptly when they were greeted by a few thousand people that arrived the day before to



protect the community that Booker T. Washington built. There were also students, with guns from the school armory, in trees along the route the Klan had to walk. Another thousand supporters were waiting in the football stadium to provide backup. The people were organized by the instructor of Cadets, **Benjamin O. Davis, Sr.**, who became the first Black U.S. General. The Klan tried many times to burn down Greenwood, however, the African American men were organized, armed and ready to defend the community, which put fear in the Klan. In the 1960's, White law enforcement officers, chasing Civil Rights workers, would not enter Greenwood.



*Left:* Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., c. 1915. Following his time as an officer with the acclaimed "Buffalo Soldiers" unit, Davis would spend years deployed in assignments designed to prevent him from commanding White soldiers, including a stint as the ROTC instructor at Tuskegee.

*Right:* Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. inspects Black troops in England, October 1942.



The community was never incorporated, however, Greenwood annually elected a governing council, and annual dues were collected for community maintenance. From 1890 till 1967, Greenwood never had a police or law enforcement presence. This changed when **Lucius Amerson** was elected the first Black United States Sheriff in the Deep South (1966) since Reconstruction.

Army veteran Lucius Amerson became sheriff of Macon County (Ala.) after passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Prior to that, the largely Black population in Macon County was not able to vote for their sheriff.





Greenwood's **Frazier Chevrolet Olds** was the first African American car dealership in the South, from Maryland to California. A person could live in the Village of Greenwood for years without ever having to leave. There were service stations, with automotive repair. **Holland's Appliances** and **Allen's Variety** were the department stores.

The entire community, with its subdivisions, is about five square miles. Many **Tuskegee Airmen** settled there. Booker T. Washington saw Greenwood as a model for what Black people could do anywhere. He spoke about it on his 1905 tour of Arkansas and Oklahoma. A newly-arrived Black land developer named **Ottawa Gurley** was in the Tulsa audience. This inspired Gurley the next year to purchase land, north of the railroad, and build Tulsa's Greenwood community. Booker T. Washington later named it "Negro Wall Street". It is now known as "Black Wall Street".