



# History Explorer

Historical Society of Greater Lansing

[www.LansingHistory.org](http://www.LansingHistory.org)

August 2015

## Lansing's African-American West Side Walking Tour

*Thursday, August 6 - 7:00pm*

*Tour meets at Union Missionary Baptist Church  
500 S. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.*

Learn the history of one of Lansing's largest historically African-American neighborhoods, including sites such as Dungey Subdivision (developed by an African-American) the Lincoln Elementary School and Community Center, and the home of Darius Moon, who employed many African-American masons during his architectural career.

## MSU's Historic West Circle Drive Walking Tour

*Saturday, August 22 - 10:00am*

*Tour meets at Beaumont Tower, MSU Campus*

Travel back to an era when the first students lived and worked on the campus of the State Agricultural College in the 19th century. The tour will contain information and stories regarding both lost and standing buildings, including College Hall, Morrill Hall, Beaumont Tower, and the original MSU President's Home. (Hint - it wasn't Cowles House!)

## Eaton County Courthouse Tour

*Thursday, September 3 - 6:00pm Grounds Tour  
7:00 Interior Tour*

*Tour meets at Courthouse Square, downtown Charlotte*

## Glendale Cemetery Tour

*Sunday, September 13 - 2:00 pm*

## From Sepia to Selfies: 150 Years of Lansing Photography

*Tuesday, September 18 - 5:00pm  
Library of Michigan, 702 W. Kalamazoo*

## Ingham County Courthouse Tour

*Thursday, September 17 - 6:00pm Grounds Tour  
7:00pm Interior Tour  
Tour meets at Courthouse Square, downtown Mason*

## Lansing Snapshots: From Sepia to Selfies

HSGL and the Library of Michigan are partnering together for our next exhibit, Lansing Snapshots: From Sepia to Selfies, which will open this fall. We're looking for both professional and amateur photos chronicling calamities and weather disasters, cultural markers (prom, first communion, senior pictures, wedding photos, bar/bat mitzvahs), recreation (such as Lake Lansing), famous Lansing residents (such as R.E. Olds, Malcolm X, Earvin Johnson, and the Stratosphere Man) and photos of minorities (including African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and others), as well as scrapbooks and rare photographic and camera equipment.

If you have photos or equipment that you'd be willing share with us, please call us at (517) 282-0671 or send an e-mail to [info@lansinghistory.org](mailto:info@lansinghistory.org) before July 30. Learn more about exhibit at [www.lansinghistory.org](http://www.lansinghistory.org).



## HSGL Auction Date Set for October 10

HSGL is pleased to announce that we will be hosting our fifth annual silent auction at historic Eastern High School on Saturday, October 10, from 4:00pm-6:30pm. We are busy collecting donations for the auction! To donate, call (517) 282-0671 or e-mail [info@lansinghistory.org](mailto:info@lansinghistory.org).

**Guides to Campus Life in the 1930s, 1950s and 1970s**

by Mary L. Kwas

In 1939 students at Michigan State University were advised that spike heels and earrings were not appropriate to wear to class, nor were jeans in 1956. My, how times have changed! To understand differences in campus life between today and times in the last century, student guidebooks from those years can be particularly enlightening. Different guidebooks informed students on etiquette, as well as rules and regulations of the university.

Each year in the earlier 20th century, students were provided with a small book giving advice on etiquette and manners. Compiled by the Spartan Women's League, the advice was meant to ease the transition into social situations and activities, not provide strict rules. The books were written in a student-friendly style and covered such topics as appropriate dress, dining etiquette, and behavior at various kinds of functions. As Miss Manners (whose column appears weekly in the *Lansing State Journal*) notes, "manners are principles, which are eternal and universal" such as expressing thanks for gifts or courtesies received. Etiquette rules, on the other hand, are "arbitrary and different" depending on times, situations and cultures.

