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IN EARLIEST LANSING

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Pulpit and Prayer in Earliest Lansing

Joseph L. Druse

AS LANSING SLOWLY EMERGED OUT OF THE MICHIGAN WOODS, tree by tree giving way to cabin and fencepost, the restless race of pioneers, who multiplied in twelve years from a handful of souls to three thousand strong, faced, as all men, problems of spiritual nature; and while, as all men, they sought consolation within their own hearts and minds, they also called upon the formal assistance of the religious organizations they had known in their varying points of origin.¹ Even before the new settlement in the wilderness had acquired its lasting name, men seemed to have joined together in small groups for a corporate expression of belief. In twelve years (1859) a survey of the town revealed eight buildings devoted to the worship of God; in addition there were three or possibly four more organizations which would erect buildings within five years. These organizations set the worship pattern of the Lansing community until nearly the turn of the century, and therefore it is of great importance to examine the first thirteen formative years of religious life in Lansing.

Two tendencies, mutually attractive, joined together to produce the first church organizations. In the first place, the association among the settlers of men and women of common spiritual convictions and devoutness led naturally to the holding of prayer meetings without the presence of ordained clergy. But, at the same time, Michigan, like all the frontier area of the nation, was being continually crisscrossed by the circuit riding clergyman, seeking out members of his religious persuasion, converting those of no great belief, and incorporating both types into the small congregations which became the nucleus of the later parishes and congregations.

Likewise in the headquarters of the various religious denominations a leader or council was contemplating the spread of the frontier and sending out men to plant the seeds, not only of doctrinal truth

¹"Pulpit and Prayer in Earliest Lansing," the presidential address of Joseph L. Druse, was delivered at the annual meeting of the Historical Society of Greater Lansing, May 22, 1958.

but also of Christian fellowship. The operation of these far away agencies helped to stimulate and enrich the pattern of preaching and prayer which was to characterize the very early days of Lansing.

The first of the traveling preachers to work in the Lansing area appears to have been the Methodist Lewis Coburn whose home base was DeWitt. It is possible that his work was antedated by ministers from the Okemos Methodist congregation which assembled about 1840 or by the itinerant ministrations of the Reverend Henry Lester, a preacher of the Methodist Protestant persuasion, a faith which had no lasting roots in Lansing. The records disclose that Lewis Coburn preached in the cabin of Joab Page on Wall Street, now Maple Street, in 1845. Early the next year a group of his hearers formed the first Methodist Class in Lansing which included among its four members Page, his wife, and his married daughter. Services continued to be held in the Page home, whose proprietor was emboldened by prosperity of Lansing and the prospect of its capitalship to enlarge his building into a small tavern, whose public room served for the purposes of Lord's Day gatherings. It is of interest to note that the same room served also for courtroom (Page was Lansing's first justice of the peace), a boarding house for workers in the area, and a business office for the contractors who built the first state capitol.

During the next two years this nucleus of Wesleyanism in Lansing grew slowly but continuously. Meeting ordinarily in the Page house or in the newly erected Cedar Street schoolhouse, in either place under summons by a great tin horn, listeners heard the witness of the Word from the lips of such circuit riders as were appointed by the Grand Rapids District Conference to the Lyons Circuit; occasionally men from the Mapleton circuit also came into Lansing. The highlight of 1847 was the great April preaching of the Reverend Frank Blades, popularly called the "boy preacher," to a congregation of sixty; in the same year the presiding elder of the district established his headquarters in Lansing, and a definite Sunday school system emerged. The burgeoning of these activities enabled the first quarterly conference to be held in Lansing in the year 1848; the new city had become a fixed station of the Mapleton Circuit the previous year. The quarterly conference revealed that the Sunday school, (twelve teachers, 26 scholars, and fifty volumes)

had "flattering prospects." The elation over these prospects produced a collection of \$5.88, of which \$3.00 went to the preacher on the occasion, \$2.50 to the presiding elder, and 38 cents was spent on "elements."

The increasing size of the group made meetings in the Page house (sometimes and somewhat grandiosely called the "Grand River House") unfeasible. On the other hand, the religious activities of the Presbyterian group forced the Methodists of Lower Town to alternate with them on the Sunday use of the schoolhouse. A step forward was taken in 1848 when a group of Methodists accepted the offer of the legislature to assign lots in the school section to churches for the purpose of building. The lot thus accepted became ultimately the site of Central Methodist Church. In the meantime James Seymour, one of the more prosperous merchants of Lower Town, came to the aid of religion and offered a large warehouse to the two religious groups for use as a church, if they would see to the remodeling. The work of renovation was done by James Turner and Hiram H. Smith, and Methodists and Presbyterians of Lower Town fraternally used the structure alternately with the schoolhouse. Its external appearance remained simple and business-like and the structural modifications of the interior were few. The irreverent were led to speak of the place as God's Barn, which aroused the ire of devout old Joab Page; and there was little appeasement in the analogy some peacemaker pointed out between the barn in Lansing and the stable in Bethlehem.

