



# Dusting off our Past: Campus Archaeology and Research Methods

Kristin Sewell and Dr. Lynne Goldstein, Department of Anthropology



## What is Campus Archaeology?

MSU students, faculty and the wider MSU community work together to learn about and protect MSU's cultural heritage, history, and the unique archaeological legacy we've inherited and hope to pass on to future generations. Almost all of the processes for completing an archaeological project— from designing a work plan and historical research to survey and excavation to reporting and public outreach— are completed by MSU undergraduate and graduate students, advancing their education in unique ways. The premier Land-Grant College, Michigan State University has a cultural heritage that exists not only in our rich traditions and academic values, but also beneath our feet, below the ground that we walk on every day.



Grandparent's University Field School 2010



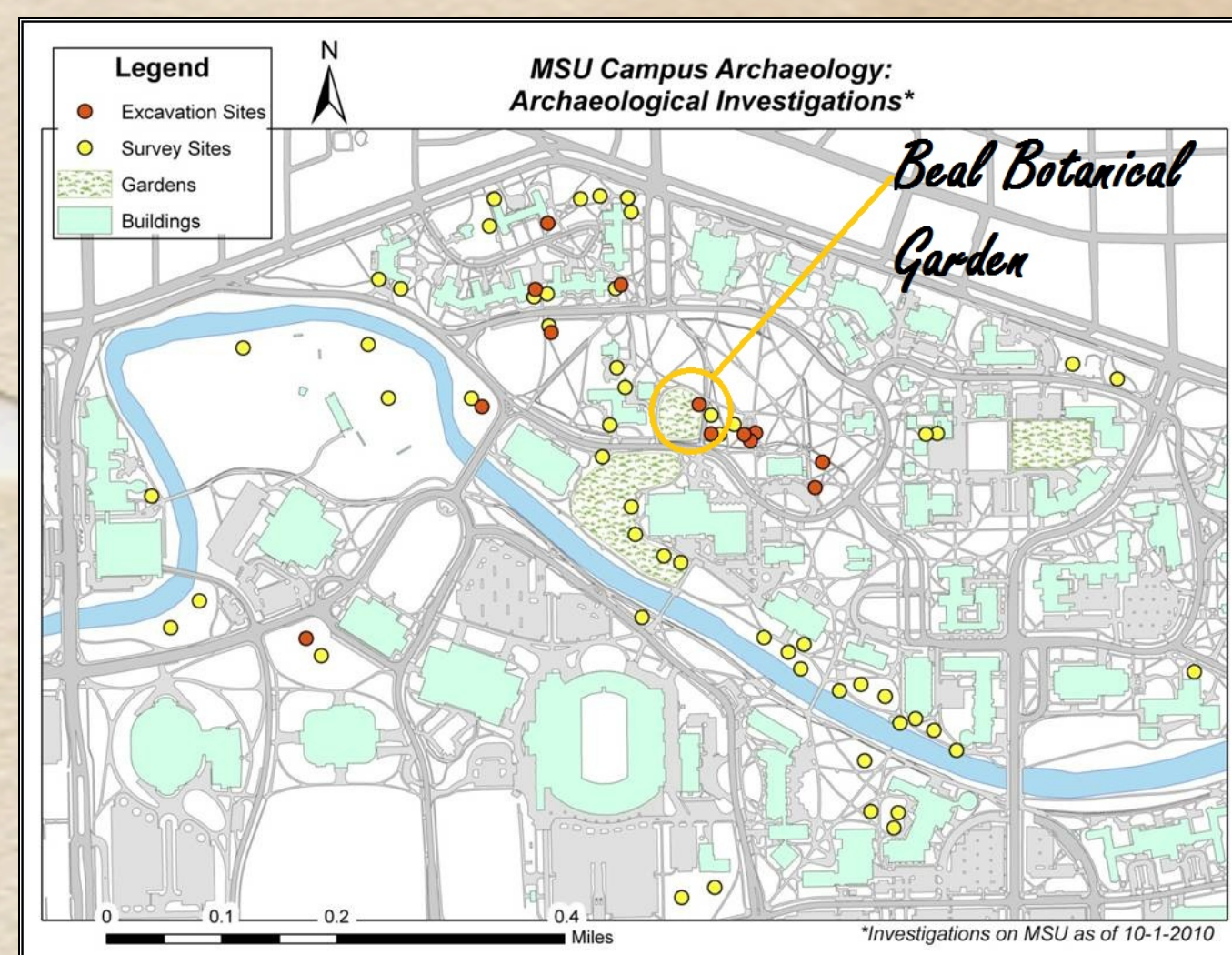
Mitigating archaeological impact near Laboratory Row



It's important to know where not to dig. This is Prof. Beal's seed experiment.



