

## **Albert Fairchild Holden Visionary of the Holden Arboretum**

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Albert F. Holden (1866-1913) left a beautiful legacy to the Cleveland community: The Holden Arboretum — a museum of trees with gardens, plant collections and natural areas that serve a mission of horticulture, education and research.

Born in Cleveland, Albert spent much of his childhood in Utah while his father lived there managing his mines. Graduating from Phillips Exeter and Harvard ('88), he went on to a meteoric career as a mining engineer. Starting with the family's Bingham mine in Utah, his business expanded to include mines in Alaska and Mexico, producing copper, silver, lead and gold.

His life was short, intense, dramatically successful, but punctuated with tragedy. He married in 1894, but his wife died six years later. They had three daughters, Elizabeth Davis, Emery May, and Katharine; but Elizabeth died at age 12 in 1908. Her death was devastating. In 1912 he was faced with his own imminent death (probably from cancer) at age 46.

Before he died, he spent 1912 writing and rewriting a will to provide for his two surviving teenage daughters, and for philanthropy. He cared deeply about science education and research, and the cultural life of the city of Cleveland. He set up a trust, the income of which was to provide for Emery May and Katharine during their lifetimes; after their deaths, the trust was to establish an arboretum for the city of Cleveland, in memory of his beloved daughter Elizabeth. Initially, he had planned to leave this trust for the

Arnold Arboretum at Harvard, but his sister Roberta convinced him that Cleveland needed its own arboretum. To Harvard, he left his mineral collection, a valuable and scientifically important collection of minerals he had collected during his mining career and travels.

His sister, Roberta Holden Bole (Mrs. Benjamin P. Bole), decided to establish the Arboretum before an indefinite future date so that it would be functioning when the endowment became available. In 1931, Mr. and Mrs. Bole donated the first 100 acres. Thus, Albert Holden's vision for an arboretum began in 1931 and has continued to grow in size, prominence and beauty.

The Holden Arboretum is now 3,150 acres (the largest in the United States); it has more than 100,000 visitors a year, membership of 7,000 families, extensive education programs, and a modern research facility.