

CURTIS WON CONFIDENCE OF
CARVER BY BRILLIANT
RESEARCH

Ever since the day in the fall of 1935 when he stepped into Dr. Carver's Tuskegee laboratory as a neophyte scientist just graduated from Cornell, Austin Curtis has crammed his career with ceaseless study and persistent experimentation in his march toward scientific eminence.

One of his first distinctions was to break a Tuskegee tradition. Carver assistants never lasted long with the highly-strung, crotchety genius, were seldom admitted to the famous doctor's experimental laboratories. But Carver was so impressed with the young chemist's imagination and unflagging drive that he soon accepted him as his trusted collaborator, on whom he rested heavily for advice and assistance.

But not before Carver gave him a dose of the usual frigid reception reserved for new assistants. When Curtis arrived at Tuskegee, he was taken to the great man's apartment in Rockefeller Hall for an introduction. In response to a knock, Carver opened the door slightly, peered into the hall. Curtis was introduced: "Here is your new assistant." But before Curtis could utter a word, the impatient professor answered, "I'm too busy to see him now. Good night," and without further ceremony slammed the door.

What finally won Carver's admiration for the fledgling scientist was Curtis' first experiments with magnolias, whose beauty attracted him but not as much as their chemical analysis, which eventually brought the development of an assortment of products including a perfume oil, water colors, soap and wallboard. And when Curtis topped that deed by making a new insecticide which was death to the aphids that attack-

ed Carver's beloved amaryllis plants, the young man of 24 was "in" with the "old man" of 74.

The able young protege soon won as his name "Baby Carver." Intellectual harmony plus a healthy mutual respect contributed to span the great gulf between their ages. Curtis proved himself not only a talented assistant, but a sympathetic companion for a lonely, often misunderstood old man.

The venerable peanut wizard once told him: "Baby Carver, you are to me as Timothy was to Paul. Through you, I see an extension of my work."

In a series of successes that stamped him as one of the nation's foremost chemurgists, Curtis proceeded to justify all the faith the aged Carver had in him. He developed cheap paints from motor oil and clay that were used on a large scale by the Tennessee Valley Authority and Farm Security Administration in those agencies' low-cost housing projects. The Curtis paints were used in beautifying thousands of the drab shacks in which impoverished southern tenant farmers lived. This was an application of the Carver program of turning science to enriching the lives of the common people of the South.

In the bleak year of 1942, when Rommel's Afrika Corps was devastating North Africa, the Board of Economic Warfare sent Curtis an S.S. They wanted to save time and transportation by doing some on-the-scenes production with African native resources. Curtis drafted proposals for the industrial utilization of the peanut in French West Africa. He was invited to join the scientific expedition which planned to go overseas to put his proposals into action, but he declined because of the importance of continuing his work with Dr. Carver, who was failing rapidly. The Germans' retreat later cancelled

the proposed African industrialization project.

After Carver's death in 1943, his protege was the prime organizer of the Carver Museum at Tuskegee, but differences with the school administration over his refusal to relinquish royalties from Rackham Holt's biography of Carver, bequeathed to him, led to his release from the staff.

He left Tuskegee with regret to take a job as research chemist for the Ford Motor Company, remembering Carver's words: "It surprises me how I managed to live all these years without you."

DIES AFTER FIGHT WITH GIRL

White Plains, N.Y., August 24 — (AP) — Percy Martin, a 49-year old Negro porter, died today of stab wounds received less than 20 hours before in a mysterious axe-and-knife battle in which a young girl clerk was critically wounded in the American Red Cross office where both were employed.

The porter died in hospital where the girl, 19-year-old Frances Anastasi, remained unconscious and in critical condition but was reported by hospital attendants as "holding her own."

Martin and Miss Anastasi, a choir singer, were found yesterday in a basement sewing room.

Screams attracted the attention of Mrs. Helen Potillo, an elevator operator, who investigated and as she neared the room Martin emerged, covered with blood, took one step into the corridor, then toppled over.

