

The Cornerstone

Volume 36, Issue 1

January 13th, 2026



Tau Beta Pi
The Engineering Honor Society

Letter From the Historian

Welcome back, Tau Bates! I hope you have a very happy New Year. My name is Chayut Shinawatra, but I prefer to be called by my nickname, Peak, and I will be your Historian for this semester. I elected to Tau Beta Pi in the Fall 2024 semester, and I am happy to serve in this role.

Like last semester, The Cornerstone will be fully digitalized and can be found at tbp.engin.umich.edu/publications/cornerstone. During meetings, The Best Puzzle, One Minute Reads, and a new experimental section will be available in physical copies. If you would like to give feedback about this, please fill out this form: tbpmig.org/digitalcornerstone. If you would like to contribute to The Cornerstone, such as writing the One Minute Reads, submitting puzzles, or giving recommendations, please fill out this form:

tbpmig.org/cornerstonecontribution, which will also be available in QR code form down below.

To kick off the semester, here's just a little fun fact: Last semester, our pride and joy, The Big House, hosted Zach Bryan's concert. Did you know that it was the largest single-headliner concert ever in U.S. history? With an audience of 112,408, it surpassed many, like Metallica, Taylor Swift, and George Strait. I hope everyone has a great semester, and I look forward to being your Historian.

Please feel free to reach out to me at tbp.historian@umich.edu, and forever,

Go Blue!

- Chayut (Peak) Shinawatra

In This Issue

- Letter from the Historian
- Zeroth Actives
- Upcoming Events
- TBPPuzzles
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Meeting Agenda

- Chapter Updates
- Leadership Opportunities
- Officer Updates

Upcoming Events

- Game Night I: 1/15, 5:30 - 8:00 PM
- First General: 1/27, 6:30 - 8:30 PM
- First Actives: 2/3, 6:30 - 8:30 PM

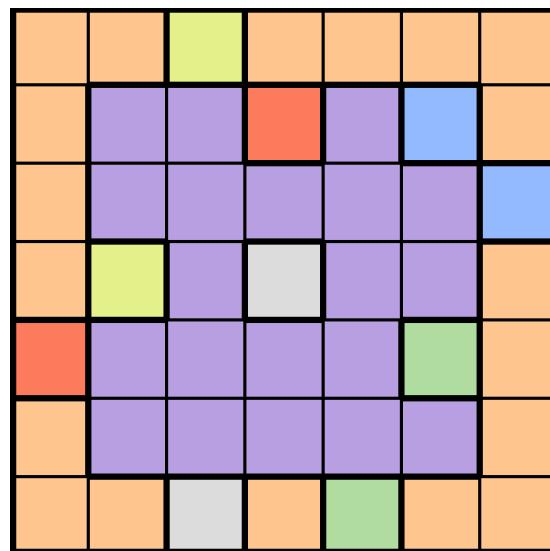
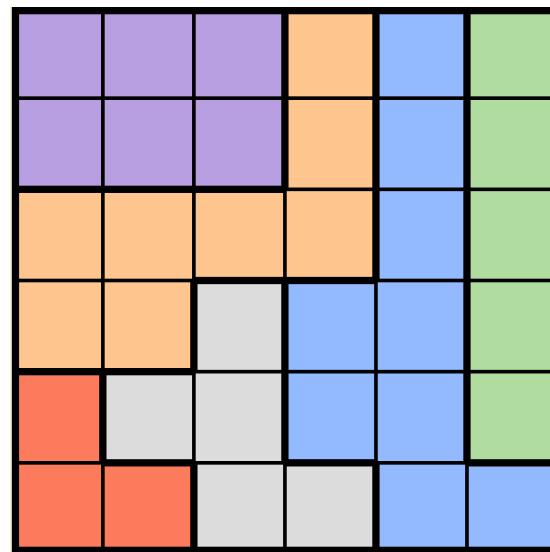
One Minute Reads

Traffic. Isn't traffic one of the worst things you can imagine? Imagine needing to rush to work only to get caught in a huge traffic jam. Intuitively, you would think adding a new road to divert traffic would make your life so much easier. Well, sometimes it actually does the exact opposite. This phenomenon is known as Braess's Paradox. In certain networks, adding a new road will only worsen the overall traffic. Why? Because drivers are selfish. They will choose whatever road seems fastest for them, causing bottlenecks and slowdowns in roads that can't handle the new influx of traffic, making everyone's commute longer than before the road existed. This doesn't just apply to roads. Computer networks, electrical power grids, and even game design fall prey to this paradox. So next time, when you wait in traffic for 30 minutes, know that sometimes, the "shortcut" is the road that is ruining your day. Thank you for reading this, if anyone is reading at all. If you are interested in something interesting and want to read some more, please check out the experimental section at the back of the page.

The Best Puzzles

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9						3
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Please contribute to the Cornerstone, scan the QR code! Send us puzzles (or suggestions), topics you are interested to read about, events/organizations you want to promote, or even your own section.



The Back-Page issue:

ISSUE 1: The Maiden Voyage of S/S Arcadia

The S/S Arcadia departed from Copenhagen on the morning of December 7th, 1891. In her inaugural passage north, she carried only a small, select company of passengers. I was among them, invited without explanation. The Arcadia's owner, the Royal Star Line, had high hopes for her to herald a new era. I disagreed. Formalities rarely included detectives.

Little did I, or the other passengers, know at the time: before the voyage ended, one of us would be dead.

The journey was pleasant until midafternoon, when the snow began falling. Normally, the light snow would be enjoyed as a novelty, but the dark clouds on the horizon suggested otherwise. I noticed the change first in the people, not the sky. The crew's footsteps were more subdued and alert, while the conversation in the salon thinned as passengers looked at the brackets and pipes warily.

Around six, Captain Rotherham appeared to reassure us.

“A blizzard front is advancing. We may reduce speed or anchor by nightfall. Rest assured, there is no cause for alarm.”

Most seemed satisfied. Finchley was not. He looked more guarded than others and continued watching the windows long after the captain was gone.

Spirits were low but lightened by the supper served at eight. As we ate, Finchley drew my attention again. He ate little, spoke less, and paused only to ask whether the lamps were tested for cold weather. Receiving assurance, he excused himself early for the night, remarking as he went that precautions were always demanded after the fact, never before. The steward mentioned bringing the gentleman tea before leaving with a steaming pot.

By nine, as I settled down for the evening, a soft knock came from my cabin door. A member of the crew appeared behind the door, already speaking as he entered.

“Evenin’, sir. The captain’s having us check the cabins before the temperature drops any further.”

He stepped into my cabin only long enough to test the catch on the lamp bracket and trim the wick, then moved on without another word. Along the corridor, I could hear similar greetings, different voices offering the same explanation. It was simply a routine procedure in winter sailing.

By ten, the storm finally hit. The blizzard battered against the windows in billows of white, and not long after, the Arcadia came to a halt. From what I could tell, the new engines were not prepared for such cold.

Sometime after midnight, a dull thud was heard in the midship cabins. At the time, it was taken for nothing more than the wind.

By morning, the roaring storm had passed, leaving behind an uneasy silence. As the steward made his routine rounds, Cabin 4 gave no response. Concerned, he unlocked the door only to pause in terror.

Mr. Charles Finchley lay on the floor beside his desk, bloodied, dead. Next to him, his pocket watch was shattered; its hands stopped at 1:14 AM.

Thus began the mystery of the Arcadia’s maiden voyage.

If you read this, I hope you enjoyed it, and please send me a Slack message!