

# FarmHouse Fraternity at Michigan State University

## **A Pictorial History**

Originally developed for presentation at the  
65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, March 2001

Mark E. Havitz, MI 77

**Part One of Nine: Our 19th Century Roots**

A common lament among people with respect to days past is that “you can’t go home again.” That sentiment is generally not true in its entirety because places rarely disappear. More troubling for many, however, is that the people move on and eventually pass away. Without the people, the places often aren’t the same. It is my hope that this history will allow you, at least in a small way to go home again and, in so doing, may inspire you to look forward to an even greater future. FarmHouse still feels like home to me. [Photos: Mark Havitz personal collection -- revisiting campus for the 1992 MSU-Ohio State football game. That we lost mattered little in the larger scheme of things.]



# Preface

In the Fall of 2000, Dan Schulz '92, chair of the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration asked me to do a history presentation for the March 2001 proceedings. He said I would have a hour and a half on the program. I knew that Dr. Peter McPherson '60, the standing Michigan State University President was also on that weekend's program and he was only given an hour! The task already appeared daunting. Although I agreed to do it, I was keenly aware that my presentation had the potential to be either pretty dry or pretty dramatic. Dramatic sounded a lot better! Achieving drama, however, would be challenging. After all, I didn't want to spend the whole time telling funny stories about my years in the House during the late 1970s and early 1980s. How could I do justice to 65 years of collective history? What about all of the men who came before me? What about those who had carried the torch since? How could I possibly summarize the experiences of over a thousand men who had lived the MSU FarmHouse experience? Suddenly, the hour and a half didn't seem very long.

## Preface, continued

Compounding my dilemma, I didn't want to talk only about FarmHouse. As I embarked on this project it did not seem appropriate to discuss our Fraternity's history in isolation. Indeed, the history of FarmHouse Fraternity at Michigan State University is intertwined with the incredible history and spatial beauty of our campus, the state of Michigan, and with FarmHouse chapters across North America and with the ongoing efforts of FarmHouse men across the globe; it extends nearly into space as one of our number has served as a test pilot with the US Air Force. I've tried to address that diversity in this story. Whenever a FarmHouse brother is introduced into this narrative, I've included his initiation date and, if not from Michigan State, his Chapter of initiation as well.

## Preface, continued

I am indebted to several sources which helped in compiling this story. First is a short existing history of MSU FarmHouse generally credited to C. Vernon Holmberg '36, which I and other members of the spring 1977 pledge class received as part of our pledge education class. Also important for more recent information are the 1985 and 1995 versions of the *FarmHouse Fraternity Alumni Directory* and my collection of *Spartan Scribes* and *Pearls & Rubies* which, for some reason, I began saving from the day that I pledged the House. Perhaps my service as Chapter Historian nurtured this interest and my favorite project in that capacity was the dinner time FarmHouse trivia questions that I posed to men just prior to desert. "Who were the seven founders?" I would ask. "Name at least ten campuses with FarmHouse chapters! Bonus points if you put them in order of chartering!" If I recall, Perry Hickey '76 usually won the end-of-term prize for most correct answers. "If the guys liked history then," I rationed, "perhaps they'll still like it now!" After all, we're all part of it!

## Preface, continued

With a few exceptions, when I introduce an individual MSU Chapter member into this narrative, I use an old photo taken from a FarmHouse composite rather than using a more contemporary photo. The originals in our Chapter's composite collection were donated to the MSU Library for permanent safe-keeping in the early 1980s. The Chapter, however, maintains a composite scrapbook that dates back from 1932 to present. For this project, I also accessed some *MSU Alumni Magazines* and made copious use of the 17 MSU yearbooks in my personal collection which date back as far as 1901. The 1955 "Centennial edition" was especially helpful. Three other sources included *Spartan Saga: A History of Michigan State Athletics*, *Through the Years: A Pictorial History of Greater Lansing 1847-1997* and the MSU website (<http://www.msu.edu>) which is the source for many of the current campus photos. Thanks to Bob Bao and Tim Potter of the MSU Alumni Association as well as to Kate Harper, Editor of the Red Cedar Log for granting copyright permissions,. I apologize for the uneven quality of some of the photos. Many of the individual shots, especially, blurred a bit when lifted from the full composite. Scans of yearbook photos sometimes include the crease between pages. Hopefully, at some point in the future, I can edit some of them out.

## Preface, continued

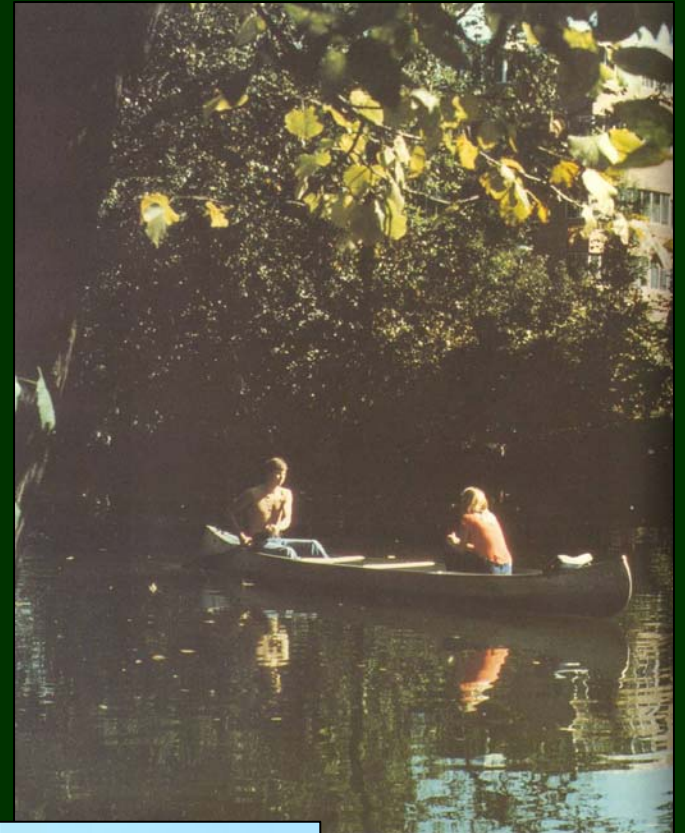
At this point I would like to acknowledge Lowell Williamson and Terry Stewart of the University of Waterloo staff who helped me with many of the technical issues involved in creating this compilation. Most importantly, I'd like to thank my FarmHouse brothers who made, and continue to make, the whole journey so fun, so educational and so spiritual. In other words, so worthwhile. It is also appropriate to note that, although I rambled on for two hours during my oral presentation at the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and have added additional material over the ensuing years, this report touches on but a fraction of the events, experiences, accomplishments, frustrations, and friendships that comprise our collective and individual histories. Much more remains to be rediscovered, to be experienced, and to be written. Here then, for the moment, is our story.

