OurStoryBridge:
Connecting the Past and the Present

Jery Y. Huntley, MLS
OurStoryBridge Founder, Keene Valley Library

Debby Carter, MLS
Assistant Librarian, Tremonton City Library

AJ Gooden
Supervisor, Igiugig Tribal Library

WebJunction
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Presentation Objectives

• Understand what’s on these websites and how you can use them
  
  • Adirondack Community: Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are (www.myadirondackstory.org)

  • OurStoryBridge: Connecting the Past and the Present (www.ourstorybridge.org)

  • Be inspired to explore the Teacher’s Guide contained on both websites so that you have a resource to use and share with students and teachers

  • Recognize how you can help communicate and improve the projects

Be Our Voice!
Adirondack Community

Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are. Tell Us Your Story!

Go to www.myadirondackstory.org
• Marked on maps as uninhabitable before the late 1800s when America’s industrialists built their “Great Camps” and then railroads to provide access

• Part of the six million-acre Adirondack Park declared “forever wild” by the NYS Constitution in 1894

• Near Lake Placid, host of the 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympics; 46 “High Peaks” over 4,000’

• Town population 1,100 with one central school of 160 students
  • Year-round population struggles financially, usually with multiple jobs; 38% of students are labeled disadvantaged; similar issues as other poor, rural communities
  • Descendants of original summer folk still come, plus a year-round retired population
  • Population skews old

• Educated and culturally rich community with a unique history

• Keene Valley Library hosts the story projects and “creates community”
Adirondack Community
Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are. Tell Us Your Story!

Go to www.myadirondackstory.org
Hear the Stories Now!

Click the categories below to hear some exciting stories. More are continually added. We would love for you to share your story too.

- Arts and Culture
- Catastrophes
- Work
- People
- Outdoor Activities
- Daily Life
- Community
- Natural and Man-made Environments
Who Was That???
• Social Justice & Social Change
• Catastrophes & Community Reaction: Part I, Water
• Catastrophes & Community Reaction: Part II, Fire & Mountains
• Tropical Storm Irene Parts 1 & 2
• Famous People Here in the Town of Keene, Parts 1 & 2

• Unique Outdoor Experiences
• Adirondack 46ers
• Black Lives Matter
• COVID-19
• KCS 8th Graders
• Work, Part 1
• Legacy
• Hiking Stories

https://www.myadirondackstory.org/podcasts
In chat:

Guess how many stories have we collected since June 2019!?
Four 2018 focus groups with 31 participants created the categories, 150 names of storytellers in initial worksheet.

200+ stories in the eight categories posted once, twice, or three times.

200+ Unique Users, 450 follow the Facebook page, 300+ in storyteller worksheet, 1,300+ have listened to podcasts.

At first, almost all came directly to myadirondackstory.org, but after beginning a Facebook page, boosting it regionally, and starting OurStoryBridge, new users grew from it.

Most viewed categories are People, Outdoor Activities, and Catastrophes (inspired by the pandemic).

Changed to more computers than mobile devices in the pandemic, maybe because more librarians are aware.
Keene Valley Library launches history project, looks for more people to tell their stories

Library director: Bethany Garretson, story aide; Olivia Dwyer, public relations, marketing and recruitment; and Elizabeth Rogers, archivist at the Keene Valley Library.

The project's roots began with an oral history project Keene Central School students did more than 20 years ago. They interviewed residents about their lives. Several years ago, library staff had those interviews digitized – about 350 hours of stories. This was local history told by the people who lived it.

“A lot of those people have passed away,” Glass said. “And when we digitized them, it was from cassette tapes, and we realized that we were losing stories. If people passed away and hadn’t told a story, it was lost.”

So they wanted to start a way to begin collecting stories from the community again. That’s when Huntley showed up. She successfully wrote two grants, one from Humanities New York and one from the Glenn and Carol Pearsall Adirondack Foundation. Glass secured an Innovation Grant from the Northern New York Library Network. They bought equipment. A focus group decided on story categories. They recorded some stories and launched a new website: www.myadirondackstory.org.

