

## Carver Hall

**title** *George Washington Carver*

**artist** **Christian Petersen**

**Location:**  
North of Carver Hall,  
George Washington  
Carver Plaza

**Materials:**

**Bronze**

**Date:**

**1949**

**Size:**

**69" h**



### **About the Sculpture**

In the 1940s, Christian Petersen sculpted a plaster figure of George Washington Carver. This is one of the few free-standing, full length sculptures that Petersen ever made. He sculpted Carver as an older man, contemplating a single peanut that he is holding in his large hands. The sculptor's intentions were to emphasize Carver's vision for the future of agriculture and his passion for science, students and farmers. Due to a lack of funds, Petersen was unable to cast this sculpture in bronze, therefore he painted the work of art to resemble bronze. The plaster sculpture originally was exhibited in Carver Hall's first floor lobby. In 1998, donors John and Linda Dasher funded the bronze casting of the sculpture to celebrate Iowa State University's All-University George Washington Carver Celebration in 1999. The bronze casting is installed in the courtyard between Carver and Beardshear Halls.

*George Washington Carver*

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Additional information about the Art on Campus Program, other Art on Campus information sheets and Art on Campus maps are available at the University Museums office, 290 Scheman Building (2nd floor) 515/294-3342, or visit us online at <http://www.museums.iastate.edu/>.

## About the Artist

Christian Petersen, (American, 1885-1961) practiced his art during a transitional stage in American sculpture when styles moved from heroic to realistic. He immigrated to America from Denmark with his family in 1894. After attending several different art schools, beginning a die-cutting career, and receiving sculpture commissions, Petersen moved to the Midwest. It was here that he was invited to join the Iowa Public Works of Art Project under the direction of Grant Wood in Iowa City. In 1934, Iowa State President Raymond Hughes offered Petersen a one-semester residency to create the fountain and bas-reliefs in the Dairy Industry Building courtyard. One semester turned into 21 years, and from 1934 to 1955, Petersen served as Iowa State's sculptor-in-residence. At the time, he was the only sculptor-in-residence at any college or university in the United States, for which he earned \$25 per week. Petersen created 12 major public art sculptures on the Iowa State campus, including the *Fountain of Four Seasons*, *The Gentle Doctor* and *Conversations*.

## Art on Campus Poetry Collection

### George Washington Carver

by Neal Bowers

Inspired by Christian Petersen's sculpture of George Washington Carver

Incredibly small in his black walnut case,  
he might be a doll or a marionette  
with a button on the side to activate him,  
to let him finish that beginning smile  
and offer everyone the peanut  
he holds up like a talisman.

Sprawled around the lobby  
of the building named for him,  
not even those students dozing  
over history and science  
can match his sweet serenity.  
In his face is an enormous patience.

To look at him, you must look through  
your own reflection in the glass,  
your thin immensity clouding this guide  
who waits to lead you through a little door  
into a world where no life is common  
and every atom is a sun.

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