NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**United States Department of the Interior**
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Tryon, Augustus S., House

other names/site number Tryon-Prentice-Powers House

## 2. Location

street & number 15 Church St | N/A | not for publication

city or town Le Roy | N/A | vicinity

state New York code NY county Genesee code 037 zip code 14482

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

**__ national __ statewide X local**

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date: 1/16/13

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official — Date

Title — State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

for Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action: 3/13/13

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [x] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

**Category of Property**
(Check only **one** box.)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

**Number of Resources within Property**
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0 | buildings |
| 0 | 0 | sites |
| 2 | 0 | structures |
| 0 | 0 | objects |
| 3 | 0 | **Total** |

**Name of related multiple property listing**
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ Residence

**Current Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ Residence

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Italianate

**Materials**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone
walls: wood
roof: asphalt
other:

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

Located in the village of Le Roy in Genesee County, New York, the Augustus S. Tryon House is just north of the intersection of Church and Main Streets, on the west side of Church, less than a quarter of a mile north of Main. The Oatka River runs between Church and Mill Streets and the Tryon House property has a ravine that drops precipitously toward the river. The house was built in 1867 and is a two-story Italianate style residence with a three-bay main block and a two bay recessed section with a single height porch across the entire facade. The house contains a number of period features such as a low pitched overhanging roof with decorative eave brackets on both the house and porch, an arched double-wood entry door, tall narrow windows with eared moldings on the first floor façade, projecting lintels with small decorative brackets over six-over-six windows and a three-bay first floor bow window with a small second floor porch above on the northwest side. In spite of being divided into apartments, the interior is highly intact and retains period details such as paneled doors and windows, arched marble fireplaces and a wide entry hall with the original historic stair case. Historic images indicate that the house looks very much as it did in 1867 and retains a high degree of integrity, especially in terms of materials, design, feeling and association.

**Narrative Description**

The Augustus S. Tryon House is located on the west side of Church Street in the village of Le Roy, Genesee County in Western New York in an area of the village with a number of historic properties that constitute a potential historic district. Church Street is anchored by an 1869 Gothic Revival Episcopal church and an 1877 former factory at its southern (East Main St.) terminus. The street is characterized by vernacular examples of mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century residential architecture along its southern and middle sections, and industrial architecture (railroad, warehouses, and factories) at its northern end. There is an early nineteenth-century church-associated burial ground on the east side of Church Street, just northeast of and across the street from the Tryon House. This burial ground originally included an Episcopal Church on the northern half of the site. In the 1860s, the church was demolished and St. Mark's Place, an east/west residential street, was laid out through the site. Situated along the east side of Oatka Creek, Church Street is a north-south side street in the village that extends north from Main Street (U.S. Route 5). The East Main/Church Street area is primarily residential and is directly east/northeast of and across Oatka Creek from the village's central business district.

The Tryon House is the southern-most residence on the west side of Church Street and is situated on the

largest residential lot on the street. It is located over 200-feet north of the former Shiloh Home Remedies factory (1877) at #1 Church Street. A large expanse of open, green space (primarily lawn and mature trees) extends between the house and the former factory. The property is less than one acre, situated along the east bank of Oatka Creek on an elevated site above the creek, but is within less than ten feet of the edge of the creek bank, which drops down steeply. The rest of the property is characterized by mature, deciduous trees, including red maple, oak, tulip poplar, and cottonwood. A non-historic asphalt driveway is to the north of the house. A limestone sidewalk extends from the public sidewalk, west to the front (east) porch. Additional limestone landscaping features include two sets of front porch steps, a carriage mounting block, and several large rectangular foundation pieces (along the driveway), as well as two, square "bases" (for planters) in the front/east lawn.

Located northwest of the house and driveway, along the edge of the creek bank, is the foundation of a two-story, gable-roof barn (no longer extant). Due to structural problems, the barn was demolished in the early 1990s by the current owner. Located below grade level, the surviving foundation walls (north, east, and south) are partially extant and consist of rectangular blocks of rock-faced limestone. South of the former barn foundations (and directly below the house) is a vertical, limestone retaining wall in which are located two, large, iron "I-bolts" and attached iron rings. These are the sole remaining parts of a late nineteenth-century, pedestrian suspension bridge that extended from the east bank of the creek, across the waterway, to the west side of Oatka Creek. The bridge is shown on the 1892 Bird's Eye View Map of Le Roy and in an 1896 photograph of Oatka Creek, looking north from the Main Street Bridge. This former suspension bridge was used by Charles Prentice when he owned the house as a direct means of access to his industrial buildings on the west side of the creek along Mill Street. The Prentice family owned this Church Street property from 1881 to 1929. In spite of the loss of fabric, the barn foundation and bridge remnants still retain their feeling and association with the house and are considered contributing.

