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CONTENTS

Historic Sketch of the First Baptist Church in Ann Arbor,
by Andrew Ten Brook

History of the First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan,
by Mrs. Helen Beman

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HISTORIC SKETCH OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN ANN ARBOR*
By Rev. Andrew Ten Brook
Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy and of the
Philosophy of History and Logic, University of Michigan,
1844-1851; and University Librarian, 1864-1877

The written history of an institution will most instruct and please when it is not abstracted from the social and commercial life in which it grew, but is sketched against its natural background and setting. We cannot properly appreciate the religious work of our predecessors unless we know the circumstances under which they wrought; knowing these we can form intelligent judgement as to whether ecclesiastical has kept pace with secular development. This sketch will, therefore, be accompanied with such touches upon contemporary progress as will make it intelligible.

In the summer of 1824 -- the tale is well known -- two men and their wives, John Allen of Virginia and Elisha W. Rumsey of New York, met on their way to Michigan, and the chance acquaintance quickly become a warm friendship. They came together to the place which, from just about the date of their stepping upon it, was called Ann Arbor. Each of the men took up an 80-acre lot, the projected Huron Street forming the line between the two. There was no settler or house near and the party camped under the oaks and began their building. Mr. Allen's first house occupied the site of the present Savings Bank. It was of logs, two-story, and designed for an Inn. Mr. Rumsey built half a block eastward, on the opposite side of the street. Both were inn keepers, dependent for their guests upon

*This is a somewhat edited and condensed edition of an informal manuscript by Professor Ten Brook found in our files. It is undated but would appear to have been written about 1890.

subsequent visitors interested in settlement. These soon came in considerable numbers.

The founders made arrangements from the start that their future village should be the seat of justice for a county as yet unorganized, and left for a court-house the square now occupied for that purpose, and also another for a jail. The latter was built by setting trunks of trees in the ground thus forming a stockade over which they placed a roof. The square was that enclosed by Liberty, William, Fourth, and Fifth streets [now, of course, Fourth and Fifth Avenues].

Thus - briefly - the founding of the town, the history of one of whose churches we are to sketch. It will be in the line of our topic to observe that in 1826 Daniel B. Brown arrived, and in 1827 brought hither a wife, and the bridal pair took lodgings at Rumsey's Tavern, which had by then migrated from Huron Street and stood on the brook near the site, later, of Allmendinger's mill. In 1827, Daniel's brother, Anson Brown, arrived, built a mill and started a vigorous mercantile enterprise in what was long to be known as Lower Town.

In 1828, on May 10, an organization called a Baptist Church was effected in a farm house 3 miles below Ann Arbor on the Huron River, the group numbering 8 persons, including the pastor, Moses Clark and his family. In 1832 this church was transferred to Ann Arbor Lower Town, and more perfectly organized. On the day of the reorganization Daniel Brown was baptized and elected deacon. The meetings were held in a room over Anson Brown & Company's store, which arrangement continued till 1834, in which year Mr. Brown died of cholera.

This sketch will be clearer if it considers in order the three several efforts to build houses of worship. *

First Church In regard to the first of these, Mr. Brown had made a beginning by writing a subscription paper, putting his own name to it for \$200, and designating a lot which he was to give for the purpose. But he died before the paper had been circulated, or the conveyance of the site executed, and the result was that his help was likely to be completely lost, for his partners ejected the little company of worshippers from the rooms over the store. They now took refuge in a mechanic shop which could be occupied evenings and Sundays, with no other inconvenience than that of placing the seats for each meeting and seeing the mechanic's tools lying around. In this situation it was determined to build at once. But Anson Brown's partners in the ownership of the real estate refused to deed to the church the promised lot; Daniel B. Brown was, however, their endorser on a note to a Detroit bank for \$5,000. Subscriptions were now obtained, and a building was erected costing less than \$500, and seating less than 100 persons. This was completed in 1835. In 1841 it was enlarged to double its original seating capacity.

*Professor Ten Brook's narrative ends with the building of the third church. We are indebted to Mrs. Beman for continuation of the story.