Mark Havitz '77, Waterloo, ON, Canada, June 2005

Massive and majestic to those who know it well, it is tempting to believe that the Michigan State University campus, as we know it, has been here forever. At right is a summer scene, canoeing on the Red Cedar River [Source: 1977 *Red Cedar Log*] This has been the title of the MSU yearbook since 1976.

“*Wolverine*” was the title of the yearbook from 1901 through 1975. The editors of its 1976 successor noted that “the name of the yearbook has been *Wolverine*. The yearbook staff has conceded that the University of Michigan’s football team holds a stronger claim to this name. As a result, the name of the yearbook has been changed to *Red Cedar Log*, at title more appropriate to and identifiable with Michigan State University.”

MSU is known for its beautiful gardens and trees, but recognizable landmarks also abound. [Panorama photo by Tim Potter, copyright MSU Alumni Association, 2002]





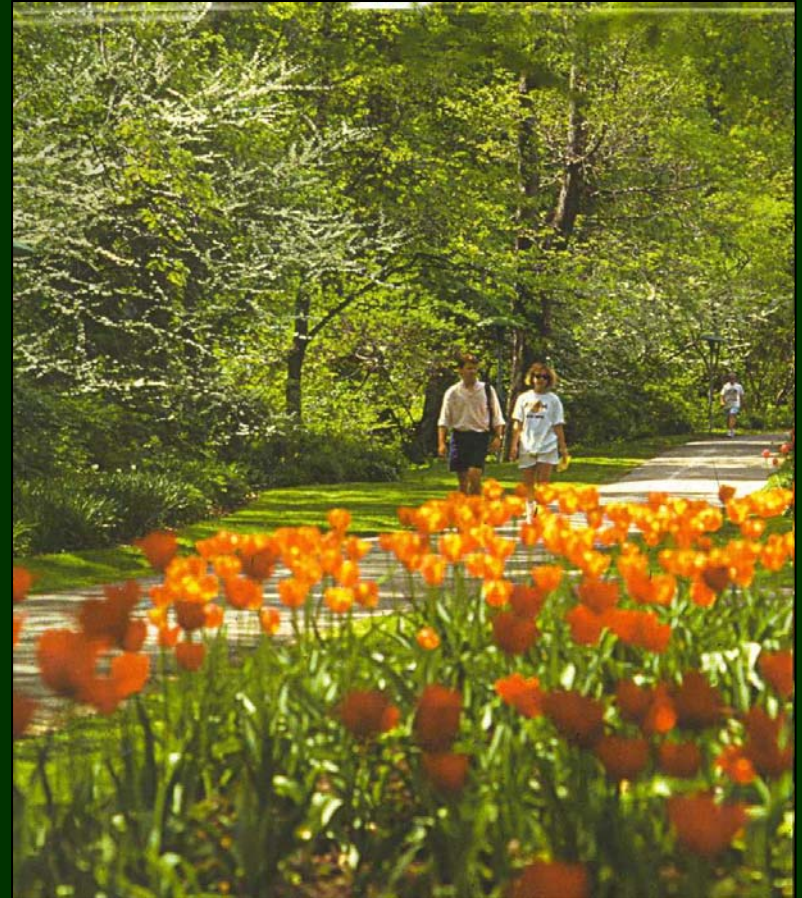
This is a fall scene, looking east from the Kalamazoo Street bridge toward the Library. It is difficult to conceive that this scene is in the midst of a campus whose staff and students number 50,000 plus on any given day. [Source: 1980 *Red Cedar Log*]



The photo at right depicts a late spring scene in Beal Botanical Gardens [Source: MSU Alumni Magazine]

Beal Botanical Gardens are emblematic of the longevity, beauty, and profound contributions of the nation's pioneer Land Grant college to our overall quality of life.

Here's an early spring scene, cycling through Beal Gardens. [Source: Tim Potter, copyright MSU Alumni Association, 2002]



The center of the campus universe is, of course, Beaumont Tower; pictured here with the MSU Museum (formerly Library) in the foreground. [Source: MSU website]



It is important to note that, despite its grandeur and established sense of place, the pioneer Land Grant college Michigan State University is, at this writing, just 150 years old. [Photo source: Tim Potter, copyright MSU Alumni Association, 2002]



The idea for a separate agricultural college was initially opposed by the established University of Michigan which had been founded in 1817, pre-dating Michigan's statehood by 20 years. The U of M wanted to subsume the proposed agricultural curriculum into its own course offerings. Advocates for the new school argued, in part, that specific attention to agriculture and mechanical (engineering) topics would ensure that critical resources would not be diverted to more traditional topics like medicine and law. Others wanted to merge the agriculture courses with existing curricula at the State Normal School in Ypsilanti (now Eastern Michigan University). Separatists carried the day, however, and the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan was created by a legislative act signed by Governor Kinsley S. Bingham on February 12, 1855. After hurried construction of three buildings on some rather low-lying state land east of Lansing, it officially opened its doors on May 13, 1857. [Text source: 1955 *Wolverine*]

