What Kind of Mathematician was Benjamin Banneker?

Benjamin Banneker was one of the earliest practicing mathematicians and astronomers in the United States. He was a very bright young man, even from a very early age. At 15, he devised an irrigation system for his parent's tobacco farm, which then flourished even in times of drought. Banneker had a great love of astronomy, borrowing books from his mentor and friend, Joseph Ellicott. Using these books, he taught himself the Algebra, Geometry, Logarithms, Trigonometry, and Astronomy needed to become an astronomer.

Banneker always had a love for mathematics, preferring books to recess when he was a boy. Since

his home was destroyed by fire on the day of his funeral, we can only speculate what kind of math he worked on, but through the few Almanacs and papers that were salvaged, it is suggested that he worked on false position problems. False Position was a method used for solving Algebra problems as far back as 1800 B.C. and was very popular in Africa. It is said that Banneker "had advanced to false position through his own efforts", continuing a tradition begun in Africa thousand of years earlier. It was because of his great ability in astronomy and math that he was appointed an astronomer on the team of surveyors that drew up the outline for what was to become Washington D.C.