By 1849 the membership of Methodism in Lansing was seventy. The minister appointed in that year bore the undeniably peculiar name of Resin Sapp, but his name was no bar to his abilities. He became the first chaplain of the Legislature in Lansing, and for so acting received \$150. His salary from the church was \$464, in addition to which he received \$50 a year rent, \$59.08 table expenses, and \$22 for travel. Probably a good part of his stated salary was in the form of missionary aid; his successor thus received \$300.

In 1851 Lansing became the center of the new Grand River district of the Methodist Church. A parsonage was built at a cost of \$378.96, which cut out the rental expense from the church budget. Late in 1852 the Presbyterians dedicated their new church

in Middle Town; they withdrew from the use of God's Barn, and Mr. Seymour sold it two years later to the Methodist group so that it became the center of Methodism alone. In 1854 pews were rented for the first time, the rental ranging from one dollar to five dollars, depending on proximity to the stove. The same year the Methodists reorganized themselves, probably to give active participation to the Middle Town Methodists. We find Sunday afternoon services being held by the Methodists at this time in Representatives Hall in the old State Capitol. In 1856 a Lansing district was formed, and in Lansing itself a new Methodist group came into existence consisting of eleven German-speaking Wesleyans who had moved into the northwest part of town. This section was also largely the center of German Lutherans, German Catholics and, later, of German Evangelicals. As early as 1853 their desire to hear the Gospel in their native tongue induced the Reverend Jacob Krehbiel to come up from Ann Arbor for occasional German services. In 1854 he was put in charge of the group; within two weeks of his initial organization of the group their membership was up to twenty. They raised the money for a church building within a year, bought the site on which their church still stands, and finished the frame structure for dedication in July, two services being held, one in English and one in German. By 1860 their Sunday school alone numbered thirty and was conducted by nine officers.

The dedication of the German church was followed soon by the first Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of Western Michigan to be held in Lansing. One hundred delegates attended, among them several Indians, and Bishop Waugh presided. In addition to the usual ordinations, reports, conferences, and assignments, the Reverend Nelson Brockway was assigned to Lansing to the congregation in Lower Town and the Reverend William Brockway was assigned to organize what was eventually to become Central Church. As a last gesture the Conference presented Michigan's Governor Kinsley S. Bingham with a life membership in the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a subscription for this purpose being taken up among the clergy at the conference. Nelson Brockway's work in Middle Town bore fruit in the organization of a Sunday school class, and in 1859 the first subscription

to build the new Methodist church there was taken up. The church itself (on the site of the present Tussing building) was not completed until 1862.

So much for what seems to have been the most active group in the period. Birt Darling avers that other Methodist societies organized but ran into difficulty; and indeed it would seem more than probable that some early effort would have been made to build a Methodist citadel in Upper Town. No trace of this remains; but Sylvester G. Scofield's account of his arrest for assault in a disputation over the use of God's Barn, an account couched in somewhat cryptic language, may reflect some sort of internal Methodist difficulties.

The Methodist thus organized a class in 1846; a congregation properly speaking seems to have emerged in 1847. In the meantime their Calvinist brethren were not inactive. Congregationalists in Lansing point with pride to the fact that the first church organized in Lansing was a Congregationalist church formed on July 7, 1847, by seven members under the leadership of the Reverend S. S. Brown, an agent of the Connecticut Home Mission Society. Apparently some of the members were Presbyterian by former affiliation. At this period of American religious history the Congregationalists and Presbyterians were working together to establish new churches on the frontier. The joint association which presided over these establishments generally recommended the appointment of a minister of the majority group in such an establishment; and the practice was that members of both the parent groups would worship together until such time as there were sufficient members of both groups to support separate churches. Although the initiative in founding the Congregational church had been Congregational, the minister sent out to take care of the group, the Reverend Benjamin Millard, was a Presbyterian. Quarrels of some sort seem to have followed. The most prominent Congregationalist leaders had been contractors who moved out of town at this juncture. When Millard returned East on a money-raising tour, he recommended that a Presbyterian group be established in Lansing and the Congregational group be disregarded. He never returned to face the few disgruntled Congregationalists; but they, faced with the *fait accompli* of the organization of a Presbyterian Church in November, 1847,

slowly adjusted their spiritual lives to living in a Presbyterian group, although some cast their lot in with the Baptists. The Congregationalist church, thus inactivated, did not reappear as a separate group until 1864. Nonetheless it is significant that as early as 1859 a piece of property on the east side of the capitol between Washenaw and Kalamazoo is described on the map of that year as belonging to the Congregational church.

