

Welcome to the Kresge Art Museum's Virtual Walking Tour of New Deal art and architecture in the Lansing, East Lansing area.

In the 1930s, the United States government, under the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his "New Deal" social program, emerged as a patron of the arts, assuring the survival of artists, improving public facilities and creating a public art audience. Countrywide, communities large and small, urban and rural, were recipients of this government-sponsored art.

The Kresge Art Museum created this website as a resource for the general public and educators to discover the numerous examples of art and architecture of East Lansing and Lansing from this period. This document has been created as a guide for you to print out and take along on a visit to the Michigan State Campus.

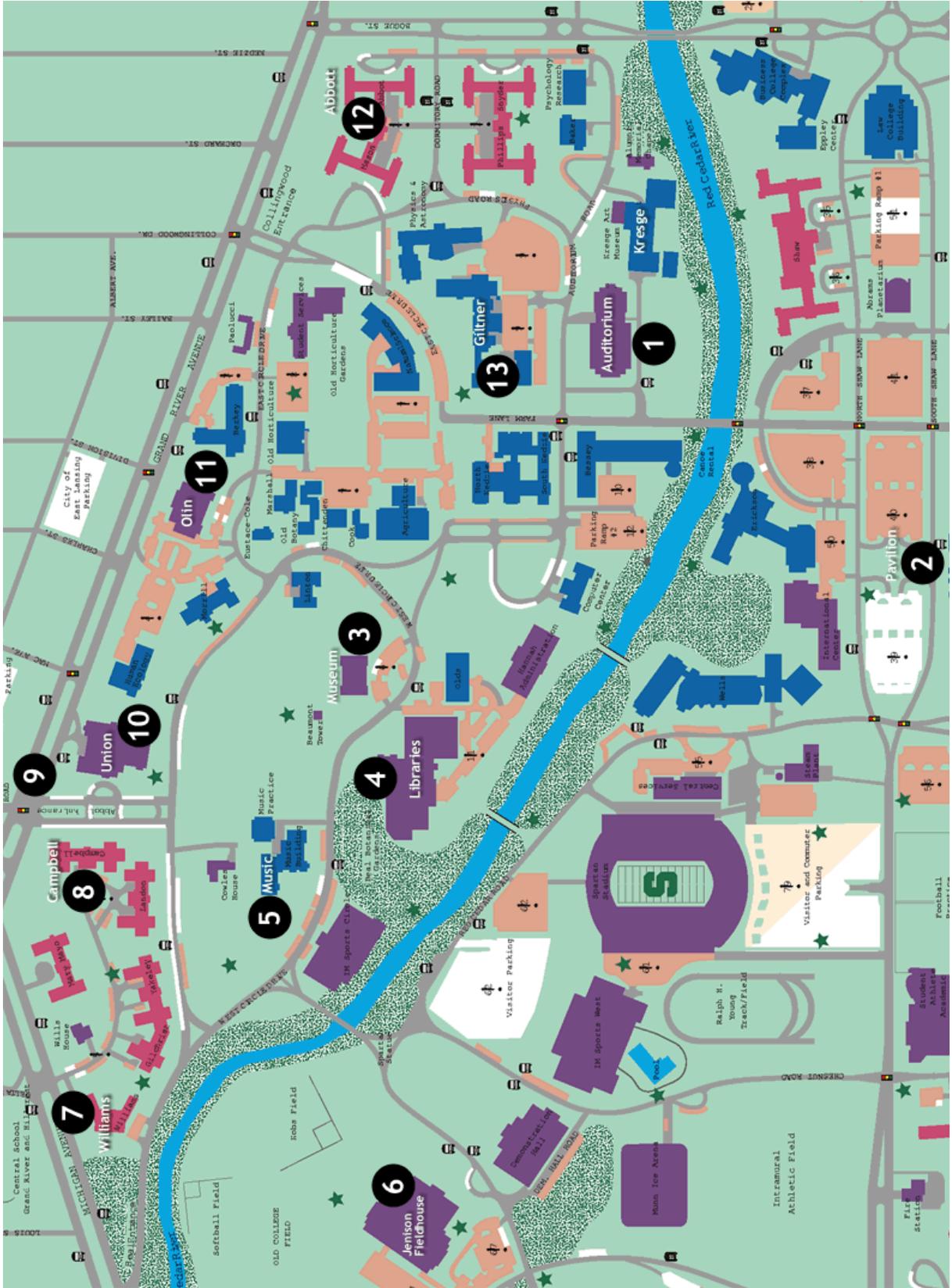
The walking tour of the Michigan State University campus takes approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