Comparing the etiquette books from 1939 (*We Like it Done This Way at Michigan State College*) and 1956 (*This We Do at MSU*) shows that things did not change much over those 17 years. Students attended

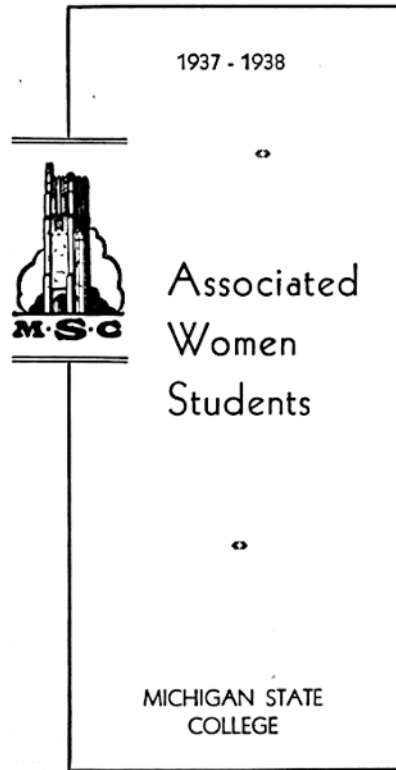
"teas" and "coffees" as well as formal parties. A good deal of attention was paid to the proper order in which to make introductions (women first, then by age) and what to do if one found oneself in a "receiving line." The proper reply to an introduction, the students were warned, was "how do you do," never "pleased to meet you," which seems puzzling today.

Table etiquette covered three pages in 1939. The proper use of silverware included "keep your elbows down when cutting and avoid the banjo player's grip" whatever that was. Only certain foods could be eaten with the fingers, and those included "salted nuts and bonbons." Despite the restrictions, students occasionally broke into high spirits. They were advised not to sing at the table unless everyone was singing, and never to flip water with a spoon for amusement.

By 1956 the rules hadn't really changed, but the advice was more detailed. An entire page was devoted to the proper techniques for the use of silverware and napkins. Specific foods earned their own paragraphs. An interesting way to eat sandwiches required: "Always break or cut a sandwich into eatable sized pieces," which rather seems to defeat the purpose of a sandwich. And olives must have been a particular challenge, as students were advised: "Eat the flesh away from the pit.

The pit should remain in the fingers and never get into the mouth." Ah, those frisky olives!

Proper attire also received a good deal of attention in the etiquette books. In 1939 "sports clothes" were the required women's wear on campus and in class. These were defined as "woolen dresses, skirts, and sweaters" with "low or medium heel oxfords." Young men were to wear "business suits and sweaters." For teas, dances and concerts, "afternoon dresses" were appropriate for women, perhaps a little dressier in the evening, with men still in suit and tie. Young women were warned not to wear pajamas or slippers to dinner, but riding habits were okay for breakfast, lunch and cafeteria dinners. When



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worn on campus, however, riding habits needed to be covered by a coat.

In 1956 classroom clothing for women was about the same, with the addition of sneakers and bobby socks. Men were not to wear jeans, but an item called a “sun-tan” was now acceptable. A search on the Internet revealed that sun-tans were pants of lighter fabric and color, what today we would call chinos or khakis. These, along with Bermuda shorts, were also appropriate for casual outdoor activities. Dinner, however, still required a suit and tie for men and classroom clothes for women. Only on Friday nights and Saturdays were girls permitted to “wear their hair pinned up and a scarf tied around it.” Gloves earned special attention, being required to be worn “any time a hat is.” And they were not referring here to cold winter weather. In both 1939 and 1956, men were expected to wear their hair short and be clean-shaven. Women were advised that “we don’t wear a mask of make-up.” Because the etiquette books were simply guides, not regulations, it is likely they were not followed all the time or by everyone.

MSU students also received other books that spelled out strict rules and penalties for infractions. All women received the Associated Women Students Handbook that dealt largely with the rules pertaining to dormitory life—micro-management was the norm.

