

# The Tryon-Prentice-Powers House - A National Register Landmark

by Lynne Belluscio

Cynthia Howk from the Landmark Society of Western New York in Rochester called a few weeks ago to see if we had any information on the house at 15 Church Street. She was writing a nomination for the National Register of Historic Places and needed more information.

We were able to provide newspaper clippings about the people who lived in the house as well as several early photographs. Cynthia compiled all the information as well as a detailed description of the interior and exterior architecture and submitted the nomination to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. This was followed by a site visit by Virginia Bartos, from the State Office of Historic Preservation. She then presented the nomination to the New York State Review Board.

They approved the nomination, and it has been submitted for the National Register of Historic Places. Usually the process takes a year or two, but the Tryon House has such a compelling story, that the nomination was accepted in a matter of months. Other sites in LeRoy that are included in the National Register of Historic Places are: the Keeney-Townsend House on West Main Street; the LeRoy House; the LeRoy Academic Institute Building; the Post Office; Machpelah Cemetery; and the Marion Steam Shovel on Gulf Road.

The Tryon-Prentice-Powers House, is an example of Italianate architecture which was popular between 1840 and 1880. The two-story house has a low pitch hip roof and wide overhanging eaves supported by large ornate brackets. The long porches on three sides are very typical of the Italianate style.

Augustus Tryon, a prosperous LeRoy merchant, built the house in 1867. The *LeRoy Gazette*, on August 17, 1867, noted that "Mr. A.S. Tryon is building a fine modern dwelling house on the west side of Church Street for his own use, which when completed,



will be probably equal to the best in town." In 1881, the house was sold to Charles F. Prentice, who owned the LeRoy flour mill across the creek. He expanded the mill into the LeRoy Hydraulic Company which utilized the waterpower to produce electricity. He constructed a suspension walk bridge from his house to his office on the other side of the creek. Prentice was one of the investors in the LeRoy Salt Company and in 1910, he became the President of the Bank of LeRoy.

In 1928, the house was sold to the Powers family, and John Green, son of Marion Powers Green, remembers living in the house. While the Powers family lived there, apartments were created, and it became a multiple family dwelling. In 1979, Fran DeYoung bought the house as a rental property. I remember when Fran called me about the barn behind the house. It had a horse ramp to the lower level, but the barn was falling into the creek and it was torn down. I never did get over there to take photographs.

When Edgar Praus bought the house in 1992, he immediately began restoration. His most ambitious project was in 2007 with the restoration of the magnificent porches. Edgar had all new balusters, railings and newel posts fabricated – duplicates of the original missing

woodwork. This extensive project included all new cedar porch decking, and three new Italianate chamfered columns on the south section of the front porch. Edgar continues to work on the inside and is removing partitions from the old apartments and recreating a single-family home. It is obvious that Edgar is committed to the architectural integrity of this historic house.

Announcement of the National Register designation is good news for Edgar, who now qualifies for a New York State program that will allow tax credits for his home repair costs. This program is in effect through 2014, and is only available to National Register-designated homes. And since all of LeRoy is located in

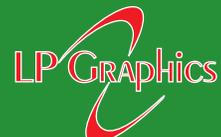
a census tract that is below the median income for the state, there are additional benefits. It certainly is incentive for folks to get their homes registered, if they qualify. (And it should be noted for anyone interested in purchasing the Townsend House on West Main Street, there are great benefits because it is already a National Register-designated home.)

If anyone is interested in learning more about the nomination process, or whether your home qualifies for nomination, you can call me at 769-7433, or even better, call Cynthia Howk at the Landmark Society of Western New York in Rochester at 546-7029 extension 24.



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