Route of Walking Tour (see map on next page)

1. Murals by Charles Pollock - MSU Auditorium
2. MSU Livestock Pavilion
3. Carl H. Frezell - MSU Museum
4. Mural by Henry Bernstein located - MSU Library
5. MSU Music Building & Three Musicians sculpture
6. Jenison Fieldhouse
7. Children Reading sculpture - Williams Hall
8. Campbell Hall
9. Abbott Road Entrance Marker
10. Mural by Edgar Yaeger - MSU Union
11. Olin Health Center
12. Abbot Hall
13. Giltner Hall

Most university buildings are open during business hours but are not open on evenings, weekends or university breaks. If you wish to see an interior view, check opening hours of individual buildings.

Parking: White areas on map indicate public parking.



MSU Auditorium, 1940
Bowd – Munson Architects

In 1938 the Public Works Administration allocated more than \$500,000 toward the final cost of \$1,025,000 for an auditorium to accommodate the academic and cultural activities of the growing MSU student body. Designed by O.J. Munson, the Gothic-inspired pointed arches and lancet windows on the entrance facade, and oak paneling, chandeliers, and white marble flooring of the lobby interior, reflect a desire for an elaborate structure to suit its cultural purpose. The limestone spandrels of the three identical entry portals are decorated with images of comedy, tragedy, musical instruments, and vines.



Munson's building houses two theaters, the large Auditorium at the front entrance on Farm Lane and the smaller Fairchild Theater at the east entrance of the building, arranged with the proscenium in the center of the building. This set-up eliminates the need for duplicate technical equipment and lighting; however, it is often problematic to hold simultaneous performances.

We Assure Freedom to the Free, Proclamation of Emancipation,
The Modern Man I Sing, 1943 – 44
Charles Pollock (American, 1902 – 1988)
Casein on canvas
MSU Auditorium foyer

Three **mural** panels in the entrance foyer of the Auditorium display themes typical of government-sponsored art of the 1930s and 40s. Painted in casein on canvas, *We Assure Freedom to the Free* (1944), the central figure of Abraham Lincoln in *Proclamation of Emancipation* (1943), and the words of Walt Whitman in *The Modern Man I Sing* (1944), emphasize the importance of freedom. Depictions of political and economic struggles are combined with symbols of technological advances ranging from pioneer days to those contemporary to the 1940s. Pollock's representational style, clear compositional rhythms and flat, evenly illuminated figures were likely influenced by the Mexican Muralists and **American Scene** paintings popular at the time.



Although for many, the word mural is synonymous with fresco, a technique that involves the direct painting on wet plaster, most **WPA** artists rarely executed murals in true fresco. Besides lacking training in this technique, it was considered difficult, costly, and required assistants. Instead artists chose water-soluble paints such as tempera or casein, which have a matte finish close to the effects of fresco. Painting directly on canvas permitted artists to work off-site. Murals were then transferred to the intended location upon completion.



**Livestock Judging Pavilion, 1938
Bowd-Munson Architects
(Demolished)**

Image courtesy of Michigan State University
Archives and Historical Collections

The **PWA** Livestock Judging Pavilion once stood north of the Engineering Building and south of the International Center on Shaw Lane until it was torn down in 1997 and replaced by the Pavilion for Agriculture and Livestock Education on the south edge of campus. Today, twelve pylons with pyramidal crowns and alternating bands of limestone, concrete, and brick refer to the former site of the Judging Pavilion. Two plaques on the pylons commemorate the history of the building and its importance to MSU as an agricultural college.



Natural Resources of Northern Michigan, 1936
Carl H. Frezell (American, 1901 – 1970)
Oil on canvas, artist's painted wood frame
Michigan State University Museum, 2nd floor Auditorium

Originally intended for the Bessemer Courthouse boardroom in the Upper Peninsula, *Natural Resources of Northern Michigan* was given to Frances and Walter M. Berry sometime in the mid 1940s in appreciation for their years of local and statewide community service. The **mural** hung in the Caspian Community Center where Berry worked before becoming the Director of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. In 1957, the Berrys donated the mural to the Michigan State University Museum, where it now hangs in the Auditorium on the second floor.