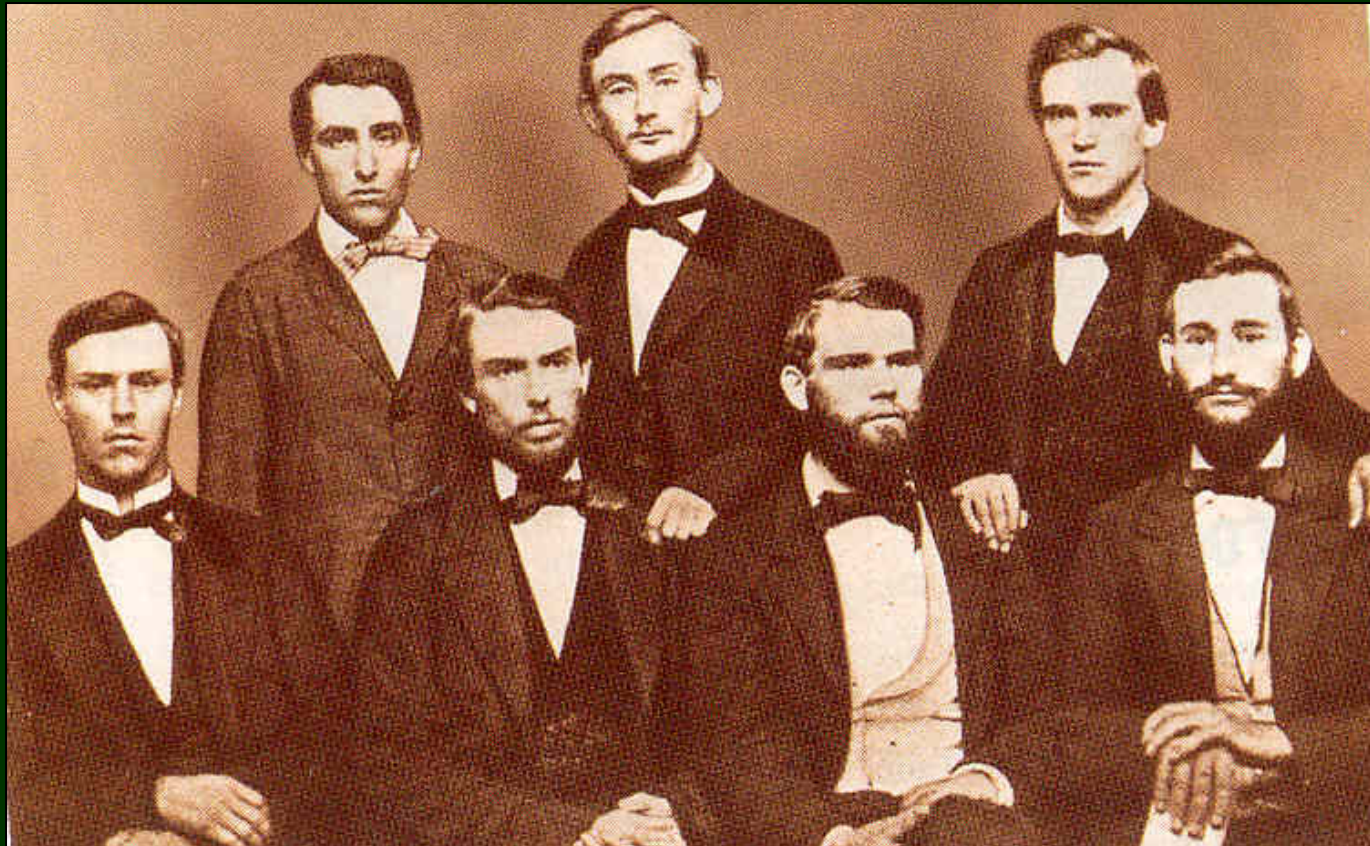
The most important of the three structures was, without a doubt, College Hall. The building opened for business in 1857 but is shown here in 1862. This was the first building ever constructed in the United States for the express purpose of teaching agricultural science. Notice the student front and center intent on completing his entomology collection! [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*.]



Students did a bit of clowning around on the tree stumps as Saints' Rest dorm (shown in 1857) and College Hall (background right) neared completion. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]



Clowning around has always been part of college life, but the United States were not so united at the time and the College's first graduating class (1861), shown here in a composite photo, never actually posed together. The Civil War was raging and the seven men left immediately after graduation to join a company of engineers in November 1861 which, despite some protest from the faculty, was moved forward two months. When the company was disbanded in 1862 after their enlistments were up, several joined new units. Gilbert Dickey, back row middle, was the first MAC graduate to die in battle, falling at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863 while with the 24<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry. Henry Benham, front row far left, was killed in 1864 during a battle in South Carolina while serving as an Union officer with one of the newly formed "colored" regiments which were comprised of white officers and black soldiers. Despite the ravages of war, the nation was intrigued by Michigan's experiment and the Morrill Act establishing similar (Land Grant) colleges in other states was passed by Congress and signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862. [Photo source: 1955 *Wolverine*. Text source: Spring 2001 *MSU Alumni Magazine*.]