Second Church Here an apology is due from me for being as egotistic as I shall have to be in my account of the effort to build the second church. I have to choose between making myself offensively personal, on the one hand, and marring historic truth, on the other. I choose to be an egotist and an historian! It was in September, 1944, that I, then but 3 years out of my pupilage, came from the pastorate of the First Baptist Church in Detroit to assume in the State University the professorship of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy. It was apparent at that time that the Baptists of Ann Arbor must have a new church, or remain quite outside the circle of growth. Anson Brown's death in 1834 had destroyed what hope once existed of making Lower Town a successful rival of Upper Town. It will help the reader to understand this if he considers that the church could only raise for Mr. Allen, the pastor, \$280, to which a donation party was added, and \$100 was also paid him by the Home Mission Society,-- all of which probably raised his salary to but little over \$400. He saw clearly what must be done in order to secure any prosperity to the church, and wisely decided to resign instead of facing the difficulties of trying to be pastor in one village and build a church in another.

There were scarcely any men of resources beyond their earnings in the church. Mr. Brown had most wealth and was always the largest subscriber to the church's support; but he had been diverted from business by public responsibilities. In 1831-32 he was sheriff, this office then being appointive by the governor. He was sheriff at the time of his baptism. In 1834 the Central railroad was completed to Ann Arbor and he was for 3 years its superintendent, then a state office.

One other line of facts must here be indicated, for it has been the making of the city, and yet up to 1849 little had been realized of what was wrapped up in it. The Ann Arbor Land Company was formed in 1836 by five men; Elijah W. Morgan, Lisha W. Rumsey, William S. Maynard, Charles Thayer, and Daniel B. Brown. Michigan was about to become one of the states of the Union, and had her legislation all ready for the moment when congressional action should justify it. The location of state institutions was one thing legislatively provided for, and Ann Arbor was among the applicants for the state prison and the state university. The Ann Arbor Land Company had bought about 200 acres of land lying east of Division Street, including the farm of Judge Rumsey, and offered 40 acres of this farm for the location of the University in Ann Arbor. Ann Arbor got the University, while Jackson got the state prison,-- the latter on the plea that a great rock underlay that town which would effectually prevent the prisoners from digging out under the walls. The builders, however, did not excavate deep enough to reach the bed rock.

And what has all this to do with the Baptist Church in Ann Arbor? First, it shows the contemporary scene in the midst of which the church grew up; and second, it must be perceived what the Ann Arbor Land Company and the State University have had to do with the churches, the business and social life of our city. They made it what it is.

Recurring now to the point of Mr. Allen's resignation of the pastorate in 1845. I was from that time to the closing months of 1848 the pastoral counselor, leader, and pulpit supply, without being pastor in a technical sense. There were two short periods of exception, and these offered relief only from the preaching, not from the other responsibilities. Mr. C. Deland supplied the pulpit from January to October, 1847, and E. D. Dunham from that date to the next April. My quasi-pastorate, from October, 1845 (with exceptions indicated) to October, 1848, was entirely gratuitous and did not even relieve me from contributing with others to the construction of the house of worship. It was accepted with the special understanding that all members of the church should keep up their contributions as if for a pastor, and that all of it should be applied to the work of building.

At the same time efforts were made to find a place for church services in the Upper village. A rickety schoolhouse which bore the name of The Academy, on Fourth a little north of William, was used for a time; after which the church was obliged to return to its old place in Lower Town.

That the background and setting of my picture may be kept along with the picture itself, I sketch in some contemporary aspects. Sunday mornings, my wife and I might have been seen leaving our house, where now stands the Dental College, moving along near the old cemetery, passing through a wooded ravine [present Arboretum?] down to the river road, thence to the Kellogg farm house at the corner of Fuller and Observatory Streets [observe on a map, with no University Hospital to interrupt, how straightly Observatory proceeds north to Fuller and the river,] there crossing the Huron by the Wall Street bridge, and proceeding to the church on that street. We generally made our homeward walk through Broadway, in order to have the company of friends going that way. Ann Arbor was ambitious of street names, yet no great monetary transactions took place on its Wall Street, nor was there much parade of finery on its Broadway. In the autumn of 1845, I sat at my window of a Sunday afternoon and saw a flock of wild turkeys coming from the south, from near the present Congregational Church, crossing what was then called "the common," the area eastward of State Street, and disappearing in the ravine north of the cemetery. East of the University grounds was a farm known as the Fletcher farm, because it had belonged to Wm. A. Fletcher, first Chief-Justice of Michigan. An interesting relic of this early farm still remains. Doubtless many a visitor and many a native has wondered what freak of nature could have originated an irregular row of red and white oak trees which adorns East University Avenue. These were, in 1845, the sprouts which slovenly farming had left in the joints of a worm fence. The fence was removed and the shrubs grew to be the trees they now are. [Keep in mind the fact that Professor Ten Brook's "now" was about 1890. How fine if the slender young elms now bordering East University might have the company of a few hundred-year-old oaks!]

