**Illicit Activity on Campus: smoking pipes, alcohol bottles, and drugs**

* Alcohol - <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=5897>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=7017>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=5882>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=5701>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=5650>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=5572>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=3047>
* Drugs - <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=5661>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?s=medicine>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=4072>
* Smoking - <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=1868>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?page_id=6943>; <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=3979>;
* Kuhn 1955:210 – Smoking banned in 1908 and East Lasing “Dry” since its chartering in 1907 (Kuhn 1955: 321)

Smoking was not officially banned at the College until 1908, but it was seen as a corrupting influence on students by faculty and students alike and was restricted since the school’s inception (Kuhn 1955: 60, 92, 144, 210). Indeed, the rules for [[Saints’ Rest]], the first dorm on campus specifically prohibited “the use of tobacco and other narcotics” (Kooiman 2016). Similarly, the consumption of alcohol at MSU has always been banned and in 1888, President Willits banned students from traveling to Lansing bars to drink during their leisure time. Even off campus, alcohol consumption was limited. When East Lansing was incorporated in 1907 it was a dry town, meaning no alcohol was sold by any business in the city and in 1916 the State of Michigan voted to approve alcohol prohibition (Kuhn 1955:60, 143-144, 321). Despite all this, CAP archaeologists often find the remains of both alcohol bottles and smoking pipes during excavations on campus.

<https://i1.wp.com/campusarch.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1-4-9FC-49-A001801.jpg> - Eleven male students at Michigan Agricultural College are shirtless and posing for a photo while smoking pipes and holding cards and bottles of liquid that are presumably alcohol c. 1906. Image courtesy of MSU Archives & Historical Collections.

<https://i2.wp.com/campusarch.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/alcohol-bottles.png> - A variety of alcohol bottles recovered from the Brody/Emmons amphitheater excavations, 2009 and 2011

Archaeology has the power to reveal what went on behind written rules and official stories. Despite stigma, building rules, and the general smoking ban, eighty-eight clay pipe fragments were recovered from the 2005 excavation of Saints’ Rest and more were recovered from the 2015 excavations of the [[West Circle Privy|Saints’ Rest Archaeology]] (Mustonen 2007; Kooiman 2016). One possible explanation for why a fragment of a smoking pipe was found in the outdoor toilet was a rule breaking student may have needed to dispose of the illicit pipe before getting caught. Hiding it in a chamber pot would certainly stop anyone from finding it!

<https://i2.wp.com/campusarch.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/CAP-pipe.jpg> - Pipe fragment from west circle privy

Other smoking pipes were found at during the 2010 excavations of [[College Hall|Beaumont Archaeology]] near Beaumont Tower, including this largely intact “I.G. Prence” pipe.

<https://i0.wp.com/campusarch.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/i_g__prence_smoking_pipe.gif?w=1200> – GIF of a clay smoking pipe labeled ““I.G. Prence // In Gothica”. The full model can be viewed on CAP’s Sketchfab account. This model was created by Jack A. Biggs using Agisoft PhotoScan.

During Prohibition, in Michigan from 1918 to 1933, a time when state and federal law made it illegal to produce, buy, sell, or transport alcohol, those who wanted to drink alcohol had to do it in secret, either at home or in discreet bars known as blind pigs. This did not mean, however, that alcohol was in short supply, due to its proximity to Winsor, Canada, Detroit became the leading importer of smuggled liquor (Tyrell 2015; Biggs 2017).

<https://i1.wp.com/campusarch.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Screen-Shot-2017-10-17-at-12.58.37-PM.png> - Photo of alcohol smuggling bust from truck with false bottom. Image courtesy of MSU Archives & Historical Collections.

How can we use archaeology to understand people’s reactions to prohibition at MSU and in East Lansing? CAP archaeologists studying the dozens of glass vessels found during the Brody Hall and Emmons Amphitheater area excavations notice that many were alcohol bottles. This area was used as the city dump from the 1920s until the 1950s and as it abutted MSU, can tell us much about what students and residents were consuming and discarding during those years. We know from these bottles that people in East Lansing were consuming alcohol and while none of the bottles CAP has yet identified have been specifically dated to the prohibition years, we can connection them to a culture of rule breaking and revolt at M.A.C. in the late 1910s and early 1920s. These years were infamous for their “Bolshevik Days” when students protested against high tuition fees and created, took their own holidays off, collectively skipped classes, or had impromptu dances (Kuhn 1955:321).

<https://projects.kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/162-565-4125/A001271.jpg> - Signs of protest, a photograph from 1921 shows female students marching during Homecoming Parade with signs to recognize the first co-eds on campus. The signs in image read: ‘What 51 years have accomplished’; ‘1895 the first H.E. girls’; ‘1870 the first co-eds’

These years were also a period of intense debate about alcohol and prohibition on campus. Three articles in the M.A.C recorder, dating from 1916 to 1924, illustrate the atmosphere towards prohibition on campus at the time. In 1916, the paper published an anonymous survey asking students whether they supported or opposed prohibition. They found that, “a large percentage of the students in favor of prohibition.” (M.A.C. Recorder 1916a). However, later that year the paper ran another article asking, “Does Prohibition Prohibit?” and reporting a story where a math professor and President Kedzie intercepted a suitcase full of whiskey and anti-prohibition fliers. The author praises the authorities and criticizes the efforts of “wet forces” to disparage prohibition efforts (M.A.C. 1916b). A third article, this one during prohibition, seems to show dissent in the general student body as the administration canceled a vote among students and faculty to see if they preferred the law or wished it would be changed or abolished. The paper writes, “apparently the fear that the registered vote might not indicate the actual sentiment of the campus was one of the considerations which prompted the suppression of the movement” (M.A.C. Recorder 1924).

Whether they were patronizing local blind pigs, revolting on campus, or drinking with friends on or off campus, students then, as now, seemed to take great pleasure in breaking the rules and challenging what is allowed.

Sources –

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1916b &emsp; “Does Prohibition Prohibit?”, //*M.A.C. Recorder//*, Vol. XXIL, Oct. 3, 1916. Michigan Agricultural College

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Code:

## (css: "color: #fffea8;")[Illicit Activity on Campus: Rule Breaking and Revolt]

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To find out more about the archaeology and apparitions at MSU, click the HOME button below!

### <div class="center">[[Home|HomePage]]</div>

### <div class="center">[[References|Other References]]</div>

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