“ать didn’t know whether we cared about it or the community cared about it,” Huntley said. “And once we got going with the first couple of stories in March, and the stories really started three weeks ago, the community has been so involved and so excited.”

Adirondack Community is a multi-year local history project that collects and organizes audio stories and related photographs from the town of Keene community members through an online platform to share the social and cultural history of this community. Stories we first-person accounts – 3 to 5 minutes long – by people in their own voice about their own experience and those of their ancestors.

The eight categories are Arts & Culture, People, Outdoor Activities, Catastrophes, Community Daily Life, Work and Natural and Man-made Environment.

As of June 15, organizers had collected 84 stories, and they want to have 100 stories by Sept. 1.

“Instead, that’s an interim goal,” Huntley said. “We hope that this will go on and on and hopefully be replicated by other communities.”

With a goal of 100 stories in less than three months, that means they’ll be busy recording, but they need the public to set up times for their interviews. People can email the group at myadirondackstory@gmail.com to set up an appointment to tell a story or ask questions.

“There’s potentially no end to this project and no end to the stories,” Huntley said. “We want this project to reflect not just the history we would lose if we weren’t telling it, but everyday life in the town of Keene as well.”

Huntley is also working with the Keene Central
Keene Valley Library reveals ‘Stories of Who We Are’

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

By Kim Dederer

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, biting at times, words framed in local voices illustrated with photographs, some dating back decades.

On June 30, Keene Valley Library officially revealed its oral history project — “Adirondack Community: Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are.” Library spokesperson 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.

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 the online oral history collection.
Local History Project Bridges the Generational Communication Gap. At the Keene Valley Library, volunteer storytellers record first-person narratives for an online collection designed to deepen community ties.

By Olivia Dwyer
Photos Provided

I learned to love hard walks in the Adirondacks well before fifth grade trekking to High Peaks summit views every summer. But as a bookish 10-year-old, the smell from Keene Central School down Market Street to Lu Brown’s house scared me more than the face-first dive down a granite slab on May 22, 1980 that left me with eight stitches.

I was there on assignment, dispatched to interview a local elder for a social studies lesson. Mrs. Brown patiently answered my mumbled questions, a non-geeky gamer guiding me through her 45 years as a music teacher in the valley. No scratchy tape or crumpled essay survives to help me summon details. I’m left with a memory of the simple awe at how one person’s story, told in her own voice, placed her existence within a vibrant community decades in the making.

The feeling comes back when I tune in to Adirondack Community: Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are. A project of the Keene Valley Library, Adirondack Community collects and organizes three-to-five minute audio stories, plus related photographs, from Town of Keene residents and visitors through an online platform in order to share our rich social and cultural history. Launched in June 2019, the project has collected 147 stories from 117 storytellers, all available to hear at myadirondackstory.org.

Just don’t call it an archive. That’s a physical place where public records, manuscripts, letters, reports, and news clippings are stored. The Keene Valley Library’s archives were established in 1921; nearly a century later, this cache of historical evidence numbers 6,000 photographs, 600 rare and limited edition volumes in a dedicated “Adirondack bibliography,” plus newspaper clippings, original artwork, maps, and every single Keene Central School yearbook. However, it’s only open to the public 14 hours a week this winter. There are also hours of audio tapes—but outdated technology and lengthy interviews mean they remain mostly unstudied. And because materials are rare and delicate, they cannot leave the secure room where they are stored.

If I want to get my hands on history, I have to get myself to the archives during open hours. That was easy when I was a KCS student and teachers scheduled class visits. As an adult I’ve managed two visits in 15 years.

Then how to engage people with local history? Put it on the internet, accessible no matter where you are or what time it is. That’s the vision behind Adirondack Community, brought into focus over two years by Library Director Karen Glass and Volunteer Grants Manager Joey Juntley.