Natural Resources of Northern Michigan depicts an idealized view of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, incorporating many of the subjects – agriculture, industry, and leisure – as well as the positive message of economic recovery that the **WPA** commission encouraged during the troubling years of the Great Depression. Painted in a representational style and accurately detailed, Frezell flanked the foreground image of leisure and tourism with images of the Upper Peninsula's two main industries: Iron ore extraction and transportation on the left and logging and lumber on the right. The suspension bridge in the far upper left corner is likely Mackinac Bridge. Although the current structure was built between 1954 – 1957, engineers drew up proposals for the bridge in 1934 – 1935. Here, the bridge leads the viewer's eye towards a distant city, drawing a relationship between the natural resources and labor of the Upper Peninsula to the urban population and the finances of the city. Although some buildings are identifiable such as the Lansing State Capital, the U.S. Capital, and the Statue of Liberty, Frezell represents a generic model city.

America's First Agricultural College, 1938
Henry Bernstein (American, 1912 – 1964)
Mural
MSU Libraries, Main Library, first floor

Originally commissioned by the **Treasury Section of Fine Arts** of the WPA for the old East Lansing Post Office on Abbott Road (now Evergreen Grill), this **mural** is typical of the emphasis on representational art, scenes of local history, and nostalgia for the disappearing rural life. The Section, however, did not initially approve of Bernstein's proposals for the mural, which all related to Michigan State University. Although Bernstein felt that the communities of East Lansing and MSU were intertwined, the Section thought that scenes of student life were inappropriate for a public commission. Of the three proposals, scientific farming, students studying, and students at leisure, the Section finally approved farming, the most prevalent theme depicted in **WPA** murals in post offices. Farming was a definitive part of the environment of small town communities in the Midwest, and especially important to Michigan State University, the first agricultural college.



Bernstein incorporated many of the typical components of farming murals encouraged by the Section. The mural depicts five agricultural students in nineteenth century dress reaping a harvest and has a general aura of prosperity and hard work emphasized by the large, healthy looking animals, abundance of produce, and the absence of modern machinery – here replaced by an old-fashioned scythe. The mural was removed from the Post Office when it was closed and placed on permanent loan to the MSU Libraries, where it can be seen on the first floor.



MSU Music Building, 1940 and 1956
Ralph R. Calder Architect and Associates

The hipped roof, limestone trim and simple design of the **PWA**-funded Music Building complement the Collegiate Gothic and other architectural styles of this historic section of campus. The large, metal-framed windows, however, allude to future stylistic developments. Samuel Cashwan, supervisor of the Michigan Sculpture Program for the **WPA**, designed the **Art Deco** limestone **reliefs** framing the southwest entrance. They depict images of dance and performance, such as

children dancing to the beat of drums.

Sculpture, Three Musicians, ca. 1940
Samuel Cashwan (American, 1899 - 1988)
Cast-concrete
Southwest lawn of MSU Music Building

The *Three Musicians* is all that remains of a pair of large angular cast-concrete sculptural groupings that flanked the streamlined 1930s MSU Band Shell. The Cubist sculpture, which depicts a bass player, drummer, and saxophonist, was moved to its present site when the band shell was destroyed in 1959.



Band Shell, 1938
O.J. Munson

Designed by O. J. Munson and funded by the WPA/ FAP and a gift from the Class of 1937, the Band Shell was located where Bessey Hall now stands (see map). As captured in this 1954 photograph of a performance of the Michigan State College Band, the open-air stage was frequently used for musical performances as well as commencement ceremonies and pep rallies.



Image courtesy of the 2003 Sesquicentennial Calendar, Michigan State University Archives and Historical Collections



Jenison Fieldhouse, 1940
O.J. Munson

The estate of alumnus Frederick Cowles Jenison and the **PWA** funded this building, originally designed to house male athletic activities. Characteristic of early 1940s architecture, the horizontal and vertical elements culminate in a monumental entrance, accentuated by low reliefs. From left to right, these glass-brick limestone **reliefs** depict basketball, football, and baseball athletes.

The main entrance hall is embellished with **Art Deco** details

from the brass and wood staircase railing to the streamlined, geometric lighting in the foyer and main lobby.

Children Reading, 1938
Clivia Calder Morrison (American, born 1909)
Glazed terracotta
Michigan Avenue entrance to Sarah Langdon Williams Hall

This small yet vibrant glazed terracotta sculpture and fish head fountain spout are part of a garden wall that leads to Sarah Langdon Williams Hall. Completed through the **WPA/FAP**, the three young girls reading serve as a symbol of education, which is fitting to this once all-female residence hall.



