

# *Thy Praises, MSU*

TREASURES & TRADITIONS *of*  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



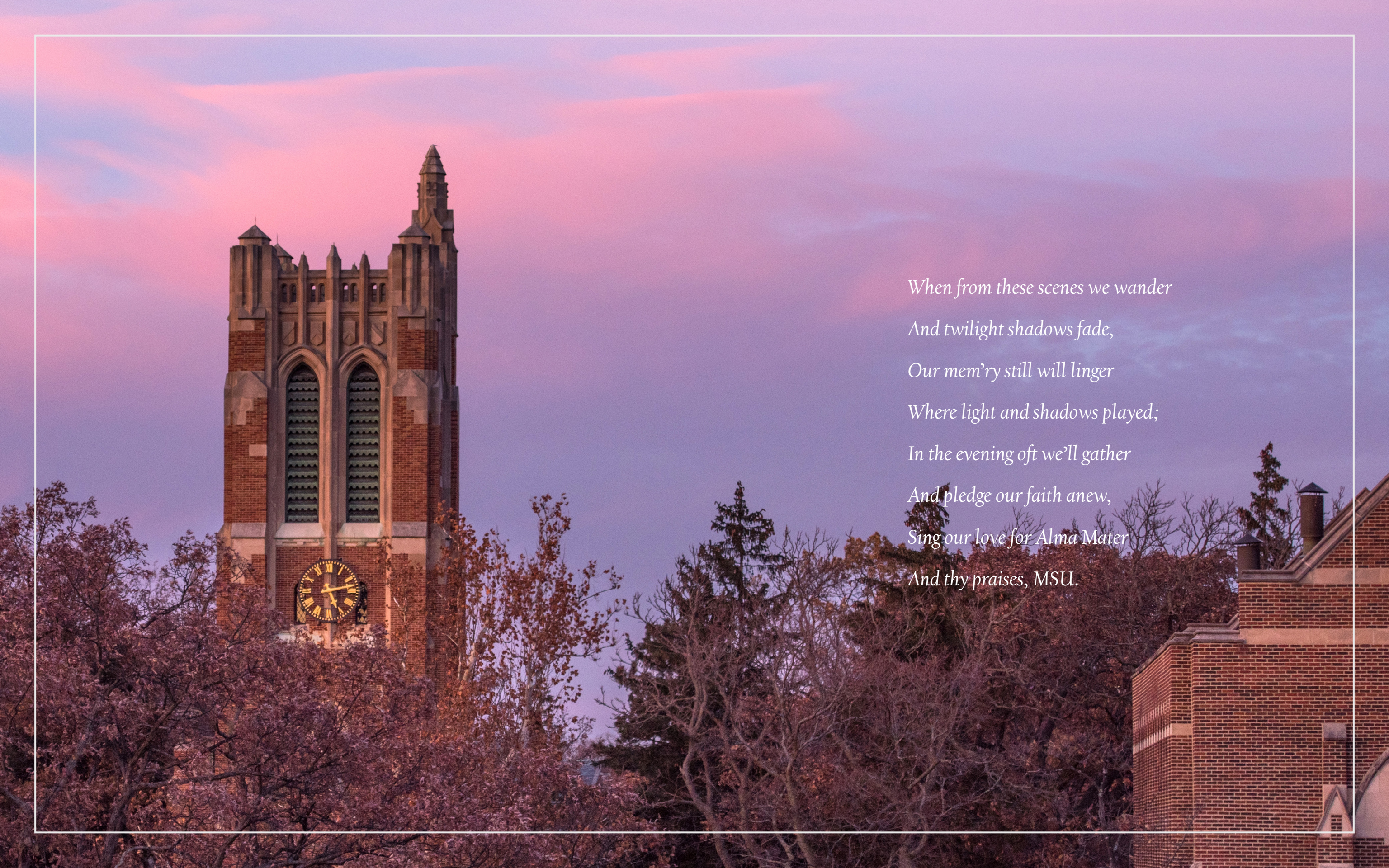
MSU Alumni  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



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A photograph of a Gothic-style clock tower, likely the Old Chapel at Michigan State University, set against a vibrant sunset sky. The tower is constructed of brick and stone, featuring two large arched windows with green-tinted glass and a clock face with gold hands and Roman numerals. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a soft pink and orange near the horizon. In the foreground, there are trees with autumn foliage in shades of brown and orange. To the right, a portion of a brick building is visible.

*When from these scenes we wander  
And twilight shadows fade,  
Our mem'ry still will linger  
Where light and shadows played;  
In the evening oft we'll gather  
And pledge our faith anew,  
Sing our love for Alma Mater  
And thy praises, MSU.*



## *No two students have the same experience during their time at Michigan State University*

– but nevertheless, there are traditions that each and every Spartan shares. These experiences are woven into the fabric of campus and all those that have walked our “ivy covered halls.” As the Alma Mater so eloquently states, the combination of our unique and common experiences linger within us as we reflect on our time at MSU.

“Thy Praises, MSU” is a compilation of campus traditions and experiences that have developed over the course of Michigan State’s history and a guide for students during their time on campus. It is a living history, one that will grow, evolve and become personal for Spartans over time.

Like those who came before them, students will also develop their own set of traditions based on their student experiences. We encourage Spartans to go out

and find their path, keep an open mind, create unique memories and carve out their place in our history.

With a story as lengthy and rich as MSU’s, we recognize that we may have inadvertently missed traditions that were part of our history. If you have content to contribute to this book, please submit it via [this online form](#). The book will be updated with new content annually.

Go Green!

## MSU HISTORY

The history of Michigan State University (MSU) dates back to 1855, when the Michigan Legislature established the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan and placed it on 676 acres of woodlands a few miles from the state capitol. The college was opened on May 13, 1857 with three buildings, five faculty members and 63 male students. As the first agricultural college in the United States, the school was the pioneer land grant institution and a prototype for future colleges opened as part of the Morrill Act enacted during Abraham Lincoln's presidency. The school's first class graduated in 1861 right after the onset of the American Civil War. That same year, the Michigan Legislature moved oversight of the college from the State Board of Education to the State Board of Agriculture.

In 1885, the only degree offered was for the Mechanical Course (engineering). Women were admitted to the college in 1870 and studied the same coursework as men until a Home Economics degree was added in 1896. The 26th U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt,

addressed the school at the 1907 commencement, an event coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the school's opening.

After World War II, the college gained admission to the Big Ten Conference and has since grown to become one of the largest educational institutions in the United States with over 50,000 students. In its centennial year of 1955, the state officially made the school a university and the current name was adopted in 1964 after Michigan voters adopted a new constitution.

**Learn more** about some of the milestones in Michigan State's history.



*Michigan State University has grown to become one of the largest educational institutions in the United States.*

**NICKNAME:**

*Spartans*

**COLORS:**

*Green and white*

**MASCOT:**

*Sparty*

**ATHLETIC CONFERENCE:**

*Big Ten*



**ABOUT MSU**

**STUDENTS (FALL 2019):**

**49,809 total**

From **all 83 counties** in Michigan, **all 50 states** in the United States and **139 other countries**.

**UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS:**

**39,176**

**GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL:**

**10,633**

**WOMEN:**

**52%**

**MEN:**

**48%**

**STUDENTS OF COLOR:**

**25.1%**

**INTERNATIONAL:**

**11.4%**

**FACULTY AND STAFF:**

**13,068**

**LIVING ALUMNI:**

**495,000**

*Cheerleaders at the MSU vs Northwestern football game, 1972.*

# OFFICIAL NAME CHANGES

FEB. 12, 1855  
Agricultural College of the State of Michigan

MARCH 15, 1861  
State Agricultural College

JUNE 2, 1909  
Michigan Agricultural College

MAY 1, 1925  
Michigan State College of Agriculture  
and Applied Science



JULY 1, 1955  
Michigan State University of Agriculture  
and Applied Science

JAN. 1, 1964  
Michigan State University

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
UNIVERSITY



# Traditions

## *Cheering “Go Green, Go White”*

On any given day in East Lansing, you’re surrounded by students and faculty sporting their college colors. The university’s association with the colors green and white dates back to April 11, 1899, when the small Athletic Association of Michigan Agricultural College took steps to endorse a green monogram for athletes. Not only do the colors represent the university, but they are also the basis for our famous “Go Green, Go White” cheer. It’s a simple call and response cheer; one group or person says “Go Green!” and the surrounding person or group responds “Go White!” The cheer is used at sporting events, presentations and almost any other interaction between Spartans from the stadium student section on game day to the streets of cities throughout the world. “Go Green! Go White!” is a vital part of the Spartan culture.

[View the cheer >](#)

## *Getting Your Picture Taken with Sparty and The Spartan*

Our valiant mascot, Sparty, is present at various events on campus including athletic events and academic gatherings. As such an important point of student pride, it has become tradition to capture a photo with him and the fearless Spartan statues on campus. The Spartan originally stood at the helm of Demonstration Hall, reaching 9’7” and weighing 6,000 pounds. Commissioned in 1941 by the university’s newly named President Hannah, he was created by Assistant Professor Leonard Jungwirth as an athletic Spartan warrior to be a symbol of the university. After four years in development, The Spartan emerged in 1945. Due to the shortages of metals during World War II, he was built out of terra-cotta, a clay-based ceramic. In 2005, a replica statue weighing 1,500 pounds was produced of more durable materials and the original statue was moved inside the Spartan Stadium tower where it could be shielded from harsh Michigan winters and Wolverine vandalism. The new bronze statue sits at the intersection of Kalamazoo, Red Cedar and Beal Streets as a reminder of how tough and enduring Spartans are and always will be.



## Participating in MSU Homecoming

Every fall, Spartan students, faculty, staff, alumni and the community come together to celebrate MSU Homecoming, a week highlighted by student and alumni events, the Homecoming Parade down Grand River, tailgates and a football game in Spartan Stadium. Residence halls, Greek organizations, registered student organizations and other groups build floats for the parade, which draws approximately 10,000 spectators annually. The MSU community is also encouraged to “Glow Green” during Homecoming by replacing a porch or other light with a green bulb for the week. Homecoming is filled with many opportunities to celebrate both MSU’s history and its future.

[View the 2015 Homecoming Parade ›](#)



*Sparty in the 2018 Homecoming Parade.*

## Attending the MSU Black Alumni Homecoming Activities

Since its inception in 1980 the MSU Black Alumni Association (MSUBA) has held an annual homecoming weekend where more than 3,000 alumni have been in attendance. Activities have included student networking, recognition of distinguished Black alumni and scholarship recipients with notable key speakers such as Barbara Roberts Mason, The Honorable Judge Mathis, Susan Taylor and Tavis Smiley, annual business meetings, football tailgates and a gospel breakfast. Each year, MSUBA gives out 30 to 40 scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students. Hundreds of students have enhanced their educational opportunities with the endowment of MSUBA which has grown from an initial \$1,000 investment to a market value of over \$2 million dollars.

## Rooting Against the University of Michigan

The illustrious Michigan State/ Michigan (U of M) rivalry has existed as long as MSU and derives from a long history of seeing things differently. It all began in 1850 when the state of Michigan was in dire need of farmers and educated agricultural workers and created the Agricultural College of Michigan, which eventually became MSU. Some say that the new college posed a threat to the University of Michigan, which caused years of feuding to ensue. In the early 1900s, U of M attempted to absorb our forestry and engineering program after their building burnt down. They were also vocal opponents of our acceptance into the Big Ten in 1948, which was fitting given the fierce battles that would ensue between the schools on the field and hardwood. Despite our history and athletic rivalries, we work together to address issues facing the State of Michigan and to solve some of the world's greatest problems. For all our differences, both MSU and the University of Michigan share the common goal of making the state of Michigan strong, but our friendly rivalry remains a storied tradition.

[Learn more >](#)

## Standing Guard During Sparty Watch

Because of the fierce rivalry between MSU and the University of Michigan, the fall football game between the two schools dominates campus. Our fearless Spartan statue stands as an iconic symbol of the university, and is naturally a target for mischievous Wolverines attempting to vandalize him. Out of necessity, members of the Spartan Marching Band protect Sparty around the clock during the week preceding the game, a tradition known as "Sparty Watch." Although this tradition was started and maintained by members of the Spartan Marching Band, all students and members of the community are invited to help protect him. Evenings are filled with laughter, games and even an occasional coach appearance.

[Learn more >](#)



*The photograph shows the lead headline of the 1948 State News Extra.*

## Painting The Rock

A place of love, protest and mourning, The Rock stands as a social billboard for Michigan State students. In May of 1873 The Rock was dug up by Spartan students on summer recess and hauled by a team of oxen to the "sacred place" near College Hall (near the site of Beaumont Tower). Originally a romantic place for couples and many proposals, it wasn't until the 1960s and 1970s that it transformed into a place for rebellion and protest. Sparking controversy, The Rock was removed from its Beaumont Tower location by the campus police department in 1977, then moved back the same day due to student outrage. In 1985, The Rock was moved to its current location on Auditorium Field. Presently, student groups and organizations paint The Rock for their events, in their mourning, to commemorate life events or to make social statements. Pledges of the Black fraternities and sororities, as a part of the pledging process, are required to paint The Rock with their Greek colors and letters. There is no set schedule to paint The Rock; students just need to be the first there at nightfall and campout overnight to ensure their message won't be painted over. When walking through campus, take a glance toward The Rock for it has a deep history within the university and is real evidence of MSU's student voice.