**EXTERIOR**

Built in 1867, the Tryon House is a distinctive vernacular example of mid-nineteenth century Italianate residential architecture. The house has a two and one-half story, asymmetrical main section with hipped roofs and a lower, two-story, west (rear) wing with a hipped roof. These two roofs are clad with asphalt shingles. There are single-story front (east), north (side) and west (rear) porches. The front/east and side/north porches have hipped roofs and are clad with a membrane roof. The west (rear) porch has a shed roof and is clad with asphalt shingles. The hipped roofs on main section and west wing of the house have wide eaves and cornices with decorative wood brackets on all four elevations. A belvedere (removed in 1939) was originally located atop the center of the main hipped roof. Shown on 1896 and 1905 photos, it featured square corner posts and horizontal, wood paneled railings. Three brick chimneys project above the main hipped roof. The north

chimney retains its historic corbelled top design and brick construction. The corbelled brick tops of the west and south chimneys have been removed.

The house sits on a foundation of rock-faced limestone blocks laid in courses. At the corners of the foundation are cut limestone blocks with a smooth face and tooled margins. A small section of the limestone foundation on the south elevation was repaired with stucco. Here, smooth stucco was added on top of the limestone blocks and scored with horizontal and vertical lines to resemble natural stone blocks. This pargetting with new stucco was done instead of re-pointing the existing mortar in between the limestone blocks. The house is clad in horizontal, wood clapboard on all elevations, with two exceptions. The first story of the east (front) elevation is clad with flush, horizontal wood boards and the northwest corner of the north (side) porch is enclosed with wood novelty siding.

The house retains its nineteenth-century front (east) and side (north) porches. Each features square, chamfered wood columns and pilasters, curved knee braces, and decorative brackets. The railings include turned, decorative balusters with plain top and bottom railings. The front (east) porch retains its original limestone steps at the front (east) and north (side) entrances. The front (east) porch features an arched, front door opening with the original, paired doors. The doors include decorative panels below and rectangular, arched windows with inserts of frosted glass above. The front (east) and side (north) porches were extensively restored in 2007. New cedar porch decks and decorative, lattice-work screens below the porch decks were installed on both porches. Many of the original porch balusters had been previously removed and replaced in-kind, based on the surviving fabric. Three new square, chamfered porch columns replaced deteriorated columns during the restoration. One additional single story porch is on the rear/west part of the house, possibly added in the early twentieth century. The porch has a shed roof, square posts and wood railings and rests on a foundation of concrete blocks. This porch was extensively damaged in a 1991 ice storm and the current porch was re-built with contemporary wood materials and clad with non historic siding.

A one-story, projecting window bay is located on the south elevation of the house. It features three, floor-length, windows with six-over-six sash on the first story and a decorative balcony with original turned posts, railings, and spindled frieze on the second story. The turned balusters on the second story balcony are identical in design to the balusters on the front (east) porch. Originally, there was a decorative, wood balustrade (no longer extant) atop the roof of this second-story balcony. The balustrade is shown in the 1896 and 1905 photos of the house.

Fenestration on the house is symmetrical and regular. Windows feature original six-over-six double-hung wood sash on all four elevations. There is one oculus window in the second story of the rear (west) elevation.

The windows include longer, floor-length openings on the façade (east) and south elevations (in the south window bay). The windows on all elevations feature shouldered, decorative trim. The nineteenth-century window lintels and decorative brackets remain on the south, east (front), and north windows where originally installed. Nineteenth-century louvered wood shutters remain with the second story windows on the front (east) elevation. While evidence of window shutters remains with many of the other exterior windows, the original shutters and hardware on these windows were removed by previous owners.

## INTERIOR

The interior of the Tryon House retains much of its historic nineteenth-century layout, design and detailing. The first floor includes a central front hall, main staircase, north & south parlors, dining room, study, library, kitchen (with non-historic updates), two bathrooms and two enclosed rear (west) porches. An enclosed, center staircase (behind a door) leads from the dining room up to the second floor. Beneath this center staircase is the stairs that leads from the kitchen down to the cellar. There is also a rear (west) enclosed staircase that extends from the north porch, up the back of the house, to the southwest bedroom on the second story.

The second floor features a large, center front/east hall, five bedrooms, two full bathrooms (one retaining its original 1920s fixtures), two kitchens, and an enclosed staircase in the rear up to the attic. The large attic retains its original configuration, with exposed beams, brick chimneys, and frieze windows. There is a full cellar under the house that is divided into several rooms and includes the remnants of the original brick-walled cistern in the west half of the basement. A 1990s poured concrete floor was installed in the basement by the present owner. There is also an enclosed stairs on the north wall of the basement that leads from the cellar up to an outside bulkhead entrance along the driveway.