The college's cumbersome name had been changed to the State Agricultural College in 1861 but throughout most the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it was more commonly known as Michigan Agricultural College (MAC), a name which didn't become official until 1909. This is a picture of campus, taken circa 1875. From left to right are Saints' Rest, Williams Hall (MAC's second dorm which was built 1874. "Old Bill" burned 1918), and College Hall. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]





Early faculty quickly distinguished themselves. Levi Taft, professor of Horticulture (standing second from left in the bowler hat) was the first scientist to control orchard diseases, specifically apple scab, by spraying. A plaque located near the Collingwood Street entrance to campus commemorates him and his orchards. Rolla C. Carpenter (seated second from left) was recorded as professor of “mathematics, one of the great engineers” by the 1955 yearbook. He was also coach of the first MAC football team where he was obviously no Biggie Munn. More on Carpenter’s MAC football team later. Two other faculty members of special note are Robert Clark Kedzie (standing second from right) and William James Beal (seated at far right). [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]



Robert C. Kedzie was a surgeon with the 12<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry during the early part of the Civil War. He was appointed Professor of Chemistry at MAC in 1863 and stayed to retirement in 1902. Dr. Kedzie fathered the sugar beet industry in Michigan, campaigned against food frauds, put an end to the use of poisonous dye Paris Green in wall paper, and championed college opportunities for women. On the latter subject, he wrote in 1901: “Along with the grand success of the Agricultural and the Mechanical Courses [the first two majors at MAC], the inquiry arose on every hand ‘Why cannot the girls have the same chance as the boys?’ Reasonable men and thoughtful women asked the same question. ‘Why cannot Mary have equal opportunities with John at our farmers’ College?’ Why indeed?” Dr. Kedzie apparently had a great sense of humor and poked fun at his colleague, former MAC secretary and College president T. C. Abbot, in the 1901 yearbook when he quoted from the faculty minutes and wrote about the early years of the College:

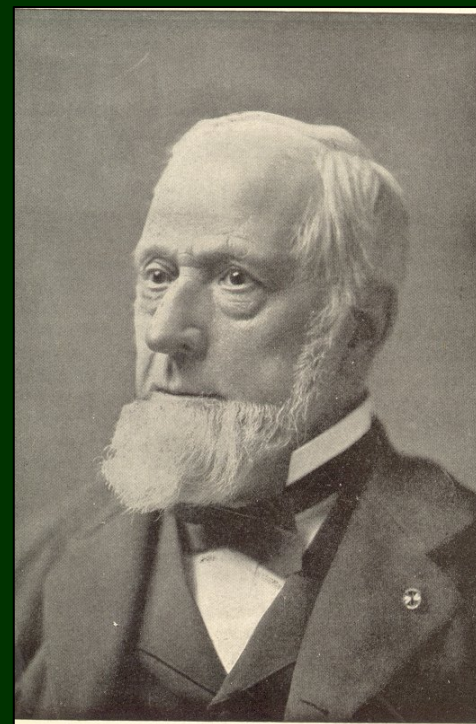
State Agricultural College, Sept. 16, 1861. Faculty met in regular session and discussed College matters. Adjourned. T. C. Abbot, Secy.

State Agricultural College, Sept. 23, 1861. Faculty met; discussed College matters. Adjourned. T. C. Abbot, Secy.

State Agricultural College, Sept. 30, 1861. Faculty met; spent the evening discussing College interests. Adjourned. T. C. Abbot, Secy.

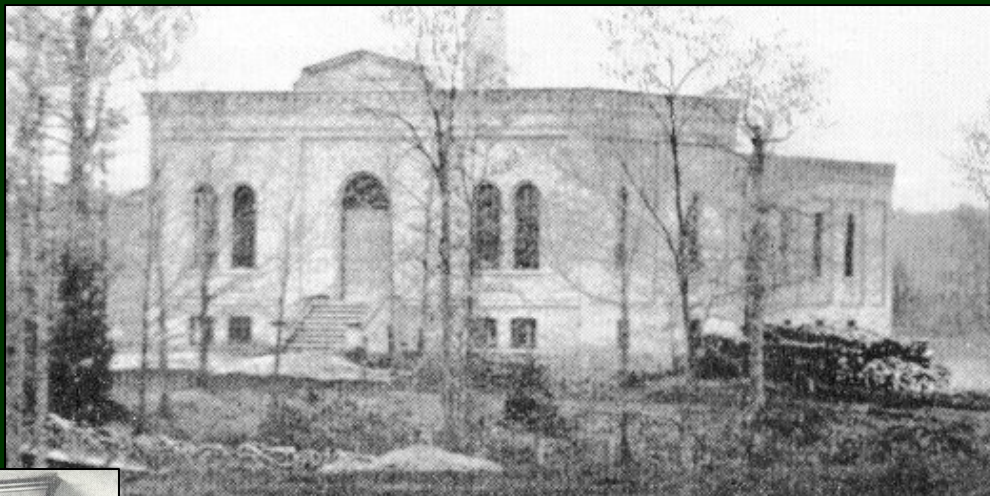
State Agricultural College, Oct. 7, 1861. Faculty met; spent evening discussing College matters. Adjourned. T. C. Abbot, Secy.

State Agricultural College, Oct. 14, 1861. Faculty met; discussed College matters. Adjourned. T. C. Abbot, Secy.



“Here are the records of five meetings of the faculty that could all be written on a postal card. Happy is that people that has no history.” Dr. Kedzie was, of course, speaking in jest for the little agriculture college had already begun to make a name for itself and gain a measure of respect throughout the state. [Sources: 1901 *Wolverine* for the quotes and the 1955 *Wolverine* for the photo and photo caption.]