In 1847 Millard had dispatched to Lansing to organize the Presbyterians the Reverend Calvin Clark who was to be agent for the American Home Missionary Society in Michigan. The group, organized in November, was recognized by the Presbytery as a church in December at a meeting in the Cedar Street schoolhouse. To guide the infant church Clark recommended the Confession of Faith and Covenant of the Presbyterian church of Geneva, New York. At the meeting four additional people applied for membership; a Sunday school was organized, and church services and Sunday school were appointed to be held in the Ohio House, a hotel in Middle Town. The pulpit used there, so tradition has it, was a flour barrel upended. An invitation was issued to clergy in the East to come to preach as candidates for the pastorate; one such candidate from Watertown, New York, came, saw, and decided that the harvests in this field were too sparse; the church's offer was declined. Late in 1848 the Presbyterians joined the Methodists in utilizing God's Barn on alternate Sundays. It is significant that the donor of the warehouse, James Seymour, was the father-in-law of a later Presbyterian minister. In the fall of 1848 the Reverend William W. Atterbury accepted a call to the pastorate. He stayed for six years, during which time sixty members were added to the group, twelve were dismissed to other churches, three died, and one was excommunicated. The minister appears to have lived on the offerings of his flock and an additional \$200 furnished by the Home Missionary Society. The five trustees of the organization gave way to the first elders in 1849. In 1850 the infant church secured from the state title to a lot on the northeast corner of Ottawa and Capitol; this was shortly exchanged for a lot on the southwest corner of Genesee and Washington. I fancy the change in property reflects the problem of pleasing Presbyterians in both Middle and Lower Town. At any rate, subscriptions were taken

up in 1851 for the new church and \$2200 in pledges were received, plus a gift of \$1500 from the East. The contract was let and the building dedicated in December, 1852. A debt on the structure hung on until 1860. The 68 by 38 building had the first bell tower in Lansing, and the first bell, donated by the Ladies Aid, was installed in 1856.

But the church had its difficulties. Under the Reverend Benjamin Franklin there was some dissension; the Sunday School declined, one of the first elders of the church left and joined the Methodists, and finally Franklin accepted a call to Corunna. For a year there was no pastor until the young scholar, Chester S. Armstrong, son-in-law of James Seymour, was called. He was ordained in Lansing and in 1856 took possession of his flock. Immediately things began to hum. Under him the first Presbytery meeting was held in Lansing in 1857. In 1858 he was the leader in the inauguration of the revival movement which swept the community. On one day more than forty people united themselves to the Presbyterian church. The revival was repeated in 1859, and the increase of membership from Lower Town was eventually to lead to the formation of the Franklin Street Presbyterian Church in that area in the next decade. In the eight years of Armstrong's pastorate one hundred and ten people were admitted by profession, sixty-two were dismissed to other churches, fourteen died, two were excommunicated, and five suspended.

In addition to this congregation there appears to have been another Presbyterian group, the Old School Presbyterians, who received from the state in 1850 a lot on the southwest corner of Capitol and Washtenaw, listed later as cancelled and surrendered. What became of the group is unknown.

In America the other great group of Calvinistic persuasion is the Baptist church. The earliest records of Baptist activity are scanty; it is obvious at least that the tendency to be of an independent mind in attaching oneself to religious organizations, a tendency faintly noticed among early Lansing Presbyterians and Methodists, was more pronounced among the Baptists. Already in 1848 three different Baptist churches were organized, none of them directly connected with the present First Baptist Church in Lansing. Records

list the names of the first trustees of the First and Second Baptist churches of that year, which were organized respectively in the homes of Robert Derry and Richard Walton.

The third of these groups represented the impact of Arminianism on Baptist practice, and called itself the Free Will Baptist Church. Unlike the other two groups which vanished shortly, the Free Will Baptists seem to have been under the direct leadership of a clergyman, the Reverend Henry S. Limbocker. Meeting in May, 1848, at the home of Cyrus Thompson, their first deacon, they agreed upon a covenant and secured L. J. Madden as pastor for a year. For three years they had no regular pastor, but during that time they secured a church lot on the southeast corner of Kalamazoo and Capitol from the Legislature and erected a church without incurring a debt. The next years seem to have been years of alternate shower and drought in their organizational life. The "exclusion" of some members probably represents some internal conflict, especially in view of the fact that complaint is made in 1858 that their meetinghouse was occupied by the "Close Communion Baptist" of whom no other record in this early Lansing period exists.

In the meantime in Lower Town there gradually emerged a group, the Regular Baptist Church of Lansing, which is direct ancestor to the present-day First Baptist Church. Baptists of that section, apparently joined by a few Congregationalists unhappy with the outcome of their organizing efforts, met together for prayer meetings in homes, at least as early as the fall of 1850, when there are records of such a meeting in the home of J. D. Edwards. They seem to have joined the Methodists for Sunday services in God's Barn. A Baptist minister from DeWitt, the Reverend John Gunderman, held a service once every four weeks for the group. Occasionally the Reverend Thomas Merrill, founder of Kalamazoo College, gave them spiritual comfort. A tavernkeeper on Franklin Street (now East Grand River) became a convert and meetings were held in his public sitting room. In January, 1851, the group decided to move toward formal organization of a church. In February a meeting of fourteen members-to-be took place in the Cedar Street schoolhouse under the presidency of the Reverend Eliphalet S. Tooker. Six new candidates presented themselves for membership, and the meeting concluded with their baptism in the Grand River. The