Interested citizens attended focus groups in 2018 to discuss potential categories and support storytellers. Then Huntley, a semi-retired seasonal resident and full-time dynamo, secured multi-year funding through grants from Humanities New York, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities; the Glenn and Carol Pearsall Foundation; the Northern New York Library Network; and private donations. In 2020, Huntley will deliver a project manual and train-
Keene Valley Library oral history project reaches 100th story mark

'Stories of Who We Are' continues to draw unique stories about life and times in Keene

By Kim Dobin

The online audio story collection, Adirondack Community Capturing, documents and preserves the Stories of Who We Are, began last spring to an effort to cherish a unique collection of voices and stories.

The project will continue to be reviewed and added up to its oral history database. “Over time, we will be able to access and add to this oral history database,” Oborn said.

“The entire collection is available to view at marquisoneh.org,” Oborn said. The collection is divided into eight categories — the most popular of which are Oral Histories, Education, and Communities. The website also features the "My Adirondack Story" project, which asks community members to share their personal stories.

Project lead Joy Robl, who coordinated funding outreach and program management, said the project's success is due to the community's involvement and support.

"The interviews and generosity greatly contributed to an extensive oral history database," Robl said.

Stories of Who We Are, a collaboration between the Keene Valley Library and the Keene Valley Historical Society, is a project that seeks to preserve and share the stories of the community's past.

The project aims to capture the unique experiences of individuals who have lived or worked in the Keene Valley area, documenting their experiences and preserving them for future generations.

The collection includes interviews with community members, as well as written stories and photographs. The project is an effort to preserve the rich history of the area and celebrate the diverse experiences of those who have called the Keene Valley home.

The online audio story collection, Adirondack Community Capturing, documents and preserves the Stories of Who We Are, began last spring to an effort to cherish a unique collection of voices and stories.
Northern Lights

On the Record

St. Hubert's guide Brett Lawrence on Lower Ausable Lake, since 2000.

Pre-hunt breakfasts of condensed split pea soup slathered on bread, practical jokes involving peeling a rubber snake in the cascades cake. A gruff mountain man exterior with an inside "as soft as a snifter full of puppy poop."

These are a few of the memories of legendary Adirondack Mountain Reserve guide Brett Lawrence, recorded by William Curtis for "My Adirondack Story," an oral history project sponsored by Tacony Valley Library. Among the dozens of other audio stories available for listening are the recollections of erstwhile Roland Weston's daughter, Nina Weston Foster; Olympic skier Tommy Bloom; and famed Mountain Rescue intern Steve Brown. Listen at www.myadirondackstory.org.

July-August 2000

ADIRONDACK LIFE
WHAT'S EXCITING ABOUT ADIRONDACK COMMUNITY?

• We have surpassed the 200-story milestone!

• Storytellers hard to recruit at first; telling a story starts with nervousness, then leads to joy, and more stories from the storytellers, then sharing that enthusiasm with neighbors so they tell their stories.

• The whole town is talking (as is the media): school, family dinner tables, on the street, events, etc.

• In the pandemic, listeners have doubled, hopefully finding comfort in the continued resilience of the community; we have also created a record of life during this crisis.

• Themes like social justice and social change, the community working together in crisis, aging here (especially women), the legacies that have been left, and the uniqueness of the area keep reappearing. Black Lives Matter stories, in a very white population, have been especially popular.

It’s clear that young and old don’t know who lives here, have lived here, and have been here!
• Goal #1: Capture stories before the storytellers are gone
  • About 2/3 of storytellers are over 65
  • The most elderly living here now and those who have come back to tell stories are involved, with plans for others we have identified

• Goal #2: Get students involved and proud of their community, helping to prepare them whether they move away or come back
  • Grades 8-12 have had school lessons on the project, check the website, and are genuinely surprised about what they are hearing, the first step!
  • The pandemic has reduced ability to get stories from students, but the Teacher’s Guide is increasing classroom use and stories from students

Posted on a website that appeals to young and old!
Adirondack Community

Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are. Tell Us Your Story!

