

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 First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 7 Clay Street

N/A not for publication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  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  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  local

Richard Purpont DSAPPO 7/3/14  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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:

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): \_\_\_\_\_

Joe Eason R. Beall 9.10.14  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

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

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

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	<b>Total</b>

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

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

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

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

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/church-related residence

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

**7. Description**

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

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

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

foundation: STONE, CONCRETE

LATE NINETEENTH & TWENTIETH CENTURY

walls: WOOD CLAPBOARD

REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

roof: ASPHALT, METAL

other: GLASS

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## Narrative Description

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### Summary Paragraph

The First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy, located at the corner of Clay and Main streets, is a wood frame religious edifice highlighted on the principal elevation by a stoutly proportioned bell tower and a monumental Roman Doric portico. The building has a complex, but nevertheless, well-documented development chronology that accounts for its present appearance and layout. The original building, erected circa 1825-26, was of a characteristic American Wren-Gibbs meetinghouse type, consisting of a gable-roofed main block with a bell tower and an engaged center pavilion. During the period circa 1839-56 a series of changes were rendered to the original building, including a significant reworking of the exterior in the Gothic Revival taste and modifications to the interior. The earliest graphic depiction of the building, a circa 1856 perspective view of the exterior, relates to this period of its physical development, which shows a building of Wren-Gibbs form with distinctive Gothic detailing. In 1866 a third renovation campaign was undertaken, at which time the tower was reworked, along with the windows that were given to their present round-arched configuration in the prevailing Italianate taste. It was also at this time that the vestibule and original galleries were reworked to reflect their present appearance, among other interior changes. Work undertaken in 1898-99 and 1913 encompassed, respectively, additions to the session room and new Sunday school rooms, the latter work overseen by architect Claude Bragdon. Finally, during the period circa 1929-51, the last major alterations were made, including the addition of the current Roman Doric portico, which imparted a classical element to the otherwise mid-nineteenth-century Italianate-style exterior treatments. The work of this period was overseen by local architect and church member C. Ivan Cromwell. Although entirely reworked during subsequent periods, the original mid-1820s building nevertheless survives as the core structure of the edifice; the building as a whole largely portrays the 1860s-era renovations, notwithstanding the later portico. A single-story wood frame addition was made in 1913 and a dining/kitchen wing was completed in 1951. The church interior retains its nineteenth century appearance, including the gallery, with its cast iron support columns and paneled face, plain plaster wall surfaces, a coved cornice and decorative plaster ceiling work, and slip pews with scrolled armrests. The entrance vestibule has bead board wainscoting and staircases to the gallery which feature newel posts and baluster turnings characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century. The nomination includes a second contributing resource, the former manse located on Clay Street, which is still owned by the church and used as rental property. The former manse is a two-story Queen Anne-style building of brick construction and was erected circa 1880; it is now divided into two apartments.

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## Narrative Description

### Location & Setting

The First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy is situated on a double village lot at the southeast corner of the intersection of Main and Clay streets in the village of Le Roy, Genesee County, New York. The nomination additionally includes also a small lot directly behind the church building, where the former parsonage, now a rental property, is located. The church property is located at the west end of the village business district, which includes a number of late-nineteenth-century buildings in addition to those of more recent age. A two-story wood-frame building is located east of the church; once

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residential, but now commercial property, it dates from the first half of the nineteenth century and is contemporary with the church. Other prominent buildings near the church are the 1917 Claude Bragdon-designed Village Hall and the Keeney/Townsend House at 13 West Main Street (NR listed 1979). Further along West Main Street are a number of early nineteenth to early twentieth century residences, many of which are situated on narrow village lots and depict a broad range of period architectural styles. Except for a few businesses and churches, Clay Street is principally residential in both directions from the central intersection. The church was originally shaded by elm trees aligned along its street frontage. These were lost due to the widening of the roadways, leaving the church on a smaller lot, which is planted with grass. Small flowering trees are situated on the east and north sides of the church, while limited landscaping is present at the front and side entrances.

### **First Presbyterian Church—General Description**

The church proper, excluding the additions which extend from the rear elevation, is a two-story wood-frame building distinguished by a prominent bell tower and monumental portico over a foundation of locally quarried limestone ashlar. The church is oriented to face northward towards Main Street and has a gable-front arrangement reflecting the original 1820s construction. The portion of the building containing the sanctuary and narthex is 50-feet wide by 82-feet long with the eaves on the flank elevations being approximately 22-feet above grade. The roof is low pitched and clad with asphalt shingles. The most conspicuous feature of the building is the bell tower, which has a stoutly proportioned lower stage which gives way to a tall spire with an octagonal upper stage and a four-sided base. A single entrance provides access to the interior, which is centered at the first-story level of the façade and consists of double-leaf doors with round arched and glazed upper panels. Windows, both small and large, are round-arched in the Italianate style, including those which punctuate the four facets of the bell stage.

The main doors lead into a vestibule, which has stairs to the gallery, beyond which is the worship space. A three-sided gallery is present, sustained by cast iron columns and having a paneled face. The worship space is oriented on a north-to-south axis with the liturgical center being situated on the south side. Doors corresponding with the side aisles lead from the worship space into the community space beyond the church proper. This part of the building, enlarged four times during the period of significance (circa 1825-1956), is now called Olmsted Hall and contains the church offices, minister's study, a large parlor with fireplace, a meeting hall and kitchen, and toilet and storage rooms. A full basement under Olmsted Hall and the worship space houses Sunday school rooms, a boiler room, toilets, and storage areas, as well as an independently operated community nursery school.

### **Exterior**

The façade (north elevation) and principal entrance is called to notice by virtue of the monumental portico. This Roman Doric order portico is of tetra style form and has fluted columns, a denticulated cornice, paneled soffits, and two fluted

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pilasters which engage the wall of the church. The area of wall corresponding with the portico's width has flush board siding, unlike the remaining walls, which have clapboard. The portico's position corresponds with a projecting center pavilion that was a feature of the original design. Three steps account for the difference in grade between the portico floor and the walkway which approaches it. The entrance is centered within the portico and consists of a pair of glazed and paneled entrance doors above which is a blind, semicircular transom with quarter-round panels. A molded architrave frames this composition. A hanging pendant lamp provides light for this door. Leaded glass inserts were added in the upper panel of each door in the 1980s, to increase visibility. A double round-headed window is centered above the entrance, while single round-arched windows, at first and second-story level, are present on the outer bays. These are fitted with four-over-four wood sash and bring natural light into the vestibule.

