

# "Green From the Beginning": Documenting Sustainability Practices Through Time at MSU

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## CAMPUS ARCHAEOLOGY

The goals of the Campus Archaeology Program (CAP) are to protect archaeological resources and disseminate information on cultural heritage at Michigan State University. **Working with departments across the university to ensure proper mitigation and documentation of archaeological features, CAP is actively involved in the maintenance of the historical past on campus.** Through the program, undergraduate and graduate students participate in research design, excavation, archival work, and historical research. Engaged scholarship and community interaction is a focus of CAP, with staff members contributing to academic journals, presenting lectures on campus, and developing public outreach programs.

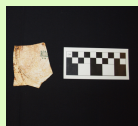
## SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

The MSU Office of Campus Sustainability explicitly situates the University's commitment to sustainable practices within a binary framework of history and community. CAP is in a unique position to enhance the efficacy of this message by providing time depth and context to the evolution of the sustainability concept. **We aim to present a history of MSU's "green" heritage by integrating archival materials and archaeological research to construct a temporally and culturally sensitive picture of how sustainable food and transportation practices have been implemented and experienced by the campus community.** This poster represents the first step in constructing this history. Further archival and archaeological research will build upon this basic framework.

## CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education defines sustainability as supporting "human and ecological health, social justice, secure livelihoods, and a better world for all generations" (aashe.org). We take a similarly broad view of the concept and adapt it further to account for the ways that attitudes toward food and transportation reflect the socioeconomic concerns of the specific periods in question. **For this project, we define sustainability as the capacity of the University to preserve and optimize food and transportation systems under changing socioeconomic conditions, contextualized through integrating historical perceptions of the urgency of environmental, economic, social, political, and health concerns.**

### The Early Years: 1855-1870



Dining refuse, such as this marked ceramic ware, help CAP archaeologists to accurately determine the age of sites.



Reusable dining wares, such as the cup pictured above, were standard for serving food and drink

•No commuters - All students lived and ate on campus

•Food was sourced locally - CAP reports from Saints' Rest indicate:

- Use of kitchen gardens
- Meat from campus stock and local butchers

•1860 - First substantial bridge over Red Cedar River

•1862 - Railroad connected campus directly to Downtown Lansing



Saints' Rest, MSU's first boarding hall, was built in 1856 and burned down in 1876.



Much of CAP's work has focused on reconstructing student life at Saints' Rest through archaeological excavations and archival research.



Ad for Chicago specialty meats, MAC Record, April 27, 1897 (above). Further archaeological work aimed at recovering and interpreting faunal remains (bovine humerus, below) can help archaeologists learn what types of local and specialty foods were consumed.



### Campus Growth: 1870-1900

•1879 - "Electric Railroad" (trolley) service becomes available, with a stop at what is now the Student Union

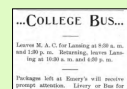
•First concrete walkways built

•MAC Cycling Club forms in response to advances in bicycle technology

•1883 - Dining Clubs formed, allowing students to pool boarding fees and collectively purchase/prepare food, some of which was purchased from college farms



CAP excavators have recovered many food containers, such as the milk bottle pictured above. Such artifacts help us quantify the amount of milk coming from private dairies versus campus sources.



Ad from 1897 MAC Record highlighting early mass transit.

### World War I: 1900-1925

•1906 - New stone road between campus and Lansing; development in East Lansing begins

•Dining Clubs continue, with at least some meat acquired from local (non-college) sources

•1909 - Expansion of dormitory system for housing and boarding students

•Extension work increases through this period; college outreach focused on gardening and food sustainability at the household level



Soda bottles (above) and other marked product containers help with quantification and sourcing of specialty food items.



Soldiers returning from war needed housing and education, and MSU worked to provide both. Future research will focus on how this increased enrollment affected campus food and transportation.



Campus officials actively promoted fuel conservation during wartime.

### Depression & WWII: 1925-1955

•Students struggled economically, with some renting inexpensive rooms off campus

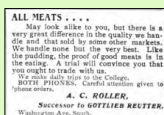
- Some "roomers" purchased meal tickets at \$5 (\$88 today) per week
- Others bought and prepared their own meals, and some were able to buy fresh, local foods for as little as \$2 (\$33 today) per week

•1936 - the University began to buy houses for student "Co-ops," so students could live, budget, and cook together

•University commitment to community-wide sustainability through expanded extension work



MSU faculty and administration encouraged victory gardening during both World Wars.



Ad from MAC Record, June 21, 1904. Butchers advertised regularly, suggesting that non-college food sources were important early on.



Ad from MAC Record, Jan. 27, 1903. Local enterprises sprouted up as a result of a growing student population.