It seems quite in place here briefly to indicate the condition of the other churches among which the Baptists were laboring to transplant themselves from a neighboring village. The Presbyterians

were strong and well established in a respectable wooden house on Huron Street. It occupied the place of the Haven block, in which Randall's photograph establishment now is. Lutherans were strong. The Methodists were not much behind the Presbyterians; their church edifice was on Ann Street, corner of Fifth. The building now forms part of the Unity block. The Episcopal church was a small wooden building on the site still held by the same body. The Congregational church had no existence here at that time; it was formed later by some members who separated from the Presbyterians.

Now it was the desire of the Baptists to build as nearly up to the standard of the other churches as they could. They succeeded in completing in 1849 a house not quite so large as the Presbyterian, somewhat larger than the Methodist, at a cost of about \$4,000. A debt of \$500 remained unpaid. Mr. Van Huson of Saline was applied to for the money; he would not loan it to the church, but would take my personal note. This was given, and was paid up in 1851, the church paying \$400, I the remainder.

Most of those now living here since our present church [the third] was built look upon this as the one and only great effort of this Christian body in the way of building. They are not to be blamed for this, but it is well to think that if the second church had not been built the third could not have been. Nor will it be out of place to compare the resources for the two undertakings. From 1844 to 1851, the church had but one member connected with the University, on a maximum salary of \$1,000. Now it would be far within the truth to say that church families connected with the University receive twenty times the income of that one professor. The increase of financial resources outside of school circles has approached the same ratio. The church as a whole has at least thirty times the resources of 1848, and built in 1880 a house costing seven times as much. It is true that one member, Professor Olney, made an extraordinary effort in the erection of the present house, even mortgaging his own dwellinghouse for its completion (though the church relieved him in the end by paying the mortgage). This devotion gave the church the nickname of "St. Edward's Church," corresponding to which I found on my return to the city in 1863 after an absence of 12 years that the structure on Catherine Street was still sometimes called Professor Ten Brook's church!

In reviewing the whole history of the church, it is clear that the most decisive and most self-sacrificing effort of the church was its transfer from a neighboring village to what, during the process, became the City of Ann Arbor. (Lower Town was truly a neighboring village and remained a separate village corporation long after Ann Arbor had its city charter.)

The work of building is of no value at all except as furnishing a shelter in which the Christian family may be gathered and nurtured. This work was well done in the old home in Lower Town, and it is a cheering thing to note the frequent additions to the little body by baptism. In those days baptism was administered in the mill-race just below Broadway bridge.

HISTORY OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN*

May 10, 1828 to May 10, 1928

By Mrs. W. W. (Helen) Beman

In the spring of 1829, on May 10, a company of eight Baptists, members of the Farmington, Michigan, Church, were released from that body in order to form a new church. This little band met in the farm house of Moses Clark, on the river bank about 3 miles from Ann Arbor Village. It was a courageous venture, the starting of a church by 3 men and 5 women. The members were: Lucy and Sally Clark, Elizabeth and Nancy Brown, Phebe Hiscock, Benjamin Slocum, Charles Stewart, and Rev. Moses Clark, said to have conducted the first religious service in Ann Arbor as early as 1825.

First Church The first church built by Ann Arbor Baptists in 1835, enlarged in 1841, was for many years used as a public meeting place, even after the later church was in use. It stood on the site of the present home of Lewis Nowland, 933 Wall Street. /Again keep in mind that the "present" of the Beman manuscript is 40 years later than that of the Ten Brook one, and 25 years earlier than our own present./

Second Church In 1849, the Baptists again felt the need of a better house of worship, and built the church on Catherine Street. The men most responsible for this church home were Andrew Ten Brook, Daniel Brown, Henry K. Hewitt, Daniel Lyon, Robert and Kenneth Davidson, Wm. R. Perry, Elisha Smith, and Abram Polhemus.

