A Corner of MSU through the Ages: The Archaeology of the Toolan Family Homestead
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This poster presents research conducted by the Campus Archaeology Program (CAP) on Michigan State University’s campus at the corner of Shaw Lane and Hagadorn Road, the location of the historic Toolan family homestead. Initial archaeological field investigations were conducted during the 2018 field season, followed by an archaeological field school in 2019. The four boxes below discuss findings from archival research and archaeological excavations of the site. Through this research, we have endeavoured to contextualize the archaeological remains using historical documents. The timeline along the bottom of the poster provides an overview of MSU’s history.

1860s-1870s: Settling Down
Map from 1857 showing what the MSU campus looked like the day it opened. The future location of the Toolan homestead is currently unhindered (Launer, 1978). Used with permission of MSU Archives and Historical Collections.

1870s-1900s: Family Life
Census records from 1880 show the whole Toolan family living on the farm (Inhabitants of Meridian Township, 1880). Image courtesy of ancestry.com.

1900s-1930s: Moving Forward
Census records from 1920 show that only Peter Toolan Jr. and his sister Mary Rodgers are the only two people living on the land.

1930s-1940s: Tenant Occupation
Plat map from 1932 showing the dimensions of the Toolan property (Babich, 1934). Image courtesy of MSU Libraries.

1940s-1950s: Becoming MSU
Deed signing over the land from the Toolan family to the State Board of Agriculture, photo courtesy of MSU Land Management Office.

Bird’s-eye view of the 2019 field school excavation of the site, showing excavation units. Image courtesy of the MSU Campus Archaeology Program.

References:
- The above aerial image shows the Toolan homestead with Hagadorn Road located to the right, taken on October 12, 1956 (MSU). Image courtesy of CAP.
- Artifact: A 1937 Mercury Dome and a sherd of green petalware from a dish made by the Mt. Clemens Pottery Company that were found in association with each other (Trietsch, n.d.). Photo courtesy of CAP.

Acknowledgments:
- Michigan State University, MSU Land Management Office. MSU Archives and Historical Collections, MSU Campus Archaeology Program, MSU Infrastructure Planning and Facilities, MSU Libraries, Dr. Lynnette King, Dr. Stacey Camp, Jeff Burnett, Autumn Painter, and Jack Biggs.
- State Board of Agriculture, photo courtesy of MSU Land Management Office.
- 1946 - the Toolan family sells their land to MSU.
- 1955 - Construction of Holmes Hall.
- The above aerial image shows the Toolan homestead with Hagadorn Road located to the right, taken on October 12, 1956 (MSU). Image courtesy of CAP.

Conclusion:
Understanding MSU’s past is important to experiencing it in the present. Next time you are traveling south on Hagadorn and make the right turn onto Shaw you can reflect on the Toolan family living on that spot 150 years earlier. Hopefully learning about the site through its different stages of development will have facilitated a greater connection to space on campus.

MSU Timeline
- 1855: Michigan State College opens in East Lansing.
- 1870: Michigan Agricultural College becomes a Land Grant institution.
- 1900: Michigan State University.
- 1925: Michigan State University.
- 1955: Present day Michigan State University.

Settling Down
- The Toolan family owned land between Hagadorn Road and what is today Bogue Street since 1861. The family farmed it until the mid-1800s.
- Before arriving in East Lansing, Peter Toolan Sr. and Margaret Toolan lived in Ireland. They came to Michigan via Canada.
- Peter Toolan Jr. and his sister Mary Rodgers are the only two people living on the land.
- In 1880 Peter Sr., Margaret, William, John, and Peter Toolan Jr. are living on and farming the land.

Moving Forward
- Census records from 1920 show that only Peter Toolan Jr. and Mary Rodgers are living on the farm (U.S Census Bureau, 1920). Image courtesy of ancestry.com.

Tenant Occupation
- Plat map from 1932 showing the dimensions of the Toolan property (Babich, 1934). Image courtesy of MSU Libraries.
- In 1940 the Toolan family rents the land out the the Bush and Westrom families who live on and farm the land.

Acknowledgments:
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