



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
22 CHURCH STREET
GOUVERNEUR, NY 13642

FPCGH-11
FROM HISTORY OF ST. LAWRENCE CO.,
NEW YORK, 1878 PAGE 44

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

This organization, first known as the First Presbyterian or Congregational church of Gouverneur, was formed May 24, 1817, by Rev. Nathaniel Dutton, of Champion, in Jefferson county. The original members were fourteen in number, viz.:

Wm. Cleghorn, Jonathan S. Colton, Elijah Hough, Jr., William Colton, Betsey Colton, and Hannah Colton, all from the church at Champion, and Daniel Sears, Horatio J. Cleveland, Isaac Smith, Dorothy Sackett, Cynthia Sears, Cynthia Cleveland, Abigail Smith, and Betsy Spencer, received on profession of faith. On Sabbath-day, July 27, 1817, the first sacraments were administered by Rev. Mr. Dutton, on which occasion ten members were added to the church on profession of faith, bringing their numbers to a total of twenty-four. One hundred and fifty more were added before 1827, making one hundred and seventy-four received in the first ten years of the church's existence.

The legal organization of the society as a body corporate was effected April 13, 1820; the Rev. Oliver Ayers, of Oneida county, being present, and the proceedings of the meeting being only verified on oath before Judge Thomas Davis, April 19. The trustees were John Spencer, Richard Kimball, William Cleghorn, William Colton, Rockwell Barnes, and James Parker. A house of worship was at once commenced, and was inclosed and in a manner made fit for occupancy during that year, though unplastered and without heating apparatus of any kind. Prior to this, the worshipers had met in the school-house, in private dwellings, or, as they often did in summer-time, in barns. These meetings were not held at stated times, but only whenever a friendly minister or missionary chanced to pass that way, as Rev. N. Dutton, Rev. Reul Kimball, of Leyden, Rev. – Winchester, Rev. Isaac Clinton, and others, who occasionally ministered to them during this period. On the 13th of January, 1821, however, soon after they occupied the first rude edifice, their first pastor, the Rev. James Murdock, came to them, and largely through his efforts the house of worship, commenced in 1820, was completed in 1824; a fair and convenient meeting-house, at a total cost of fourteen hundred dollars. Twenty years later a new church, their present place of worship, was built, and was dedicated Aug. 29,

1844. It has since been enlarged and refitted, the session-room improved and modernized, and a parsonage built. All these were paid for as they went along, and the society is free from debt. Rev. James Murdock (died at Crown Point, New York, 1841, aged eighty-six years.) remained until 1825, and was succeeded by Rev. Richard C. Hand 1825 to 1832. Since his time the pulpit has been filled by the following ministers, namely, Rev. Jonathan Hovey (supply), 1833-1834; Rev. John Bucknell (supply), about six months; Rev. Robert F. Lawrence (supply), 1835-37; Rev. Simeon Bicknell, pastor, 1838-42; Rev. John Orr (supply), continued about two years; Rev. Baruch B. Beckwith, pastor, 1843-66; and the present pastor, Rev. N. J. Conklin, who came in March, 1866.

In 1863, during the pastorate of Mr. Beckwith, the church emerged from its former condition of "Presbyterian or Congregational" organization, and became wholly Presbyterian. A board of elders was chosen, consisting of George Rodger, Melville H. Thrall, Samuel Wright, James Brodie, Simeon L. Parmelee, Joseph Howes, and George Lockie, who were ordained on the 17th of May, 1863.

A division occurred in this church in 1842-1843, which resulted in the secession of certain members, and the formation of the Second Congregational church of Gouverneur, and its incorporation as such in March, 1843. The trustees were John Leach, M. W. Smith, and Rockwell Barnes. After many years of misfortune and struggle, it was disbanded, and most of the members returned to the parent church.