Go to www.myadirondackstory.org to listen!
OurStoryBridge: Connecting the Past and the Present

OurStoryBridge is your resource and tool kit for producing a crowdsourced, community story project emphasizing audio history collecting and sharing.

Get Your Tool Kit Here!

www.ourstorybridge.org
What Is OurStoryBridge?

• Free resource and tool kit for producing a crowdsourced, community, online story project emphasizing audio history collecting and sharing
  • Based on the Keene Valley Library’s Adirondack Community model, www.ourstorybridge.org, adaptable for any community or topics
  • With a commitment to help each community one-on-one!
  • Especially during this pandemic, free online resources of interest to all generations take on unique importance
The $ Question...

**Adirondack Community**

- Initially funded by grants
- Community members stepped up to assure the future
- Part-time jobs created in the community

**OurStoryBridge**

- Initially funded by seed grants (Cloudsplitter and Adirondack Foundations)
- Currently seeking larger grants to hire staff
- Costs of your OurStoryBridge projects are outlined in the User Guide

Leadership of both is supplied on a volunteer basis.
The Tool Kit

Plus, free technical assistance as you begin!

1. User Guide
2. How-To Videos
3. Sample Documents
4. Teacher’s Guide (new)
The OurStoryBridge User Guide links to How-To Videos that provide examples and templates to design your story project and are also posted on the website.
Sample Documents

• The *OurStoryBridge User Guide* links to Sample Documents that provide examples and templates to design your story project

• They are also posted on the website
Why Start an *OurStoryBridge* Project?

We all have a story to tell, many stories. Life is a narrative, woven out of experience and emotion. Think of *OurStoryBridge* as the loom on which the fabric of your community's narrative comes together. Each thread, each story binds the fabric tighter and tighter, creating intricate linkages between individuals, groups, organizations, events, environments, locales, and more.

In other words, *OurStoryBridge* offers a user-friendly framework on which to mount your community's story project, but the shape this project takes and the content it captures and communicates remain yours to construct. We want to help. *OurStoryBridge* will guide you through how to collect the nuanced histories of your community, to preserve its stories and pass their characteristic wisdom from mouth to ear by going digital.


[https://www.ourstorybridge.org/why](https://www.ourstorybridge.org/why)
OurStoryBridge: Why?

• Appreciate the history that shaped your community, that helps make it what it is today and what it can become tomorrow.

• Create closer bonds between residents and promote connections that lead to neighborly acts of kindness, assistance and support in times of need.

• Preserve stories that may be lost if not recorded soon and honor the legacies of your older generations by capturing their stories in their own words.

• Engage the younger generations and encourage them to remain in or return to their home community after high school, college, trade school, or any number of life’s adventures.

• Educate residents and visitors of all ages and inspire them to become contributing members of your community.

• Celebrate what makes your community unique, perhaps even famous.

“I love this project and think of it as a balm and a community builder for our times, an amazing educational resource, carrying rich historical value.”
— Janelle

See Testimonials: https://www.ourstorybridge.org/why
**OurStoryBridge: Why?**

- Attract new residents and visitors.
- Reveal pockets of rich histories and connections heretofore unknown or not widely known.
- Acknowledge the catastrophes, tragedies, or difficult challenges that shape your community.
- Appreciate how the geography and the economics of your area impact how your community members live.
- Unravel the puzzle of how and why street or place names, stores, clubs, and other institutions came to be.
- Re-ignite a passion for your community archives and/or previously recorded oral histories by translating some onto this new digital platform.
- Meet your audience where they are: online!