The roof pitch of the portico's pediment matches the slope of the church's roof and its cornice is aligned so as to correspond with the cornices of the main block. The portico roof is covered with standing seam copper, while that of the main block is covered with asphalt shingles. The majority of the church's exterior is clad with eastern white pine clapboard with a four-inch exposure, most of which dates to the 1866 renovation. The corner boards are plain and narrow. The bell tower, an original feature of the design, was extensively modified in 1866 and continues to largely reflect that date.

The west elevation, fronting on Clay Street, has six tall triple-hung round-headed windows, evenly spaced, each of which is surrounded by wide, plain wood trim. All of the glass panes in the worship space and vestibule are etched with a cross motif, which lends a softening effect to the light inside. A plain fascia and corresponding cornices mark the transition between exterior wall and roof planes. Visible along this elevation is the ridge of the one-story community building, which is attached to the rear of the church and parallels Clay Street. The west walls of both the two-story and one-story parts of the building are flush with one another, and the cornices, trim boards, and clapboards of the one-story community building match those of the church. An open portico supported by two pairs of fluted columns marks the Clay Street entrance. The columns, pediment and entablature of this smaller portico are similar to those employed on the monumental portico. The pilasters supporting the portico, where it meets the building, are square and paneled. A concrete ramp was added at this location in 2009 to make the building ADA compliant. The entrance doors are glazed and paneled with a glazed transom above. The windows in the community building are tall and trabeated; each opening contains a mullioned pair of double-hung windows glazed with clear glass (four-over-four lights each). Two such windows are placed on either side of the Clay Street entrance portico.

On its south side the community building has the same tall double windows as employed on the west elevation, with a paired and two single windows at each end. Attached east of the gable end is an at-grade side entrance used by the Le Roy Community Nursery School, located in the community building basement. The last addition to the community building can be seen on the east side and it houses the church kitchen and meeting hall. The nursery school is located in the basement below. This portion of the building forms an ell that is placed 90-degrees to the rest of the facility and extends 45-feet to the east. A concrete sidewalk runs between the community building and the former manse at 9 Clay Street and from Clay Street to the village parking lot east of the church.

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An addition at the east end of the community building faces the village parking lot and forms the meeting room/dining hall ell. Two pairs of tall double windows in the gable end provide light for the interior of the meeting hall. Three pairs of double hung windows are located on the north side facing Main Street. The meeting hall ell meets the oldest portion of the community building to the left. Further to the left, at the juncture of the one-story community building and the sanctuary, is a two-story projecting stuccoed-masonry stair hall that provides an egress from the sanctuary balconies, the first floor hallway leading to the sanctuary, and the basement classrooms. The sanctuary wall on the east elevation mirrors that of the west.

The church building itself occupies most of the present lot, with only a small yard north of Olmsted Hall and another small yard behind 9 Clay Street being present. The first parsonage was located at 11 Clay Street. After it was sold, a new two-story Queen Anne-style manse of brick construction was erected, in 1885, at 9 Clay Street. The original veranda has since been removed and the building has become a two-family apartment house, which still belongs to the church.

## **Interior**

The principal entrance from the Main Street opens into the vestibule of the church, which extends across the full width of the building. Open stairways on each side lead to the galleries and additionally provide access to the Sunday school rooms in the basement level. The vestibule walls are plastered and have bead-board wainscoting beginning immediately below the window sills. The ceiling is also plastered. The current vestibule arrangement and treatments date to the 1866 renovations, as does the worship space exclusive of the south wall.

The worship space has slip pews with scrolled armrests arranged in ranks along two aisles and facing the liturgical center. The pews farthest from the liturgical center are slightly raised above those in front of them so as to improve sight lines. This space exhibits the same plastered wall surfaces and bead-board wainscot as the vestibule. Windows begin at wainscot height and are wider than those in the narthex and much taller. Six triple-hung windows with rounded heads punctuate the east and west sidewalls. Wide, simple moldings form surrounds for the windows, which have etched/frosted glass panes that provide filtered but adequate natural light.

A U-shaped gallery engages the east, north, and west walls. The gallery is treated as an entablature, with a molded architrave, paneled frieze, and molded cornice. Cast iron columns with lotus leaf capitals support the gallery. The tall round-headed windows extend on the outside walls up above the gallery-level so as to provide adequate natural light. The locations of the gas jets on the gallery walls for lighting can still be seen, but electrically-lit double wall sconces are used in conjunction with the three suspended multi-light chandeliers along the axis of the sanctuary.

The liturgical center consists of a paneled dais with a lectern, beyond which is a choir loft and a large Palladian motif centered within the wall. The original paneled communion rail, while no longer used, remains in situ. A cross aisle connects the long aisles to the doors on either side of the south wall. A communion table is located within the front cross aisle. Steps provide access to the dais and choir area. The present liturgical arrangement dates to the turn-of-the-twentieth

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century as documented by a 1912 centennial history booklet. The organ case has moved from the back to the front of the sanctuary several times, as has the location of the main ranks of organ pipes. At the time of architect C. Ivan Cromwell's interior remodeling, the Palladian motif was added at the center of the rear wall, for the purpose of housing the pipes; however, these were since moved to the tower.

It appears that the cove molding of the plastered ceiling dates to the 1866 renovation, based on historic photographs and a similar cove molding in the 1858 Plymouth Congregational Church in Syracuse, New York (NR listed 1997). As for the ceiling, it is divided into panels along the perimeter, with a single long rectangular center panel from which are suspended the chandeliers. The panel borders and the trim at the top and bottom of the eased cornice display restrained decorative plaster work. The worship space is carpeted, except for under the pews and the choir loft. To the south of the sanctuary are the offices, meeting and social rooms, which were described previously.

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**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.)

- 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.
- 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1825-1956

**Significant Dates**

1825, 1856, 1866, 1913, 1929, 1951, 1956

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Cromwell, Charles Ivan

Bragdon, Claude

**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.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The cited period of significance, ca 1825 -1956, begins with the initial construction of the church and terminates with the additions of 1956.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

The building is eligible under Criteria Consideration A as a religious complex significant for its age and design.



