

The Congregational Church was officially organized Feb. 27, 1838 with Mr. Cochrane as pioneer pastor, and he remained with it until 1842.

These early meetings in the log school house were usual to the times and attended by everyone. Prayer, scripture and hymns (the pitch given by a tuning fork) were the preliminaries, followed by a sermon of an hour's length based on the stern and uncompromising theology of that day. History recounts that Mr. Cochrane one spring when maple "sugaring" was due, lost a day of the week and went to the cooper's early one Sunday morning to get a barrel. Returning home his wife asked where he had been. On telling her, she said "Sylvester, don't you know it is Sunday"? His grief over breaking the third commandment was great and he confessed his sin, with tears, to the congregation at the church service later in the day. Upon his resignation in 1842 Rev. W. U. Benedict became pastor also first principal of The Academy, remaining until 1850 in these positions.

In Hon. E. W. Barber's estimate of his value to early Vermontville he says; "Without doubt religion and education are more largely in-debted to Mr. Benedict because of his learning and energy than to any other occupant of the Congregational pulpit and certainly no other man is held in more grateful remembrance by those who received most of their schooling under his tuition." He spent his later life in Vermontville and passed away in 1875. Rev. Seth Hardy, Rev. Chas. Temple and Rev. O. H. Spoor followed him as pastors of the church from 1850 to 1872. During the eleven year's pastorate of Mr. Spoor, the present Church building was erected.

In the diary of H. J. Martin covering the years 1859-1870 we find under the date of Feb. 28, 1863 the record of possibly the first anniversary service of the Church -- "The quarter Centennial." There were three services addressed by visiting clergymen, Calvin Clark, Mr. Temple and Prof. Hosford of Olivet. In the evening Deacon Church read the 25 years history, and reminiscences were given by others. Mr. Martin writes " I had forgotten many of the incidents related but recalled them when mentioned. The dense forests with occasional foot paths, the old log school house, log dwellings all came back before my eyes. I felt again the thrill of terror at the dismal howling of wolves and loved over in a few moments the years of my early life." It was felt at this time that the organization was strong enough to undertake the erection of a permanent church building and under the diary date of March 18 of the same year we find a meeting was held to settle definitely on a site. This site was decided by vote to be on the Public Square, and building operations planned and begun. June 9th an attempt was made to raise the frame work but the breaking of a rope delayed the operation until the next day when it was "raised with out accident or difficulty." From this date building proceeded and in Qugust the spire of the Church, built in the New England style of architecture "was up as high as it was to go." All did not go smoothly and it is recorded that the last of August "The hands on the church packed their tools and quit until paid off." The building committee went to work and adjusted matters after which the work proceeded. Labor strikes began this early.