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Adirondack Stories offer unique teaching tools

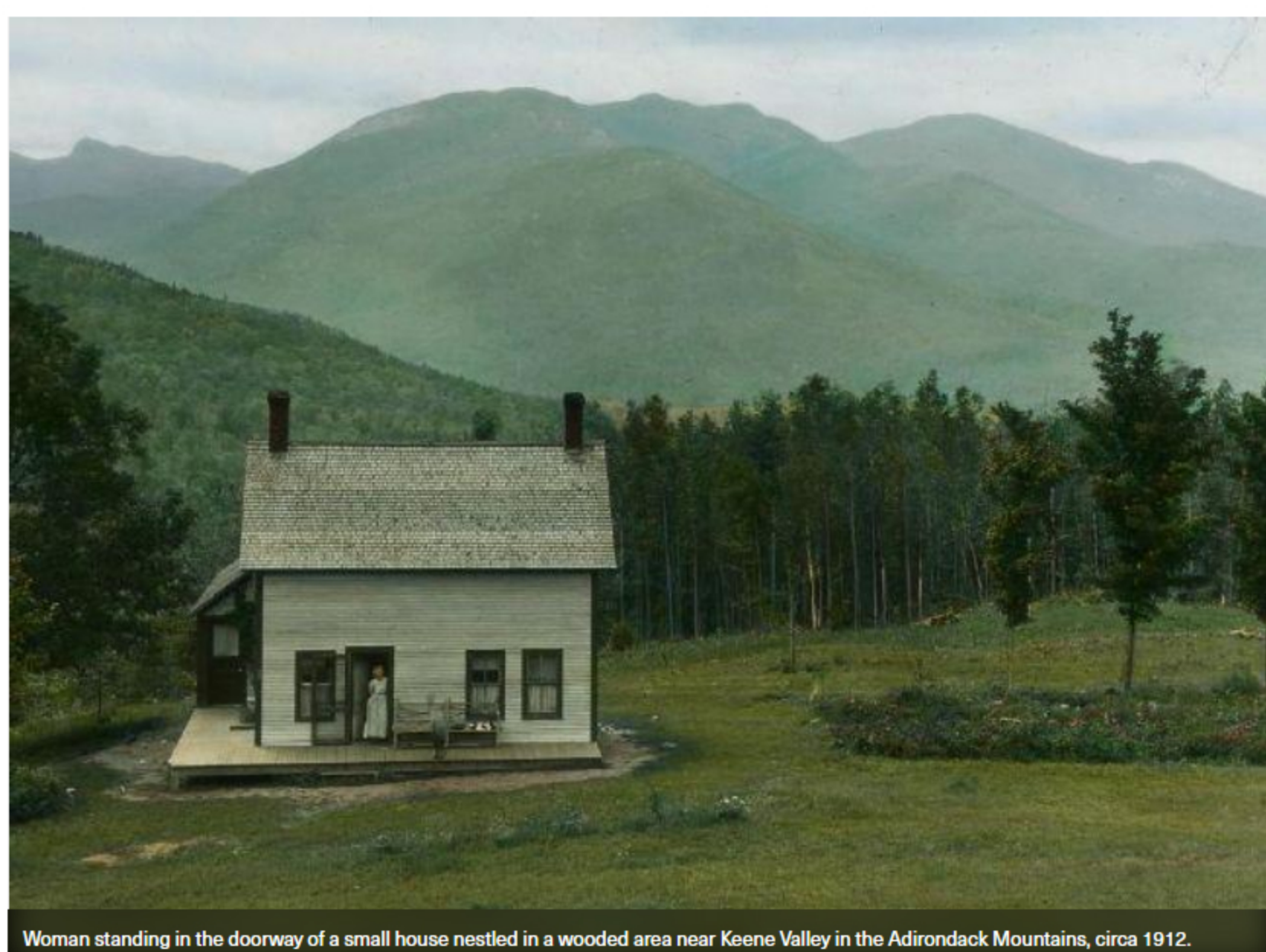
Teachers welcome to use as course, class resource

By **Kim Dedam**

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Woman standing in the doorway of a small house nestled in a wooded area near Keene Valley in the Adirondack Mountains, circa 1912.