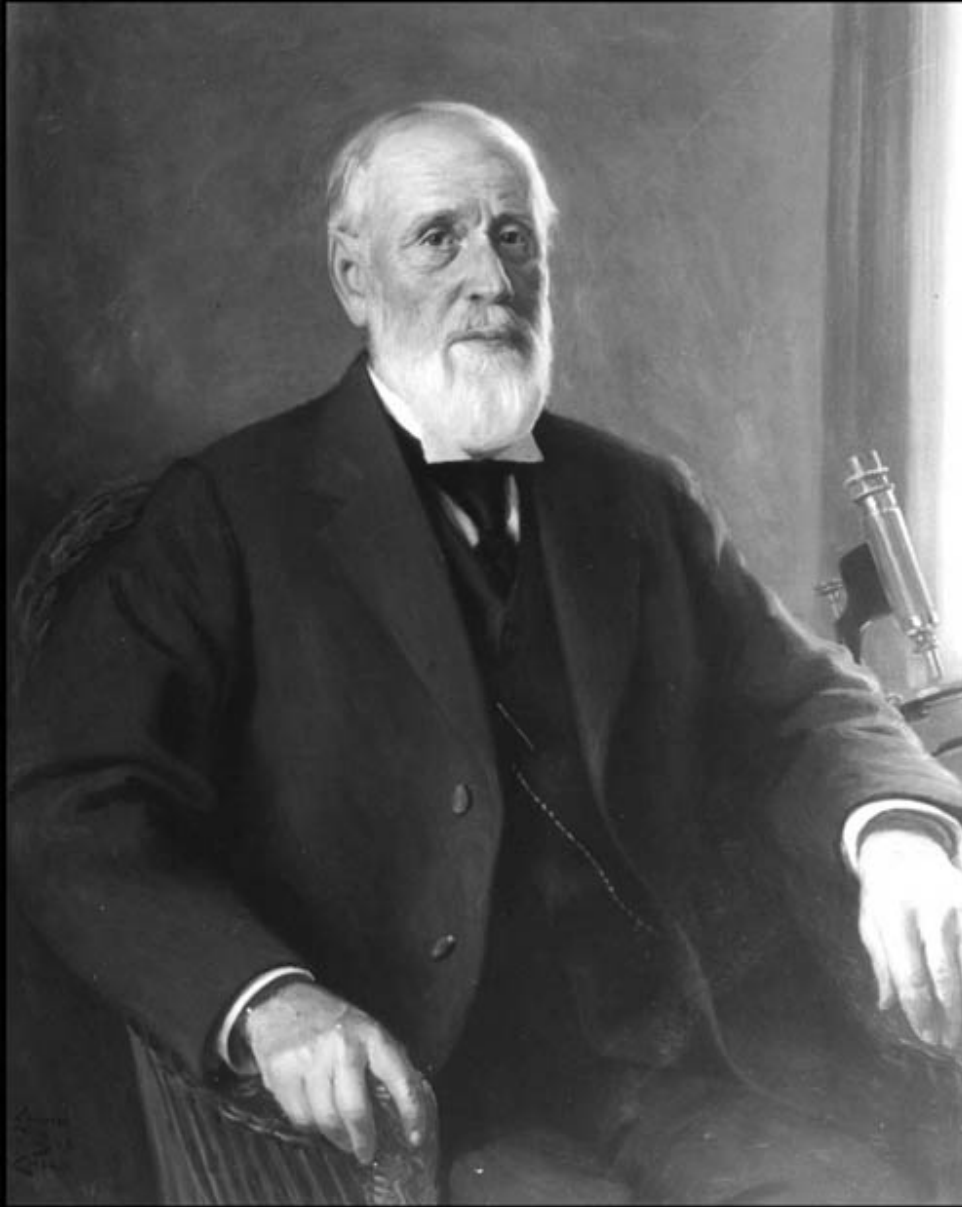
The original chemistry building, soon christened as the “Chem Fort” by students soon after it was constructed in 1871, is pictured (right) in 1873. The wood pile to the right was used to heat the structure. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]



Here is Dr. Kedzie (left) lecturing in 1892 in the Chem Fort. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]

This photo (right), taken from the west side of what is now Beal Gardens looking east, clearly pinpoints the location of the Chem Fort near the courtyard in front of the present day library. [Source: 1919 *Wolverine*]





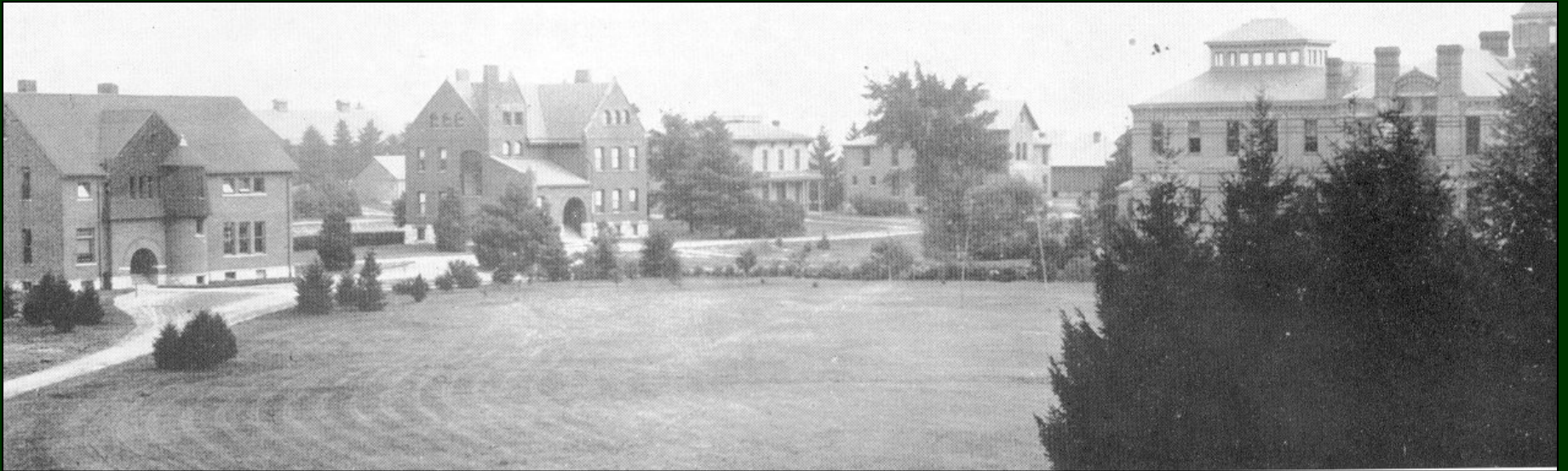
William James Beal was professor of Botany at MAC. In 1877, Beal became the first scientist to cross-fertilize corn for the purpose of increasing yields. This work led to the 19<sup>th</sup> century miracle of crop production-- hybrid corn. Dr. Beal planted trees all over campus and founded the Beal Botanical Gardens in 1873. Referred to as the "M.A.C. Wild Garden" in the 1919 yearbook, Beal Garden is the oldest continuously operated botanical garden in the United States. A street and an elementary school in East Lansing also bear his name. [Source: MSU website]