The first floor of the house includes a large, center (front) hall with open, straight staircase, highlighted by its original varnished newel post, railing, balusters, and painted, ornamental brackets under the treads. The entrance hall features original plaster walls, ceilings, decorative plaster cove moldings and a ceiling medallion with a floral motif. The same decorative plaster cove ceiling moldings are also extant in the south and north parlors, dining room, and second floor front (east) hall. There is a large, elaborate, diamond-shaped ceiling medallion--the largest in the house--on the ceiling of the south parlor. The ceiling of the dining room features a circular, central ceiling medallion. The ceiling of the north parlor, however, was repaired at some time in the twentieth century and the smooth plaster finish was replaced with new plaster in a swirl-pattern. Evidence of a ceiling medallion here is no longer visible.

Shouldered, wood moldings are situated around door and window openings in the front hall, south and north parlors, dining room, study, and two front bedrooms (east side) on the second floor. All of the windows in

these same six rooms have decorative panels under the window openings. In several areas, original painted graining remains extant, but is mostly obscured by subsequent layers of paint. Painted interior wood shutters remain extant on the lower half of the windows in the north parlor, south parlor and dining room. These shutters consist of both solid and louvered panels. While no interior shutters remain on the upper half of these same windows, there is evidence of shutter hardware via niches cut into the woodwork where shutter hinges were originally located.

Ceiling heights in the front hall and all other rooms on the first floor are ten feet, five inches. On the second floor, the front hall and east side (front) bedrooms have ceiling heights of nine feet, while all other rooms on the second floor have ceiling heights of eight feet. Most of the interior entryways in the house retain their original, six-panel wood doors. Door height varies with the height of the ceilings in each room. Doors located in the south and north parlors, dining room, study, front hall (first floor) and several second floor bedrooms retain their original white ceramic door knobs.

The north and south parlors feature original, white marble mantels and marble hearths on their respective north walls. Each mantel is decorated by a central, marble bracket or cartouche. The mantels include shallow, round-arch fireplace openings with cast iron inserts. The fireplaces appear to have been fueled by gas rather than wood or coal. The fireplace in the south parlor also includes its original cast iron fender and is still attached to a gas supply pipe. Although the house is presently heated with steam radiators, there is evidence of parlor stoves present on the upper sections of two chimneys on the second floor. There are circular openings (now covered) on the south and north sides of the south chimney (southeast bedroom, center/front hall), as well as on the south side of the north chimney (northeast bedroom).

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce
Architecture

### Period of Significance
1867-1939

### Significant Dates
1867, 1881, 1928, 1939

### Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation
N/A

### Architect/Builder
unknown

### Period of Significance (justification)
The period begins with the construction of the house and ends with the removal of roof cupola in 1939, the last major alteration made to the residence.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)
N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Built in 1867, the Augustus S. Tryon House at 15 Church Street in the village of Le Roy, Genesee County (New York) is significant under Criterion C for architecture as an intact example of an Italianate style residence in a rural, Western New York community. The house is also significant under Criterion A in the area of commerce for its association with the Tryon and Prentice families, prominent residents who were connected with several of the important and successful business enterprises in Le Roy between the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The large house was built for Augustus S. Tyron, a businessman and farmer who settled in Le Roy after returning east from his adventures in California during the Gold Rush. At the time he settled in Le Roy, it was emerging as one of the premier villages in Genesee County and Tryon adopted the popular Italianate style for his house to display his success and prominence in the village. The style also revealed Tryon as a man well versed in the latest styles of designs of the day. The design of the house was one of many styles promoted in the mid nineteenth century by authors such as Andrew Jackson Downing, who were instrumental in setting the tastes and fashions for buildings in communities across the U.S. The house attracted another prominent businessman, mill-owner Charles Prentice, who bought it in 1881, no doubt for similar reasons that Tryon had it built, but also for its close proximity to his mill located on the west side of Oatka Creek. The house went through several minor alterations but retained its integrity and serves as an excellent model for those interested in first hand studies of mid nineteenth century popular architecture.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

The growth and development of the Village of Le Roy was characteristic of many western New York communities established in the early nineteenth century. Its success was predicated on water power, specifically the Oatka Creek, and viable transportation routes such as Main Street (SR 5) and Lake Street (Route 19), which ran through the heart of Le Roy. A settlement was established at the convergence of three principal tracts of land: the Triangle Tract, the Craigie Tract, and the Mill Tract. The tracts were large land holdings purchased in the early 1800s by out-of-town investors that were then subdivided and lots sold off for development. Herman Le Roy of New York City was one of the purchasers of the Triangle Tract. He hired Richard Stoddard to operate a land office in the settlement. The office, known as the Le Roy House (NR listed 1997), is located at 23 East Main Street. As more people moved to the area, a town was established in 1812 and named in Le Roy's honor. In 1834, a village was incorporated and also named after Le Roy. Early settlers established churches and schools throughout the area, including the village. In 1839, Marietta and Emily Ingham founded the Le Roy Female Seminary, a well known and respected girls' school in Western New York.

In 1857, the seminary was granted a charter to become a university. Named Ingham University after its founders, the school was one of the seven nationally recognized women's universities, but closed in 1892 due to financial difficulties.