CAP Field School at the MSU Archive Field School 2011



Previous surveys and excavations Field school 2010 and 2011 locations shown

## Historical Archaeology and Campus Archaeology

Historical archaeology differs from other archaeology in that historical archaeologists benefit from the documentary record — when it exists. It has been a challenge for historical archaeologists to shed the “handmaiden to history” moniker given to them by British archaeologist Ivor Noël Hume over 40 years ago. For Campus Archaeology this means asking anthropological questions. When people think of landscapes, we often think only of the natural environment but landscapes also reflect the creative or destructive impact people have when they interact with nature. In the case presented here, we use the archaeological record and documentary records together to illuminate the past and help us better understand how the activities of higher learning may have affected the campus landscape.



Beal Botanical Garden excavations Field School 2011



Beal Botanical Garden excavations Field School 2010



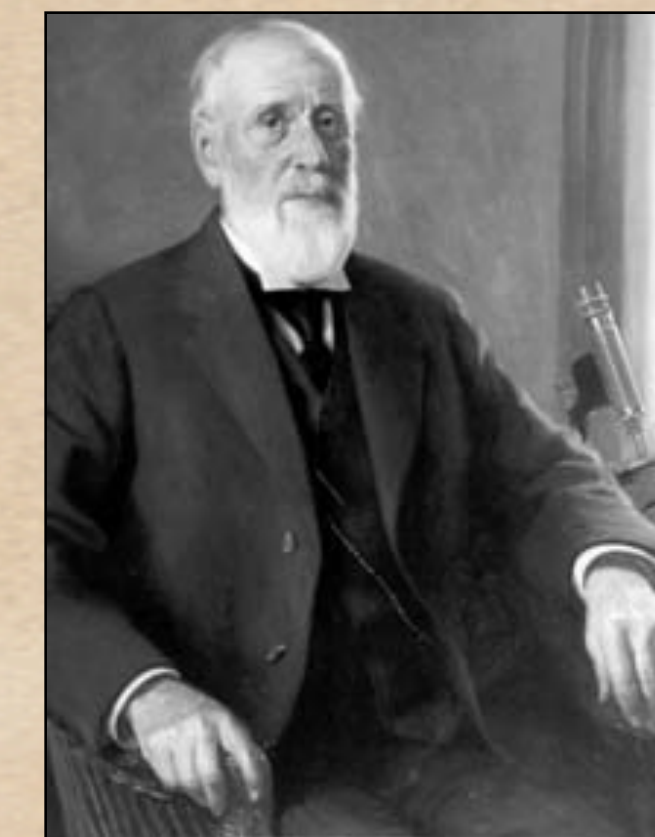
Excavations near Beal Botanical Garden revealed artifacts related to College Hall and laboratory activities on campus