In 1879 Dr. Beal started his "Seed Viability Study," the longest continuously operating experiment in the world. He buried bottles of seeds at secret locations around campus. Selected bottles are unearthed every twenty years (1980 and 2000 are the latest; the next will be in 2020) and then planted. Seeds from some plants (notably the moth mullein) still germinate. Dr. Beal has been dead for nearly 100 years, but his academic program is still active. Now that's longitudinal research! [Photo source: 1901 *Wolverine*. Text source: *MSU Alumni Magazine*]

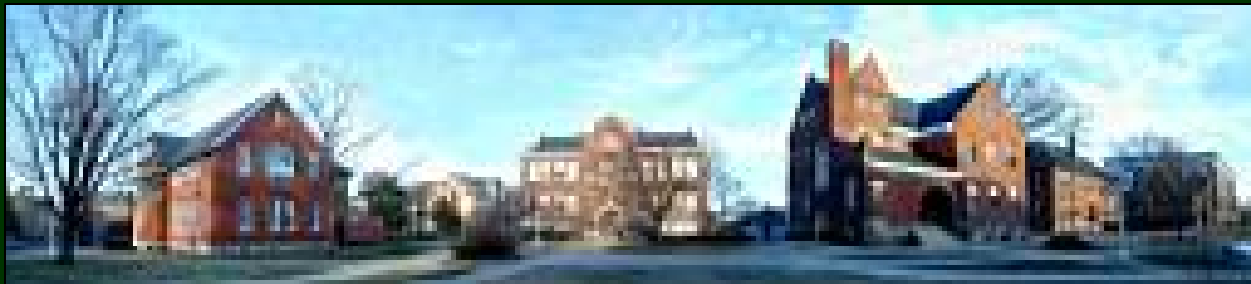
Though most of the buildings were different from those existing today, the central part of campus now ringed by Circle Drive had established its essential character by end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This panoramic shot was taken in 1888. The photographer was standing on the north edge of the campus, near Grand River Avenue, looking south toward the campus and the river beyond. From left to right: Williams Hall dormitory (nicknamed Old Bill by students) which was located near the site of the present day MSU Museum, the Chem Fort, Wells dormitory (this “first” Wells replaced Saints Rest which burned in 1876. First Wells burned in 1905), and “old” Botany which burned in 1890. Near as I can tell, the Botany building would have been located on what is now the marching band’s practice field. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]



This 1895 photo shows the newer buildings on what was then the east edge of campus. From left, Horticulture (designed by Botany professor Liberty Hyde Bailey, this Tudor style structure survives and currently houses the Honors College), “new” Botany (which also still survives), some faculty homes occupied the present site of Agriculture Hall, and the library/museum (which also still survives). The large structure visible behind Horticulture and Botany is one of the campus barns. Note the emerging shape of what is now Circle Drive in front of these buildings. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]



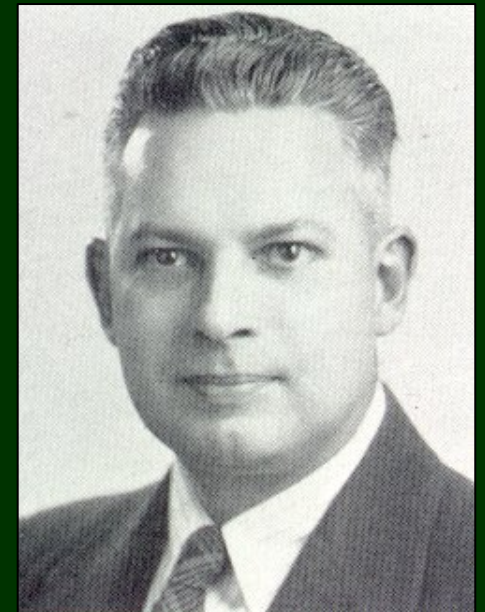
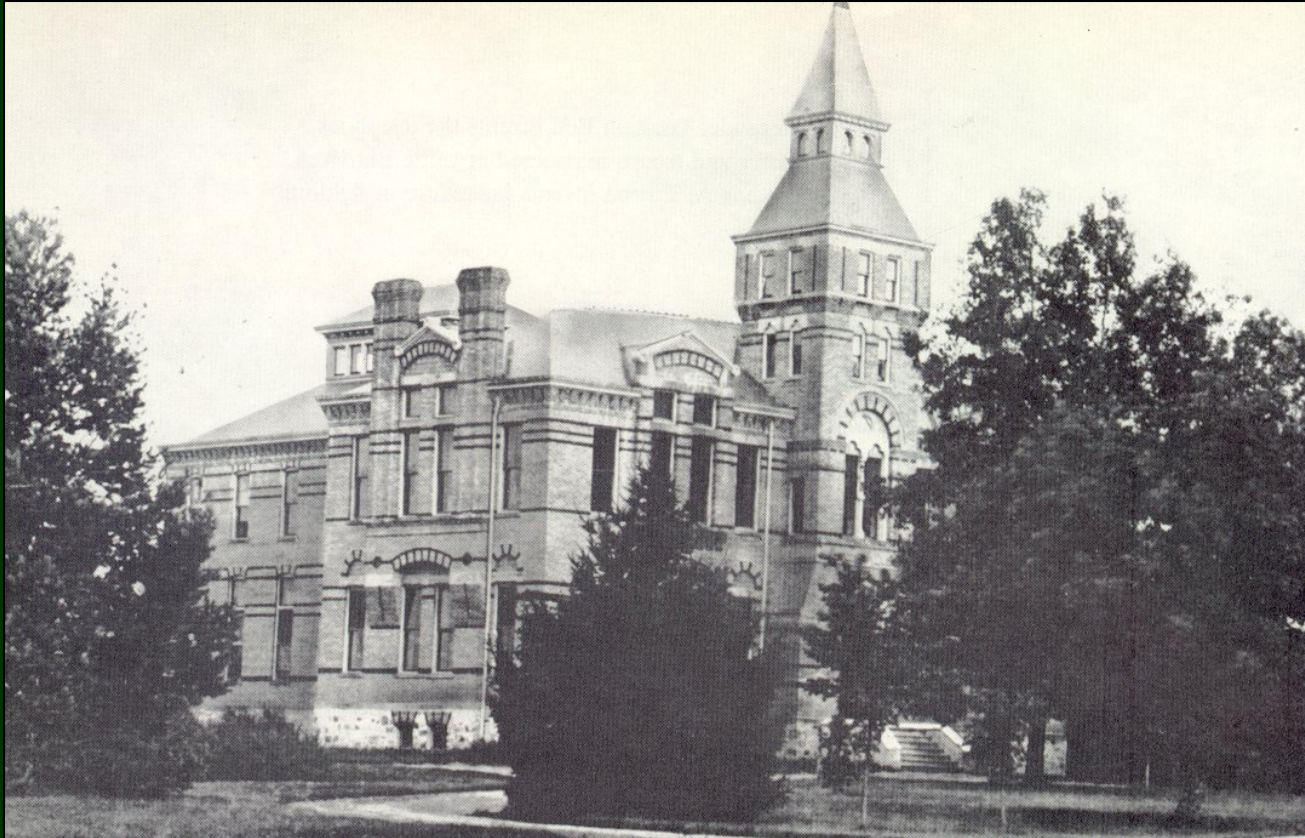
In order to remind us that the 19th Century campus was every bit as bright and colorful as the present version, I've included a more recent artistic photo, taken from a slightly different angle and with some creative use of lens, but which includes many of the same buildings. [Panorama photo by Tim Potter, copyright MSU Alumni Association, 2002.]