Early in the village's history, the Oatka Creek became an important waterway for transportation and industry. Shortly after settlement began (1801-1802), a bridge was built across Oatka Creek and a dam was built to harness the waterpower of its rapids. Le Roy's early industries were dependent on the agricultural economy and the natural resources in the area. Flour, salt, limestone, wool, apples, beans, cattle, and poultry all became important commodities for Le Roy's merchants, farmers and millers. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, village entrepreneurs built shops for furniture, carriages, railroad cars, stoves, patent medicines, cigars, hats, agricultural implements, milled lumber, malt, dynamite, silos, porcelain insulators, organs, automobile parts, airplanes and, most notably, "America's Most Favorite Dessert"–Jell-O.

An 1864 map of Le Roy indicated that Main Street served as the main east-west road through the community. With ample waterpower available from Oatka Creek, a variety of local industries were established on the west side of the creek along Mill Street, north of the Main Street Bridge. In the center of the village, just west of Oatka Creek, a thriving business district had been established along Main Street. Outside of the business district, residential neighborhoods were laid out north and south of Main Street that included some of the most distinctive examples of nineteenth-century houses in the community interspersed with churches representing the major denominations (Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist and Methodist) and a Roman Catholic parish. Church Street was mostly a residential side street, which paralleled Oatka Creek to its immediate west. The name "Church Street" was based due to the presence of Episcopal and Baptist church buildings on the east side of the street. The Episcopal Church was demolished by the 1860s (replaced by "St. Mark's Place" street), but its burial ground remained. A new Episcopal church building for St. Mark's congregation was erected in 1868-69 at the corner of Church and Main streets, at the east end of the Main Street Bridge over Oatka Creek. Originally built between 1823 and 1829, the First Baptist Church was located at 123 East Main Street before it was moved to #8 Church Street in 1835. It moved a second time in 1902 to its present location at 5 East Main Street at the end of Church Street, across from the Episcopal Church.

In addition to the modest houses indicated on the map, there was an industrial district at the northern terminus of Church Street that included the east-west railroad tracks, a malt works, and a warehouse. The 1864 map included several, small buildings (most likely houses) on the west side of Church Street, in the same area where the current Tryon House was built in 1867 by local businessman Augustus S. Tryon. Tryon purchased this Church Street property from the estate of John Munro. Previously, Tryon lived across the street, in a

house two lots north of the Baptist Church (per the 1864 map). An entry in the Saturday, August 17, 1867 edition of the *Le Roy Gazette* mentioned that Tryon was building a fine "modern" residence on the west side of Church Street which, "when completed, will be probably equal to the best in town."

Augustus S. Tryon was born in Middletown, Connecticut on June 28, 1826. After a common school education, he began his business life in South Carolina, where he employed in the mercantile trade. In 1849, he went to California, where he engaged in mining and the mercantile business, attracted by the "Gold Rush" of 1848. In 1856, he came east to Le Roy and again started a business in merchandising. In 1880, he retired and took up farming and became a trustee of the village. His first wife, Elizabeth, died in 1883 and he married again, his second wife being Helen M. Holmes of Le Roy. His children were Albert, Mary, Bryant, Augustus C., Arthur, Clara, Mattie, Jeannie, and Anna. Many of the Tryon children died before reaching maturity and were buried in the Tryon family plot in Le Roy's Macpelah Cemetery (NR listed 2007).

The 1899 publication, *Descriptive and Biographical Record of Genesee County, New York* described Tryon as a businessman "of upright character, and he has always sought to promote the growth and prosperity of the town."[1] Tryon's apparent success in the mercantile business enabled him to build at that time the-largest house on Church Street, just eleven years after arriving in Le Roy. In 1881, Tryon sold the family home to another successful Le Roy businessman, Charles F. Prentice. It is possible that Tryon's retirement in 1880 and sale of the family home in 1881 might have been precipitated by family health issues, as his wife died just three years later in 1883 at the age of 49. Tryon remarried and lived until 1902. His second wife, Helen, resided in the family home on North Street and died in 1908.

The second owner of 15 Church Street, Le Roy businessman Charles F. Prentice (1833-1917), was a descendant of one of the oldest and wealthiest families of Genesee County. The son of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Prentice, he was born on a farm in the town of Stafford, in Genesee County on September 5, 1833, where he spent his boyhood days and attended neighboring district schools. He augmented his education with two years of study at the Genesee Wesleyan Seminary in Lima, Livingston County. As a young man, he engaged in farming and on October 23, 1862, he married Miss Rosepha J. Cold at the home of her parents, Justice and Lavinia Cole, about two miles west of Le Roy. For the next three years, the young couple lived on his farm in the town of Stafford, moving to Le Roy in 1865. At that time, Charles Prentice purchased the mill built by Jacob Le Roy in 1822 on the west side of Oatka Creek.

