Dec. 15, 2017

The family of Rolla Carpenter, one of MSU’s first Spartan Engineers, donates an original engineering textbook

“A Text-Book of Experimental Engineering” from 1892 written by Rolla C. Carpenter, one of MSU’s original Spartan Engineers, was presented to the MSU College of Engineering during the Design Day Awards Ceremony Dec. 8, 2017.

Anthony Ingle, teaching specialist in civil and environmental engineering, officiated at the presentation as Engineering Dean Leo Kempel accepted the donation from Rolla’s great great niece, Nancy Carpenter of Colorado.

Rolla C. Carpenter was an influential professor in his era. He built ice houses, taught students French, astronomy, mathematics, mechanical drawing, hydrostatics, hydraulics, survey, and civil engineering. Throughout his work on campus, he involved students through analysis, design and construction, forming what was essentially the first senior capstone design class.

Here are Anthony Ingle’s comments during the presentation ceremony:

A short story of the Carpenter Brothers

Rolla C. Carpenter and his younger brother Louis G. Carpenter were both alumni of The State Agricultural College (now known as Michigan State University). Both brothers eventually taught at the school throughout the 1880s.

Rolla earned a bachelor’s degree in 1873 and his brother in 1879. Rolla went on to receive an additional bachelor’s and master’s degree from the University of Michigan in 1875. His brother also studied at the University of Michigan.

Rolla was a professor of mathematics and civil engineering. While here, he designed and supervised much of the construction for MSU’s emerging campus.
Campus at that time was entirely north of the Red Cedar River, mostly buildings around the West Circle on campus that included a track and ball diamond.

The first bridge across the Red Cedar River was at Farm Lane and was constructed during the tenure of the Carpenter brothers.

In 1887, Rolla and Professor William J. Beal laid out “Collegeville,” the first neighborhood in what later became the city of East Lansing, Michigan.

Rolla Carpenter went on to teach at Cornell University and Louis at Colorado State University.

Rolla was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Laws by the Michigan State Agricultural College (also MSU) in 1907.

He published several books, including: A Textbook of Experimental Engineering in (1892).

And now I would like to invite Engineering Dean Leo Kempel and Ms. Nancy Carpenter to the podium.

Nancy is a descendent of Louis G. Carpenter and wishes to present an original copy of Rolla’s 1892 book to the college where he got his degree and his teaching start.