



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

Romeo, Michigan

HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH ORGAN

According to the January 13, 1887 minutes of the First Congregational Society, Romeo, Michigan, a motion was approved that:

“The bequest of \$500 from John S. Newbury of Detroit when paid to the Treas. Of the Society be put at interest and be the basis of a fund for the purchase of an organ.”

M. I. Brabb, Clerk

It is supposed that some sort of organ was being used in the then-new building (it having been erected in 1876), as a “Miss Pindon” was employed as organist at \$50 each year (to include all services) beginning in 1885. (It may be noted that the same year the Rev. E. A. Berry would receive a \$1,200 salary.) Miss Hattie Pindon continued as organist until she resigned in September, 1889, when Miss Nellie Newbury was elected organist for the balance of the year.

It is possible that the organist was playing a “melodeon”, as numerous members signed a pledge sheet, still in the church archives, agreeing to pay specified amounts for the purchase of a melodeon. Among those signing the pledge sheet were E. W. Giddings, C. B. Newbury, Dexter Mussey, A. B. Rawles, Daniel J. Poor and George Chandler.

A separate list of “Subscribers to Organ” includes the following: J. W. Dyar, E. W. Giddings, C. B. Newbury, Giddings Mussey & Co., Dexter Mussey, W. Loud, A. B. Maynard, H. T. Mallary, Mr. Farrar, Mrs. Dickenson, A. B. Ayer, S. A. Reade, D H. Rowley, Mrs. R. Owen, Oliver Nichols, A. B. Rawles, E. C. Newbury, A. M. Groves, Agness Sutton, V. Ames, A. B. Aynes, Brad Owen, Wm. Abbot, Joseph Holland, John Brabb, R. R. Smith, J. Thorinton, D. J. Poor, Geo. R. (?), M. Taylor, C. Seaman, S. H. Fitch, L. McIntyre, Abijah Palmer, Wm. Mims, Cyrus Hopkins, Mrs. Clark, W. A. Jennisen, Jonas Cupman, Dr. Andrews, E. F. Mead, N. D. Mussey, N. Gray, and John Phelps. In all, the “Subscribers’ Paid \$308.25 toward the organ.

On September 13, 1889, the Congregational Society (which handled the secular affairs of the Congregational Church) noted:

“On motion the following were chosen a committee to act with a like comm. already chosen from the church to purchase an organ. E. Newbury, Miss Lou Dyan, Miss Grace Gray. It being understood that this com. Shall be continued until a church organ is purchased the necessary funds provided for paying the entire cost of which organ raised.”

A month later, October 17, 1889, the Society minutes shows:

“Organ Com. Reported. On motion voted that contract be made for a [Casavant] organ with the Farrand & Votey Organ Co. of Detroit at \$675. & that piano and our old organ be exchanged for better instrument (some used) at difference of \$100. Organ & piano to be fully guaranteed & to be placed in church ready for use. The Organ Co. to give concert with help of church choir for the benefit of organ fund to make balance of funds needed to pay for same if possible. Organ Co. to repair old organ if only small repairs are needed.

In minutes of a special meeting held July 26, 1890, it was moved and supported “that the Organ Committee go on with the exchange of Organ.” Motion carried.

By a vote the Trustees on February 12, 1892, elected Miss Abbie E. Muzzy organist at a salary of \$75 a year and Frank Hopkins was elected organ blower at an annual salary of \$20.

In 1939, the organ was rebuilt and chimes added as the result of gifts to the church. Miss Marian Hosner contributed the chimes in memory of her parents, Mrs. And Mrs. Lincoln Hosner. Mrs. Charles (Lucinda) Fairfield contributed \$2000 for rebuilding the organ in memory of the Fairfield family. Her father-in-law, the Rev. M. W. Fairfield, served as pastor of the Congregational Church from 1874 to 1881.