[1] Safford E. North, ed., *Our Country and its People, A Descriptive and Biographical Record of Genesee County New York, Part III Personal References* (Boston, MA: The Boston History Company, Publishers, 1899), 13.

Located on Mill Street (corner of Main St.) this large, three-story, stone building was the first mill to be erected in Le Roy and produced flour that was distributed widely. Prentice expanded the milling operations for flour, feed, meal, buckwheat and later adapted the building to produce electric power. In 1896, Prentice founded the Le Roy Power and Milling Company (also known as the Le Roy Hydraulic Company), of which he was president. A few years later, Mr. Prentice acquired a second gas manufacturing business, which he consolidated with the Le Roy Hydraulic Electric Company. The Le Roy mill was demolished in 1923 and the U.S. Post Office was built on the property (NR listed, 1989).

In 1884, Charles Prentice was one of four local businessmen who organized and incorporated the Le Roy Salt Company. The mining of salt commenced in Le Roy several years earlier, but proved to be difficult. In the summer of 1884, the salt works were remodeled by new owners and a more successful process was adopted that pumped brine to the surface, where the water was evaporated in huge vats. As the demand for salt increased, the plant was continuously expanded. By 1897, it produced 1,000 barrels per day and employed 125 workers. Eventually, the Le Roy Salt Company became one of the largest salt producers in the country. After several fires (1891, 1915) and an eventual sale of the company to a larger firm, the Le Roy Salt Company closed in 1928. Prentice became president of the Bank of Le Roy in October, 1910, a position he held until the time of his death in 1917. He was one of the largest stockholders of the bank and a member of its board of directors. He was also a trustee of Ingham University. During all these years, he retained and successfully operated his farm in the town of Stafford. His lengthy 1917 obituary (three columns in the *Le Roy Gazette*) stated, "He was ever ready to contribute of his time and money for the advancement of any project of local interest and lent his support to the establishment of many local industries. He was especially interested in the promotion and building of the new water system and exerted a strong influence in bringing about a successful vote on the appropriation."

Charles and Rosepha Prentice were married for 55 years (1862-1917) and had three children (two daughters and one son). The Prentice family lived in the house for 48 years (from 1881-1929). During their ownership, Prentice died suddenly of a heart attack in May, 1917, while visiting his daughter and her family in Buffalo. At age 83 years, he was described in a May 16, 1917 newspaper obituary as "the oldest and most prominent business man in Le Roy." Mrs. Prentice survived her husband by ten years, dying in the house at #15 Church Street, on February 25, 1928. They are both interred in the Prentice family plot in Le Roy's Macpelah Cemetery.

During the Prentice ownership, the house continued to be an important and distinctive example of residential architecture in Le Roy. A major renovation of the front (east) porches was done between 1896 and 1904,

expanding two smaller porches into one, large, porch that extended across the full width of the façade. An 1896 photo was published in *Art Work of Genesee County*, showing the house with extensive landscaping, two large limestone planters on the front lawn, and two pyramidal wood trellises flanking the house with decorative vines growing on them. The house retained its original exterior Italianate style features, with two, separate front (east porches), louvered wood shutters on most of the windows, a decorative wood balustrade atop the roof of the second-story south balcony, and a distinctive belvedere with corner posts and paneled railings at the peak of the main, hipped roof.

Two additional 1896 photographs from the same publication showed additional features of Church Street and its immediate environs along Oatka Creek. One photo of Church Street was a streetscape looking north, directly up the street, past the houses located between #8 Church Street and the former Episcopal burial ground. The houses shared period features such as two limestone hitching posts and a limestone mounting block out along the tree lawn, next to the curb. A particularly large carriage mounting block was visible in front of the house at 15 Church Street, as well as a continuous row of young trees, which extend north-south, along their front lawn, just west of the public sidewalk.

The second photo from this 1896 publication is of particular interest, as it shows a view of Oatka Creek, looking north from the Main Street bridge. This photographs clearly shows the industrial buildings on the west side of Oatka Creek, as well as the west (rear) section of the Tryon house, visible just above the tree line on the east side of the creek. In the middle of the photo, spanning the entire width of the creek bed, was a remarkable pedestrian suspension bridge that extended from the rear of the house at #15 Church Street to the west side/Mill Street industrial buildings owned by Charles Prentice. He may have created the bridge to provide direct access between his home and his industrial buildings across the creek instead of walking all way around via Main Street bridge. The suspension bridge was also shown on an 1892 Bird's Eye View map of Le Roy. The actual construction date is unknown as is the date of removal. Today, the stone retaining wall (on the east bank of the creek, below the house) with two metal I-bolts and two attached metal rings are the only parts of the suspension bridge that have survived.