Courtesy of Historical Society of Greater Lansing

BAPTIST CHURCH AT CORNER OF CAPITOL AVENUE AND
IONIA STREET DEDICATED OCTOBER 5, 1859



Courtesy of Historical Society of Greater Lansing

FIRST PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, LANSING, ORIGINALLY A SCHOOL

next month the formal organizational meeting was held with delegates from neighboring churches of the Shiawassee Association present. The right hand of fellowship was extended by these churches and the new church came into being under the pastoral care of the Reverend Gunderman, and later of P. C. Dayfoot. The group made approaches to the other Baptist groups in town, one of whom had secured title to a piece of land upon which the present church is built. Behind this irenic action lay the wisdom and pressure of Miss Margaret Dryer, probably the most outstanding woman religious leader in early Lansing history. In 1852 the new church was host to the annual meeting of the Shiawassee association. Its religious services seem to have been held in various places: homes, the state capitol, schoolhouses, and occasionally in God's Barn. A year without a pastor, 1855-56, was a great shock to the infant church; the new pastor, the Reverend Lyman H. Moore, came from Marshall, surveyed the situation, and announced bluntly, "You must have a house of worship or abandon the field." The result was that a church building was completed through the dint of great sacrifice by the members and dedicated in 1859 in conjunction with the first meeting in Lansing of the Michigan Baptist Convention. A slight indebtedness was cleared away in a few months. The First Baptist group faced the decade of the sixties with a loyalty strengthened by the sacrifices of the building program and quickened by the devotion of a tireless pastor.

In the decade of the fifties Lansing's most popular, most civic-minded, and most sought-after clerical figure seems to have been the Reverend C. W. Knickerbocker, pastor of the Universalist society for nearly ten years. The Universalists had organized in 1848 and had taken advantage of the legislative bounty to secure a lot on the southeast corner of Grand and Allegan upon which ultimately to build a church. It was not erected until 1863. Their first minister was John H. Sanford who came to Lansing in 1849 with a printing press upon which he published an evangelistic paper called the *Expositor*. Formal incorporation of the Universalist group was delayed until 1855. In the early fifties Dr. Knickerbocker arrived. One of his first duties was to organize a Sunday school which met in the Senate chamber. He established the custom of the annual Thanksgiving Day service in the Senate chamber, which was to last

for many years. In 1856 a first attempt was made to secure funds for a church building. The church's Ladies Aid held suppers and bazaars. At the end of that year Dr. Knickerbocker took his departure. But in September of the following year a public subscription was raised to get him returned to Lansing. In October newspaper note is made of the fact that he had returned. Negotiations were undertaken to exchange the lot site on Grand Street for one on Washington next to the Presbyterian Church, but these apparently fell through. The editor of the *State Republican* characterized Knickerbocker at this point as a "young man of superior mental culture and marked ability." The next year the state convention of Universalist churches was held in Lansing. Thus state recognition of the strength of the young society enabled them to enter the next decade with redoubled efforts to build a church.

Adherents of the Protestant Episcopal church seem to have been here late in the forties. Mrs. Frances L. Adams states in her *Pioneer History of Ingham County* (Lansing, 1923) that there were several trustees, and that the group met in the Senate chamber in February, 1849, for a sermon, probably delivered by an itinerant clergyman or read by a lay reader. In 1850 St. Paul's Parish took title to a piece of legislative grant on the southwest corner of Washington and Ionia, now occupied by the Gladmer Theatre. Whatever parish organization then existed appears to have disintegrated in the years immediately following. During the first years of the fifties a minister named Brown is reported to have held services according to the Book of Common Prayer in Lansing. In 1853 he held a Communion service for four families in the parlor of the Benton House in Upper Town. In June of that year a vestry of eleven men is reported organized. Congregational meetings were held in the State Library and the Senate chamber. From 1854 to 1856 the spiritual wants of the parish were attended by the Reverend Algernon S. Hollister of Hamburg. In December, 1855, a notice of meeting for the establishment of the Episcopal church appeared in the local paper. Apparently an invitation was extended to the Reverend John Bramwell to preach late in January. His performance was satisfactory, apparently, and succeeding services confirmed the trustees in their opinion. Consequently the Reverend Bramwell was appointed to the parish in March.

In July of that year the diocesan convention admitted the parish, then numbering fifteen members, to membership; the pastor was shouldered with missions in Owosso, St. Johns, Delta, and DeWitt. Despite the success of his labors, or perhaps because of them, Bramwell resigned on the grounds of ill health. He left a church of twenty-seven members, and had the happiness of seeing the Bishop in Lansing for the first confirmation service for four persons. He was assigned to the healthier clime of Lake Superior and died very shortly. His successor, the Reverend William Withington, came in 1858. One of his first endeavors was to build a church, and in 1859 the Victorian Gothic frame church arose. It cost \$1500 and was free of debt. It was consecrated in May of that year. 1860 saw a second confirmation service, this time of twenty-two confirmands, and the beginning of the short but striking tenure of the German Reverend Edward Meyers.