Botanical and Bacteriological Lab Laboratory Row ca. 1904



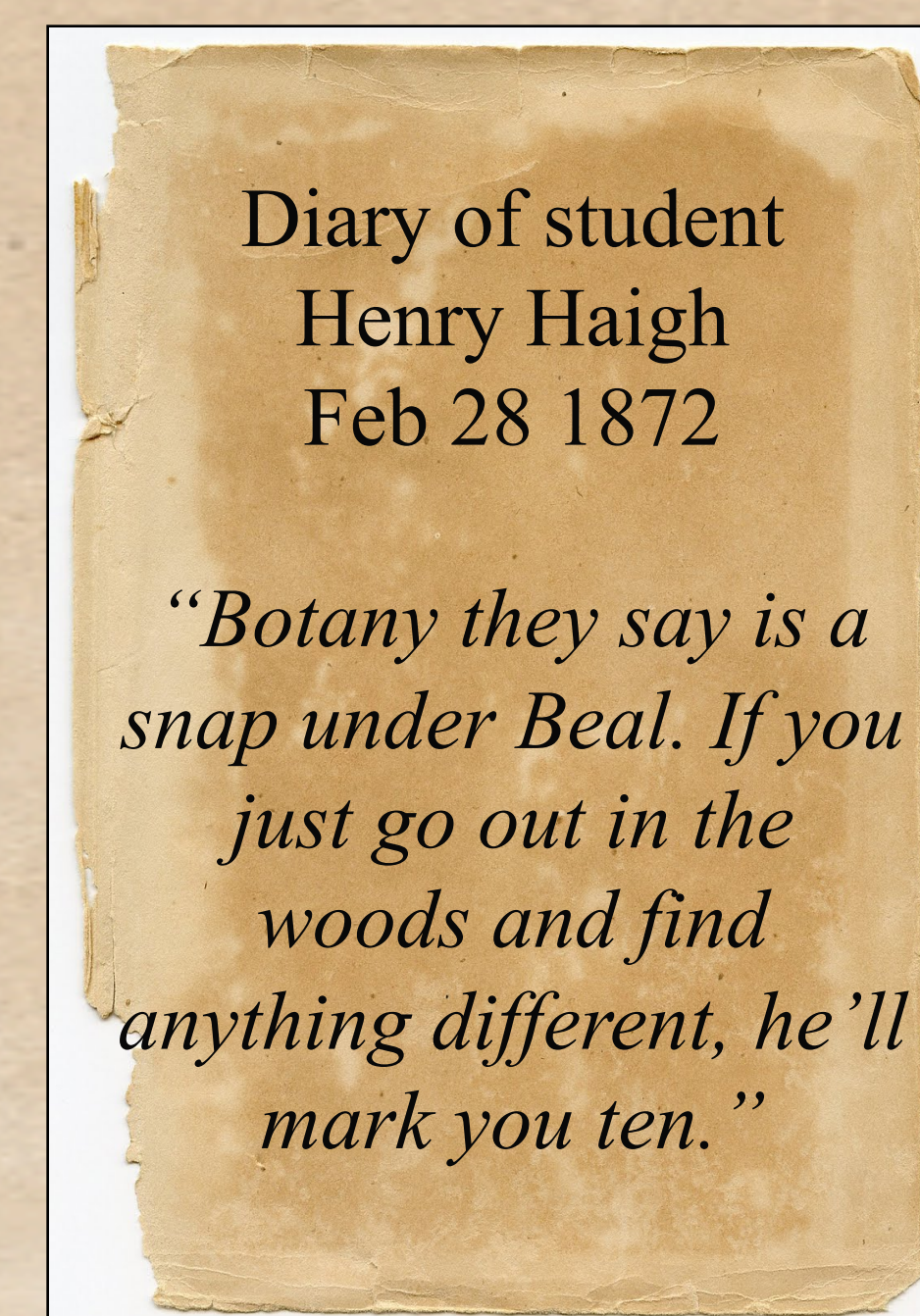
Beal Botanical Garden ca. 1900 Prof. Beal shown in foreground



Dr. W. J. Beal 1870-1910



Cinder path shown in hand-drawn Bird Nest Map ca. 1896



Diary of student Henry Haigh Feb 28 1872  
“Botany they say is a snap under Beal. If you just go out in the woods and find anything different, he'll mark you ten.”

## Campus Archaeology Research Methods

Archaeology happens as much in the dust as in the dirt. We begin our research in libraries and archives where we try to understand the documented history of our subjects. It is here that we begin to develop our research plans. Today, most archives are climate controlled repositories housing primary resources such as diaries, letters, photographs, and official documents. These are invaluable sources for archaeologists. Of course, our research does not end there. We also want to know what research has been conducted before us. For this, we look at records of the state archaeologist. Once we have the history of a location, we conduct pedestrian survey and testing of the areas we're interested in. We use these methods to make predictions about the archaeology below and it is only then that we set up our excavation units.



Cinder path discovered near Beal Botanical Garden



Lab-related artifacts found near Beal Botanical Garden