

“THE DENISON ARCHWAY”  
or  
“THE ENGINEERING ARCH”

The famous “Engineering Arch” in the New Engineering Building (later called West Engineering and then West Hall) was the contribution of an engineering professor, Charles Denison. When he learned that there was a serious problem of how to design the building without interfering with the diagonal walk of the campus, he prepared a sketch showing the diagonal walk passing through an archway in the building.



The New Engineering Building - 1903



The Arch was named “The Denison Archway”  
Later, known as the “Engineering Arch”



Charles Simeon Denison

Charles Simeon Denison's nickname was 'Little Lord Chesterfield,' for he was the Beau Brummel of the University. His slightly curly hair matched the shine on his boots. His ties matched his socks. His wardrobe contained unnumbered suits of clothes and overcoats for all kinds of weather. The collars of some of his topcoats were of expensive fur. He had all kinds of haberdashery, including more than forty shirts. He did not have these laundered in Ann Arbor, but sent them each month to Chicago for 'proper' laundering." (Mortimer Cooley, *Scientific Blacksmith*, p. 96)

"He was a good man, and he came of a long line of good men. The family traces its lineage from Antenor, King of the Cimbri, of the Trojan nobility, born about 1239 B.C., down through Charlemagne and a royal line to Captain George Denison of Stonington, Connecticut, who came to America in 1631, and who achieved distinction for services rendered in Cromwell's army and in our own Indian wars." (*The Michigan Technic*, 5/1914)

Charles Simeon Denison received a B. S. in 1870 and a C. E. in 1871 from the University of Vermont. He was appointed Instructor in Engineering and Drawing in 1872. His friend James Angell, who the year before, had also come to Michigan from the University of Vermont, recruited him to the faculty. The Angells looked upon Denison almost as a member of the family. He was the favored guest at nearly every table in town. He was a connoisseur of food and wine as well as fashion. He was a bachelor and his students were his whole life. He served on the faculty for 42 years. Denison also served as Ann Arbor city engineer.



Professor Denison's Classrooms



Professor Denison “Denny” to his students “would go around the free-hand drawing room inspecting the drawings. He would stop at a desk, look the work over, and say in a voice to be heard by all, ‘Very good, very good.’ He would then take the student’s pencil and begin changing a line here and there, calling out the changes as they were made, until the drawing had taken on an entirely new and correct form.” Herbert J. Goulding, 1893*e* (*The Michigan Technic*, Nov., 1941, p. 10)