

MR. WORK'S CONFERENCE WITH MR. WASHINGTON  
CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS AND RESEARCH

---

In May, 1908, Mr. Washington wrote me a letter. In the letter he said he wanted to establish a Department of History relating to the Negro. He said he would be coming to Savannah and asked me if I would come down to the train and see him. I sent him a telegram stating I would come down to the train. Then Mr. Washington gave me the hour when he would be through Savannah.

Mr. Washington was on his way to Beaufort, South Carolina, to speak. He was traveling in a private car. He travelled in style. He had a pullman for his party and so that amounted to a private car.

This was the day after the commencement here and Charles Anderson of New York had been the commencement speaker, and he had Anderson and Emmett Scott, his secretary with him. I do not recall any of the others. He got into Savannah about 8 o'clock at night. They switched his car off and kept it there that night.

I went down to the car and said that I wanted to see Mr. Washington. He was out in the open pullman. Mr. Scott came and stood by him. In general, whenever he was going to talk to anybody about anything that was important, his secretary was there. Mr. Scott would tell him the next day just what had happened.

This is what took place. I told him who I was. He nodded his head. I don't think he ever shook hands with me. I told

him I came down in reply to his letter. He wanted to know where I had been educated and I told him. He wanted to know what I thought about his suggestion and I told him I would have to think it over. He then told me to come over to Tuskegee and we would settle it. Then when I came here he sent a carriage down to Tuskegee Town to meet me. I don't think any one but Doctor Washington got off the train at Chehaw and rode out to the school in the carriage. Less than 30 days after I first saw him I was here working. They gave me a guest room in Rockefeller Hall. The next day I reported to Mr. Scott and Mr. Scott let Mr. Washington know I was here. Then Mr. Washington called me in and he also had Mr. J.H. (his brother) in. I noticed at this meeting that Mr. Scott was not there. Later he called in Mr. Logan. These three men were Tuskegee, Mr. Washington, Mr. J.H. and Mr. Logan. All his really important things he discussed with these two individuals.

I told him he did not want a History Department of the Negro but what I thought/he wanted was information about what is taking place at the present with reference to the Negro. He didn't say yes or no. He went on to talk about what I was to get and how long I was to work. I told him that this was a year round job and not a nine months affair. I was to get \$1,200 a year. This was in 1908. There were only about two or three others getting that here. I was to have a month's vacation with pay.

Everybody here, including Mr. Scott, got the idea that I came to establish a placement bureau. The kind of thing Heninburg is doing now.

Mr. Davis wanted to know if it was not also thought that Mr. Work came to establish a department to furnish information to the Principal's Office?

I was to get information about the occupations of the Tuskegee

graduates and I told Dr. Washington that I had done something like that on a small scale. To the general public the report was that I was brought here to find out what the graduates were doing and to keep a record of the graduates. That was a part of the job.

I went to Hampton to see how they kept their files on the graduates and I got everything they had there in a day. I brought that information back and that was the thing that the public knew about. Now that wasn't the thing that Mr. Washington had in mind. He had in mind this department as it has been developed. He went in that indirect way to get what he wanted but that indirect way has caused a lot of trouble because Tuskegee still has the idea that this department was and is to find about / what the graduates are doing.

In our meeting my first day here at Tuskegee somebody asked what was to be the name of the work and I said the Department of Records and Research. The Records would take care of the information on the graduates and the Research would allow for other things. That is the origin of the Department of Records and Research.

Now Mr. Scott who directed the publicity of the school had no record of what went on in this meeting. Mr. Logan had a record of what I was to get. Mr. J.H. was in there but most of what was said was over his head. These three men were not in the habit of discussing things and so the people here never did find out what went on in that meeting. I don't think I was ever in a meeting with those three men after that time.

Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones was responsible for my coming here. He had been to Savannah and know something of the work I was doing. Dr. Jones said that there should be more accurate information available at Tuskegee Institute. Two things were discussed at Hampton by Dr. Jones and Mr.

Washington: the matter of accurate information that Doctor Washington

was to use in his speeches and accurate information about the graduates.

The Savannah Conference and the Conference here consumed less than a half hour.