The early history of Catholicism in the area is clouded. The first Catholics in the area seem to have been of German descent, and they were visited by German-speaking priests from Detroit or from Westphalia, that curious settlement of 1836. It is asserted that the first Mass was said in 1854 in the cabin at Lenawee and Townsend of Thomas Saier by Father Kellert from Westphalia. The Rev. Francis Krutil, a Redemptionist from Detroit, said Mass in the Senate chamber. At a later date the Catholics of the area were confided to the care of the Catholic pastor at Corunna. A frame church was begun on land donated by Thomas Saier at Madison and Chestnut. Apparently funds ran out, and the contractor dismantled the edifice before it could be used. A brick church edifice was begun in 1859, but it was not completed for two years. In 1860 the Catholics appealed to the Bishop of Detroit for a resident pastor. His first appointee was unsuccessful and left. The future of the Catholic church in Lansing seemed in the opening of the sixties to be in some doubt.

In the northwest section of the city, along with their Catholic and Methodist compatriots, German Lutherans from the Ann Arbor area had settled. Their religious life was sustained by occasional visits from the Reverend Frederick Schmidt of Ann Arbor. Services were held in the Cedar Street schoolhouse. In 1855 a congregation, eventually to be called Emmanuel, was organized,

and immediately began working for a church building which appeared in 1856 on the northeast corner of Seymour and Kilborn. The first regular pastor was the Reverend Carl Volz, succeeded in 1857 by the Reverend Adam Buerkle who remained for nine years. The church, which was affiliated with the Ohio Synod, also served as pastoral headquarters for Lutherans in Westphalia, Woodland, and Grand Ledge. In 1860 the mother church of Lutheranism in Lansing was not yet reft by the quarrel out of which Trinity church was to appear.

In the fifties one of the most prosperous and potentially successful societies in Lansing was the Church of the United Brethren. Unfortunately records are scanty. In 1854 the Michigan Conference of United Brethren churches was organized at a meeting in Eaton Rapids with the Reverend Stephen Lee as evangelist. By June, 1856, the Reverend Aaron Bowser, "a young man of marked ability," according to the newspaper of the time, was holding services in the Senate chamber. In the famous Bobier arson case of October, 1857, the culprits were apprehended attempting to destroy The United Brethren Church then in the course of building. Their frustrated efforts were matched by the determination of the United Brethren who dedicated their church on the northwest corner of Kalamazoo and Capitol in November of that year. The church participated enthusiastically in the revival movement of 1858, and several mentions are made of twenty-five persons uniting with the church and of twenty-three people being baptized in the Grand River by Pastor Bowser. In 1860 S. Lee (probably Stephen Lee) is listed as pastor of the church. In the *Gazeteer* of 1863 the church is mentioned but the pastorate is vacant; by 1873 even the church building is no longer mentioned.

There were several other abortive efforts to establish churches in Lansing. In the midst of the turmoil between Congregationalists and Presbyterians in 1847, a Dutch Reformed minister, the Reverend Demarest, appeared, and sought to incorporate the Calvinists of Lansing into his own communion. He stayed around for five or six weeks, at the end of which time the attendance of his services had declined to zero. He shook the dust of Lansing from his feet. In 1850, perhaps under stimulus of a printer-minister named Jabez Fox

of Marshall, a First New Church of Jerusalem Society was organized and took a lot from the state on the southwest corner of Washington and Shiawassee. Nothing more is heard of the group. Lastly, there are reports of Mormon Evangelization in this area. It would seem well nigh impossible that with Jesse James Strang as delegate to the House of Representatives no attempt was made to organize a local stake. There are no records available, however, and any such organization probably disappeared in the wild panic that prevailed among Michigan Mormons after the assassination of their leader.

So far the denominational development of Lansing's religious life has been discussed. What of the day by day life of these churches? It must first of all be asserted that in each church there were its own sectarian peculiarities: thus the practice of baptizing in the river is peculiar to Baptists and United Brethren in Lansing, while the formal ritualism of Episcopalian and Catholic was not shared by other groups. But many of the circumstances of life in the frontier town were shared by all of the groups.

Perhaps an examination of the organization of the churches is in order. The life of the circuit riding preacher needs no detailing. He appears in Lansing in Methodist, Baptist, Catholic, and Lutheran guises; within a few years, for all these groups save the Catholic he gives place to the settled pastor, though such a pastor, as in the case of Episcopalians and Lutherans, often has mission stations in the vicinity for whose pastoral care he is responsible. The earliest organization of the Methodist church in the area, the circuit, remained for a long time as testimony of the early nature of religious administration of the pioneer days. No good account of the particular circuit riders of Lansing is available but the general pattern and nature of their lives and duties can be seen in the lives of the Methodist Cartwright in Illinois, the Episcopalian DeKoven in Ohio, and the Catholic Mazzuchelli in Wisconsin.

When a settled group is established in Lansing its earliest organization is simple, if not indefinite. The Methodist class of Joab Page has the traditional structure implicit in Wesleyanism, but the prayer meeting of the Edwards family was a free form, so to speak. Very early in Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal groups we find the emergence of a board of trustees, apparently a legal

group empowered to take possession of the lots offered for building purposes by the legislature. Very shortly, however, these committees give place to the elders and deacons of the Presbyterian form, the vestry of the Episcopal usage, or similar specialized groups. Often the institution of these specifically denominational forms occurred in connection with the settlement upon a statement of belief and practice, such as took place at the recorded covenant meetings of the Presbyterians and Baptists. Sometimes the parish organization came into full legitimate being only when the local group was recognized by an authoritative outside group as an authentic division of the whole church. Thus the Baptists awaited recognition from the Shiawassee Association, the Presbyterians acknowledgment from the Marshall Presbytery, and the Episcopalians validation by the diocesan convention. In some cases, of course, the local church came into being only by the intervention of an outside authority upon the scene; the example of the organization of both Congregational and Presbyterian churches occurred in this fashion, and the abortive attempt at a Dutch Reformed group likewise was of this source.