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### Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Erected in 1825-26 and modified subsequently during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy encompasses multiple periods of development and eras of taste in American ecclesiastical design. The original edifice was of a conventional Wren-Gibbs type, typified by its two-story, self-contained gabled form, the façade highlighted by an engaged central pavilion and prominent multi-stage bell tower. This building type was well established by the 1820s and was widely disseminated by Asher Benjamin in his 1797 book *The Country Builder's Assistant*. It formed an important early expression of the New England heritage of the settling families and was, at the time it was erected, one of Le Roy's premier works of architecture. During the following generation, the original meetinghouse was transformed with the introduction of Gothic Revival features, an indication of the growing popularity of this design mode among Protestant groups. The building was again updated in the immediate post-Civil War period (1866) as a new renovation campaign introduced distinctive elements of the Italianate style to the interior and exterior. It is this period which the present church building's interior and exterior features largely portray and include a monumental portico that was the work of architect and church member Charles Ivan Cromwell (1899-1980). The circa 1929-1951 remodeling phase overseen by Cromwell came early in his practice, after his association with Dwight Baum in New York City (1927) and Bryant Fleming in Ithaca (1928), when he was establishing his own architectural office in the village. While subsequently modified, the original meetinghouse formed an important outward symbol of Le Roy's early founders, the majority of whom came to the region from Connecticut beginning in 1802, drawn by the promise of fertile farmland and abundant water power. The Presbyterian church was the first congregation to be organized and its building has stood prominently at the center of the village since its construction, offering a gathering place for the community and its members, many of whom were Le Roy's foremost early citizens. The building is being nominated in association with Criterion C, in the area of architecture at the local significance level, as an example of early nineteenth century religious design which was significantly modified and expanded, in response to the need and shifting architectural fashions, at various junctures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today the building largely portrays the third major phase of its development (circa 1866), which also features the work undertaken in the second quarter of the twentieth century that includes the monumental portico across the façade. The long evolution of the building represents its continuing importance in the community's religious and social life and its prestigious status in Le Roy, where it illustrated the most contemporary architectural fashions of the period.

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### Developmental history/additional historic context information

#### Early History of Le Roy

New York State Route 5 was originally the east-west trail of the Iroquois Nations, stretching from the Hudson River to the Niagara River. After the Seneca Nation was dispossessed of its lands following the American Revolution, this trail became a route used by New England and downstate New York settlers of the region. Various land companies saw the need for improvements to this route, which was widened and renamed the Great Niagara Road. Route 19 was also an early roadway, running north from Pennsylvania to Lake Ontario that aided in settlement from the south and shipping via Lake

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Ontario. Parts of that road still bear the name Lake Street (north of the intersection with Route 5). The portion of Route 19 where the Presbyterian Church is located was renamed Clay Street in honor of the politician Henry Clay, who was a Whig candidate for president in 1844; many Le Roy citizens were loyal members of that political party.

Near the roadway intersection was Oatka Creek, which in some ways determined how the village developed and was a key to the success of the initial settlement established at the convergence of the Triangle Tract, the Craigie Tract, and the Mill Tract. These were large land holdings purchased in the early 1800s by out-of-town investors, which were then subdivided and sold for development. Herman Le Roy of New York City was among the purchasers of the Triangle Tract. The town bearing his name was established in 1812. In 1834 the village was incorporated and also named for Le Roy. By this time, a dam had been erected to harness Oatka Creek's water power, leading to the development of local industry. Le Roy's early industries were dependent on agriculture, but by the late nineteenth century, the village had manufacturers producing furniture, carriages, railroad cars, stoves, patent medicines, cigars, hats, agricultural implements, milled lumber, malt, dynamite, silos, porcelain insulators and organs. In the early twentieth century, automobile parts, airplanes and "America's Most Favorite Dessert"—Jell-O—were the principal products of local manufacture.

## Early History First Presbyterian Church

With settlement and growth came the establishment of religious groups. As early as 1800, regular Presbyterian religious services were being conducted by the Reverend David Perry, a missionary from Massachusetts. A formal Presbyterian Society was formed in 1812 and by one account "was increased in numbers by the admission into membership of the local adherents of the Congregational denomination."<sup>1</sup> At first, members met in houses, but as the congregation grew, services were later held in barns and schools. During the construction of the meetinghouse between 1825 and 1826, the congregation met in a school building on Craigie Street. Next to it was the Presbyterian burial ground, established in 1814, which now fronts on Myrtle Street.<sup>2</sup> Land for the new church was purchased for \$200 from Herman Le Roy's land agent, Egbert Benson. The property consisted of less than one-half of an acre on Main Street at its intersection with Clay Street. Local lore indicated that the new building closely resembled the Congregational Church in Bennington, Vermont, reflecting the village's New England heritage. One of the village founders, Captain John Ganson, was from Bennington, Vermont, and had been to the Genesee region with the 1779 Sullivan-Clinton Campaign. Remembering the land, he returned with his sons to settle in the town.

Anecdotal accounts have linked two carpenter-builders to the original construction campaign, Philo Pierson and Clark Selden. For several years the design was attributed to Philo Pierson, but this was discounted given that he died in 1820, before the church was built. Pierson was born in Killingworth, Connecticut in 1781, came to Le Roy in 1805 with his brothers, and there became a merchant and a farmer. He was elected as one of three town assessors at the founding of Le Roy in 1812. His nephew, Philo L. Pierson, was also a builder, but only nineteen years of age at the time of the church's

<sup>1</sup> Safford R. North, *Our County and Its People: A Descriptive and Biographical Record of Genesee County, New York* (Batavia, NY: Batavia History Co., 1899), 90.

<sup>2</sup> It later became non-denominational and is now maintained by the Town of Le Roy.

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construction. He later became a well-known house wright and cabinetmaker and died in 1875. It was possible that he began learning his trade during the construction of the Presbyterian Church and may well have been involved in the later additions. As for Clark Selden, his name appears in several records in connection with the construction of the church. Born in 1779 in Haddam, Connecticut, Selden came to Le Roy in 1815 and was listed as a carpenter and joiner, as well as a farmer. Before his death in 1993, Stewart Selden recounted his great-grandfather's remembrances of how the great roof trusses for the church were shaped. After the church was completed, Clark went on to serve as an elder and clerk of session for many years before dying in 1863. Clark Selden worked at times with Marshfield Parsons, who also came to Le Roy from Connecticut, in 1815, the same year as Selden. According to his granddaughter, Parsons was identified as a carpenter and as the head builder of the Baptist and Presbyterian churches in Le Roy. These anecdotal accounts suggest the possibility that Selden and Parsons were sometime partners in the building trades and may have ultimately been responsible for the construction of the original edifice.

