

# Beaumont Tower

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Tower Guard: Beaumont Tower Accessibility Project

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## Beaumont Tower

Walking from Linton Hall, a bold Magnolia Tree greets me. Its buds are closed, reverse-teardrop shaped and fuzzy. Several dark green Yew bushes, a traditional evergreen shrub, surround the beautiful Magnolia Tree. Tranquil and peaceful, the surrounding nature delights my soul and transfixes my gaze to Michigan State University's storied Beaumont Tower. As a prospective student, Beaumont Tower brought me strength and inspiration. The meaning of Beaumont Tower solidifies my calling as a Spartan. As I look to its crown, I am humbled by the height of its vocation as well as proud of its purpose.

As the first line of defense, giant Oak Trees line the North border of the basket weave brick pathway in the tower's courtyard. Their far-reaching branches canvas the cold, black, metal benches lining the edges of the path.

The two benches face four stone garden boxes at the courtyard's center. The two long, semi-circular boxes to the left and right contain two ornamental cherry trees each. In February, striking, horizontal stripes cover the grey bark of the fifteen-foot skeleton trees. The more narrow, semi-circular boxes in front and back are bare in February but hold brightly colored tulips during spring. Showy and large, the tulip flower bears bold blooms. A brick path extends several feet between the garden boxes and leads to the double doors at the entrance of the tower.

Extending several feet from the outsides of the boxes, the brick path leads to bordering Evergreen bushes lining its edges. On the right, behind the evergreen bushes, a Scotch Pine stands as a sentinel. The Pine, tall and cascading, has light green branches and tan bark hinted with orange. Sheltered and safe, visitors standing at the center of the garden boxes are welcomed to reflect.

To the left of Beaumont Tower, bordering the brick path, is a majestic Weeping Norway Spruce. As if truly weeping, its long, soft branches drape towards the ground in an evergreen waterfall cascade. At the base of the giant tree, green Yew bush shrubs surround.

A Yew Tree grows beside the Tower's entrance door. The yew, known for its ability to rebirth new trees from a fallen branch, offers the hope of new beginnings. Opposite of the Yew, to the right of the entrance door, is a Hemlock tree. The Hemlock is poisonous. Tan, thumb-sized cones hang, perhaps as a warning to the bitter fruit of a frivolous life.

Juxtapose with the East side of the tower, where a Eunanymus Bush sprawls.. The prominent corners of the tower nestle around it. The leaves, narrow and droopy, are curled with rigid edges. Earlier in the winter, red berry clusters decorated the bush.

Oriental arborvitae, the "trees of life", surround the tower. The deep green arborvitae offer a sense of eternity.

On the right side of the tower, the brick path leads to three downward steps of smooth stone that lead away toward MSU's Main Library. While on an educational journey, many Spartans have unearthed their soul mate. Planted on the "sacred space", Beaumont also offers good luck to couples who kiss under its shadow. Along this path, a beech tree invites loving couples to approach its smooth, pale-grey bark and scratch their initials on its surface.

## Beaumont's Exterior

"...a meeting or trysting place of the students, student groups or organizations, the center of all the activities of this institution" -MSU President at dedication ceremony.<sup>1</sup>

Beaumont tower stands in the Northwest circle of campus and is 104 feet tall. Beaumont was designed by John Beaumont, who served on the State Board of Agriculture, and completed construction of the Tower in 1929.

Smooth, sandy-colored rock wraps around the bottom third of the tower. Serving as a strong base, the large stone pieces resemble a chapel. As a higher calling builds into a vision, the smooth stone base extends at the corners into the brick middle portion of the tower.

Extending above the smooth stone, rough red brick continues for the upper two-thirds of the tower and affronts the bell tower. The bulkiness of the brick section was intended to represent the mundane middle course of life which requires strength, practicality, guardedness and an attention to time. Smooth stone pieces are placed here and there among the brick reminding one of the meaningful calling driving their vision. Smooth stone also wraps around each gothic-style, extended, half-round window on the East, West and South sides of the second and third floors. The two windows at the West side are shifted to the right, accommodating the five-sided, half-pentagon shaped turret that extends from that side of the tower. Two stories high, the turret holds seventy-three stairs. The smooth stone wraps around the turret. Extended, half-round windows allow light from the North and West to illuminate the spiraling staircase within.