Taking into consideration the limited resources of so small a membership, it is not surprising that the pastorates for the first 20 years averaged less than two years. Even in 1848 the salary accepted by Samuel Graves, a young theological seminary graduate, was \$500, \$200 of which was paid by the Home Missionary Society, and when he resigned the Deacons were requested by a vote of the church to give their notes for the balance due Brother Graves.

In 1854, the trustees offered for sale at auction the church pews, for cash or on time with interest. Notice of the sale was published in the city papers, and handbills were struck off and distributed. The auction resulted in sale of 14 pews, prices ranging from \$35 to \$50; the pews were chosen by lot. Today all pews have been declared free, and one may sit where he chooses.

In the early days the Board of Trustees looked well after the delinquent members, and frequently the record reads: "Committee appointed to visit Brother B. and ascertain why he is not walking with the church," and later it is reported "that he had been faithfully admonished and entreated to return to his first love and covenant

*Mrs. Beman's manuscript, carefully and fully prepared for the Centennial celebration of the Church, is unfortunately too long for verbatim reproduction. Certain factual portions are excerpted here to supplement the preceding sketch and bring it up to the date of the Centennial. The original is on file in the Michigan Historical Collections of the University of Michigan.

obligations, and he having failed and refused to do so, the committee recommend that the fellowship of the church be withdrawn from him. "... Church letter refused to Brother F. because he thinks one church is as good as another, and says he has a right to attend the circus and horse race....Fellowship withdrawn from Sister Ann K. for fighting with her mother.

Third Church The church building on Catherine Street had now become quite shabby, both inside and out. It consisted of a vestibule and audience room, heated by stoves, no basement. Immediate measures were taken toward securing the lot for a new house. In 1870 some desirable property on Huron Street was offered for sale at \$2200. A few hours later the owner wished to withdraw his offer, but was persuaded to keep his word to the church. Philip Bach, a trustee though not a member of the church, advanced the money and gave the church six months to secure subscriptions. The actual building was delayed for ten weary years /due to a multitude of financial difficulties and discouragements/.

At the annual meeting in January, 1880, the building committee could report the foundation in and the walls of the basement up, at a cost to date of \$2282. It was agreed that construction should proceed only as fast as funds were in hand. Boulder stone was chosen for the walls. All the black walnut used in the building was furnished by John Nowland, taken from his father's farm.

It is well known that Professor Olney mortgaged his own house in order to secure to the church his subscription to the building fund. It is no less true that other members relinquished cherished plans that this building might be dedicated free of debt. We love this church to which we are dedicating our best service, and we have it only because those who came before us had a vision, and with a mind to work gave generously from very limited incomes. Those of us who looked on while Professor Olney, Rev. Haskell, and John Nowland chose every stone that went into the front of this building that it should be beautiful and shapely, appreciate the loyalty and devotion that are built into these walls. To quote Dr. Haskell: "A year and a half it was common with us to meet here every day, and from foundation to turret, from floors to ceilings, consider everything that went into this house, of structure or furnishings, and means for the cost."

In 1881 the Catherine Street property was sold to the Langley Electric Light Company, for \$1500, the amount to be applied on the new edifice. J. H. Dean of New York made a \$500 gift to the church, through the American Baptist Home Mission Society, stipulating only that if the property should ever be alienated from Baptist use, the amount of \$500 should become due with legal interest. For 47 years we have had the use of this money without interest. On September 29, 1881, it was recorded, "The new house of worship was dedicated this day free of debt; also all bills and pastor's salary are paid to date"

Twenty-six pastors have ministered to the church in the hundred years of its history. The shortest pastorate was that of Rev. Gorham Easterbrook, who came after a serious nervous breakdown and did not recover as it was hoped. His fine scholarship, deep spirituality, excessive modesty, and kindly disposition made us regret

that he could not have remained in charge. The longest pastorate, 17 years, was that of Dr. Haskell, of whom it was said that his life here was a benediction upon the city. The name longest on our church rolls was Daniel B. Brown, baptized in 1832, member 69 years, Deacon 45 years, he died in 1901 at the age of 96.