A Service of Dedication of the Fairfield Memorial Organ and Hosner Memorial Chimes was held on Sunday, June 24, 1939. The Rev. George B. Ratcliffe was the minister, Mrs. Charles H. Dodge was the organist and Mrs. Mildred M. Lagatree was the Choir Director.

1939 was mostly likely when the present Casavant windchests were installed by the Herbert firm, a Detroit Casavant representative at the time.

In 1948 unspecified repairs were made to the organ and chimes, and the blower was moved to the basement. In 1960 the chancel was redesigned, and the organ was moved at a cost of \$250.96.

In the Spring of 1972, the Board of Trustees voted to use a \$1000 bequest of Mrs. Margaret Mair for "several items (that) need immediate attention." Bodman Organ Service was authorized to make the repairs, which included installation of a "good used blower."

By February of 1973, "the remainder of the organ pipes are to be installed back of the baptismal font."

In 1975, the Board of Trustees was told by Marney Bruske that the "Thrift Shop would absorb the cost of re-installing the pipes" in the archway for decorative purposes (evidently the front rank of pipes had been left out for several years so as not to block the sound; but members of the congregation evidently did not like the look, so the pipes were reinstalled.)

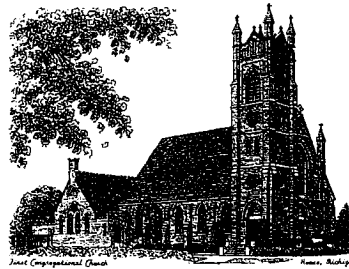
Finally, 1984, David Wigton, of Wigton Pipe Organs, Inc. rebuilt the organ, adding to the windchests and making quite a few tonal changes to make the organ more reliable and versatile. He replaced the mechanical switches with solid-state relay, and provided new façade pipes for the main organ arch. The organ now has 16 stops, 16 ranks and 930 pipes.

WELCOME TO
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

OF

ROME0,
MICHIGAN

FOUNDED
AUGUST 16, 1828



Welcome to the second oldest Congregational Church in Michigan! This church, along with the First Congregational in Rochester, First Presbyterian in Pontiac, and perhaps several others, was founded by the Reverend Isaac Ruggles, a missionary of the American Home Missionary Society of Connecticut. He came to Pontiac in 1824 and through extensive visitations and travels, organized this church on August 16, 1828.

Our first worship, with seven worshippers, was held in the north part of the house that is located along Van Dyke in the front of what is now known as Frontier Town. Our first home was in a schoolhouse located on North Main at Hollister, on the site of the present Romeo Community Schools Administration Center. Our first Annual Meeting was held there on February 6, 1832.

In 1833, our first church building, costing \$300, was built at our present location. This building was moved in 1842 further west on Church Street, where it became the home of the Romeo Academy, a school, which for a short time, was a branch of the University of Michigan.

A second, larger church building was then built on the present site in 1842. For a time during the early 1852s, that building also housed a private school.

The third and present home of the First Congregational Church of Romeo was erected in 1876 at a cost of \$30,623. The building was designed by C. H. March, a student of Christopher Wren, and built by R. F. Odion.

The building is a Gothic Tudor style of architecture, typical for churches built in England during the reign of Henry XII and XIII (1485-1558). Many early English churches had thick stone and brick walls like this one. Heavy timber beams and wood roofs are found only in English churches. The windows and doorways are all painted arches, typical of the Gothic era. The windows are small, compared to churches further south in France, to help protect against the cold and harsh winters. The interior walls were usually plastered to keep winds from penetrating. Walls were generally light-colored to help reflect the natural sunlight or candlelight, which were the only original light! This building was lit by gas from 1877 until 1899, when it was wired for electricity.

Included in the original building were the Audience Room (our present Sanctuary), the Dorcas Room, the Ladies' Room and the Library on the upper level. A furnace room, kitchen and cisterns made up the lower level.

