Wallace and Carver Science Halls

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Abstract. The old science building, in which George Washington Carver studied while at Simpson College, was remodeled in 1967, dedicated the Henry A. Wallace Hall of Science, and now houses the Departments of Physics, Geology, Mathematics, and Psychology as well as providing general lecture and recitation rooms. The newer Carver Science Hall was remodeled in 1968 and houses general class­room space along with the expanded Biology and Chemistry Departments. Specific aspects of the remodeling are described, and some sidelines of the building's history are mentioned. Two other honors concerning George Washington Carver at Simpson College are mentioned.

George Washington Carver, even though not a native son of Iowa, is of more than casual interest to Iowans because of his collegiate education in this state, first at Simpson College in Indianola and then at Iowa State College, from which he received his baccalaureate degree. He valued his years at Simpson and later said, “At Simpson I discovered that I was a human being.” A most gracious comment. In 1956 the newly-constructed building housing the natural sciences at Simpson was dedicated and named in his honor, and was described in an article in these Proceedings. At that time the old science building, in which Carver actually studied (and lived for a short time!), was relegated to storage and occasional emergency classroom or office use. Several years later a fire seriously damaged the entryway and part of one of the floors. Because of the structural soundness of the thick exterior walls (which had been constructed as a separate entity from the rest of the building), and because of the historical value of the building, the fire led to eventual restoration rather than demolition. At the June, 1967, commencement ceremonies the remodeled building was dedicated the Henry A. Wallace Hall of Science and now houses the departments of geology, mathematics, physics, and psychology.

HENRY A. WALLACE HALL OF SCIENCE

Because of the original two-part construction, it was possible during the remodeling to raze all interior construction except for load-bearing walls and to achieve an almost wholly new interior. Floors are poured concrete, all walls are of new plaster, and the drop ceilings are acoustical tile. Each floor has independently operated heat exchangers in a steam heated, forced warm air/fresh air system concealed above the drop ceilings. The exterior was cleaned, but remains basically the same in structure and design as it appeared at the time of Carver. The windows retained their general form and size, but were divided somewhat differently after remodeling in order to enhance the total appearance of the building.
The ground floor is occupied by physics and has labs for general, electronics, spectroscopy, and other advanced physics work, as well as two stockrooms, a small shop, and two office-research lab combinations. The first floor is partially for general college use in the tiered lecture room across the east end. Geology office, stockroom, and two labs fill the rest of the first floor. On the second floor are two general purpose classrooms, five offices, and two psychology labs. The top floor is unfinished at this time and somewhat smaller in area than the other floors. There is a small section for housing experimental rats and mice for the psychology department, but the balance of the top floor is essentially reserve space for expansion.

Figure 1. Henry A. Wallace Hall of Science, Indianola, Iowa.

Not connected with the above development, but an interesting sidelight is the fact that it was on this top floor that Carver studied painting. Until just recently the doors to the top floor still clearly carried the title of Art Department. It was partly the result of his studying art and related subjects, and doing reasonably well in them, that he received the advice that he perhaps would do well to apply himself to something more practical and potentially useful. The result was that he transferred to the college in Ames and graduated with an agricultural major. It was also on this top floor that Carver lived for a short while at Simpson, but no physical evidence of this was uncovered during the remodeling. There were several other reminders of pre-
vious building use uncovered—and covered up—besides the old art department doors. Most of the memorabilia was destroyed, as were the doors, but in at least one location detailed drawings of the circulatory system, done in colored chalk on the walls by an instructor who has long since passed away, were covered undisturbed by new wall studs and plaster, and may some day come to light again if the plaster has to be replaced in that particular location. Then someone will wonder—perhaps at the inaccuracies in detail, but more likely at the effort and extensiveness in size and the strange medium (colored chalk) used. It will take a considerably longer period of time, however, before alumni forget the life-long involvement of Henry A. Wallace in applied science, and the wide and extensive interest and help of many members of the Wallace family in Simpson College.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER SCIENCE HALL

After moving the geology, math and physics into Wallace Hall of Science, Carver Hall was remodeled in several areas and the biology and chemistry departments expanded upward. Most of the remodeling was on the second floor, but one area on the first floor (labeled “analytical chemistry” and “balance room” in reference 2) was made into one large lab, with new benches and several fume hoods, for organic chemistry classes. The area labeled “organic chemistry” will then be used both for student research and biochemistry lab. Other areas of the basement and first floor will remain essentially unchanged. The one optics room on the second floor was converted to an isotope counting room, and the other optics room now serves as a balance room for both the instrument lab (labeled “electronics”) and the analytical lab which was made from about two-thirds of the old “general physics” lab. This area has new fume hoods and an area for study desks for the chemistry majors. The rest of the original general physics lab was converted into an office, a staff research lab, and a small stockroom for unknowns. The area labeled “advanced physics” received minor modification for use in physical chemistry. The “general geology” area was partitioned into an office, an animal room, a research lab, a stockroom, and a microtechnique lab, all for biology. The other two labs on this end of the second floor did not require significant structural change to be used for anatomy and embryology, and for physiology.

The other major commemorations of Dr. Carver on this campus have been the awarding of a doctor of science degree to him in 1928 for his outstanding chemurgic research, and about a year after publication of the previously mentioned article in these Proceedings it was announced that through the generosity of the Kresge Foundation and a number of Simpson alumni an endowed professorship had been established in memory of Dr. Carver’s teaching career. Dr. Clifford Meints was installed as the first occupant of the George Washington Carver Chair in the Natural Sciences in October, 1958.
Literature Cited