

Rolla C. Carpenter was born in Orion, Michigan in 1852. He received his bachelor of science degree from Michigan Agricultural College (M.A.C.) in 1873 and a civil engineering degree from the University of Michigan in 1875. Upon graduating from Michigan, Carpenter returned to M.A.C. as an instructor, while also continuing his studies further and receiving a master of science degree in 1876. Not one to stop learning, Carpenter later received another master's degree, this one in mechanical engineering from Cornell in 1888. Carpenter devoted his professional career as a professor between M.A.C. and Cornell. He served at M.A.C. from 1875 to 1890 and at Cornell from 1895 until his retirement in 1917. At M.A.C., as a professor of mathematics and civil engineering, Carpenter designed and supervised much of the construction of the young school, including construction of a dam on the Red Cedar River. In 1887, along with Professor William J. Beal, Carpenter helped design "Collegeville," a neighborhood that later became East Lansing, Michigan. Carpenter was considered an expert in his time in the field of engineering and was appointed by the Academy of Science in 1915, at the request of the President of the United States, to investigate the slides at the Panama Canal. He passed away in 1919.