The old Botany building was surrounded by beautiful gardens, a tradition carried forward in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries by subsequent horticulture buildings. The girl in the foreground was the daughter of an MAC faculty member. This building burned down in 1890. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]



An impressive structure originally built to house the Library and Museum was built in 1881. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*] In the first half of the 20th Century, until the Hannah Building opened in the late 1960s, it served as the administration building. It is now named after Robert Linton (inset) who served as the campus Registrar during a good portion of that time. [Source: 1939 *Wolverine*] This is the oldest surviving academic building on campus and is located on the east end of Circle Drive across the street from Ag Hall.

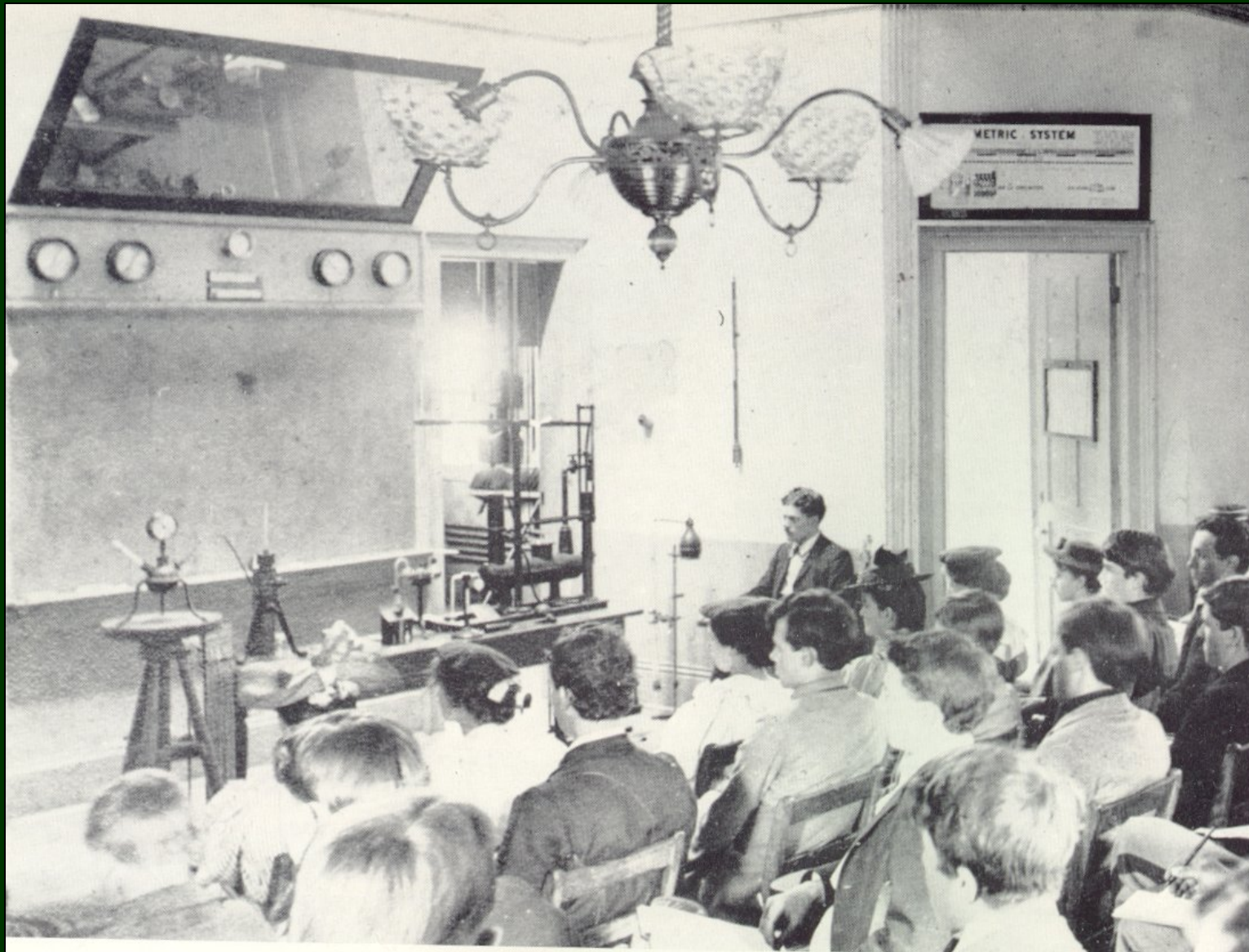




A hay crew, 1896. Work on the campus farms was required of all students. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]