A discussion of organizations ought not to leave out the women's societies. Presumably every cult had such a group, but the records of most of them have disappeared. It is perhaps a tribute to the effectiveness of their operations that they, taken so much for granted, made little imprint upon the imaginations of their immediate descendants. There is a record of an early functioning of the women's group among the Baptists, to which allusion will be made later; and in an open letter to the *Lansing Republican* the Presbyterian ladies reviewed their activities for seven years from the date of organization with seventeen members in 1851. During that period they raised \$800 for furnishing the church with cushions, carpets, sofa, lamp, table, and pulpit for the chancel. They paid off part of the church debt. They helped toward the purchase of "the Musical Instrument in the Gallery." They paid for a bell which cost \$450, and their labors paid for material for the fence which enclosed the church property.

The record of their expenditures leads neatly into the discussion of church finance. The sources of funds were as manifold as the fertility of imagination. To begin with were the homely sacrifices

which characterized the lives of the zealous; the building of the Baptist church was possible because some members of the group postponed the expectation of plastering the inside walls of their cabins so that the funds might be used for the church. Very often decisions for such sacrifices were brought about by the circulation of subscription lists, such as the ones meant to erect the Episcopal and Central Methodist Churches, or to persuade the Universalist Knickerbocker to return to the city as leader of his flock. Other groups, such as the Methodists and Lutherans had a form of pew rent; among the former the pews hired out at rates from one dollar to five dollars per year, the highest priced being nearest the stove. Still other groups utilized directly the labor of its members in lieu of any specie exchange. The Baptist church was built by the physical labors of its members; and long before that event the women of the Baptist church in the summer of 1852 clambered aboard a lumber wagon and rode out to the Reverend Gunderman's farm in DeWitt where they spent the day sewing for his family.

The peculiar American ability for combining business with pleasure also combined the two with religion in the use of various entertainment devices for raising money. Perhaps the most common of these devices was the donation party in which a committee of arrangements planned a program and presumably headed off duplication in grants of luxury items. Usually the party was announced; all the citizens of the town took part, whether or nor they belonged to the church, and in due course a Thank-You note appeared in the press on behalf of the minister. Occasionally these were surprise affairs; the Presbyterian Armstrong was lured away from his home one winter night on pretext of some ecclesiastical business, and when he returned found over a hundred people assembled to wish him well; the ladies group presented him with a dressing gown on this occasion, in the pocket of which was a filled purse. Obviously there was a strong social aspect to these affairs. Occasionally the recorded gifts are curious; the Universalist Knickerbocker who had left and then had been lured back by the church, early in the following year was presented by the ladies of the Society with an Album Quilt, which might sound like a going away present.

Sometimes these affairs were more formal: a concert perhaps in the State Capitol building for 25 cents admission, for the benefit

of Mr. Knickerbocker. This was furnished by the younger members of the Universalist choir assisted by members of other choirs. A similar affair was undertaken to help provide funds for the building of the Lutheran church. Again there were fairs and suppers. The Presbyterian Ladies Sewing Circle advertised one in 1857 to help pay for the bell. The notice specified clearly that neither lottery nor Post Office would be part of the fun, which could be joined for ten cents admission at the Representatives Hall. The Episcopalians preferred to give their church suppers in the Benton House in Upper Town.

Some degree of the support, especially at the beginning, came from sources outside Lansing. Both the Presbyterian and Methodist clergy received outside grants to augment what must have been a fairly meagre salary in the first years of their churches. The Presbyterian church itself was partly constructed by an outside grant of \$1500. Probably the German Catholic priests who served their Lansing faithful were supported in part by the Ludwigsverein or some other European missionary fund.

It is worth noting also the support governmental agencies gave these groups. The presentation of lots, of course, was an outright subsidy for the various sects. In addition every religious group in early Lansing utilized with liberality the government buildings opened to them for services: the Cedar Street schoolhouse was very commonly used, and even more so the various rooms in the State Capitol building, the Senate Hall, the Representatives Chamber, and the State Library. The salary which the Legislature appointed to its chaplains, usually local pastors, was no small addition to the clerical income.

What happened to the funds collected? The expenses of the minister were probably largest and foremost. The various aspects of the Methodist minister Sapp's salary have already been discussed. The Presbyterian Atterbury received a salary in 1849 of \$400. The stated funds in salaries often concealed such items as parsonage, food allowance, travel, etc.

The building of the church or the payment of the building debt was upon occasion a major item of expense. The upkeep of the church: fuel, cleaning, furniture, light; all took their share of the budget.