As windows are the eye of the soul, larger gothic-style, extended, half-round windows face the Library, where students look to literature in leading the growth of their mind and

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<sup>1</sup> Galik, Mark (Summer 1996). "[Beaumont Tower: At the Crossroads of Past, Present & Future](#)". *MSU Alumni Association Magazine*. Retrieved 2009-05-07.

enrichment of their passions. At the top, two, blue-green, arched copper shutters signify the carillon bells within on either side of the tower. At every quarter hour, the bells ring and can be heard all across North campus. The fourteen-slatted shutters are surrounded and separated by the same smooth stone as below. A golden art deco clock face hangs centered below the shutters. Gold roman numerals and gleaming clock hands fill the face. The clock covers the inner and upper corners of two, smaller, gothic extended half-round windows. As a student walks, the clock reminds them of studious commitments.

As the tower reaches upwards, the brick narrows as if representing the refining that occurs with one's commitment to their calling. The smooth stone which surrounds the base of the windows, is continuous with tiles that extend down to form a square around the clock, filled in with brick. Within the tower, behind the clock, the playing cabin lies, and the area above the cabin houses the carillon bells. There are forty-five Carillion bells within the tower, arranged in a chromatic series. As one looks unto the crown of the tower, one is rooted again to their spiritual belonging. The crown consists of elaborate stone scroll work and four spires extending heavenwards. The spire of the Northeast corner stands taller than the others, as a reminder of transcendence and the importance of striving towards higher education.

At the base of the tower on the North side, mahogany double doors entice passers-by. Warm light illuminates the tiny, rectangular windows in the upper third of each door as well as the three colored windows above the double doors that complete the rounded arch.

In the face of the tower above the doors, engraved in the cool, tan stone, *The Sower* stands tossing seeds to the ground. The man depicted leans back, holding a basket in his left arm, and with his right arm arched behind him, positioned to throw his seeds. Inscribed below him, "Whatsoever a Man Soweth," calls visitors to contemplate the vision and impact of their life.

The saying derives from the Bible's Galatians 6:7 reading, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The image, sculpted by Lee Lawrie, pays tribute to College Hall, the first building at MSU and in the US to be dedicating to the teaching of scientific agriculture.

### Beaumont's Spring Scape

As snow melts away and the sun invites new growth, four blossoming, ornamental cherry trees burst to life, lining the path to the tower. On a sunny, warm April day, thousands of their flower clusters are illuminated, thin, pale-pink, white petals surrounding the bursting, black-tipped yellow stamen. Together the flowers frame the tower with graceful beauty. As unique individuals, Spartans from around the world facilitate goodness and growth.

The path approaching the North side of the tower from the East passes the magnificent Magnolia tree. To the right of the Cherry trees, two more Magnolias border the brick path. Its distinguished branches of thin, smooth bark extend upwards in twenty feet of pyramidal growth. Its large flowers, fully opened, grace visitors with creamy-white fragrant petals. Clustered together, the flowers contribute to Beaumont's ethereal beauty. Just as each Magnolia flower adds to the collective beauty of Beaumont, the gentleness and uniqueness of each Spartan speaks to MSU's collective anticipation and contribution for a better world.

The unanimous bush's narrow, pointed leaves have uncurled and faded. Its winter berries lie browned on the ground beneath it.

As summer leaves appear, the giant oaks shade the two black, metal benches facing the tower.

## Beaumont's Inner Contents

Upon entering the tower, visitors find themselves in a bright, chapel-like room greeted by a practice carillon at the center of the room. Its deep brown wood extends around the massive body and houses several lines of honey-wood-colored batons and pedals. Black key levers are above the white key levers.