[Learn more >](#)



*Students walking by The Rock in winter and the Rock has been painted to read, "Big Ten Champs #1 77-78." Taken 1978.*

## Listening to the Carillon

On Aug. 12, 1918, a small military band serenaded a crowd with "The Star-Spangled Banner." Afterward, College Hall - one of the first buildings on campus when the university opened its doors in 1857 - collapsed. At its opening, College Hall served a multitude of purposes including being used as a library, as classroom and even a museum. When it collapsed in 1918, an important piece of MSU history was lost. In order to commemorate College Hall and maintain this "sacred space," Beaumont Tower was built on its site in 1928. The tower is named for John W. Beaumont in honor of his generous donation that made the construction possible. With a 49-bell carillon, the tower sings out melodies throughout the week and keeps chiming in on the hours of the day. Legend has it that a kiss at midnight or in its shadow means you'll marry your sweetheart.

[Learn more >](#)

## Watching the Spartan Marching Band

A Civil War veteran named Ransom McDonough Brooks created the Spartan Marching Band (SMB) in 1870, with only ten members who performed at military drills and parades. The present-day band, under the leadership of David Thornton, stands as a premier college marching band. Boasting 300 members, the band has played at a multitude of events from Rose Bowls to World Fairs. They serenade us on our evening walks to class, during our game-day activities and even on early Saturday mornings. Athletic events wouldn't be complete without the soundtrack that the SMB provides. If you can't catch their halftime show, or the drumline's amazing third quarter performance in Spartan Stadium on game day, there's always the drumline's SBS street performance an hour before kickoff, or their playing of "The Series" as they process to the stadium.

After the last home game each year, the Spartan Marching Band plays, "The Series" while exiting Spartan Stadium as normal – but instead of making the left turn to head to Demonstration Hall, the entire band circles around The Spartan statue three times and then heads north over the bridge. As they cross the bridge, the students that won't be returning to the band break ranks and head to the edge of the bridge where they throw a rose into the river (celebrating MSU's connection to the Rose Bowl, and because their earlier tradition of throwing their horns in the river was problematic for obvious reasons). The graduating members then rejoin the march toward Adams Field where the band gathers to sing the first verse of "MSU Shadows" together, with the non-returning members singing the second verse led by a high-ranking, graduating member of the band.

[Learn more ›](#)



*People canoeing on the Red Cedar River, undated.*

## Canoeing or Floating Down the Red Cedar River

The Red Cedar River is a constant friend on campus – walking you to class, helping to beautify your selfies, even playing host to the duck population. Running through the center of campus, the Red Cedar is a constant presence and has impacted every Spartan's experience. Back in the day, there were campus-wide canoe races. Fraternities, sororities, campus clubs and residence halls all participated. They were much anticipated and occurred near the end of the year when spring was in full swing.

Despite not having this tradition anymore, the Red Cedar is integral to campus; canoeing or floating down the river is a great way to see the beauty of Michigan State.



A young girl sits on a lily pad in the Beal Botanical Garden, 1938.

## Visiting the MSU Gardens

MSU is known far and wide for its beauty, and our William J. Beal Botanical Garden, Children’s 4-H Garden and Horticulture Gardens are three reasons why. The William J. Beal Botanical Garden started in 1873 and has been home to the longest running botany experiment in the world. A place of learning and exploration, the Beal Garden represents our deep connection between history and beauty. The Children’s 4-H Garden nurtures not only blossoming flowers but creativity. The garden was established in 1987 as a means of outreach and education to children, its four H’s standing for head, heart, hands and health – representing the whole person. It’s an imaginative place complete with treehouses, singing steps and a mini-maze. Right next to the 4-H Garden stands the Horticulture Gardens, complete with annual and perennial gardens, a rose garden and a vegetable garden. With a highly ranked horticulture program, MSU values these gardens as a means of education as well as pleasure. Just as previous Spartans have walked through these gardens over the years, take a walk to connect with the university and experience both its history and beauty.



A color postcard of the Beal Botanical Garden in 1904

## Eating MSU Dairy Store Ice Cream

Don’t miss out on MSU’s famous sweet treat: MSU Dairy Store ice cream! With deep roots in agriculture, the MSU Dairy Store has long been an integral part of campus life. In 1914, the university established a dairy facility that would eventually grow into the Dairy Store we know today. Started as a research facility, it eventually branched out and began selling limited amounts of cheese and ice cream two afternoons a week, as well as giving student tours. The store now has a variety of foods to offer from grilled cheese to cookie sandwiches. Get your fix at either of the locations on campus in Anthony Hall and the MSU Union. For more information, visit [dairystore.msu.edu](http://dairystore.msu.edu).

[Learn more >](#)

## Celebrating ANR Week

Michigan State University is proud of its history as an agricultural school. One event that highlights this heritage is the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Week, which began more than a century ago under the name “Farmers Week.” Throughout the years, the event has incorporated the themes of the times, including the space age in the ‘60s, world hunger in the ‘80s and today’s trends such as organic farming and sustainability.

## Attending Global Festival

Global Festival celebrates international traditions with exhibits from international student organizations and representatives of different countries and regions, as well as live performances of songs, dances, instrumental music and more. While it is unknown the exact year this international festival began, photos date back to the 1940s. In more recent years, the Global Festival has drawn up to 3,000 attendees from across the Greater Lansing area and even across the state. There is also a World Gift Shop where volunteers collect and sell international items to benefit international student scholarships. Community Volunteers for International Programs (CVIP) has long been a supporter and coordinator of the event.



## Aspiring to Hold the Kedzie Cane

Presentation of the Kedzie Cane, also known as the “Kedzie Old-Timers Stick,” is a tradition that dates back to 1931. It was in that year that former president Frank S. Kedzie donated a cane that was previously owned by his father, Robert Clark Kedzie. Starting in 1929 at the suggestion of Dr. Kedzie, MSU began hosting an event called the Patriarchs Luncheon for alumni who graduated 50 or more years ago. It was at the third annual Patriarchs Luncheon that the cane was presented to the oldest living alumnus in attendance, Daniel Strange, class of 1867. The Patriarchs Luncheon was eventually renamed the Kedzie Reunion Luncheon and continues to this day. Each year the MSU Alumni Office presents the Kedzie Cane Award to both the oldest male and female in attendance. The cane itself is 37 inches long, features intricate carvings and is made from coffee wood.



2018 Kedzie Cane award

## Finding Treasures at the MSU Arts and Crafts Shows

For more than 50 years, the University Activities Board has coordinated the holiday and spring arts and craft shows in and around the MSU Union. These are some of the largest craft shows in the state, typically with more than 300 booths. All crafter and artisan fees collected for both shows benefit programs for the Spartan community at Michigan State, which are planned for students by students. Programs include bi-weekly craft nights and open mic nights, and late-night programs such as UFest, Last Spartan Standing and bingo.

## The African American Celebratory

The African American Celebratory was founded with the guidance of the Black Student Alliance in 2001. The purpose of the organization is to plan and execute an annual ceremony to recognize the achievements of their peers and to facilitate educational programs for the student body focusing on cultural issues and retention rates. Since its inception, African American Celebratory has been fortunate to see growth not only in the level of participation with the graduation ceremony, but within the student community as well. Both undergraduate and graduate students are honored at Fairchild Theater the week of finals.