During the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, other prosperous businessmen built homes on Church Street. In 1875, another handsome brick Italianate house was erected by Augustus Miller at 19 Church Street. In 1887, architect Miles Merritt created a distinctive Queen Anne/Shingle style residence at 12 Church Street for the patent medicine manufacturer, George H. Wells. In 1904, Joseph Lapp, founder of the Lapp Lumber Company built one of the largest houses on the street, a Queen Anne-style residence at 32 Church Street ,which remained in the Lapp family until 1966. In 1911, attorney Scott W.

Skinner commissioned the architectural firm of Dillon and Mallock to build an elegant Colonial Revival style house at 8 Church Street, a property formerly occupied by the First Baptist Church (a building that was moved in 1902 to its present site, around the corner on E. Main Street.

With the death of Mrs. Prentice in 1928, the house was subsequently sold to the Powers family, who lived there for a number of years. The Powers family continued to own the house until 1979, the longest ownership of this property to date (50 years). It is likely that few changes and very little updating were done to the house in the first decades of the twentieth century, as both Mr. and Mrs. Prentice were quite elderly. It is likely, however, that the intact, early twentieth-century bathroom on the second floor was created during the last years of the Prentice occupancy. What appears to be the first "modern" bathroom to be installed in the house, this remarkable artifact retains its original wood floor, scored plaster walls (to resemble tile), pedestal sink, claw-footed bath tub, toilet, medicine chest, and glass-and-silver towel rack.

## Architecture

The 1867-built Augustus S. Tryon House is an important example of Italianate style residential architecture in both the village and town of Le Roy. The Italianate style, along with Gothic Revival, began in England as part of the Picturesque movement, a reaction to the formal classical ideals in art and architecture that had been fashionable for about two hundred years. The movement emphasized rambling, informal, Italian farmhouses, with their characteristic square towers, as models for Italian-style villa architecture. Italianate houses built in the United States generally followed the informal rural models of the Picturesque movement. In America, these Old World prototypes were variously modified, adapted, and embellished into a truly indigenous style with only hints of its Latin origin.

Few American architects could afford to travel to Italy in the mid-nineteenth century, so most of the Italian influence on American architecture came from English buildings and pattern books. Of the three styles of Italian houses that were built in America (Italian Villa, the Italianate, and the Urban Brownstone), the Italianate became the most popular. The style was introduced in America in 1837 when architect John Notman built an Italian Villa for Bishop Doane in Burlington, New Jersey. In 1842, this house was published by A.J. Downing in *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America.* Downing further popularized the style by publishing many A.J. Davis designs for the Italian Villa style in both *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The* Architecture of Country Houses (1850). Downing recommended the style because of "the irregularity in the masses of the edifice and the shape of the roof" rendered "the sky outline of a building in the style extremely picturesque." The style allowed exceptional freedom in planning in the design of a new house and in making an addition. The style was at once charming, attractive, and practical. By the

1860s the style had completely overshadowed its earlier companion, the Gothic Revival. Most surviving examples date from the period 1855-1880; earlier examples are rare.

Although located on a residential side street (off E. Main Street), its size, scale, and detailing are similar to the more visually prominent, nineteenth-century houses situated along the village's Main Street (SR 5). Characteristics of the Italianate design exemplified by the Tryon house include cubic massing, low-pitched hipped roofs with wide, overhanging eaves, porches with square chamfered columns, and brackets under the house and porch eaves. Window decoration on the exterior includes original distinctive moldings around the window openings and shed-roof hoods over windows on the south, east and north elevations. Original louvered, wood shutters are still extant on the second story (east) elevation windows.

The picturesque, Italian inspired house had clapboard and flush board siding over an asymmetrical plan. The main, two and one-half story section had a set-back, southern L-section and a two-story, west (rear) wing. Downing believed that porches were important to residences and stated in his 1849 publication *Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture:*

> A porch strengthens or conveys expression of purpose, because, instead of leaving the entrance door bare, as in manufactories and buildings of an inferior description, it serves both as a note of preparation, and an effectual shelter and protection to the entrance. Besides this, it gives a dignity and importance to that entrance, pointing it out to the stranger as the place of approach. A fine country house, without a porch or covered shelter to the doorway of some description, is therefore as incomplete, to the correct eye, as a well printed book without a title page, leaving the stranger to plunge at once *in medias res,* without the friendly preparation of a single word of introduction.[2]

Tryon had a porch built across the main block of the façade and Prentice extended it across the entire east elevation. This new, expanded version featured decorative brackets, railings with elaborate turned balusters, and large-scale, square, chamfered columns that are particularly distinctive and unique among the Italianate houses in the village.

The interior of the house was a testament to the refinement and taste of the Tryons and the Prentices. Plaster cove molding decorated the front hall, two parlors, and the dining room. The principal front staircase had a varnished wood newel post, railing, balusters, and scroll brackets under the treads/along the string course. The staircase railing extended from the first floor newel post, up to the second floor, and curved around, 180-degrees at the top, continuing along the second-floor hallway. Decorative plaster ceiling medallions were added to the front hall, south parlor and dining room. Two white marble mantels covered the fireplace

[2] A. J. Downing, *Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture (1849)* (reprinted New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1991), 325.

openings in the south and north parlors. Interior woodwork in these rooms included wide baseboard moldings, shouldered moldings around windows and doors and also decorated the spaces in the halls and two second floor bedrooms. Painted graining was used in the north parlor and dining room interior, as window trim and rectangular panels below the windows; but as tastes changed, it was later painted over.