“The story project keeps the history of our small town alive and accessible. The older residents of the town have recorded eyewitness accounts of important events that happened 60, 70 years ago, and memories of the people who were born in the 1800s. The younger ones have memorialized more recent ones, knowing themselves to be links in the chain of generations that bind this community together.” — Henrietta

See Testimonials: [https://www.ourstorybridge.org/why](https://www.ourstorybridge.org/why)
Marketing

• Presentations to librarians and to teachers
• OurStoryBridge Facebook page
• Press releases
• e-Newsletter
• Networking
• Logo use by new story projects
• Blog posts and articles for e-newsletters

This Photo by Wasi ahmed02 is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0
Debby Carter, Assistant Librarian at the Tremonton City Library in the Bear River Valley of Utah

Our Bear River Valley Stories: Our Heritage in Story at www.ourbrvstories.org
Tremonton City Public Library’s *OurStoryBridge* Journey

- We saw the ad for the *OurStoryBridge* release presentation at the virtual annual meeting of the Association for Rural and Small Libraries on September 29, 2020 and “knew in our hearts” that this was for us
- Checked the website and contacted *OurStoryBridge* afterwards
- Applied for a grant
- The Tool Kit made it accessible and easy; no need to reinvent the wheel, just used the Tool Kit

Tremonton City Library in the Bear River Valley of Utah is the 1st library to use the *OurStoryBridge* model!
Today: The Bear River Valley

OurStoryBridge

- Website released on January 27, 2021
- Currently 32 stories
- COVID was a challenge, but we knew that everyone has a story and it's important --- that focus kept us on track
- The impact on our future generations drives us further
- If I can follow your directions, anyone can; it was easy!
- Remember that all of you have stories to tell!!!!
Across the miles, connecting our stories, past, present, and future...

Sponsored by the Tremonton City Library, the Bear River Valley Community is a multi-year local history project for collecting local audio stories with associated pictures. The Bear River Valley is rich in local history and we feel these stories deserve to be told. Come and listen as we bridge the old and new, past and present.
Listen to a Story from the Bear River Valley

https://app.memria.org/stories/public-story-view/d7ab4ce098184f7c816310b2aa8b40cf/
Stories Projects Connect Us!

• Did you notice? **Hunsaker** in both story projects? A coincidence?

• We noticed that the **Adirondack Community** Charles Lindbergh story took place at the **Jerome C. Hunsaker** home in the Town of Keene, New York

• Then ten of the first **Bear River Valley**, Utah stories were told by **Hunsakers**

• Further research in Keene with Hunsaker descendants and in the Bear River Valley revealed that Jerome C. Hunsaker’s ancestor **Abraham Hunsaker (1812-1889)** and his wife **Eliza** left NY with Joseph Smith, founder of the Church of Latter Day Saints, then continued with Brigham Young after Smith was killed for his beliefs, and together they traveled West in covered wagons to start the church’s settlement in Utah

• The Bear River Valley storytellers are Abraham’s descendants and related to the Keene Hunsakers!
AJ Gooden
Supervisor, Igiugig Tribal Library, Alaska

Photo used with permission from the Igiugig Village Council https://www.igiugig.com/
Igiugig Tribal Library

Photos used with permission from the Igiugig Village Council and AJ Gooden
Why *OurStoryBridge*?

“We grow stronger when we share our stories.”

-AlexAnna Salmon, Igiugig Village Tribal Council President

- Preserve local knowledge and stories
- Strengthen community as it connects residents of all ages
- Highlight the value of small and rural places
- Create opportunity for increased understanding across cultures and communities

Photo used with permission from the [Igiugig Village Council](#)
Niraqutaq Qallemcinek Website In Progress! “Bridge of Stories”

- Story Aide trained and collection began in July 2021
- Goal: story/week
- Translation into local language will take additional time

Photos used with permission from the Igiugig Village Council and AJ Gooden
How Can You Get Started?

• Contact *OurStoryBridge* for outstanding, free support!!!
• Read the User Guide on [www.ourstorybridge.org](http://www.ourstorybridge.org)
• Approach your Village Council, library, or governing body for support
• Apply for grants
What We’ve Learned So Far from the Community

• There is so much good in the world (generosity of spirit)!
• Storytelling makes the world a better place!
Adirondack Community

Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are. Tell Us Your Story!