## Black Power Rally

The Black Power Rally (BPR) has become a tradition in the Black community at Michigan State University since the early beginnings of the Black Student Alliance, circa 1969. Every year, students involved with the organization come together with a sense of stern consciousness and urgency in concern of the state of Black America. BPR is an event that is hosted to cultivate awareness about the histories, narratives and everyday experiences of African and African-descended people through the mediums of art, music, dance, spoken-word poetry and intellectual skits, all of which are produced and executed by students across campus. In general, BPR strives to ignite social activism and coalition building across identities at MSU. Not only is the rally an arena to spread consciousness, it is a celebration of blackness. Since the start of the BPR, Black figures from all over the country have participated in this event, including Dick Gregory, Sister Souljah, Dead Prez and Jeff Johnson.



*A Tower Guard student reads to a blind student, 1956.*

## Tower Guard and May Morning Sing

Michigan State has always strived to be a place that is accessible to all. One example of this commitment is Tower Guard, originally founded in 1934 by May Shaw, wife of MSU president Robert Shaw as an all-female honors society. In 1977, membership was opened up to include high achieving male students as well. Their original goal was primarily to serve the needs of visually impaired students. Today, the organization is paired closely with the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD) to help ensure that all students have an opportunity to be successful at Michigan State. Membership to this prestigious group is by invitation only and is extended to those who are in the top five percent of the freshman class each year. The students in Tower Guard are some of the best and brightest that Michigan State has to offer, each of them giving significant volunteer

hours with the RCPD. Students learn they have been inducted into Tower Guard each year at an event called May Morning Sing, which dates back to 1929 and is steeped in rich tradition. During the ceremony, students hear speeches from RCPD representatives, faculty members and university officials, all highlighting the important role the club plays within MSU. After the speeches and some singing, the students are ready to carry the torch of Tower Guard for the upcoming year.



# Traditions No Longer Practiced

## *Class Rivalries*

To say that class rivalries used to be intense would be an understatement. Constant brawling was common on the Michigan Agricultural College grounds in the early years. The freshmen-sophomore rivalry was widely viewed as the most aggressive. As the classes grew in size and tensions became too high, the administration organized events to provide a positive release for all the spirit. Tug-of-wars over the Red Cedar, canoe races, flag-pole rushes and even capture the flag were among the events organized. In later years, class presidents participated in a “sit out” in the trees near the Union, where they literally sat in a tree waiting for the others to jump out first. There was also a phase when freshmen men wore beanies until the year-end bonfire when they could be burned. Freshmen beanies had a short lifespan; after World War II the freshmen men felt they had done their fair share to prove their worth and stopped wearing them.

## *Concerts at the Band Shell*

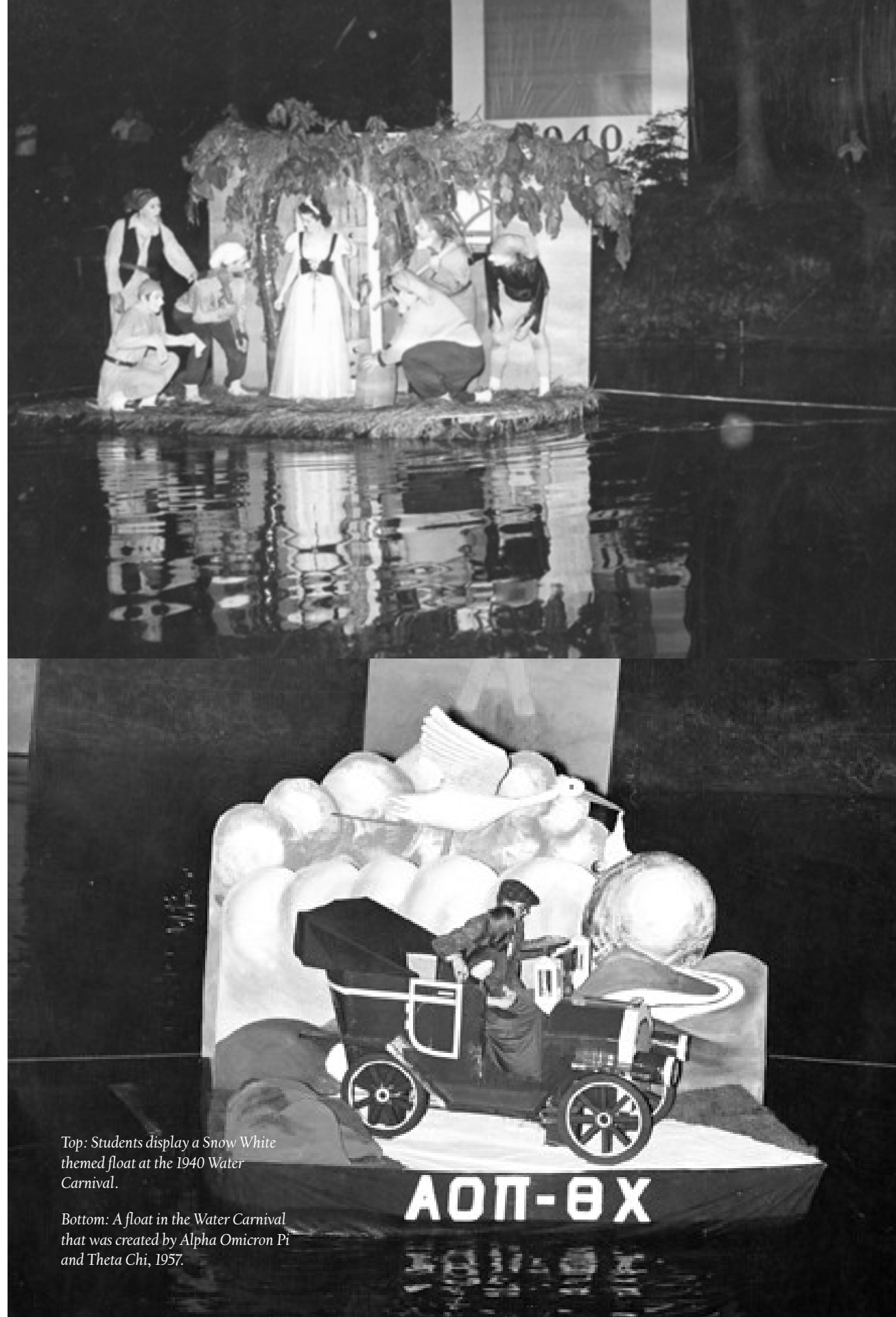
In years past, there was a glorious art deco band shell where Bessey Hall and its accompanying parking structure now stand. An ambitious gift partially funded by the Class of 1937, the band shell was a source of entertainment for years, featuring concerts, pep rallies and even commencements. Fraternities serenaded and bands of all types performed there. With student enrollment increasing exponentially, demand for classrooms and parking required that the band shell be removed in 1960. As you walk along the Red Cedar, don't forget the many Spartans before you who performed and participated in numerous events at this site.