Following is a list of the pastors of the First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor, with their terms of ministry, from the beginning:

Moses Clark, 1828-1831
J. S. Twiss, 1831-1836
John Mitchell - dates uncertain
Harvey Miller, 1837-1838
Wm. L. Brown, 1838-1839
Allen A. Guernsey, 1839-1841
Oliver C. Comstock, 1841-1844
Marvin Allen, 1844-1845
Andrew Ten Brook, Oct., 1845-Oct., 1848
C. Deland, Jan.-Oct., 1847
E. S. Dunham, Oct., 1847-Apr., 1848
Samuel Graves, Oct., 1848-1851
G. W. Gunnison, Jan.-Mar., 1852
O. C. Comstock, May, 1852-Apr., 1854
O. C. Comstock, Nov., 1854-May, 1855
J. M. Gregory, Dec., 1855-Nov., 1858
A. L. Freeman, 1859-1860
Samuel Cornelius, 1860-1865
N. S. Burton, 1866-Jan., 1871
Samuel Haskell, Apr., 1871-Apr., 1888
Augustine S. Garman, June, 1888-1893
Gorham Easterbrook, Mar.-July, 1894
Thomas W. Young, Nov., 1894-May, 1906
Wm. Arthur Lee, Sep., 1906-Mar., 1911
Frank B. Bachelor, May, 1911-Dec., 1915
R. Edward Sayles, Feb. 5, 1922 --

✓The origin and development of the many subsidiary activities of the First Baptist Church are described in detail by Mrs. Beman. A brief listing of them here will secure at least credit where credit is so abundantly due.✓

Baptist For some time the belief had been growing that some
Guild special provision should be made by the denomination for the welfare of the Baptist students in university centers. Rev. Young, like his predecessors, had endeavored to cope with the task of caring for his parish and the students as well, but had found it too great a burden. The State Convention, in 1902, unanimously approved Rev. Young's plan for the purchase of property for a students' social, education, and religious center, in charge of a competent salaried man, and endowed to insure permanency. ✓Property immediately back of the church, fronting on Washington Street was desired.✓ To prevent its being sold to other parties, certain members of the Board of Trustees of the church advanced most of the money. The fact that for a period of time these Trustees held the Guild property has given rise to the oft repeated error

that the Baptist Church of Ann Arbor owns the Guild property. The property was deeded to the State Convention in 1904, subject to a mortgage which was paid off in 1905 by a gift of Mr. A. Q. Tucker, of England, in memory of his wife, Mrs. Julia Tucker. Thus the name "Tucker Memorial Hall."

During the 24 years since that time, the position of Guild Director, later known as University Pastor, has been held by eight different men. They have exerted a beneficent influence through friendly personal, social, and religious contacts with students, and through systematic religious instruction in classes. Financial support of Guild work is shared equally by the Michigan Baptist Convention and the Northern Baptist Board of Education.

Men's League This organization was begun in 1912, with a membership of 70. Its life was brief, date of demise not recorded.

Women's Society Called in its infancy "The Mite Society," later "Ladies' Aid," later still "Ladies' Benevolent Society," and afterward "The Ladies' Society," united in 1916 with the two missionary societies in one organization to be known by the more dignified name of "The Women's Society of the First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor." This body has concerned itself with improvements on church and parsonage; the Golden Jubilee Fund for Missions; tuition of Chinese students in the University; Serbian and Belgian relief and war work; Southern and Indian schools, and local charities and hospitals.

Boy's Orchestra Under the direction of Mrs. McGregor and Mrs. Vanderveer a Boy's orchestra had been organized, and later a boy's choir. They played at the opening exercises of Sunday School, occasionally at hospitals, and at the Miller Ave. Chapel.

