

= John Clough Holmes =

John Clough Holmes ( September 25 , 1809 ? December 16 , 1887 ) was responsible for the establishment of Michigan State University . As the co @-@ founder of the Michigan State Agricultural Society , John Clough Holmes spearheaded the movement to build an agriculture college in Michigan . Holmes Hall , the home of the Lyman Briggs College , is named in his honor .

After moving to Detroit at age 26 , Holmes married into a merchant family . He later got involved in both the Detroit Horticultural Society and the Board of Education . In 1849 , his background in horticulture and education led him to co @-@ found the Michigan State Agricultural Society , a group dedicated to establishing a state @-@ funded agricultural college in Michigan . Holmes spent the next six years drafting legislation and gaining support for his cause , and in 1855 , the Michigan state governor signed a bill establishing the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan .

Holmes was keenly involved with the details of the Agricultural College , influencing everything from the purchase of land for the campus , layout of the buildings , and even the placement of the chairs and tables . Once the College opened , he assumed the role of treasurer and later Professor of Horticulture . By 1861 , Holmes had fallen out of favor with the other College administrators , and retired to his home in Detroit . Nevertheless , he continued to support and visit the college until his death in 1887 .

= = Biography = =

Born in Salem , Massachusetts , John Clough Holmes moved to Michigan in 1835 , and gained employment in a Detroit merchant store . Within five years he had married his boss 's daughter , and soon became a partner in the family business . Holmes served as president of the Detroit Horticultural Society in 1847 . The following two years he was a member of the Board of Education of Detroit . Then in 1849 he co @-@ founded the Michigan State Agricultural Society .

The Michigan State Agricultural Society immediately assumed a lofty goal to foster the establishment of a state @-@ funded agricultural college in Michigan . Holmes , who served as secretary of the Agricultural Society from 1849 to 1857 , was also the college 's most tenacious proponent . In conference with his fellow society members , he drafted a bill that would create the college . Significantly , Holmes ( among others ) vehemently admonished that this college be independent of both the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and the Normal School in Ypsilanti , for he " feared that agricultural studies would not receive the attention needed to survive and thrive " at those schools .

Holmes spent the next five years gathering supporters for his grassroots movement , traveling at his own expense to gather petition signatures from across the state . On January 14 , 1855 , Holmes went to the state capital of Lansing to lobby the legislature for an agricultural college . He spent the next four weeks championing the bill he wrote and cementing support in both the House of Representatives and the Senate . Though many legislators supported the basic concept of a state @-@ funded agricultural college , there was strong opposition from University of Michigan president Henry Tappan , who wanted the agriculture program to be part of his school . Nevertheless , Holmes prevailed . On February 12 , 1855 , Michigan Governor Kinsley S. Bingham signed Act 130 , establishing the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan , the school that would become Michigan State University . The final draft of the bill held only two significant differences from the one that Holmes presented : that the purchase price not exceed US \$ 15 per acre , rather than the \$ 25 Holmes desired ; and that the site must be within ten miles ( 16 km ) of Lansing , a provision added to silence the various factions that wanted the new college built in their own backyards .

Holmes ' work had only begun : Act 130 put the Agricultural Society wholly in charge of selecting the site for the Agricultural College . In June 1855 , Holmes and the society 's executive committee visited nine sites of offered land , including some near the present towns of Holt , Millett , DeWitt , and Haslett . As a result of the low stipulated price of \$ 15 per acre , all of the sites were uncleared land , and many were quite untenable for a campus . Eventually , Holmes wrote the proposal to purchase the 677 acres ( 274 ha ) Burr farm , located three miles due east of the capitol . He also

included a second proposal , outlining both the college 's organization and " specific appointments for a staff . "

The State Board of Education approved the site purchase in July 1855 , but months later had proven unable to make any progress in deciding on basics for the college ? including what buildings it might require . The Board turned to Holmes , who had continued to acquaint himself with the site by making some preliminary surveys . After some consideration , he reported back to the Board that the school required two main buildings : a combination classroom and office building , and a dormitory . Thus , John C. Holmes is the man responsible for the design of both College Hall and the original dormitory , now known as Saints ' Rest . In addition , although Professor Harold W. Lautner ( who , as the official Director of Campus Planning from 1945 to 1969 , was a direct successor to Holmes ) makes a point of noting that " who proposed the sites for these first buildings is not answered in any record , " he concurs that Holmes ' ubiquitous hand makes it unlikely that anyone else made that decision .

The buildings were completed , and the first classes commenced in May 1857 . As the College began operations , Holmes was appointed its treasurer . Showing that no decision was small enough to escape his view , he is said to have " supervised the placing of chairs and tables in College Hall . " The college 's 200 @-@ volume library was donated by the Michigan State Agricultural Society ? curiously , this meant that Holmes ( as secretary of the society ) had conveyed the library to himself ( as treasurer of the college ) .

In addition to treasurer , Holmes was appointed as the school 's first superintendent of horticulture , responsible for campus planning and planting . This title was used alternately with Professor for a short period . On February 2 , 1858 , the Horticulture Professorship was suspended , ostensibly for financial reasons ( as well as the fact that the wild condition of the land hardly warranted a full @-@ time horticulturalist as yet ) . Even so , Holmes was allowed to continue residing in one of the original on @-@ campus Faculty Row houses until the end of the term .

Then , on March 8 , 1859 , Holmes was asked to resign as treasurer , and he complied . Some time in that year or the one following , he was appointed once again as Superintendent of Horticulture , guiding students in planting the College gardens and improving the grounds . Through 1861 he continued to be listed in the college catalog under various titles including Professor of Horticulture , Secretary , and Treasurer .

= = Legacy = =

In 1861 , a major reorganization of the College transferred control from the Board of Education to the newly formed Board of Agriculture . Holmes was " not retained despite the urging of his colleagues and the unquestioned spiritual debt which the College owed him . " Holmes returned to the Detroit area , lived another twenty @-@ six years , and remained active in his community . Although he continued to be , as President T. C. Abbot wrote circa 1883 , " a not infrequent and always welcome visitor at the college , and one of its warmest friends , " Holmes never again held any official position at the College . There is no known explanation for this change of fortune , but as Lautner wrote , " clearly there were troubles here other than financial ones that are not suggested in the minutes . "

Professor Lautner contrasts Holmes ' legacy with that of John Harvard , whose donation of a modest library and four hundred British pounds led to a major university that bears his name , implying that MSU 's debt to Holmes is far greater . Professor William J. Beal called him " the most important agent " of the school , while President Abbot said , " To no one man is the College so much indebted as John Clough Holmes . " One hundred years after the founding , Madison Kuhn 's high regard for Holmes was clear , using as the frontispiece of his book a painting clearly meant to signify the exact moment of the Agricultural College 's genesis with an almost mythological glow . Finally in 1965 , MSU named a new six story modernist residence hall after Holmes . The building still stands to this day , and is home to the Lyman Briggs College .