Here is the physics classroom in 1885. According to the yearbook caption, the subject of the lecture was “petroleum.” Note the women seated in front row. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]



“Progress” soon arrived, however. Beginning in 1896, women were restricted from other majors and could only enroll in the new “Women’s Course.” This photo was taken in 1896. [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]



This is the MAC band, sometime before 1880 (when they received military uniforms). The MAC band was founded in 1870 by ten Civil War veteran students. Khaki military uniforms were worn until the 1952 football season (MSC's first in the Big Ten) when the band donned green uniforms for the first time. [Photo source: 1955 *Wolverine*, text source is the 2001 MSU/Michigan official football program.]

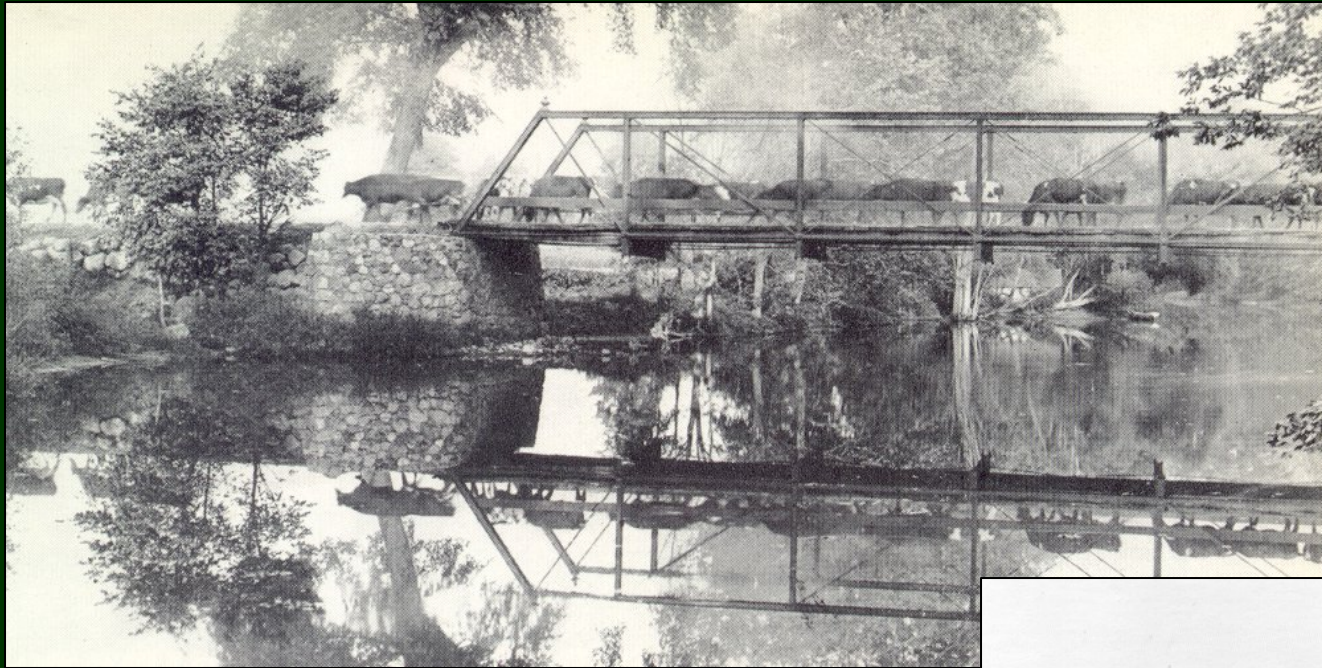


The MAC faculty and administration resisted intercollegiate athletics for some time. This is the first MAC football team, which took the field in 1886. The Aggies, as we were then known, played two games, losing to Albion College 79-0 and Olivet College 78-0. An inauspicious start to say the least! As noted earlier, the team's unofficial coach was professor R. C. Carpenter. The origins of our school colors are sketchy, but in 1899 the Athletic Association of MAC took steps toward adoption of a green monogram "to be worn only by athletes who subsequently take part in intercollegiate events." [Photo source: 1955 *Wolverine*, text sources are *Spartan Saga: A History of Michigan State Athletics* and the November 3, 2001 *Spartan Sports Zone* football program.]



The first full-time Director of Athletics, Chester L. Brewer, arrived in 1903 and instituted wide-spread use of the Green and White. In addition to his AD duties, Brewer coached all four existing varsity sports: football, basketball, baseball and track. Baseball started in 1884 and played two games the first year. We beat Olivet and lost to Michigan. The 1897 team (pictured here) finished 3-6. Check out the large and somewhat inflexible catcher's mitt in the foreground! [Photo source: 1955 *Wolverine*, text source is *Spartan Saga: A History of Michigan State Athletics*.]





Before 1900 (above), the Farm Lane bridge was primarily used by cattle! [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]

But by 1911 (right), the campus was more diverse and the bridge was also used by sheep! Students and faculty not working on campus farms had little reason to venture to the south side of the river. [Source: 1978 *Red Cedar Log*]

The latter picture was taken facing to the northwest. The barns in background are near site of present day Ag Hall. Things were definitely changing as MAC moved into the 20th Century!



But before we depart from the 19th Century, let's take one last look back. Believe it or not, this is Michigan Avenue, from near where the Brody dormitory complex now stands, looking west toward Lansing in 1898. The Michigan Agricultural College was still a small school poised at the end of the tracks, but it was ready to grow and big things were in store! [Source: 1955 *Wolverine*]