### **Important Events in the History of First Presbyterian Church**

In the late 1820s, anti-Masonic sentiment was palpable in the village and the First Presbyterian Church. In 1826 Captain William Morgan, from nearby Batavia, published an account of the secrets of the Masons. He was subsequently attacked and kidnapped, presumably by the Masons, never to be seen again. His disappearance touched off an anti-Masonic fervor, which found expression in a number of conventions held in the Genesee region, mostly for the support of anti-Masonic politicians, among them Henry Clay of Kentucky. After a convention in Le Roy, three leading members of First Presbyterian Church—Richard D. Bill, Seth Field, and E.P. Ingersoll—publicly renounced their Masonic membership by publishing a letter in the paper stating that, as Christians, they needed to take a stand against an organization that they regarded as a threat to the country and to the souls of believers.<sup>3</sup>

A decade later, the members of First Presbyterian publicly supported the Abolitionist Movement when the church held an anti-slavery rally in 1830. An angry pro-slavery demonstration took place outside, at which time stones and logs were thrown through the church's windows in an attempt to end the rally. The church's membership never wavered in their convictions and it hosted another such event in 1847, with Frederick Douglass as the keynote speaker. Deacon Clark Selden's son, Richard, was also known as being part of the Underground Railroad. On one occasion, he found an escaped slave at his door. After showing the man how to proceed north, he was accosted by two marshals who were chasing the man. They forced Selden to guide them through the swampy terrain north of his house until it became impassable, and then instructed Selden to go on ahead alone and alert them when the man was found. When he found the distraught man, Selden hid him and gave him instructions to wait until nightfall. He reported to the marshals that he was unable to find the man, and after making certain they were gone, he returned to the hiding place at night with his wagon to take the man to the next stop in Elba, where he would be escorted by others to the Canadian border.

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<sup>3</sup> *Geneva Gazette*, 4 June 1828.

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Members of First Presbyterian were also supportive of education for women. In 1835 Marietta Ingham and Emily Ingham Staunton founded the Le Roy Female Seminary, which was chartered in 1841. The Ingham sisters were members of the church. In good weather the students customarily walked together from the campus site to Clay Street to attend Sunday Services at the nominated church, where they usually sat as a group in the upper east gallery. Because of its affiliation with the church, the school received some financial help from the regional Presbytery and local churches. In 1852, the school's property was surrendered to the Presbyterian Synod of Genesee due to financial conditions, at which time it was renamed Ingham University. During its years of operation, Ingham's chancellor was Phineas Staunton who was married to one of the Ingham sisters. As an elder of First Presbyterian Church, he stepped in as a supply minister as needed and regularly assisted at services. In 1867, Professor Staunton died in Ecuador while serving as an illustrator on a scientific expedition from Williams College. The school continued but was never a financial success. In 1883, the church relinquished its trust and the school eventually closed in 1892.

Captain John Lent, a hero of the American Revolution, settled in Le Roy with his family in 1815 where he operated a hotel and a whiskey distillery before going into the mercantile business. He was also one of the first trustees of the town at the time of its incorporation. He and his wife were early members of the church, but left when an overzealous pastor and Session decision censored Mrs. Lent for her attendance at a local Christmas Ball. She defended her actions in writing, refused to meet with the Session and was expelled from membership. This prompted her husband to denounce the church's action in the newspaper and nail the door of the Lent's box pew shut. The entire family then joined St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

Members of First Presbyterian continue to support the local community and respond when needed. In the early 1950s, a member of the congregation organized the first nursery school in Le Roy, housed in the basement of Olmsted Hall. Recognizing the need for affordable child care for working parents, the school offered low cost tuition with the school becoming part of its mission to the community. The Le Roy Nursery School is still in operation more than 50 years later and is still in Olmsted Hall. The Blizzard of 1977 provided the church with another opportunity for community service when it offered the building as a haven for stranded travelers. Members cooked food, supplied pillows and blankets, and offered fellowship until the snowbound roads re-opened. Over the years, the church has been a Red Cross Emergency Center, a location for the Genesee County Senior Citizen Lunch Center and the home to many community and service groups such as Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, the Le Roy Food Pantry, Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers.

### **Criterion C and Criterion Consideration A: Architecture**

The original 1820s building was of the Wren-Gibbs type, characterized by its self-contained, two-story form with gable roof, engaged central pavilion, and multi-stage bell tower. The origins of this building type are found in the work of English architects Sir Christopher Wren and James Gibbs, and the type found its first expression in America in the eighteenth century. The publication of Asher Benjamin's *Country Builder's Assistant* in 1797 accounted for its wide dissemination, which included a plate showing this building type in elevations, plane and section. Traditional accounts have linked the Le

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Roy church's design to that of the First Congregational Church in Bennington, Vermont, circa 1806, the work of master builder Lavius Fillmore, who also built the meetinghouse at Middlebury, Vermont, circa 1809. The veracity of these accounts cannot presently be established since no images of the building from this period survive and the majority of original finish treatments were removed in subsequent campaigns. The building nevertheless would have displayed attributes of the prevailing Roman-inspired Federal style, of which Asher Benjamin was a major disseminator through his architectural guidebooks. A bell, cast in Schenectady, New York, was added upon the building's completion in 1826, which was replaced in 1847 when a new bell was ordered and installed. The bell and tower were the highest points in the village and, at the time, the church was the most centrally located building. Besides calling worshippers to service, the church's bell was used as an emergency alarm and fire signal until the 1940s, when a mechanical siren in the town/village hall at the southwest side of Clay Street was installed.