Campbell Hall, 1939
Malcomson, Calder & Hammond Architectural Firm



Partially funded by the **PWA**, Campbell Hall is part of a complex of six residence halls originally for women. It was named after Louise H. Campbell, a state home demonstration leader from 1920 to 1930. The Tudor-style design, with its high-pitched gabled roofs, metal casement windows, slate roof, and Renaissance detailing, recalls medieval estates.

Michigan State College (Abbot Road Entrance Marker), 1938 – 39
Samuel Cashwan (American, 1899 - 1988)
Limestone
Abbot Road entrance

Created through the **WPA/FAP** programs and a gift from the Class of 1938, this limestone marker welcomes visitors and students to the MSU campus, then known as Michigan State College. The classical column, reinterpreted in the Art Deco style of the 1930s, along with the man, horse and woman with a sheaf of wheat, recall MSU's agricultural heritage.



Thomas Edison, ca. 1937
Edgar Yaeger (American, 1904 – 1997)
Oil on canvas
MSU Union, main floor

This **WPA mural**, originally part of a triptych located in the Public Lighting Commission Building in downtown Detroit, was removed when the building was destroyed in the 1960s to be replaced by the Renaissance Center. The complete mural was discovered behind wood paneling, and only two of the sections, including this one, were in good enough condition to be salvaged. For this composition Yaeger chose scenes relating to the history of light: the discovery of fire, Benjamin Franklin's discovery of electricity, and Thomas Edison and the invention of the incandescent light bulb. This final section, which was donated by the artist to the Kresge



Art Museum and is on long-term loan to the MSU Union, depicts Thomas Edison, on the right, working in his laboratory with his assistants inventing the light bulb. The large female figure with streaming hair symbolizes light and optimism. Preparatory drawings owned by the Kresge Art Museum indicate that portions of the right side of this mural are missing. Nevertheless, this mural is an excellent example of the modernist style that Yaeger employed for his WPA commissions.

Although the original structure of the MSU Union, built in 1924 by Pond and Pond, was not government sponsored, in 1936 \$150,000 was secured in WPA funds to add the east wing. The Michigan architectural firm Bowd-Munson completed this addition.

Olin Memorial Health Center, 1939, 1956, 1969
Ralph R. Calder Architect and Associates and
Samuel Cashwan (American, 1899 - 1988)

This **PWA** building by architect Ralph R. Calder, built in memory of Richard M. Olin, M.D., was considered "modern in every detail." Although additions to the building were made in 1956 and 1969, the bulky massing, textural variety, and minimalist limestone trim distinguish this building from others nearby. Samuel Cashwan designed the twelve symbolic reliefs that frame the main entryway. He chose the fitting subject of the healing arts, framing the building's name with two Greek goddesses of health, Panacea and Hygeia. The two pilasters display themes from modern medicine. On the left, in descending order, they are "Medical Magic," "Diagnosis," "Anatomy," "Physiology," and "Vaccination." On the right they are "Herbs," "Microscope," "Anesthesia," "X-Ray," and "Chemistry."





Abbot Hall, 1938
Bowd-Munson Architects

The I-shaped plan of Abbot Hall was designed as part of a four-dorm complex for male students, including its partner Mason Hall as well as Synder-Phillips residences. Shared common areas including the kitchen and bakery were originally built to link Abbot to Mason Hall. However, in 1958 renovations to basement corridors were completed to allow residents to walk from one hall to the next. Created as the residential complement to the female dormitories in the West Circle Complex, Abbot Hall is similarly Collegiate Gothic in style. The building, named after Theophilus C. Abbot, the third president of the University, features an arched entrance bearing an inscription in old English lettering, semi-hexagonal limestone multistory bay windows, and lime stone trim.

Giltner Hall, 1913, 1931, 1938, 1940, 1947, 1952, 1968
Bowd-Munson Architects (1938)

In 1938 **PWA** funds were secured to expand the Veterinary Clinic, erected in 1913 on the southeast corner of Farm Lane and East Circle Drive. Designed by the Bowd-Munson architectural firm, the addition blended well with the Collegiate Gothic style of the existing structure. In 1952, the expanding Veterinary Clinic was joined to the building for the Department of Anatomy and Animal Pathology to its east to form Giltner Hall. This building honors former professor and Dean of Veterinary Medicine, Ward Giltner (1882 – 1950) and houses scientific laboratories and classrooms.