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KEENE VALLEY | Oral history stories collected online now have tools and worksheets for area teachers to use in the classroom.

Begun in 2018, the Keene Valley Library project has built a website with over 180 oral histories, some dating back over a century, others relating to current events and life stories.

Jery Huntley spearheaded the effort with the Keene Valley Library Association.

The **Teacher's Guide to the "Adirondack Community: Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are"** web

resource went live online on Monday.

"This guide is designed for teachers in the Adirondacks, New York state, and across the country," Huntley said in an interview with the *Sun, Valley News*.

"We've designed teaching materials for grades 9 through 12 and Middle School, as well. They're already using this at Paul Smith's College and Clarkson University."

Huntley held an online workshop with several New York BOCES educators who coordinate student instruction in seven northern counties.

And teachers have already expressed interest.

"We started our story branch project with two goals in mind: to collect the stories before they were gone and to get our kids interested in them so they could engage with their communities. Then we realized there was still a missing piece," Huntley said.

Finding a way to incorporate this material in a format ready for classroom use began with student project research.

From the various **Stories of Who We Are**, a multitude of options arose beyond history, social studies, and civics class resources.

Stories in the Keene oral history project involve **Arts and Culture**; **Work**; Outdoor Activities; and People – subjects that might apply to art classes, technical and vocational training, physical education or a health course.

There are eight subject headings in all.

"We knew we had to hand it to teachers in a really easy way," Huntley said.

"We thought about: What do most high schools in the country's teach? We looked at the existing stories, we created a matrix, and then I found a high school student who had a service project to do."

The student listened to a sampling of the stories, each captured in audio with photographs or video components.

"We talked about her favorite stories because we wanted to get a feel for how other students would respond to these oral histories," Huntley said.

"I realized the Teacher's Guide needed clear instructions and that it would be helped by a list of the 182 stories with a brief description of each."

The result is a sequence of materials that offer teachers suggestions for how to use the database.

“ “These are all first person accounts. It's real. It's someone from town," Huntley said.

"Instructors are using this in college as a whole course section. In High School, oral history could augment existing class segments. The stories have been in place for several years now. But this tool is new," Huntley said.

"We designed it to help take some of the stress off of teachers during this difficult time of online coursework. And in every case, we provide email contact information so if anyone needs help or has questions we can answer them that day."

The **Teacher's Guide** has a How-To document for lessons that could apply at any school in any community. A Story Selection Chart helps align stories with specific high school courses. Story Summaries provide brief synopses of the 180 stories currently available. And there is a Sample School Assignment worksheet that comes with the kit. All materials are available at no cost.

Keene Central School teacher Brad Hurlburt helped create the Teacher's Guide.

"We have used Adirondack Community Stories in the classroom to provide firsthand historical knowledge, including models of local civic engagement," he said in announcing the new teaching tools.

"Although the storytellers are based in the Adirondack Mountains of New York state, their stories teach universal lessons."

Adirondack Community: Stories of Who We Are, is a multi-year, local history project that curates and organizes 3- to 5-minute audio stories and related photographs from community members in and around the town of Keene.

To review the **teaching materials**: <https://www.myadironackstory.org/teacher-s-guide>

Adirondack Community: Stories of Who We Are are online: myadironackstory.org



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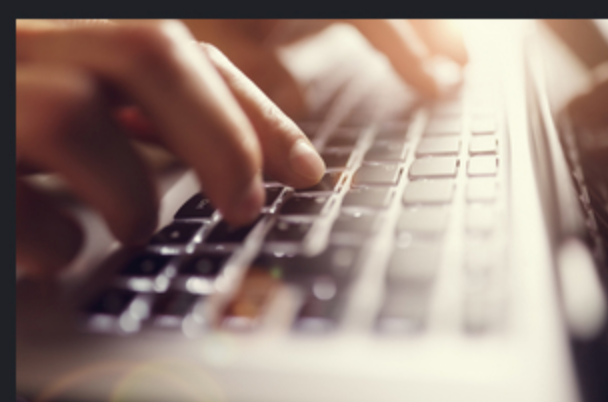
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