According to church records, the sanctuary was extended in 1839 and, sometime between that date and 1856, a major renovation campaign was undertaken in the Gothic Revival style. The earliest known graphic depiction of the church dates from 1856 and shows the building in its second known incarnation. Features at that date included a two-stage bell tower with an open, Gothic-arched bell stage and a square tower base with corner pinnacles. Louvered openings in the base had pronounced Gothic arches while the tall windows of the side elevation and the main entrance were also Gothic arched.<sup>4</sup> The low pitched roof was concealed behind a wood paneled parapet while the entrance was contained within a projecting center pavilion with paneled, full-height pilasters, a reworking of the original facade.<sup>5</sup> The image also depicted a one-story addition at the rear, dating to 1851, which was built to house a new Session and lecture room. According to the local newspaper, the pews were remodeled in 1851 from their original configuration of boxed pews with gates to open-ended slip pews with scrolled arms. Other improvements mentioned were new wallpaper and the installation of central heating to replace the earlier stove heating. The galleries remained as built in the 1820s--open balcony spaces forming a U-shape around the interior of the east, north, and west sides of the worship space, with stairs accessing the galleries from the vestibule.

If the building depicted in the 1856 map image is accurate, then the church at that time had Gothic fenestration. While examples of Wren-Gibbs meetinghouses incorporated a Gothic design vocabulary and, more specifically, Gothic windows, it is presently assumed that these date to the mid-century work and were not original to the 1820s meetinghouse. Windows with trabeated heads were by far the prevailing type in the first quarter of the nineteenth century for religious buildings, though round-arched and Gothic windows were sometimes employed. Prior to the pre-Greek Revival period, initiated in rural areas of New York in the 1830s, windows in large meetinghouses were often divided into first and second-story units

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<sup>4</sup> The image of the Presbyterian Church is one of a number of illustrations of prominent Le Roy buildings decorating the perimeter of a large map of the town and village of Le Roy, published by French & Clark of Philadelphia in 1856. A copy of this map is in the collection of the Le Roy Historical Society. This is the earliest depiction of the church and the dimensions of the earliest portion of the existing building corroborate the drawing with the exception of a one-story addition shown on the south end of the sanctuary.

<sup>5</sup> The image indicates that the front of the church had wide, paneled pilasters at the corners of the building and corresponding with the position of the center projection, entry and bell tower. A wide entablature, or perhaps a paneled wood parapet, between the pilasters and across the top of the building's front is consistent with features of the Greek Revival style and suggestive of an eclectic composition. The extant Presbyterian Church of Chili in Monroe County has a similar parapet on either side of the center pediment.

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rather and be treated as continuous vertical bands, as they are at the Congregational meetinghouses in Bennington and Middlebury, Vermont, built by Fillmore. The image suggests the possibility of a merging of Gothic features with those of Greek Revival influence, but whether these are contemporary with one another cannot be stated with certainty; such intermingling of classical and Gothic motives was not uncommon in the 1830s and 1840s. The reworking of the building in this era, and so soon after its erection, was indicative of the desire of the congregation to chase contemporary architectural fashions and remain abreast of them.

As noted, the church was lengthened in 1839 by twenty feet on its south side, which is the extent of the present worship space; this division between the older and newer sections is visible in the stone foundation and the roof frame. According to church records, the upper bell stage was enclosed in 1866 by the continuation of the lower stage upward, and to this new and square-plan stage was added a tall spire. An account of this remodeling was published in the *Le Roy Gazette*, which stated that only the stone foundation and the timber frame were retained from the original and that the clapboards were completely replaced.<sup>6</sup> Another aspect of this renovation phase was the introduction of evenly spaced triple-hung windows with round heads on the east and west flank elevations. The new round-headed windows and smaller, matching windows corresponding with the vestibule contained etched lights with a *fleur-de-lis* and cross pattern. The windows were installed when large-scale glass etching manufacturing techniques were first developed in the mid 1800s. The extant 1866 glass was retained in additional renovations/remodeling projects of the church.<sup>7</sup> This phase of work introduced a third architectural aesthetic to the building, that of the Italianate style, which emerged during the Picturesque phase of American design. The church building, as presently constituted, largely portrays this era of development, manifested in the round-arched fenestration and overall exterior treatments, notwithstanding the later portico, and in features such as the stair turnings of the gallery stairs in the vestibule and the galleries themselves.

An 1867 interior photograph shows the liturgical area at that date as having a wood altar sustained by columns and draped in black. The image was taken to commemorate the memorial service of Colonel Phineas Staunton, chancellor of Ingham University, who died while on a scientific expedition in South America. Another photograph from 1873 offers a clearer view of the liturgical area and the worship space and depicts features such as the wide cove moldings. The 1866 rebuilding also included a new pipe organ, installed at the north side of the worship space, in the gallery, replacing an older melodeon. The galleries were lowered during this phase, at which time the cast-iron columns with Lotus leaf capitals were introduced. This allowed space for the new organ pipe chamber to be inserted above the main entrance and further brought the organ and choir closer to the main congregants for acoustic purposes. In 1898-99, the organ was moved from the rear gallery to the front of the sanctuary. A 1903 photograph shows the new organ pipe installed within an ornate three-part case. This hand-pumped organ was replaced in 1912 by the church's first electric powered pipe organ. The console was placed in the upper back gallery.

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<sup>6</sup> *Le Roy Gazette*, 18 July 1866.

<sup>7</sup> Some later accounts of the 1866 remodeling incorrectly attribute the window design to Rochester architect Claude Bragdon, which is impossible since Bragdon was born in Ohio in 1866 and did not begin practicing in Rochester until the early twentieth century.

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Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the church was constantly expanded and remodeled to suit the tastes and worship needs of the members. In 1898-99, a dining room and kitchen were added next to the Session room, and in 1913, Rochester-based architect Claude Bragdon (1866-1946) was hired to draw up plans for a Sunday School addition on the south side of the community building.<sup>8</sup> He later went on to design the village and town hall (1917) located across from the church on Clay Street. Bragdon, who began his career as a draftsman in the office of Charles Ellis, studied architecture in Europe in the 1890s before returning to Rochester to establish his practice. His work with Ellis and his studies in Europe led Bragdon to the conclusion that European classicism was poorly suited to the American character, and instead he embraced the architecture of the colonial period and became a practitioner of Colonial Revival architecture. The new community room designed by him included a new stairs to the basement, a kitchen extension on the east and modern conveniences. All rooms were outfitted for electricity and indoor toilets replaced the need for the original outdoor privy.

