Booker T. Washington 1856–1915
with Andrew Carnegie

Booker T. Washington and Andrew Carnegie—both seated at center—encapsulate much of nineteenth-century America. Both were self-made men: Carnegie was an immigrant who built a manufacturing empire and amassed enormous wealth; Washington was a former slave who became an African American leader during one of the harshest periods of American race relations. Carnegie determined that the ultimate purpose of wealth was to improve society; Washington founded Tuskegee Institute to enable his people to make economic progress. Carnegie was one of Tuskegee’s benefactors. Speaking at the school’s twenty-fifth anniversary when this picture was taken, Carnegie praised Washington as the best “climber” the world has ever seen.

Frances Benjamin Johnston (1864–1952)
Gelatin silver print, 1906
NPG.2009.8