Go to myadirondackstory.org
**OurStoryBridge:**

*Connecting the Past and the Present*

*OurStoryBridge* is your resource and tool kit for producing a crowdsourced, community story project emphasizing audio history collecting and sharing.

Get Your Tool Kit Here!
Teacher's Guide

This Teacher’s Guide can help you use stories from Adirondack Community in your classrooms. These downloadable documents, How to Use the Teacher’s Guide, Adirondack Community Story Selection Chart, Sample School Assignment, and Story Summaries will get you started.

The Adirondack Community stories hold lessons beyond the categories on this website and course selections in the Adirondack Community Story Selection Chart. Among them are catastrophes and community reactions, family legacies, the grandeur of our mountains, social justice and societal change, quite a few stories about the Keene Central School, and many surprises.

READ FIRST

1. How to Use the Teacher’s Guide
2. Adirondack Community Story Selection Chart
3. Sample School Assignment
4. Story Summaries

https://www.myadirondackstory.org/teacher-s-guide
• What is the Teacher’s Guide?
• How can I use Adirondack Community stories and podcasts in my classroom?
• Why should I use these stories in my classroom? What do they add to current resources?
• What is Adirondack Community: Capturing, Retaining, and Communicating the Stories of Who We Are
• Who told these stories?
Story Summaries

• Brief synopsis of each Adirondack Community story with the story number, title, and storyteller, plus soon, direct links

• All stories are relevant for middle and high school classes

• Codes for elementary school, college classes, and additional categories are included

• As other OurStoryBridge projects come online, their stories will be added
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<th>Government</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Phy. Ed.</th>
<th>Music &amp; Art</th>
<th>STEM</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<td>Our 21st Century Library</td>
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Chart focuses on middle and high school courses, but other levels can be found in the Story Summaries.
Why Use the Stories?

• **Meet** students in the media that compels them
• **Create** closer bonds and community connections
• **Introduce** a topic, demonstrate a concept, or stimulate discussion, making your classes appealing and memorable
• **Engage** the younger generations with their community's rich history
• **Increase** civic engagement of all community members
• **Celebrate** what makes your community special
• **Reveal** people, stories, and unique anecdotes not widely known

Use these continually updated stories and podcasts from www.myadirondackstory.org by assigning stories relevant to a lesson as homework, playing them in the classroom, or suggesting them for activities or projects.
**OurStoryBridge: What’s Next?**

- Presenting to librarians, teachers, museums, historical societies, archivists, and other organizations
  - Create awareness of the free resources
  - Generate interest in starting *OurStoryBridge* projects and using the stories with students

- Creating a focused ten-year growth plan

- Promoting and expanding the *Teacher’s Guide*

- Building partnerships to help us grow

- Continuing the public relations and marketing program

- Staying connected with an e-newsletter and Facebook pages

- Providing free one-on-one assistance to interested communities

- Generating funding for *OurStoryBridge* to help communities as they begin their story projects

- Testing and improving the tools and resources
If You or Someone You Know is Interested in a Local Story Project...

Check out
www.myadirondackstory.org
www.ourstorybridge.org

Listen to a few stories found on either

Review the Tool Kit and other resources

Fill out the form on the OurStoryBridge website or email createyourstoryproject@gmail.com
Be Our Voice!

- **Guide** others to *OurStoryBridge* if you think they are interested in starting a story project.
- **Show** patrons, especially students, *Adirondack Community* and the other websites so they can hear the stories and podcasts.
- **Introduce** local teachers to the *Adirondack Community* and other stories to use in their classrooms, using the *Teacher’s Guide*.
- **Put** links on library/school library/other resource pages.
- **Volunteer** to review the resources or help us grow *OurStoryBridge*.

- **Follow** and **Like** the Adirondack Community Story Project and *OurStoryBridge* Facebook pages.
- **Send** names and email addresses for the e-newsletter.
- **Suggest** grant and other funding sources.

How can you use the stories?