

Keene Valley Library reveals 'Stories of Who We Are'

Oral history series features voices, photos, memories of local life, lore

By Kim Dedam
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KEENE VALLEY | The new collection of stories at the Keene Valley Library is illuminated by voices.

These stories aren't bound in cloth, cardboard or leather. They aren't set in silent prose to rise from a page at a reader's pace.

They are resonant, lilting at times, words framed

in local voices illustrated with photographs, some dating back decades.

On June 15, Keene Valley Library officially revealed its oral history project — "Adirondack Community: Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are."

Library spokeswoman Olivia Dwyer said the first 34 entries are uploaded and available for the public to peruse from their computer or other digital device.

"Now, anyone with an internet connection can access the project's collection of audio stories and related photographs."

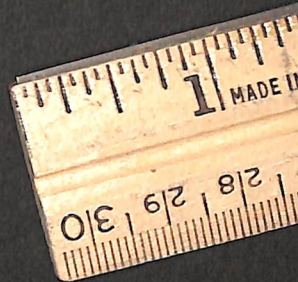
Accounts, she said, capture a sense of the rich social and cultural history of this valley in the Adirondack Mountains.

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Keene Valley Library Association Director Karen Glass (in front) revealed the first 34 stories in the library's oral history project — "Adirondack Community: Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are." With Glass (in the center) is Project Grants Manager Jerry Huntley, who helped design and develop funding for the online oral history collection.

Photo provided



'STORYTELLING CULTURE'

The tales reach from accounts past to present of people, work and daily life. They provide a range to explore of memorable events, from catastrophe to arts and culture and environments, from manmade to wilderness adventure.

Recollections in place include artist Frank Owen's memories of his father-in-law Adrian Edmonds and the "storytelling culture" at the turn of the 20th century. Adirondack guide, conservationist and map and trail builder Tony Goodwin recounts 75 years of his father Jim Goodwin's discovery and creation of the Little Porter Trail.

Willie Janeway, who is now executive director of the Adirondack Council, provides memories of his family's life in Keene Valley. And Andrew Derr III recalls his family's connection to Adirondack life in Keene Valley dating to the 1880s.

Doug Downs, who currently leads the Backcountry Rescue

team in Keene Valley, recounts a New Year's Eve rescue more than 3 miles through mountain snow to John's Brook cabin where he found an injured hiker with a stick driven through his carotid artery. The hiker made a full recovery in part due to care and training of rescue personnel.

Donna Reed Austin, Keene tax collector for 20 years, shares memories of the first year she was elected, which coincided with the Ice Storm of 1998.

Keene Valley Library Project Grants Manager Jery Huntley said "Stories of Who We Are" look to preserve Keene's living history for future generations.

"Two years of planning became real today," Huntley said in announcing the successful project launch last week.

"Storytellers start out nervous, but they walk away happy to have entrusted a piece of themselves to future generations."

REACH, RANGE

Keene Valley Library Association Director Karen Glass, who is a well-known local storyteller, welcomed the reach

and range of the project.

"Stories have the power to both inspire curiosity about what we don't know and bring us closer to the people and places that shape us," she said.

"This project does that through a modern and universal platform."

The oral history program launch was held in the library's Strickler Family Community Room, a public meeting space built as part of the library's \$1.5 million capital project.

Organizers hope to collect more than 100 stories by September, Dwyer said.

Those who wish to contribute to the living history collection can find out more via email: myadirondackstory@gmail.com.

The stories are now online at myadirondackstory.org.

Supported by grant fund awards from Humanities New York, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Glenn and Carol Pearsall Adirondack Foundation and the Northern New York Library Network, founders established the project using the Memria.org platform. ■