The worship of the church was various according to the tradition of the religion concerned. The regular Sunday service consisting of Bible readings, extempore prayer, hymn, and sermon provided the usual routine. The prayer meetings in homes were similar with a meditation or testimony ordinarily replacing the sermon. The Sunday was a day full of services. In 1855 the Methodists held services at 10:30, 2 and 6 in various localities. The language was ordinarily English, except for the German used in the Saginaw Street Methodist and in the Lutheran church, and the Latin used for the rarer Roman Catholic rites. The records of the baptismal services of Baptist and United Brethren have been noted. One Baptist record concludes, "After preaching, repaired to the water and the candidates were baptized." The Baptists preferred the Grand River at the foot of Ottawa Street. One early pastor, having taken off his shoes and deposited them on the banks, was unable, after the rites, to locate them and had to walk home in his socks. There were also sadder meetings of the congregations. Occasionally disciplinary action had to be taken against some member, and he was suspended or excommunicated. The chief basis for this action was alleged moral transgressions, although occasionally doctrinal dereliction is noted in the records. Upon occasion the meeting took a joyful tone as when some prodigal thus separated returned to the fold. One Baptist record of an argumentative disciplinary session somewhat wearily reads, "Regular covenant meeting. Heard from all. All looking forward to a rest in heaven." These covenant meetings took place ordinarily on Saturday nights, and make a curious parallel to the Roman Catholic practice of reconciliation through confession, usually on Saturday nights.

In the history of the church there also occurred outstanding special events. Thus the Episcopal church celebrated with some eclat the first two visits of Bishop McCloskey who confirmed, first, four people in Representatives Hall in 1857 and then twenty-two people in the new church in 1860. Ordination services occurred occasionally. The setting-apart for the Presbyterian ministry in Lansing of the young C. S. Armstrong in October, 1856, was preceded by the public examination of the candidate, and must have been an event of much interest to the community. The trial sermons of ministers usually brought a fuller crowd. Days of dedication of buildings, such

as the United Brethren in 1857 and the Episcopalians in 1859, attracted goodly throngs. The Universalists made an annual event of the Thanksgiving service in the capitol to which all were invited. As Lansing grew in importance, various state or area organizations of the churches held annual meetings in Lansing, which became events of some remembrance for the local members of the groups. The funerals of these early days were a trifle different from our current practices. In the presence of the corpse the minister gave a short biography and few words of praise. Then, noting the grandeur of the occasion when a soul goes to meet its maker, the minister confessed his own sinful past and related his conversion to the light. The final motif was a warning to the listeners of their approaching deaths and imminent punishment.

But of all dramatic events in the history of the town, the revival movement was most important. The year, 1858, was the great year of revival in early Lansing, although some mention is made of similar movements among the Presbyterians and Methodists of Lower Town in 1849; and in 1859 C. S. Armstrong tried another such campaign among the Presbyterians. In February, 1858, note is made that "revivals are in progress all over the state, in Lansing, and also at the agricultural College." It was characterized in Lansing by daily meetings in the churches, a schedule which in the Presbyterian and United Brethren churches seems to have lasted until the end of May. The height of religious enthusiasm seems to have been reached in March. The Methodists in Lower Town had between sixty and eighty converts at that point. In Middle Town the Presbyterian Armstrong, assisted by a Congregational minister from Marshall, was making great spiritual progress, and the Universalists had added twenty new members. Reports of the revival in other parts of the nation came in, and sustained the course of the revival. Early in May notation is made that thirty persons joined the Presbyterian church, most by profession, most being heads of families. At the same date the Baptist baptized four more members, and the Reverend Bowser of the United Brethren immersed 23 members in the Grand. Ultimately it was said of the Presbyterian church that its membership was doubled in this campaign; this increase led indirectly to the founding a few years later of the Franklin Street church.

Notice has been taken of the gradual erection of the various ecclesiastical edifices in Lansing beginning with God's Barn and closing the fifties with a half-finished brick structure of the Catholics. It might be well to summarize here the other places in which the corporate worship of the various religious bodies took place. Homes formed the earliest scene. Public edifices and, especially, as noted above, the various chambers of the capitol building, and the Cedar Street school, provided space for worship. Then the public houses of the town: commencing with Page's rough Grand River House and including the Ohio and Benton Houses, as well as the unnamed tavern on Franklin Street in which the early Baptists held meetings, provided opportunities for church societies to meet. Occasionally the church building of another denomination was used by a new church group; thus the Episcopalians are known to have worshiped in the Presbyterian edifice. Most of the church buildings standing in 1860 were designed for that end; however, God's Barn had a chequered history and there is some possibility that either the Free Will Baptist or the United Brethren church had been originally the old second ward schoolhouse. It is a pity that not one of these pioneer edifices is now standing, even in a modified form.

We have some idea of the condition of these pioneer temples. The first, God's Barn, the converted warehouse was a long building with a double row of wooden pillars holding up the roof and obstructing the view. Its walls had been plastered inside, and had been painted white, although it soon took on a dingy gray hue from the smoke. The seats were high-backed pews made by the men of the congregation.