## Wonders Showcase Talent & Fashion Show

Beginning in 1975, the Wonders Hall Black Caucus sponsored and organized an annual fashion show which continued until the late 1980s. Students would ask local clothing retailers to donate garments to wear in the show. A theme was chosen, students modeled clothing to the latest R&B music and talented singers and bands performed. Three shows would take place throughout the weekend. “Showcase” was a main event to attend during the winter quarter and would sell out every year. A similar type of show produced by the Akers Hall Black Caucus called Ebony Reflections also occurred on campus during this time.

## Office of Black Affairs Picnic

The MSU Office of Black Affairs sponsored an annual picnic at the end of spring quarter at Patriarch Park in East Lansing. Students from Michigan State and other Michigan universities would fill the park to celebrate the end of the school year. Members of the Greek fraternities and sororities would be present and would perform impromptu step shows.



Top: Students display a Snow White themed float at the 1940 Water Carnival.

Bottom: A float in the Water Carnival that was created by Alpha Omicron Pi and Theta Chi, 1957.

## Water Carnival

The Water Carnival was a year-end event when student organizations built floats around a theme and sent them down the Red Cedar River. Originally started as decorating canoes, it grew into a three-day event including lights, music and narration. Hours of work were put into the student floats, making them a point of pride for many students. The event began in 1923 and died out in 1969, but was revived in 2005 in celebration of MSU’s 150th Anniversary.

## Senior Ox Roast

As graduation approached and seniors began to get nostalgic about their time on campus, the MSC Class of 1908 decided an ox roast was in order to gather with friends, heal the wounds of class conflicts and celebrate Spartan triumphs. As class sizes grew over the years, it became harder to maintain the camaraderie once enjoyed by the seniors and the tradition slowly died off.





*A couple dances at a 1958 Michigan State University dance.*

## J-Hop

In the words of former Spartans, the 1942 yearbook defines the J-Hop as “five hours and fifty minutes of fun and frolic, flowing formals and trim ties and tails.” The J-Hop was an annual dance that began in 1888. It was a chance for beautiful gowns and full suits, the classiest event of the year. No matter the war-time climate, global happenings or university transitions, the J-Hop continued. The last dance was held in 1963, but its memory still lives on today in the halls of the auditorium.

## Lambda Chi Junior 500 Race

Inspired by the Indianapolis 500, the Lambda Chi Junior 500 was a race between push carts crafted by men’s dorms, fraternities and co-ops. Teams raced 1.1 miles along West Circle Drive. The event included live bands, the crowning of a Junior 500 queen and a party. It eventually grew to become the largest Greek-sponsored event in the country before it died out in the early 1970s after a run of nearly 25 years.



*The 1953 winners of the Lambda Chi Alpha Junior 500 for the second consecutive year, members of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and their coed sponsor, Audrey (Gatewood) Cross. They obtained the track record with a time of 3:03.*

## Friday Step Shows

Pledges of the Black fraternities and sororities would perform step routines outdoors on Fridays at noon at South Kedzie during the spring quarter. Most Greek organizations call this “Rush,” while the multicultural Greek organizations call it “being on Line.” Many students would gather to watch to the show as the pledges would stand at military attention before they performed. This event was so popular that students would plan their spring classes around the time so they could attend.

## Graduation Traditions

In years past, a variety of traditions surrounded graduation, primarily for women. Morrill Hall, originally called “The Women’s Building,” had swings outside its doors and on graduation day, senior women would swing in celebration. After that tradition ended, the marching band would parade around campus collecting graduating seniors and walking them to Fairchild Theatre one last time as a class. “Lantern Night” was another graduation tradition involving senior and junior women. The seniors would don their caps and gowns and line the winding paths of campus with lanterns in hand, then pass them down to the juniors as a gesture of acceptance and good luck.

Outdoor Homecoming display of William and Mary, 1950



## Gatherings at MSU for the Black Community

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Black Caucus planned many weekend parties on campus in the residence halls. They charged a small admission (as low as \$0.25), and a D.J. would play the latest R&B music. These parties were instrumental in the livelihood of the Black community on campus. In addition to the dorm parties, the Greek fraternities would hold big parties at the beginning of each quarter called “Icebreakers” at the IM or at Dem Hall. Omega Psi Phi would plan the fall party, Kappa Alpha Psi the winter and Alpha Phi Alpha the spring party. Local night spots were also a tradition for the Black students during the 1970s and 1980s. The basement of Dooley’s (now called Harper’s) was reserved for R&B music on Sunday nights and on Fridays and Saturdays, the Bus Stop (later called the Outer Limits) was the hot spot to see and be seen.

## Homecoming Displays

Homecoming has always been, and will always be, a time of great pride. Spartans of the 1930s began decorating their residence halls, fraternities and sororities to match the Homecoming theme. Awards were given to the most creative displays. From posters in windows to 20-foot displays that encompassed doorways and porches, Spartans always found a creative way to represent their pride. It’s unclear as to why this tradition fell by the wayside, although now these same groups build floats that are part of the annual Homecoming Parade.

## College Bell

Can’t wake up for class if your alarm doesn’t go off, right? The college bell was a large bell that served a critical function for years on campus, waking up students and faculty for class. Originally it rang out from a location between College Hall and Williams Hall, eventually being moved to Williams Hall. Occasionally in the winter, student pranksters would stuff the bell with snow or fill it with water at night so that it would freeze and fail to wake people up, delaying the “start” of class.



# Bucket List Items

While not yet having reached tradition status, there are several other happenings that define the MSU student experience. Students are encouraged to check these items off their bucket list during their time on campus.

## *Participating in Fall Welcome*

Fall Welcome celebrates students' return to campus. It traditionally included events like Fall Convocation, College Colloquium, Greek Fall Welcome, Moonlight Madness, U-Fest, Spartan Re-mix and Spartan Spectacular. Fall Welcome has evolved over the years; when the campus transitioned to a remote learning format due to COVID-19 in Fall 2020, Fall Welcome programming included virtual editions of events like Spartan Bingo, Sparty Smart Trivia, Spartan Scavenger Hunt, Spartan Virtual Dance Party and FemFest.

## *Volunteering for a Spartan Day of Service*

The MSU Global Day of Service was established in 2013 and has grown into a year-long initiative involving students, alumni, faculty, staff and friends of the university. Students volunteer for numerous service projects, and alumni can post projects or volunteer through their local alumni club. These efforts culminate each April on the Global Day of Service, an annual event demonstrating the amount of good that can be done in a single day. Projects range from planting trees to serving meals. Since 2013, more than 12,000 Spartans have given more than 57,000 hours of service (valued at \$1.375 million) to their communities through this effort. For more, visit [serve.msu.edu](https://serve.msu.edu) or [communityengagedlearning.msu.edu](https://communityengagedlearning.msu.edu).