The sewing room was blood-spattered and in an adjoining rest room Miss Anastasi was found lying unconscious on the floor. Beside her were a small axe and an eight-inch knife.

No charges have been filed against the girl.

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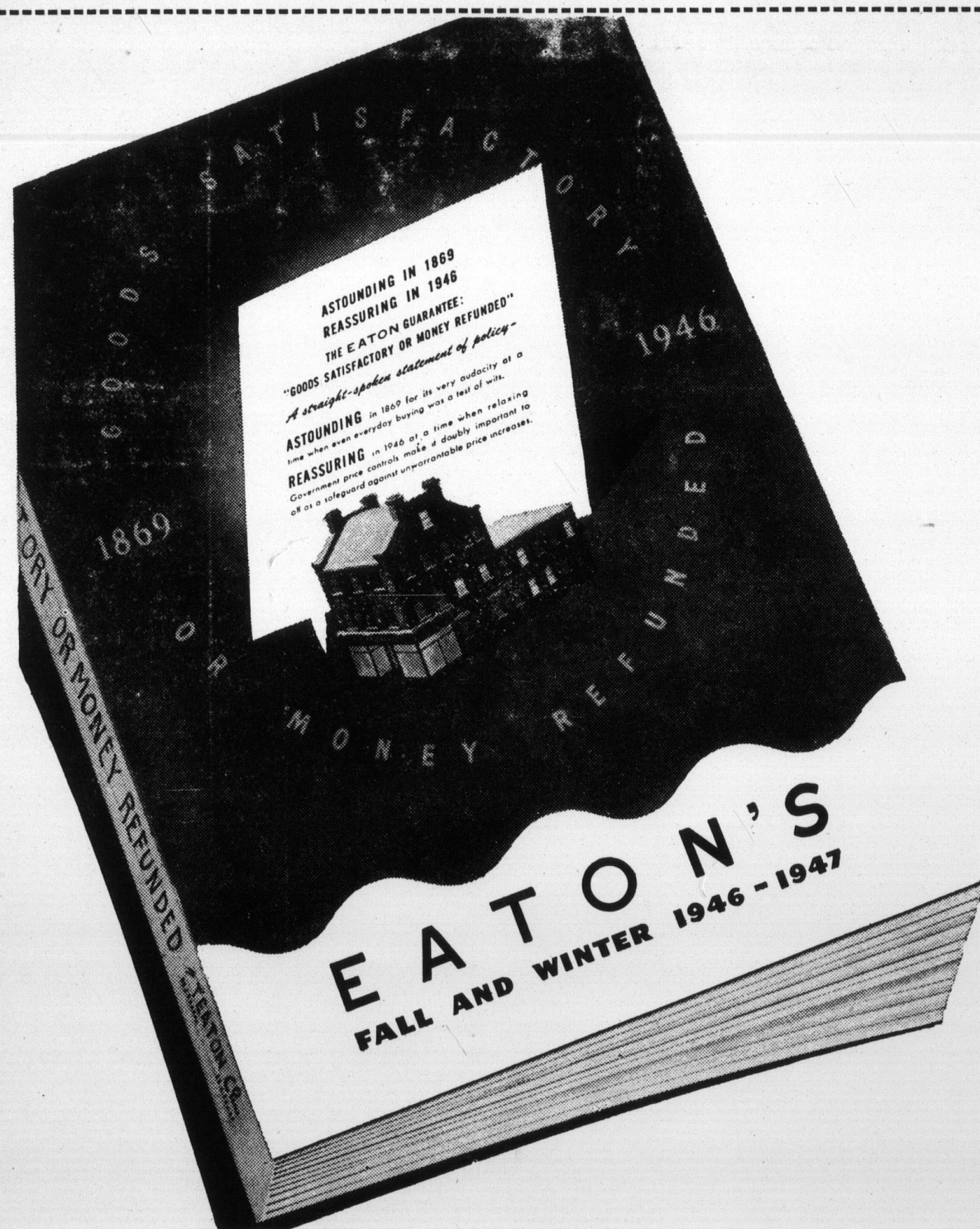
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