The Presbyterian church of 1852 was 68 x 38 feet. It contained a gallery; perhaps, it was like the old Presbyterian church in Homer. The style of most of these buildings seems to have been a more or less close approximation of the Greek revival. The Episcopal church, however, was a modest Gothic revival structure with a central tower in the front facade. If ecclesiastical custom and financial condition permitted there was an organ; bells were unusual at first, and still rare by 1860. Most structures were frame, although the new Catholic edifice was brick. To judge by the description of the work of the Ladies Aid of the Presbyterian church, church furnishings at first were sparse, (and often borrowed, as were those of the Baptist

society at first) but comforts in the church gradually came with age. Lighting was provided by swinging lamps whose oily fumes caused some discomfort, and which were often unreliable in some types of weather. Heat was provided by a potbellied stove, said to be in the center of the Episcopal structure, around which was arranged the square of pews. Seating, originally very simple — the first Lutheran pews were unplanned boards laid across blocks — was made comfortable by cushions, the first ones of which seem to have been made by the ladies societies by stuffing with a coarse firm wild grass; the Presbyterian ladies bewailed the cut fingers they received in this holy work of cushion plumping carried on at the Ohio House. The original borrowed furnishings of the Baptist church were only gradually replaced as financial stringency wore off. A certain amount of attention to cleanliness was paid to the structures. A local anecdote involving a popular but not fervently religious denizen of one of the local hostels reveals the existence of the caretaker. The gentleman in question went to church unexpectedly one Sunday. He removed his hat and put it on the floor beside him. When he came to leave, he couldn't find his hat. He realized the lady sitting beside him had it covered up beneath the ample measure of her great skirts. Too much of a gentleman to ask a strange lady to lift her skirts, he left and then sought out the "sweeper" the next day. Usually, however, church sanitation was in the hands of congregational committees. The last issue of the *Lansing Republican* for 1858 notes that everything was being cleaned in Lansing — even services in the churches were suspended in order that painting and whitewashing might take place.

There is one other aspect of the church's life that assumed great importance, the Sabbath School. Probably all the early churches had some form of this institution. We know that in November, 1848, the Methodists had nine teachers and twenty-six scholars in theirs; the Presbyterians organized theirs in December that same year and met in the Ohio House. There appears to have been some languishing of the movement in the next years, but in 1853 the Universalists founded theirs. For the Independence Day celebration the various Sunday schools joined together; those listed included Presbyterian, German Methodist, Methodist, United Brethren, and Universalists. Inadvertently the Universalist group was left out of the final plans;

and in a public huff, they announced they were going to have their own Fourth of July Sunday school celebration. A similar festival in 1857 found the Baptist group also listed. The success of this affair led to the organization of the Union Sunday School Association of Lansing that same month. Funds were raised for the group by an offering by little girls. Another outcome of this kind of cooperation was the opening of Lansing's first book store by Alvin L. Upson as a depository for Sunday school books.

The cooperation in this area leads naturally to a consideration of other aspects of intercreedal cooperation in early Lansing. The members and ministers of the churches in Lansing joined together in the Ingham County Bible Society which was formed about 1855. There is a notation in 1856 of a Union meeting "for prayer and conference" in the Young Man's Hall in Lower Town on every Friday evening, to which the public was invited. Different church leaders sponsored speakers such as the Reverend William Crane of the American Peace Society who spoke in the Senate Chamber in 1857. The revival movement of 1858 was accompanied by some intersectarian cooperation, and at the Thanksgiving service held at the Presbyterian church in 1857 the sermon was preached by the Baptist minister. Moreover, the Senate, instead of selecting a chaplain for the whole session, invited the clergy of Lansing to arrange among themselves to officiate in turn in the opening of the deliberations, which would require some cooperative planning.

These all too scarce records give some idea of the progress of irenic action among the various churches. But it was not all smooth sailing. The quarrel over the Sunday school arrangements in which the Universalists were estranged has been noted; and the Universalists also kept on with their own Thanksgiving services in the capitol rather than join with the others at the Presbyterian church. There were some theological difficulties between various types of Baptists, and the uneasy union between Presbyterian and Congregationalist was soon to be snapped. The quarrel over the use of God's Barn evidences some argumentation back of it. In the group signatures of the clergy, rarely or never do the names of Lutheran, Episcopal, or Catholic clergy appear, which argues some sort of standoffishness there.

JOSEPH L. DRUSE

The year in which Lincoln was elected president saw Lansing strongly set upon the path of worship of God. All the religious organizations which it was to have during its first half century were present — there is a strong tradition of the external manifestations of belief in public baptism, Sunday school parades and picnics, public support for religious devotions, camaraderies in the support of the clergy. The devoted young clergy of the area who sometimes like Bramwell exhausted themselves in their duties, or who like the Methodist Donelson, went on to the presidency of Ohio Wesleyan College, were men upon whom the strongly religious nature of Lansing could well be founded. The tradition of religious sermon and song which was established in these thirteen years was to flourish in almost unbelievable fashion in the hundred years which followed. Lansing's churches of today may well look back with gratitude and affection to these pioneers of pulpit and prayer.