During a 1929-1930 renovation, the house was divided into four apartments, but kept the original design and layout of the house. Narrow, oak flooring was installed throughout the principal first and second floor rooms and a parquet wood floor was installed in the dining room. New partition walls (drywall) were installed to create additional closets, a south kitchen, and two bathrooms for the newly created apartments). The addition of new partition walls and installation of two new kitchens and two new bathrooms was done carefully, and little of the original design and fabric of the 1867 house was compromised. One of the apartments was occupied by the owner, Mrs. Louise Powers, who took part in a 1939 community documentation project that included 500 images of Le Roy buildings, people, and sites taken by a professional photographer and is now in the archives of the Le Roy Historical Society

In 1979, Marion Powers Green, daughter of Louise Powers, sold this property to Mr. and Mrs. Francis DeYoung who maintained the house as rental property until 1992, when it was sold to the current owner, Edgar G. Praus. In 2007, Mr. Praus completed a major restoration of the front and north/side porches, which had significant deterioration, replacing columns, rails, posts and balusters based on historic documentation. A view of the Tryon House in a 1905 newspaper photo shows the porches as one large porch, with square chamfered columns, railings with decorative balusters, and curved brackets. The expanded south half of the porch held furniture and comfortable outdoor seating. It is likely that this expanded front porch was the result of changing cultural and social practices, as front porches often became "summer living rooms," where family and furniture would be positioned out-of-doors, in hopes of catching any existing breezes. The recent restoration included all new cedar porch decking, three new Italianate chamfered columns on the south section of the front (east) porch, all new wood screens with lattice detailing under the porch decks and new wood handrails next to the limestone steps (front porch).

Interior renovation of the house continues, as there are no longer any rental tenants in the apartments. Three of the apartments are now occupied by the current owner, and the fourth apartment (second floor/north side) is undergoing renovation also for owner-occupied space. Some of the 1930s partition walls have been removed, along with one of the two, small kitchens that were installed at that time. A lower missing section of the central enclosed staircase (off the dining room) was rebuilt so that restored staircase now makes access from the dining room to the second floor once again possible.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Belluscio, Lynne J. "The Limestone Industry in Le Roy, parts I-IV." Le Roy Historical Society newsletter, Volume XVII, Numbers 1, 2, 3, & 4. Le Roy, New York. 2007.

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Walker, Lester. "American Shelter: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American House." Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press. 1981.

Weigle, Ozzie, photographer. "Le Roy in 1940." Photographic survey (500 images) of buildings and residents of Le Roy, New York. Unpublished. 1940.

Tryon, Augustus S., House
Name of Property

Genesee County, NY
County and State

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

**Primary location of additional data:**

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
_x_ Other
Name of repository: **Landmark Society of Western New York (Rochester)**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 18N | 256342 | 4762878 | 3 | | | |
| 2 | | | | 4 | | | |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property boundary is the same as during the period of significance.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cynthia Howk, Architectural Research Coordinator
organization Landmark Society of Western New York date 13 December 2012
street & number 133 South Fitzhugh St telephone 585-546-7029
city or town Rochester state NY zip code 14608
e-mail CHowk@landmarksociety.org

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Tryon, Augustus S., House

City or Vicinity: Le Roy

County: Genesee State: New York

Photographer: Landmark Society of Western New York

Date Photographed: Photos 0001 through 0006 taken October 2012
Photos 0007 through 0020 taken July 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

0001 of 0022. East façade and north elevation, view looking southwest.

0002 of 0022. East façade, view looking northwest.

0003 of 0022. South elevation, view looking northwest.

0004 of 0022. Rear (west) elevation, view looking southeast.

0005 of 0022. Site of former barn, showing remaining foundation sections, view looking south.

0006 of 0022. View of rear edge of property showing suspension bridge bolts, view looking down and north.

0007 of 0022. North elevation, view looking south from edge of property.

0008 of 0022. Detail view of north elevation window.

0009 of 0022. Detail view of east façade porch.

0010 of 0022. Detail view of south elevation window.

0011 of 0022. View of center hall looking east.

0012 of 0022. View of dining room looking north.

0013 of 0022. View of main stair looking west.

0014 of 0022. Southeast parlor, view looking northwest.

0015 of 0022. Southeast parlor looking into main hall.

0016 of 0022. Southwest room (study) looking into southeast parlor.

0017 of 0022. South wall of dining room—center door hides stair to second floor.

0018 of 0022. Light and medallion in main hall.

0019 of 0022. Second floor hall/stair landing.

