

LeRoy's Swing Bridges

by Lynne Belluscio

Cynthia Howk from the Landmark Society of Western New York has been researching the Tryon-Prentice House on Church Street. It was noted in the July 1867 *LeRoy Gazette* that A.S. Tryon was building a fine new house that would "probably be the best in town" when completed. The house still stands on the west side of Church Street, pretty much like it did 150 years ago.

The house was purchased by Charles F. Prentice, who was one of LeRoy's best known businessmen. He was born in Stafford and attended the Genesee Wesleyan Seminary in Lima. He first tried his hand at farming, but in 1865 he purchased the mill that had been built by Jacob LeRoy in 1822 and expanded the milling business. In 1884, he organized the LeRoy Salt Company. He then went on to establish the LeRoy Hydraulic Electric

Company and also manufactured gas until natural gas was utilized. Prentice also served as a Trustee of Ingham University. In 1910, he became the president of the Bank of LeRoy.

In 1912, the *LeRoy Gazette* described his daughter Mary's wedding that was held in the living room of the Church Street home: "The marriage ceremony was performed beneath a bower of southern smilax, flanked by white chrysanthemums, most artistically arranged in the large bay window of the living room ... the wedding march being softly played by August Fricker's Orchestra, of Batavia, stationed in the rear of the hall behind a screen of smilax and flowers ..."

C.F. Prentice died in 1917 and his house passed through several hands. But the curious part of the story is Prentice's bridge. It was a foot bridge that spanned the Creek from behind his house

to the west side to the Prentice Mill on Mill Street. A photo of the bridge appears in a photo book of Genesee County in 1896. And it can be seen in the 1892 birds eye view of the village. It must have been quite a walk across the bridge. And so far, I haven't been able to find out much more about it.

There was another "swing" bridge across the Oatka. It was known as the "LaBounty" swing bridge and it ran from the north end of Machpelah Cemetery on North Street across the creek to about Red Mill Road. A photograph taken in 1923 identifies the kids as Lillian Anchor, Margurite Carmichael and Mildred Vadez. The photo was given to the Historical Society by Warren Hansen. No one seemed to know why that bridge was built or who built it.




LaBounty Bridge north of Machpelah Cemetery.



Prentice Swing Bridge 1896.

Of course today, there is a more substantial walk bridge that connects Church Street with Mill Street and part of that story was that it allowed students from the east side of the creek to walk to Holy Family School without having to go all the way down to the Main Street bridge.



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