[Learn more >](#)

## Tailgating on Game Day

Throughout the crisp Saturday mornings of fall, crowds of green and white bearing loads of food descend upon campus in anticipation of gridiron matchups at Spartan Stadium. Make sure to wander about campus on these tailgating Saturdays, whether it's to catch a Spartan Marching Band performance, see the team walk to the stadium from the Kellogg Center or just to get hyped up for game time.

## Attending Football, Hockey and Basketball Games

A huge part of going to a Big Ten school is the outstanding athletic programs. Although Michigan State has various opportunities for student involvement, student sections at athletic events are an unparalleled experience. If you're lucky, you may even see worlds collide like when Coach Izzo sat among the football student section after a weather evacuation. Get all the latest info at [msuspartans.com](http://msuspartans.com).



*Earvin "Magic" Johnson dribbles the ball in a Michigan State University vs. Kentucky basketball game, 1978.*

## Watching the Football Team Walk Over to the Stadium

Sparty and the Spartan football team - what else does one need on game day? For home games, the football team walks past the Spartan statue on their way to the stadium from the Kellogg Center about two hours before kickoff. Serenaded by the Spartan Marching Band, the team walks past the statue and leaves pennies at its base for good luck.

## Participating in the Izzone Campout

Want to be a part of an insanely dedicated student group that truly bleeds green and white? Look no further than the Izzone, our enthusiastic legion of basketball fans. Each year the Izzone Campout brings out the best in Spartan basketball fans with an all-night camping extravaganza for all members of the Izzone. Enjoy free food, sweet giveaways and an appearance by the coach and the team. Grab your friends, pick up the camping tent from home and get excited for the Izzone. Memberships are on sale each fall through the Spartan Ticket Office. For more information, visit [msuspartans.com/studentsections](https://msuspartans.com/studentsections).

**[View the 2018 Izzone Campout](#)**

## Participating in the Senior Class Campaign

Dating back to 1873, graduating seniors have attempted to “pay it forward” by supporting future Spartans and leaving their mark on campus through class gifts. Starting with “The Rock” in 1873, gifts have included the band shell (1937), “smokers’ lounge” in the MSU Union (1956), flag poles for the Administration Building (1982), the Library fountains (1983) and donations to the Sparty Mascot Program (2012). Other class gifts have been more eclectic; the class of 1886 donated a tree to replace one that had been taken by tornado damage, and the class of 1996 gave pencil sharpeners for campus buildings. Now students have an opportunity to support whatever part of the Spartan experience is meaningful to them as part of the Senior Class Campaign. Whatever your passion, there is opportunity for you to pay it forward to the next generation of MSU students. By giving at least \$50 within your senior year, you earn a philanthropy cord to wear during graduation. The green and white cord shows your commitment to and support of MSU. For more information, visit [givingto.msu.edu](https://givingto.msu.edu).

## Skating at Munn

Standing between Spartan Stadium and the Breslin Center, Munn Ice Arena is a staple of the MSU campus. Named after historic football coach, Clarence “Biggie” Munn, it is the home of the Spartan Hockey team. Come early October, Munn is booming with energy, for the hockey season brings great liveliness and spirit. Numerous renowned Spartan hockey players have skated in Munn, from Justin Abdlekader to Ryan Miller. Throughout the semester, open skate gives students a chance to skate on the legendary ice as many Spartans have before them. Whether you go with a big group of friends or a Friday night date, Munn is a great place to hang out, have fun and feel the Spartan tradition. For more information, visit [munnicearena.com](https://munnicearena.com).

## Attending Michigan State Madness

Spartan basketball kicks off its season each year with Michigan State Madness, a community event that fills Breslin Center with fans. See Coaches Izzo and Merchant make some really unusual entrances, gather autographs from the coaches and players, collect awesome giveaways and see the first scrimmages of the year. It’s a great nighttime event that gets campus hyped up for the upcoming basketball season.

**[View a recap of the 2019 Michigan State Madness](#)**





*A female student lays on her stomach beside the Red Cedar River as she reaches out her arm to feed the hungry ducks on the rocks nearby, 1971.*

## Spending Time with the Ducks and Squirrels

From your first walk on campus, to the ones you'll take as an MSU alumnus, you can't help but fall in love with campus' natural beauty. We share our 5,200 acres with more than just students and alumni, including large populations of ducks and squirrels. Our squirrels are friendly creatures, always ready for a photo opportunity, and are so essential to the campus setting that the university even has an MSU Squirrel Watching Club. Teeming along the Red Cedar, whether they're swimming or strolling around, ducks occupy the rapids across from the Hannah Administration Building. On both ice-melting days of spring and sunny days of summer, the ducks are always ready for company.

## Participating on an Intramural Sports Team

Need a competitive outlet? Intramural (IM) sports teams are a great opportunity. It's as simple as forming your own teams with friends, club members or your floor members and picking a sport. Recreational Sports and Fitness Services offers teams for a wide variety of sports including basketball, indoor and outdoor soccer, volleyball, softball, baseball, football, tennis and inner tube water polo. Both competitive and non competitive teams are available to accommodate all levels of skill. Let the crazy team naming commence!

Visit [recsports.msu.edu](https://recsports.msu.edu) for more information.

## Participating in Relay for Life

Take over the Breslin Center and fight cancer! Michigan State's Relay for Life is a great event that happens each spring through the American Cancer Society and Spartans Fighting Cancer, bringing together Greek Life and campus organizations to raise thousands of dollars for cancer research. The event runs from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., and is an all-night extravaganza filled with activities including dodgeball tournaments and candle-lit walks. You can form your own team, join one that already exists or simply stop by the event.

*Four performers on stage for a demonstration of "modern theater," 1967.*

## Seeing a Performance at the Wharton Center

Named for former MSU president Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. and his wife Delores, the Wharton Center stands as an outlet for the performing arts and education. The center was created with the idea that art is a universal language that can bring all types of people together, and that creativity can be understood across any culture, viewpoint, race or perspective. Numerous shows are performed at the Wharton Center throughout the year, from Broadway performances to campus band concerts. Its stage has presented a diverse set of performers, including celebrities, politicians, students and educators. For more information, visit [whartoncenter.com](https://whartoncenter.com).





Top: Students playing pool at the pool tables in the Union Building, 1949.

Bottom: Students gathering at the Union Grill, 1955.