A Seth Thomas clock was installed in the church tower by prominent members of this congregation who, at that time, were also prominent members of the Village of Romeo. The clock was initially maintained by the Village. Now it is maintained by members of the church, the Romeo Historical Society and members of the community.

In 1915-16, the building was 'repaired, enlarged and renewed' through the generosity of Mrs. Henry Stephens, Sr. and her son, Henry Stephens Jr., members who had lived immediately north of the church (in the house that was the parsonage until 2002). The Chapel and Sanctuary were redecorated by darkening the blond wainscoting, paneling and pews and by replacing the bright-colored windows with the present, more somber colors of glass. The basement was expanded to include a Social Room (our present Dining Room) and the roof was replaced by a slate roof. The weight of the slate roof later necessitated reinforcing rods now seen in the Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary was again refurbished in 1961, with the Chancel being changed from having a central pulpit to the present divided Chancel.

The altar and chandeliers from the Sanctuary were moved to the Chapel. The Casavant organ, originally purchased in 1888, was renovated about this time, as it was again in the mid-1980s.

The Christian Education wing was added to the west end of the main church in 1965, at a cost of \$150,000.

The church's first parsonage was at 247 Fremont from at least the early 1850s to 1980. That year, a lot was purchased at 319 N. Main and the house presently there was constructed. In 1927, Mrs. Catherine Leete willed her home at 156 S. Main to the church. It was used as a parsonage until 1954 when the home at 277 N. Main was purchased from the Lawrence Kelly family. That parsonage was sold in December, 2001.

In 1931, The Congregational Churches merged with the Christian Churches to form the Congregational Christian Churches in the United States. This denomination merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Churches in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ, which this congregation joined in 1961.

Missions – the ministries we offer to the wider community have historically been a part of this congregation's life. From sewing bandages during World War II in the Chapel, to our Material Aids program, participating in the CROP Walk, to Angel's Wing, a Transitional Home for a Homeless Family with Children; people of First Congregational have sought to minister to those in need. In 1960, for example, women of this church founded the Romeo Thrift Shop, purchasing an old shop building on Main Street. For over 30 years the Thrift Shop provided low-cost clothing, furniture and odds-and-ends. The church has been involved with Macomb Habitat for Humanity, MCREST, and is a contributing member to Samaritan House. Our church provides hospitality to community groups, AA and NA meetings are held here, and Nature's Child Preschool meets in our lower level.

Worship service and Church School are held at 10:00 am on Sundays throughout the year.

As of this printing, these 33 pastors have served this congregation:

Isaac W. Ruggles	1828-31	Henry W. Hunt	1904-12
Luther B. Shaw	1831-35	Ralph H. Ferris	1912-14
John Taylor	1835-37	Ralph W. Paul	1914-18
O.C. Thompson	1837	William Skentlebury	1918-25
B. Barber	1837-38	George B. Ratcliffe	1925-42
John B. Shaw	1838-39	Joseph Q. Mayne	1943
Seth Hardy	1839-40	<i>(Interim)</i>	
Robert R. Kellog	1840-48	Oscar P. Bollman	1943-47
<i>(first installed Pastor)</i>		C. Earle Page	1947-54
George Newcomb	1848-49	Peter Vos	1954-77
<i>(supply)</i>		Thomas R. Uphaus	1973-77
Philo R. Hurd	1849-70	<i>(Min of Education)</i>	1973-77
Horatio O. Ladd	1870-72	Ronald Christiansen	1977-84
T. B. Hascall	1872-74	Daniel W. Boxwell	1984-86
M. W. Fairfield	1874-81	<i>(Interim)</i>	
S. F. Gale	1881-83	Robert A. Martin	1986-08
E. A. Berry	1884-89	Sherry M. Schacht	2008-11
S. L. Smith	1889-93	<i>(Interim)</i>	
E. Clarence Oakley	1893-98	Sherry M. Schacht	2011-14
Gainer P. Moore	1899-04	Penny L. Lowes	2014