



# Maroon and White: Mississippi State University, 1878-2003

*Michael B. Ballard*

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Mississippi State University was founded in 1878 and opened its doors in 1880 as a land-grant school designed for teaching agriculture and mechanical arts. Building upon the work of John K. Bettersworth, Michael B. Ballard traces the evolution of this institution. From the beginning, first president Stephen D. Lee wanted to expand the university's vision beyond agriculture and engineering. While admitting that these should be the focal points, the school gradually introduced studies in the humanities.

The university evolved around the expectation of being the "People's College," drawing students from rural areas and poor backgrounds and giving them a chance to succeed in higher education. There remains a broad cross-section in the student body from many backgrounds, including a substantial number of African American and international students. This kind of mix, which extends to the faculty, has strengthened the research capabilities of the university and broadened the academic landscape in ways Lee never dreamed.

The author covers many other facets of MSU, such as how it has been affected by national events through the years, including the Great Depression, World Wars I and II, and the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Michael B. Ballard is the university archivist and coordinator of the Congressional and Political Research Center at Mississippi State University. He is the author of numerous books on the Civil War, including *Pemberton: The General Who Lost Vicksburg* and *Civil War Mississippi: A Guide*, both from University Press of Mississippi.

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