New Parsonage Plans to secure a new parsonage were consummated by the sale of the old one and contributions of sums to purchase another residence for \$14,000. (about 1928)

New Organ The first pipe organ had been pridefully installed April 6, 1883, the dedication concert being contributed to by Dr. Henry S. Frieze, Prof. C. B. Cady, and the members of the Choral Union. This organ served with varying degrees of faithfulness for 45 years, and gave indications of having reached the age of retirement. There was an organ fund of \$6300 already in hand, derived from the sale of the chapel and a bequest of Mrs. Paul Snauble. Our 100th anniversary was approaching, and a birthday gift of an organ seemed so appropriate that subscriptions were secured to purchase a new one for \$15,000. On recommendation of Prof. Earl Moore and Prof. Palmer Christian of the University, the contract was made with Lewis & Hitchcock, of Washington, D. C., for a modern, 3-manual organ, with 32 stops, 19 couplers and chimes, to be completed by May 1, 1928. The West Bay City Baptist Church accepted the old organ for installation there.

Bible School It is generally acknowledged that the growth of the church, and to some extent its spirituality, depend upon the Bible School. The children now in its primary classes will be the future officers of the church, carrying heavy responsibilities. They are being trained by men and women of high ideals, of personality and character to inspire imitation. There are four departments: Cradle Roll and Beginners; Primary; Intermediate; and Adult (which includes the Men's Class, Women's Class, and Guild Classes).

Centennial Celebration The one hundredth birthday of our church was observed on May 10, 1928, the committee responsible for it being our pastor, Rev. Sayles, Dr. Bunting, and Mrs. J. L. Markley. Dr. Shailer Mathews preached the anniversary sermon on the preceding Sunday; and Prof. Palmer Christian dedicated the new organ in a vesper service.

The perspective of years is not needed to reveal the fact that the progress of this church would not have been possible without much wise leadership. With gratitude we acknowledge our debt to the men and women of the early days of poverty and struggle, and we feel that the same spirit of self-denying devotion is being exhibited today.

<u>Comparative</u>	At organization, May 10, 1828. 8
<u>Membership</u>	50th Anniversary, 1878. 269
<u>Totals</u>	100th Anniversary, 1928. 486
	Today (1952), approximately. . . . 650

Missionaries The First Baptist Church has been represented during this century by 25 members in the foreign field, as follows:

- In Africa, Dr. and Mrs. Judson S. King
- In Assam, Dr. and Mrs. Galen G. Crozier
- In Burma, Dr. Olive Emerson Morrow
- In China, Dr. and Mrs. Charles E. Tompkins
- Dr. Clara Sargent-Shepherd
- Dr. Mildred Scott-Carman
- Rev. and Mrs. Henry Huizinga
- Dr. and Mrs. J. S. Grant
- In India, Dr. and Mrs. Willard F. Down
- Rev. and Mrs. Frank Kurtz
- Rev. and Mrs. A. S. Woodburne
- Rev. Edwin D. Kelly
- Miss Sigrid C. Johnson, RN
- In Japan, Dr. and Mrs. Job Scott
- Mrs. Harriet Mead-Woodward
- Mrs. Helen Elgie-Scott

Ministers Eight members have been ordained to the ministry by this church: Wm. L. Brown (1839); Samuel Graves (1849); G. W. Gunnison (1852); James R. Boise (1862); Edwin D. Kelly (1871); Galen G. Crozier (1899); Wm. Arthur Lee (1906); Newton C. Fetter (1912)

Seven more have entered the ministry from this church: Harry E. Hodge; Rufus Osborn; Robert Davidson; Warren Jackson; Harry McDonald; Mahlon Tunnison; and Julius A. Fischbach.

NEW MEMBERS
Since the last issue

Ann Arbor Antiques' Study Club - Life Membership
Mrs. John W. Cate, Ann Arbor
George Chalmers "
Don Farrant, Ypsilanti
Mrs. Lester Gilbert, Ann Arbor
Alta Graves "
Mrs. Ruby S. Greene "
Mrs. Katherine Hill "
Mrs. Hudson Morton "
Albert Staebler "
Mrs. E. C. Todd "
Paul Ungrodt, Ypsilanti

LOST BY DEATH

Mrs. Anna Mercereau, March 4, 1952
Roger L. Morrison, March 23, 1952*

*Professor Morrison read a paper before the Washtenaw Historical Society on April 22, 1943, which forms Volume 1, Number 2, of our series of Washtenaw Impressions, entitled "Early Transportation in Washtenaw County by Road."

For information about Washtenaw Impressions or the Washtenaw Historical Society, address the Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. I. Wm. Groomes, 1209 S. State Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.