

# **DR. CARVER, WIZARD OF THE PEANUT**



*Dr. Carver and his goober products saved the South*

**Orphaned Negro lad, he was stolen from his Missouri master and traded back for a \$300 race horse. Today Dr. Carver is the South's most distinguished scientist. He turned the peanut into a \$60,000,000 industry. At the age of 80 he works on a cure for victims of infantile paralysis.**

**O**NE of the greatest agricultural chemists of our day was born a slave 80 years ago. He has given the world approximately 300 new by-products from the peanut. Of the sweet potato and soy bean he has wrought more than 100 articles. From almost zero, his efforts have boosted the South's peanut crop to a total evaluation of \$60,000,000 a year. His name is George Washington Carver.

The peanut wizard has opened new vistas in the South and released one-fourth of this country from a vicious one-crop system. He has worked miracles with the sweet potato, soy bean, clay, okra, chinaberry, pomegranate and muscadine.

But he hasn't made a penny, aside from the salary that Tuskegee Institute pays him for directing its experiment station. He has sold none of his discoveries. He simply "gives them to humanity."

Anybody who wants to make use of his experiments in the making of synthetic rubber for automobile tires may do so. He has offered his new road building process to the country: a process whereby he uses cotton to tie the asphalt together, as steel rods do

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for concrete. Experts have approved it. A road one inch thick would take 40 bales of cotton for every mile. This would make use of the South's surplus cotton and, at the same time, provide a stronger roadbed.

"It has been given out," Dr. Carver said some months ago. "that I have found a cure for infantile paralysis. I have not. But it looks hopeful. I have used it on 250 persons and it has never failed, so far as I can find out."

That denial was the beginning of a rush to Tuskegee to secure peanut oil. "It would take a factory running full time to fill all the requests I've had for peanut oil," Dr. Carver said. "But I don't want to commercialize. I am still experimenting. When I feel I have a finished product, I shall give it to suffering mankind."

While still a boy, orphaned George Washington Carver was stolen from his Missouri master and carried into Arkansas. His captors later traded him back to his master for a \$300 race horse.

He worked his way through Iowa State College, and upon receiving his M.S. degree, was elected to the faculty and placed in charge of the greenhouse. His great love for plant life, his expeditions into near-by woods with small boys at his heels (among them the Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace) attracted attention to his work. Booker T. Washington hired him as agricultural chemist at Tuskegee.

At once noting the South's dependence upon King Cotton, the young scientist set to work to introduce a second cash crop. He later returned to school and took his D.Sc. Back at Tuskegee again, he worked so diligently with the everyday products that by 1923 he had received the Spingarn Award, was listed in *Who's Who* and was a member of the Royal Society of Arts, London.

Every year, for the past 20 years, Dr. Carver has made a speaking tour, and has told his story from Maine to Florida. Recently, however, he has confined himself mostly to the South. Simple, retiring, with baggy trousers, high-laced shoes and a high-pitched voice, he has become probably the greatest single force for interracial good will since the turn of the century.

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White audiences that had never before gathered for a colored speaker, listened to him in rapt attention. The white South, which 40 years ago had no welcome whatever for an educated Negro, today takes pride in Dr. Carver's achievements.

Probably the most significant phase of the peanut wizard's amazing career is now being undertaken at Tuskegee—the establishment of the Carver Creative Research Laboratories.

Dr. Carver is a painter, musician, poet and philosopher. When told the bank had closed permanently with his savings of a lifetime in it (about \$70,000), he looked up from playing the piano and smiled.

"I guess somebody found a use for it," he said. "I wasn't using it myself."

He has strong likes and dislikes. He once remarked at the table that the perfect dish consists of tomatoes with heaps of sugar piled on them. Salads are an abomination to any self-respecting palate, he contends, but anything that is smothered in rich gravy is really just so much nectar.

There is always a flower in his lapel or his hand. In his laboratories are plants of all kinds and colors. Boxes of flowers choke his windows. He pampers them, croons to them, talks to them—and each day walks through the fields and pastures looking for new specimens.

He has never owned an automobile, never worn a hat. He prefers a cap, abhors waste, laziness and people who are merely curious. He answers all the letters that pour in upon him (and he gets them from cranks, quacks, would-be manufacturers and jail birds) and is quick to flash his dry wit in an exchange of opinions. He has never married. His one big love affair went to pot when the girl of his choice told him she wouldn't play second fiddle to "a bunch of weeds"—when he offered her a bouquet of cuttings from nature's outdoor hothouse.

Dr. Carver has given the South a new lease on life; he has promoted goodwill among the races all over the nation; he has attracted ambitious young men to the field of agricultural chemistry and, by his miracles with the peanut, has added many useful

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products to our list of everyday necessities. But his efforts as a trail blazer in the use of peanut oil to reduce the awful toll of infantile paralysis may make him an international humanitarian.

This use for the oil was discovered accidentally. Dr. Carver used it as a base for a beauty lotion. Women inclined to be fat brought it back to him and told him, indignantly, that they wouldn't think of using it again—never. It made them gain weight. The oil is extracted by a cold process—and the secret of its success on withered limbs is in the way it is applied and the flesh massaged.

Dr. Carver doesn't like to talk about himself. He doesn't like to see his picture. But people are interested in him. Henry Ford made a special trip to the Carver laboratory. Richard Haliburton and the late Will Rogers journeyed to his door. A bust of him was recently unveiled on the Tuskegee campus.

The *Louisville (Ky.) Courier-Journal* summed up Dr. Carver's contribution to the South: "It would be strange, indeed, if a member of a liberated race should in turn liberate a large part of the South."

Dr. Carver gives God the credit. Ask this scientist how he managed to make the lowly "goober" produce coffee, face powder, dye, soap, oils, sherbet, ice cream, pickles, insulating board, breakfast foods, ink, milk or rubber, and he gives you this answer:

"I simply go to my laboratory, shut myself in and ask my Creator why He made the peanut. My Creator tells me to pull the peanut apart and examine the constituents. When this is done, I tell Him what I want to create, and He tells me I can make anything that contains the same constituents as a peanut. I go to work—and keep on working until I get what I want."