0020 of 0022. View of northeast bedroom, second floor.

0021 of 0022. Historic image of house, ca. 1890.

0022 of 0022. Historic image showing suspension bridge over Oatka Creek (house barely visible on right).

**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Edgar G. Praus

street & number 15 Church St telephone N/A

city or town Le Roy state NY zip code 14482

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Tryon, Augustus S., House
Town of Le Roy, Genesee Co., NY

*15 Church Street*
*Le Roy, NY 14482*

*Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N*
*Projection: Transverse Mercator*
*Datum: North American 1983*
*Units: Meter*

Feet
0 112.5 225 450

Tryon House

*Tax Parcel Data:*
*Genesee Co. RPS*
*http://gis.co.genesee.ny.us/*

OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE

Tryon, Augustus S., House
Town of Le Roy, Genesee Co., NY

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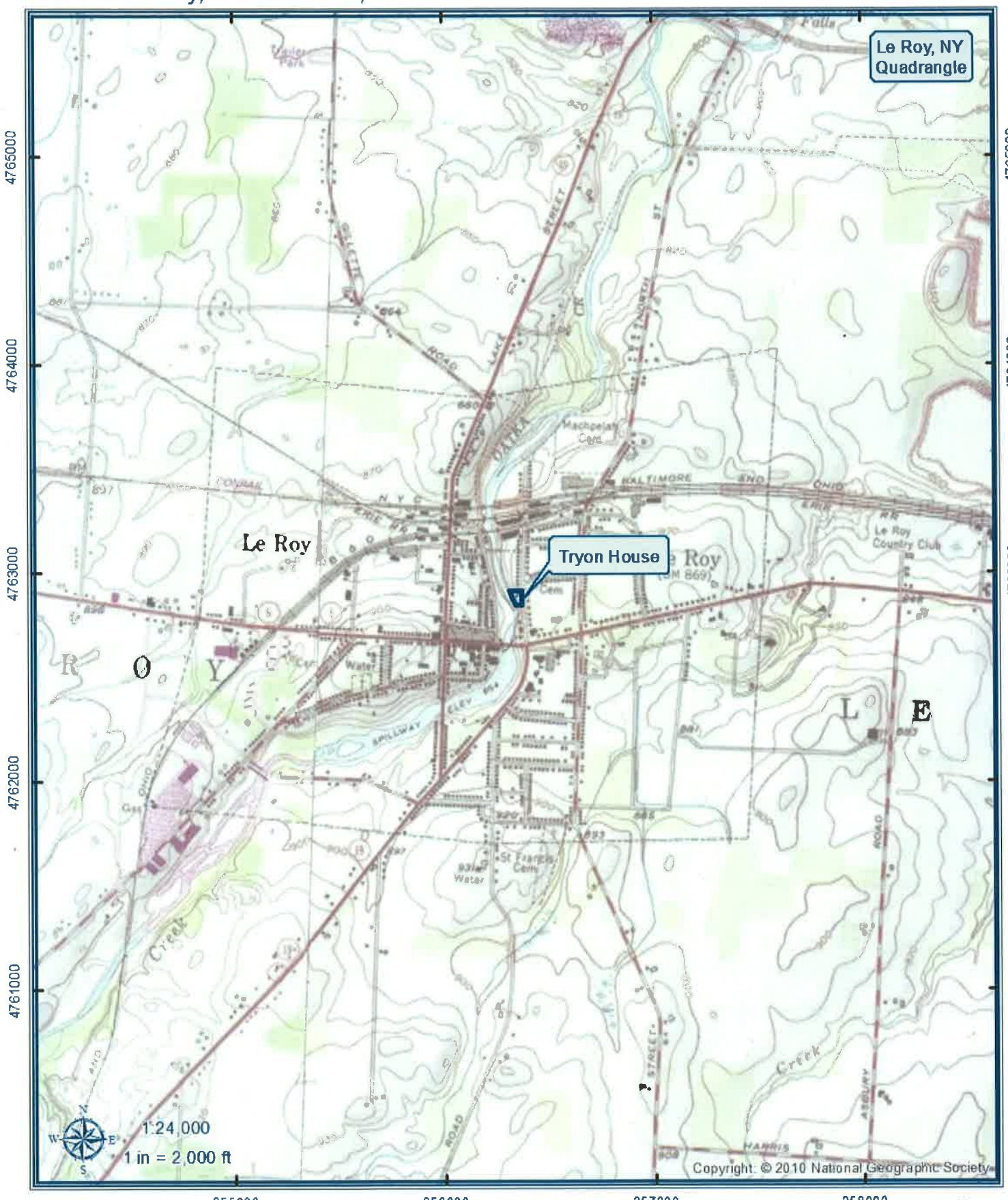


*Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N*
*Projection: Transverse Mercator*
*Datum: North American 1983*
*Units: Meter*

Feet
0 650 1,300 2,600

Tryon House

15