## Visiting the MSU Union

Thank you Spartan classes of 1915 and 1923! Without your \$5 donations and manual labor, the MSU Union that stands today would not have been possible. Conceived in 1905 as an idea for a Memorial Union Building to commemorate our soldiers, the Union officially opened its doors in 1925 and quickly became the epicenter of campus. When it first opened, the Union was full of private offices, a barber shop, beauty salon, smoking room, billiards room (for men only) and a two-story ballroom. Major renovations occurred in 1948, giving the Union a travel office, bowling alley, ping pong room and the new Union Grill (the roots of the food court we have today). As the university changed its name, the Union did as well, officially becoming the MSU Union in 1955. With each new wave of Spartans and changing wants and needs, the Union will change and adapt along with them. Now with the MSU Dairy Store, full food court, Sparty's Convenience Store, Spartan Spirit Shop and a media center, there is a mixture of the very old and very new. No matter what changes at the university and in the world, the MSU Union will always be there to support any and all Spartans. For more information, visit [union.msu.edu](http://union.msu.edu).

## Visiting the Alumni Memorial Chapel

For the first several decades of its existence, the university's students were required to attend chapel, with the original chapel located on the first floor of College Hall until it collapsed in 1918. In 1946, President John Hannah announced a fundraising effort to build a Memorial Center, including a chapel and an international center. After three years, plans were modified to construct the chapel and place the international center on hold due to the amount of money that had been raised. The Alumni Memorial Chapel, located just south of Snyder-Phillips Hall, was dedicated on June 7, 1952. Its construction honors some 6,800 alumni who defended our nation in various wars and serves as a tribute to the several hundred who failed to return to their alma mater. For more information, watch this [Alumni Memorial Chapel video](#).

## Dining on Combo-X-Change and at the Eat at State Food Truck

Living on campus has many great advantages, including combos. Monday through Friday, on-campus students with meal plans can get to-go meals at a number of campus locations including any Sparty's, select restaurants at the MSU Union and International Center, and the Eat at State ON-THE-GO food truck. If you've got a good amount of time between classes and want a fresh lunch or dinner, the Eat at State food truck is worth the wait. The truck, in its green and white glory, parks at different campus locations and makes fresh, delicious food. With Eat at State, you'll never go hungry, no matter how much you're running between classes.

Get more info at [eatatstate.com](http://eatatstate.com).

## Running a Campus 5K

3.1 miles, 5 kilometers, 16,404 feet – however you want to look at it, there is always a 5K run happening on campus. Between the clubs and departments on campus and in the greater Lansing area, there is always an opportunity to support a great cause and get a cool t-shirt. Lace up your shoes and get out there!

## Celebrating Graduation at Cowles House

The end of each semester brings graduation, a day every Spartan works hard to make a reality. To commemorate this accomplishment, Student Affairs and Services and the MSU Alumni Office host the Graduate Reception at Cowles House for all graduating seniors. This is a chance to speak with the president, your college dean and other administrators, and enjoy delicious food, giveaways and an appearance from Sparty. Although you may be leaving your Spartan home, there couldn't be a better farewell. Take advantage of this great opportunity. Learn more at [alumni.msu.edu](http://alumni.msu.edu).







# *Fraternity and Sorority Life at MSU*

Since 1872, Michigan State University's fraternity and sorority community has been a thriving part of campus life. Joining a fraternity or sorority brings lifelong relationships, opportunities for personal and career growth and a national network of alumni across the globe.

For complete information and a full list of chapters, activities and council members, visit [greeklife.msu.edu](http://greeklife.msu.edu).

## *Interfraternity Council*

A fraternity is a group of men who dedicate themselves to service, leadership, academics and brotherhood. Above all, brotherhood in each of these fraternities is lifelong; you will secure a place on campus which you can return to many years later with brothers from years past.

Activities range from sports to service to academic-oriented experiences. Many fraternities host social events for their members, offer scholarships to members deserving of academic recognition, plan large trips for their members and promote leadership development through various programs and opportunities. Each fraternity is different, focusing on their core beliefs and what their members wish to achieve in their time at the university.

## *Multicultural Greek Council*

The Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) at Michigan State is a unique governing body that represents Latinx, Asian, Progressive and Multicultural/Multiethnic Greek-letter organizations on campus. MGC organizations are smaller in membership size, which allows for a close-knit group of members. MGC fraternities and sororities are truly diverse, representing an immense number of cultural backgrounds, nationalities and ethnicities. Culture and history are central to these organizations. Members participate in service projects and programs that are not only pertinent to their individual group, but also connect them to the Michigan State and East Lansing communities.

## National Pan-Hellenic Council

The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) is composed of some of the largest historically African American Greek-letter organizations. All the “Divine Nine” NPHC organizations are represented on Michigan State’s campus. Internationally, NPHC organizations have a membership of over 1.5 million members. NPHC organizations provide members with opportunities for strong brotherhood and sisterhood. These fraternities and sororities deeply respect and place important emphasis on the cultural and historical context of their organizations. NPHC organizations stress the value of philanthropy by actively engaging their members in service projects in the East Lansing area. NPHC fraternities and sororities also hold academics and personal growth in high regard, holding scholarship balls and educational programming throughout the school year. Being a member of the “Divine Nine” is a strong tradition for African American students at MSU.

These organizations include:

Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Zeta Chapter, established 1954

Delta Sigma Theta, Epsilon Epsilon Chapter, established 1961

Sigma Gamma Rho, Gamma Omega Chapter, established 1968

Zeta Phi Beta, Phi Gamma Chapter, established 1969

Alpha Phi Alpha, Gamma Tau Chapter, established in 1948 and later the Zeta Delta Chapter, established 1998

Iota Phi Theta, Gamma Mu Chapter, established 1998

Kappa Alpha Psi, Delta Pi Chapter, established 1956

Omega Psi Phi, Sigma Chapter, established 1961

Phi Beta Sigma, Delta Kappa Chapter, established 1967

## Panhellenic Council

The mission of the Panhellenic Council member sororities at Michigan State is to commit to ensuring student success, while celebrating friendship, leadership, scholarship, service and social advancements. Panhellenic Council exists to unite various members across campus, as well as recognize and appreciate the diversity of its member organizations.

## National Pan-Hellenic Council Stroll Off

The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) Stroll Off is an annual fall event consisting of each sorority and fraternity in the council competing to win the title of Stroll Off winners! Each of the NPHC organizations are allotted a time slot to perform through strolling and stepping. Through this event, NPHC organizations showcase their members and engage in some friendly competition.

## National Pan-Hellenic Council Yard Show

The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) Yard Show is an annual fall welcome event that involves each sorority and fraternity under the NPHC. Each of the nine organizations is allotted a time slot to showcase their chapter’s history through steps, strolls, chants and dancing. This event allows NPHC organizations to introduce themselves to the MSU community and incoming students.



*Members of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority pose for the 1955 Wolverine. Alpha Kappa Alpha was the first sorority for African American women on the MSU campus. The sorority was formed on Feb. 3, 1954, and this is either the charter group or first group after.*

## Greek Week

Every spring, fraternities and sororities collaborate to form Greek Week teams. Each team chooses a non-profit organization to sponsor then competes against one another in various activities such as fundraising, Greek Day of Service, Greek Games and more.

Greek Week is a major highlight for Greek Life at Michigan State. Members make a positive impact on many different philanthropic organizations while creating lasting memories and interacting with more people in the Greek Community. In 2019, more than \$93,000 was raised for local, national and international charities.