Around 1929, the Colonial Revival theme was carried further during another remodeling campaign. The architect for the project, Charles Ivan Cromwell (1899-1980), was a member of the church with a practice in Le Roy. A graduate of Cornell University with a degree in engineering, Cromwell studied architecture at Syracuse University and graduated with honors in 1924. After working briefly for Dwight Baum in New York City and Bryant Fleming in Ithaca, he established his own firm in Le Roy, where he remained until retiring to Florida after a long career. Both Baum and Fleming were proponents of the Colonial Revival style, even though Fleming was best known as a landscape designer. The Colonial Revival movement was one in which architects were encouraged to look to the past for inspiration, rather than copy historic buildings, or as one author stated, for "the creation of new variations on an existing theme."<sup>9</sup>

Cromwell designed his-variation-on-a-theme to enhance the Wren-Gibbs typology that the 1826 meetinghouse represented. The north entrance received a monumental Roman Doric portico, most prominent of Cromwell's exterior work, a feature which echoed the work of James Gibbs's St. Martin in the Fields in London, a much admired example. Shortly after work was started, however, the stock market crashed and work was halted on the exterior redesign to concentrate funding for interior modifications. Interior work centered on another rebuilding of the organ, the pipes being housed in a Palladian motif designed by Cromwell and centered against the rear wall, which remains, though the pipes were relocated to the tower when a new large organ blower and motor were installed.

Cromwell kept with the Colonial Revival theme when he was asked to design an addition in 1945, which was known as the Elizabeth Allen Olmsted Memorial Hall, the result of a bequest by Allen S. Olmsted in memory of his mother. Shortages of materials carried over from World War II, pushing the completion of the hall to 1951. Cromwell incorporated the stone foundation and Sunday School rooms of Claude Bragdon's 1913 addition into the hall and added a large multi-purpose room, kitchen facilities and a full basement on the east side of the community building. The Sunday school rooms added by Bragdon on the south end of the first floor were opened into one large room, which became the church parlor. The old

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<sup>8</sup> The plans are part of the Claude Bragdon collection in the Rush Rees Library at the University of Rochester.

<sup>9</sup> David, Gebhard, "The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s," *Winterthur Portfolio*, volume 22, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1987), 110.

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dining hall space became the church's offices and workrooms. A new hallway connected with a side hall leading to the sanctuary.

The entrance to the 1913 addition was reworked by Cromwell to reflect his reworking of the church's main entrance and included a projecting entrance vestibule centered on Clay Street. The set of glazed and paneled wood doors with square transom light, a feature of Bragdon's design, was highlighted by the introduction of a small Doric portico. At the time the hall was completed, Cromwell oversaw the excavation and construction of new Sunday school rooms underneath the sanctuary and community rooms. When finished, the entire single-story community building attached to the worship space became known as Olmsted Hall. Few minor changes were made to the church following the completion of Olmsted Hall, which included replacing the wood shingles on the steeple with aluminum in 1976. An ADA compliant restroom was added inside Olmsted Hall in the late 1990s and a ramp was built to grade at the Clay Street entrance of Olmsted Hall in 2009.



First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy  
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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy  
Name of Property

Genesee County, NY  
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**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  
 Other

Name of repository: First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than 1 acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>256034</u> Easting	<u>4762637</u> Northing	3	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing
2	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing	4	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing

**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 boundary is the same as for the period of significance.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Ann Ver Hague, R.A. & William Krattinger (NYS OPRHP)  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 12 June 2014  
street & number 88 East Main Street telephone 585-768-8447  
city or town Le Roy state NY zip code 14482  
e-mail averhague@rochester.rr.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy

Name of Property

Genesee County, NY

County and State

- **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.)

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**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: First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy

City or Vicinity: Le Roy

County: Genesee State: New York

Photographer: Virginia L. Bartos (NYS OPRHP)

Date Photographed: 15 May 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

0001 of 0015: First Presbyterian Church depicted on 1856 Genesee County (NY) map.

0002 of 0015. North elevation (façade), view looking southwest from Main.

0003 of 0015. North and west elevations of church, view looking southeast from Main and Clay Streets.

0004 of 0015. Olmsted Hall and church viewed from Clay Street looking northeast.

0005 of 0015. Kitchen/dining room/day care additions of church, view looking southwest.

0006 of 0015. Former Manse, view looking east from Clay Street.

0007 of 0015. East elevation of former Manse, view looking west from adjacent parking lot.

0008 of 0015. View of east side of entry vestibule showing east stair to gallery.

0009 of 0015. Main floor worship space looking southeast.

0010 of 0015. View looking towards northeast corner of worship space.

0011 of 0015. Detail view of east gallery looking south.

0012 of 0015. Detail view of gallery section of window.

0013 of 0015. Passageway from sanctuary into Olmsted Hall, view looking south.

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0014 of 0015. Interior view of meeting room showing 1913 Bragdon designed fireplace and windows.

0015 of 0015. Cromwell designed bookcases in 1913 meeting room.

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**Property Owner:**

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

name First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy  
street & number 7 Clay Street telephone 585-768-8700  
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.).