Behind the Carillon, a plaque upon the stone wall describes the rededication of the Beaumont Tower bells:

“On May 3, 1996, the bells of Beaumont Tower rang again after having been silenced by wear and tear since 1987. Spartans rejoiced. In July 1995, the MSU Board of Trustees approved a renovation plan for the tower and carillon. A gift from John W. and Alice B. Beaumont, the tower was dedicated in 1929, when MSU President Peter McPherson’s grandfather Melville was on the Michigan State College Governing board. John Beaumont, a Michigan State alumnus, was a professor at the Detroit College of Law in the late 1800’s. John Donaldson was the architect and Lee Lawrie the sculptor of the original tower. The restoration project included renovation of the carillon mechanism, replacement of 20 of the 47 bells to match the shape and tonal quality of the originals, partial automation of the bottom 27 bells, and renovation of the clock, the Westminster chimes, and the tower structure. With this restoration, the bells of Beaumont again serve as a source of inspiration and unity to the MSU for generations to come.”

On the second floor is the MSU Tower Guard office. Tower Guard fulfills Beaumont’s function of facilitating unity on campus. Tower Guard, working in conjunction with the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, services the MSU community creating a more inclusive and accessible campus. At the center of the room is a small meeting table. Upon

Spartan green walls a white Spartan helmet and the Spartan “S” are painted. An antique green tapestry hanging in the Southeast corner features delicate white threading that displays Beaumont tower, a diploma, torch, graduation cap with gravel and a helping hand. The signatures of previous Tower Guard classes span all across the room. Two hanging photos remind the organization executive board of its founder, May Shaw, and the first 1934-1935 Tower Guard class. Originally a female-only honors society, Tower Guard performed most of its services for the visually impaired. Today, the co-ed Tower Guard engages in a variety of activities serving students with disabilities at MSU such as converting text to electronic format, reading exams, mentoring, tutoring, and fundraising. Members exemplify leadership, scholarship, outstanding character, and commitment to service.

While John Beaumont initiated the creation of our beloved Beaumont Tower, Russel Daubert was the passion behind expanding the range of its bells. As Beaumont’s first carillonneur, Daubert worked to add three additional bells in 1930. Beaumont officially became a carillon when ten bells were added in 1935. The torch was passed to Wendell Wescott, a church organist so inspired by the bells of Beaumont that he attained a degree from the Royal Carillon School in Belgium with highest honors. Under Wescott’s direction, Beaumont achieved the ability to play a full range of musical literature.

On the third floor, one finds the carillon’s office, a wide open space with a desk on one side and a set of comfortable grey couches on the other. The walls are white and textured. Across from the doorway, a single set of white metal stairs drops down from the ceiling. At the center of the room, a massive wooden trap door is easily spotted, and visitors suddenly realize that there was an identical trap door on every level of the tower. By opening them all, the tower bells can be safely lowered to the ground for cleaning and maintenance.



Walking up the stairs, visitors reach the fourth floor, where the real carillon resides. This carillon controls the forty-nine bells above it by various forms of touch. The first ten bells were installed in 1928. Thirteen additional bells were installed by 1935. The smooth, honey-wood baton shaped levers on the left side of the carillon are the heaviest since they ring larger bells. Meanwhile, the levers on the right become lighter. When looking out the windows of this room, one is greeted by the bottom corners of the gold clock and may be struck by how much larger it seems from this vantage point.

A sliding access door in the ceiling of the carillon room leads to the very top of the tower, a dim and crowded space which holds the forty-nine carillon bells. Little light filters through the shutters here, creating an atmospheric space untouched by time. What little light there is silhouettes the hanging bells and the many strings that control them. Larger bells at the bottom, the Westminster Quarters, are automated. A hammer strikes these bells every fifteen minutes.

As its music resounds on campus, Spartans look to Beaumont Tower. Beaumont Tower, a reminder of one's spiritual foundation, faithful vision through the committed life and transcendence, inspires meaning and pride.