## Annual Awards Gala

The Annual Awards Gala is an end-of-the-year celebration and awards banquet hosted by the Panhellenic and Interfraternity Councils. This is a time for Panhellenic and Interfraternity Council chapters to celebrate their accomplishments and recognize individuals in their community who have gone above and beyond to represent Fraternity & Sorority Life in the best way possible. The Awards Gala also serves as the public installation of the incoming Panhellenic and Interfraternity Council Executive Officers.

## Safe Halloween

Safe Halloween is an annual event in which fraternity and sorority chapters host a “street carnival” of Halloween activities for area children to enjoy. The purpose of Safe Halloween is to provide a safe alternative to trick-or-treating for the children of East Lansing’s community. M.A.C. and surrounding streets are closed off for the event, inviting children to enjoy haunted houses and festive games at each sorority house. In the streets, a D.J. serenades the Greek community and trick-or-treaters alike as they can choose to bounce on the moonwalk or carouse the activities sponsored by chapter houses. Safe Halloween provides a means for chapters to participate together in a philanthropy project, and to facilitate positive public perceptions of the Greek community.

## **MSU SHADOWS** (ALMA MATER)

*MSU, we love thy shadows  
When twilight silence falls,  
Flushing deep and softly paling  
O'er ivy covered halls;  
Beneath the pines we'll gather  
To give our faith so true,  
Sing our love for Alma Mater  
And thy praises, MSU.*

*When from these scenes we wander  
And twilight shadows fade,  
Our mem'ry still will linger  
Where light and shadows played;  
In the evening oft we'll gather  
And pledge our faith anew,  
Sing our love for Alma Mater  
And thy praises, MSU.*

[Learn more >](#)

**ADOPTED:**  
1927

**COMPOSED:**  
*Bernard Traynor*

**CURRENT ARRANGEMENT:**  
*Leonard Falcone*

## VICTORY FOR MSU

The fight song holds a special place in the hearts of Spartans. Stored within its notes are all of the great lifelong memories one makes through Michigan State. Every Spartan associates the song with something special and personal.

The fight song was originally composed in 1915 by Francis Irving (F.I.) Lankey, who cowrote the lyrics with his roommate Arthur Sayles. At the time Lankey was a yell leader (now called a cheerleader) and he was tired of not having a proper song to play after a football victory. Instead, MSU would play the fight song of the team we just beat. In true Spartan spirit, he saw an opportunity to solve a problem and went to work. Lankey's "Fight Song" gained

popularity with the student body and Michigan State finally had a song to call its own.

The lyrics of the fight song evolved as Michigan Agricultural College changed to Michigan State College and then to Michigan State University, but the arrangement that we know and love today was written by Leonard Falcone, long-time director of the Spartan Marching Band. Falcone was instrumental in many of the traditions the band still holds, but his biggest impact was penning the version of the fight song that is lovingly called "Falcone Fight" by the Spartan Marching Band. Although popularly known as the "MAC/MSC/MSU Fight Song," it was renamed "Victory for MSU" as part of its 100th anniversary in 2015. The new title represents Michigan State University's victories as a leader and world changer in addition to being part of the song's lyrics.

"Victory for MSU" is a song that you will cherish for the rest of your life. If you don't have it memorized yet, don't worry – you will by the end of your first football game!

### COMPOSED IN:

1915

### WRITTEN BY:

Francis Irving (F.I.)  
Lankey and Arthur Sayles

### RENAMED IN:

2015



*On the banks of the Red Cedar  
Is a school that's known to all;  
Its specialty is winning,  
And those Spartans play good ball;  
Spartan teams are never beaten,  
All through the game they fight;  
Fight for the only colors,  
Green and White.  
Go right thru' for MSU,  
Watch the points keep growing.  
Spartan teams are bound to win,  
They're fighting with a vim.  
RAH! RAH! RAH!  
See their team is weakening,  
We're going to win this game.  
Fight! Fight! Rah! Team, Fight!  
Victory for MSU.*



*The first Sparty mascot created in 1955 with papier-mâché by the Theta Xi fraternity brothers Donald Pais, Kenneth Roberts and Don Bauer.*

## HISTORY OF SPARTY

Michigan State University's first mascot appeared in 1955 and was a papier-mâché Spartan head made by Theta Xi fraternity brothers Donald Pais, Kenneth Roberts and Don Bauer. The head was six feet tall and weighed more than 60 pounds. Fraternity brother Bill Clithero was a perfect fit for the larger than life mascot costume. This Sparty debuted at a Jenison Field House pep rally before the Notre Dame football game.

By the 1956 Rose Bowl Game, the papier-mâché head had been replaced by a fiberglass version that was 30 pounds lighter. In 1960, the MSU Student Government assumed responsibility for the head. Records from that time to 1981 provide no information on who portrayed Sparty or how many years the fiberglass head was used at sporting events.

In 1985, MSU Alumni Association Executive Director Chuck Webb attended an alumni directors' conference. There, he saw a "Bucky Badger" table tent produced by the University



*New Sparty mascot at a football game in 1989.*

of Wisconsin. Webb brought a sample back to East Lansing and asked Alumni Association Graphic Designer Dave Giordan to create a Spartan version. Giordan was to draw a muscular Sparty in full body armor. Based on this design, Sparty table tents were produced for use at alumni events and became a treasured keepsake.

Early in 1989, a group came together to design and revamp the Sparty mascot. The group conducted research on MSU's mission, community and traditions. The result was an "approachable, fierce yet kind, man for all seasons" mascot. Sparty would reflect MSU's strength and character. To introduce MSU's new mascot, six billboards were positioned around East Lansing announcing his Spartan Stadium debut on Sept. 16, 1989. Since the current

mascot was introduced in 1989, the MSU Alumni Office (formally MSU Alumni Association) has had the honor of overseeing the Sparty Mascot Program.

Sparty currently makes more than 500 appearances per year at academic and athletic events, weddings, graduations, alumni functions and charity events. He has had the honor of being voted "Buffest Mascot" by Muscle and Fitness Magazine. Sparty has also been crowned the national champion mascot three times by the Universal Cheer Association, and participates in events across the country including the NCAA Hall of Champions: Mascot Mania and the Capital One Mascot Challenge.

View Sparty's first-ever game appearance on our YouTube channel [here](#) >



## WITH GRATITUDE

We appreciate the multitude of people without whom this book would not have been possible. Your memories and traditions are what makes MSU a special place.

*MSU students and alumni*

*MSU Alumni Office*

*MSU Black Alumni Association*

*Office for International Students  
and Scholars*

*Student Life*

*University Archives and  
Historical Collections*

Looking for more information on MSU's history and traditions? "Tales from the Archives", published by [University Archives and Historical Collections](#), is [available for purchase](#) at [shop.msu.edu](https://shop.msu.edu).



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MSU Alumni  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY