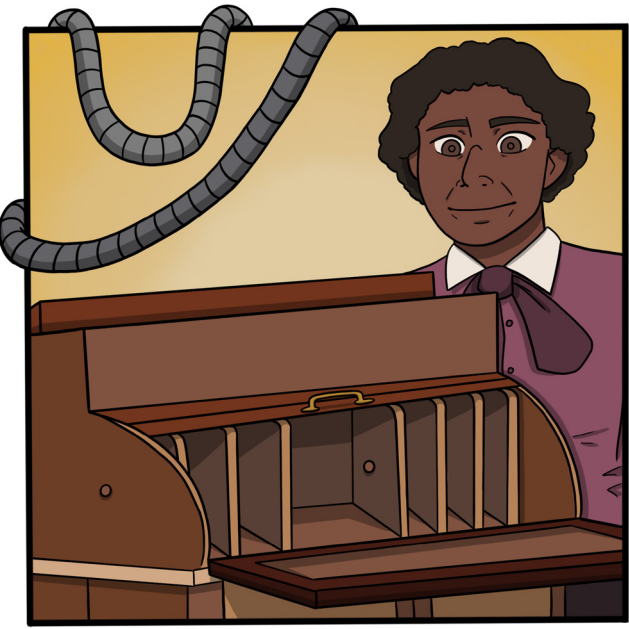


# Scientists and Inventors

## Sarah E. Goode, Inventor

Written by: Carolyn Mueller    Illustrated by: Nicole Hartfelder



"I think I've got it!" Sarah shouted, folding the bed back into what appeared to be a writing desk.

"Got what, Mama?" Sarah's youngest asked from the corner of their modest furniture shop in Chicago.

"My new invention!" Sarah said proudly.

Sarah's children came over to see their mother's invention, which looked like nothing more than a regular roll-top desk. Sarah and their father, Archie, owned this furniture shop, where they created custom furniture. Many of their clients were poor, Black families that lived in the city in small tenement apartments. In the 1880s, city dwellers lived in buildings growing skyward as tenants packed into their premises. Most tenement buildings had a footprint of 25 feet by 100 feet and were no taller than 80 feet. There were a lot of people in Chicago living in some very small spaces.

"It looks like a desk, Mama," Sarah's oldest child said.

"Exactly!" Sarah responded, triumphant. "It looks like a desk, but it's actually a bed."

Sarah showed her children the blueprints of the bed she'd sketched, which she and Archie turned into a reality by working off-hours on it.

"During the day, it is a desk," Sarah told them. "There's even room for paper and ink. But at night time..."

Sarah pulled a lever and the desk expanded. "It folds out into a bed! Families can have a bed and a desk without wasting any space."

Sarah knew about not wasting space. She and Archie had six children in their tenement apartment. Aside from their children, they were constantly acquiring furniture pieces to upholster or fix up. She felt lucky to have enough room to light the stove and bed her babies down for the night. That's how she got the idea for the

foldable bed. Necessity is, of course, the mother of invention.

"That's neat, Mama!" her little boy squeaked. "Are you going to sell it in the shop?"

Sarah's eyes twinkled. Sure, she planned to sell it in the shop. But her bigger plan was to apply for a U.S. patent. She only knew of one other Black woman who'd been able to acquire a patent, Judy Reed, who'd invented a dough kneading machine. Sarah intended to be the second Black woman with a patent! In 1885 she did just that, receiving patent #322,177 for her folding bed, which was the precursor to the "Murphy Bed."

Sarah had been born into slavery in 1855 in Toledo, Ohio. She'd moved to Chicago with her parents at the end of the Civil War. It seemed like a far reach for someone with her background, working in a modest furniture shop, to become a true inventor.

But Sarah was no ordinary woman.

She was a mother, a dreamer, a doer and an inventor. And she surely never dreamed of a school being named for her, but the Sarah E. Goode STEM Academy on the southside of Chicago is now named in her honor.

## NEWSPAPER CONNECTIONS

**Find a piece of furniture in your local newspaper. Describe how you would transform it into another piece of furniture using words or pictures or both.**