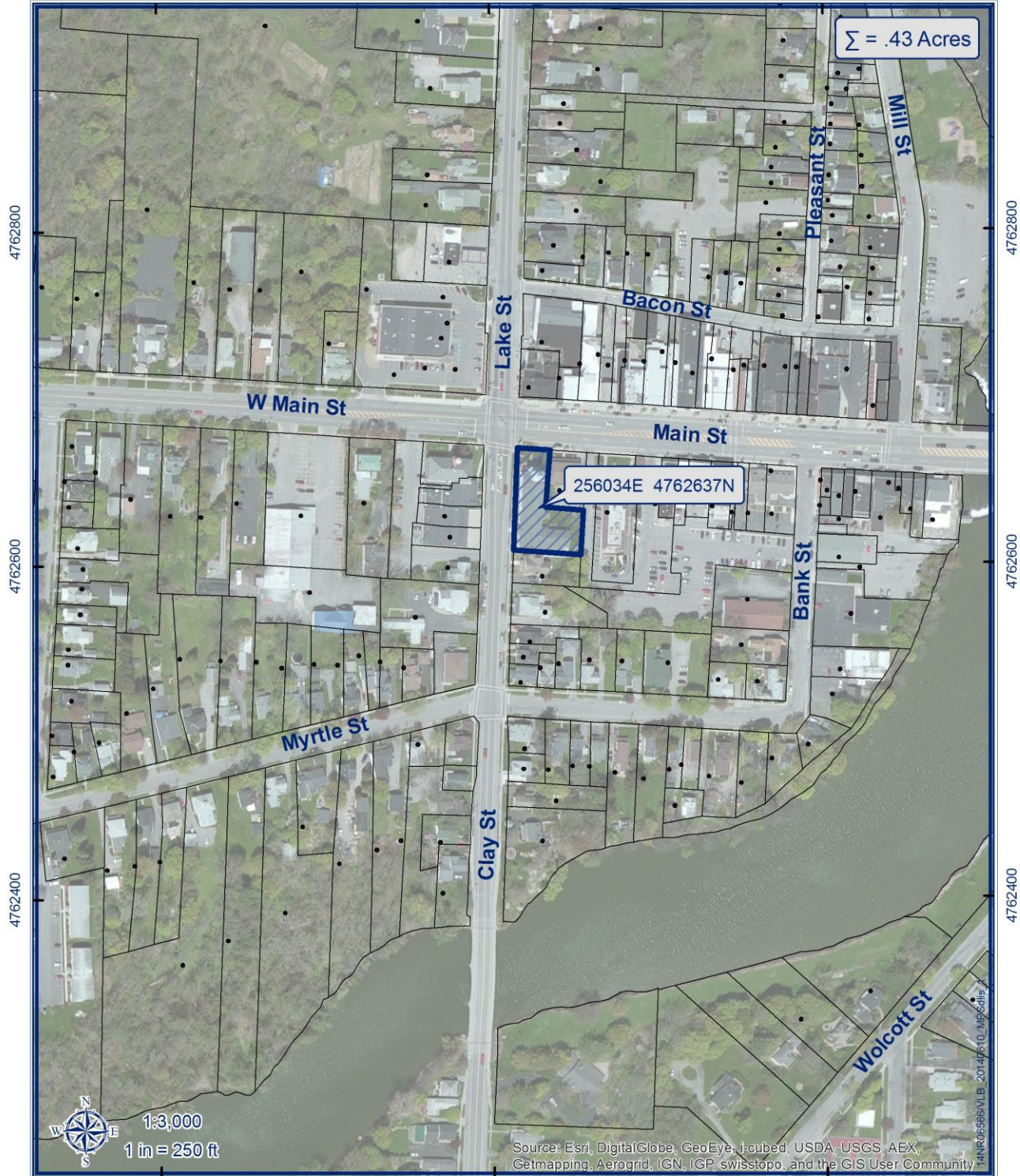
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form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

First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy  
Name of Property

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First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy  
Le Roy, Genesee Co., NY

7 Clay Street  
Le Roy, NY 14482



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

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



First Presbyterian Church

— RR

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



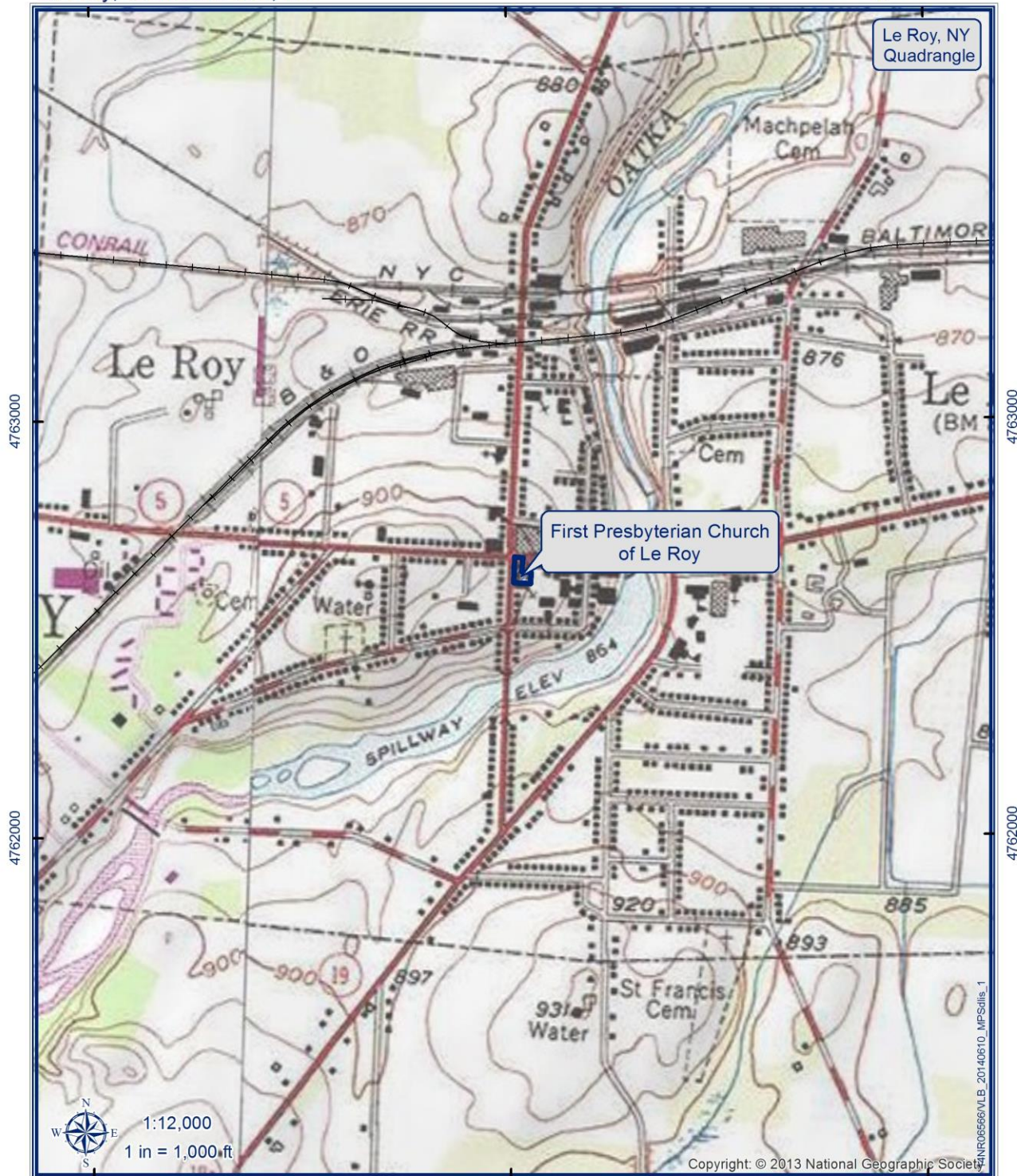


First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy  
Name of Property

Genesee County, NY  
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First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy  
Le Roy, Genesee Co., NY