The AWS handbooks for academic years 1938-1939 and 1956-1957 were similar in their restrictions. Hours in the dormitory were regulated by quiet hours, visiting hours, shower hours, typing hours and radio hours, and a curfew was enforced. Women needed permission to be out after curfew, and arriving even 15 minutes late incurred penalties that resulted in being grounded. Attendance at late theater performances or concerts required that the attendee bring a ticket stub or program to prove where

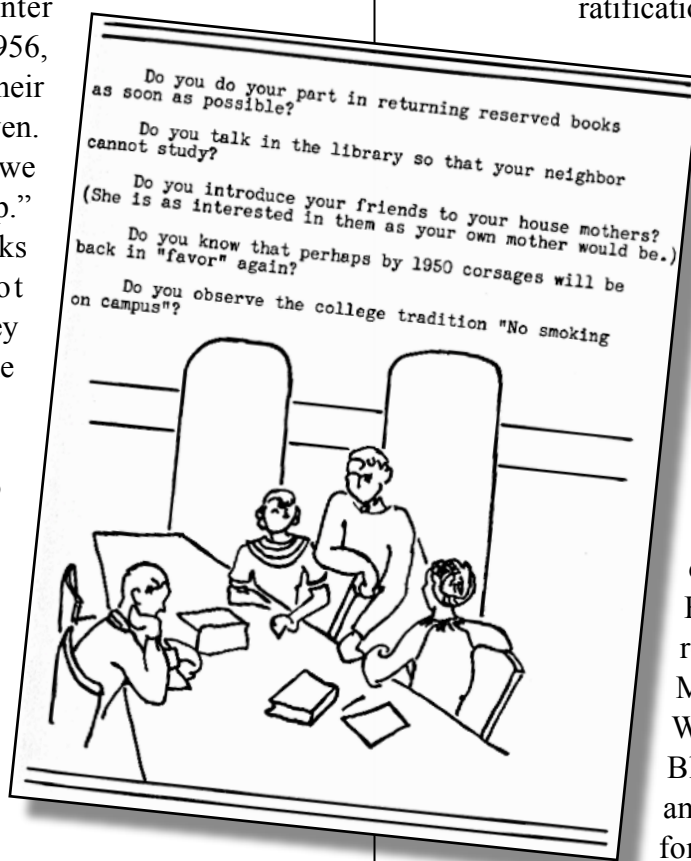
she had been. Permission was required to spend the night with a girlfriend or hold a job.

Things changed in the 1960s with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Movement, and protests against the Vietnam war. The activist Baby Boomers began to arrive on campus in the mid-1960s, demanding social change. As early as 1965, women were protesting university curfews. Until 1971, however, the age of adulthood was set at 21, so most students were still considered children under their parents’ and thus the university’s authority. An argument against the Vietnam war charged that young men who could not vote shouldn’t be drafted to kill and be killed. From that came the 26th Amendment to the Constitution giving 18-year-olds the right to vote, which received the fastest ratification of any Amendment, becoming law in 1971. The lowering of the age of adulthood for most purposes followed suit, and thus many rules and customs regarding campus life also changed.

By 1970 the focus of the Associated Women Students Handbook was on service and campus organizations, and career and life-plans for women. There was not a single mention of dormitory rules. The Baby Boomers abandoned most of the restrictions of the earlier years. Men grew long hair and beards. Women let their long hair flow free. Blue jeans became almost a uniform among the young. Many of the formalities of etiquette were set aside.

But what goes around, comes around. One thing has returned to the practice of 1939: No smoking on campus.

*The guidebooks referenced above are available in PDF format at <[onthebanks.msu.edu/Collections/](http://onthebanks.msu.edu/Collections/)>. Thanks to Bill Castinier for the loan of the book Michigan State Manners.*





Historical Society of Greater Lansing  
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Historical Society of Greater Lansing - Membership Application

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