7 Clay Street  
Le Roy, NY 14482



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

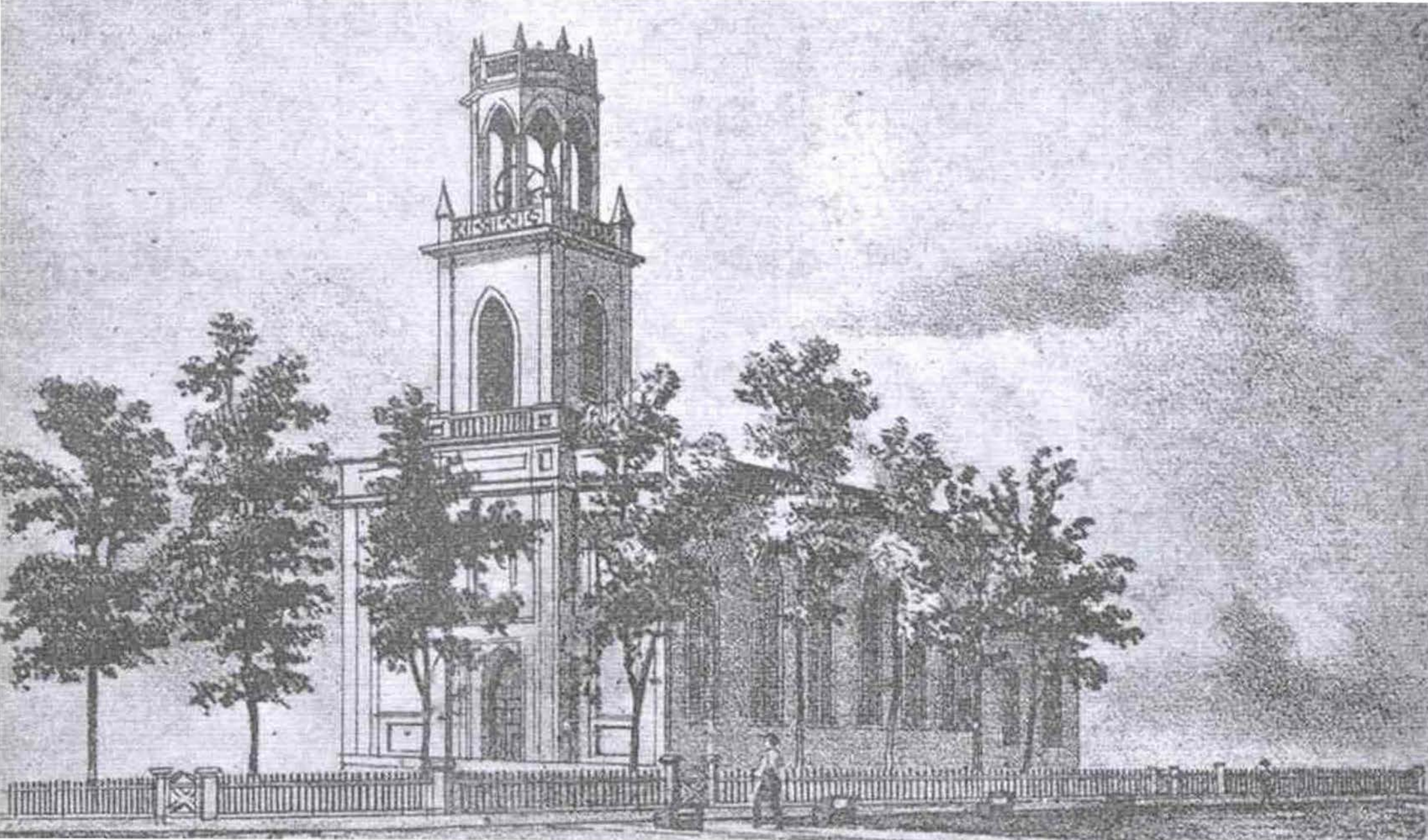


 First Presbyterian Church  
 RR

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



















ELIZABETH ALLEN OLMSTED MEMORIAL

ELIZABETH ALLEN OLMSTED MEMORIAL

ELIZABETH ALLEN OLMSTED MEMORIAL









5555  
LENNY  
HUBBARD



























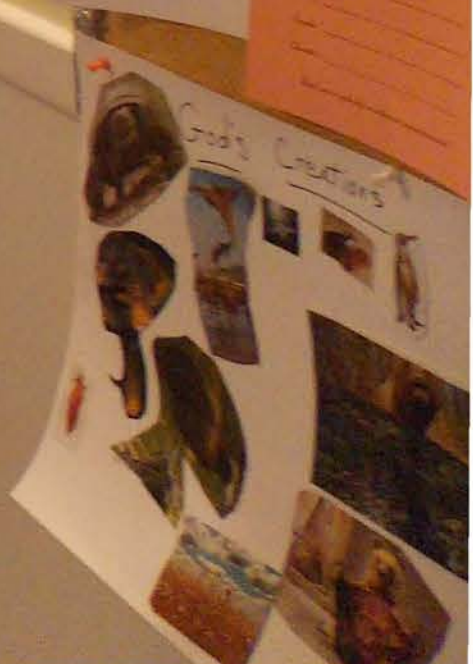


Sunday School  
New



HOW CAN I HELP...

Flower Chairpers











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Genesee

DATE RECEIVED: 7/25/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/22/14  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/08/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/10/14  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000577

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 9.10.14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.





## New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Division for Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189  
518-237-8643



**Andrew M. Cuomo**  
Governor

**Rose Harvey**  
Commissioner

9 July 2014

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to enclose the following five National Register nominations, all on discs, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Oakwood Cemetery, Niagara County  
First Presbyterian Church of Le Roy, Genesee County  
North Star School District # 11, Monroe County  
Western New York Wine Company, Steuben County  
Hopkinton Green Historic District, St. Lawrence County

Please feel free to call me at 518.237.8643 x 3261 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office