Stan Ransom Appointed Director of Plattsburgh Public Library

On Monday, November 5, Stanley Ransom will take over the reins as director of the Plattsburgh Public Library. During a long and varied career, Mr. Ransom has focused on small and medium sized libraries of several types, and he has a distinguished history of service in the North Country.

Stan writes:

“I was Director of a similar sized library from 1958 to 1974 in Huntington, Long Island, which was also a Central Library of the Suffolk Cooperative Library System. I then came to CEF and was Director there from 1974 to November, 1991. I retired “to something” and went into volunteer library work at the Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital Medical Library, keeping up my library skills and adding new technology skills.

I am looking forward to guiding the Plattsburgh Public along the paths expertly laid out by Director Sonia Long, who has done an exceptional job in increasing the circulation and making the Library ever more user friendly. I will work with the staff to continue to provide the best possible library service. It is a challenge to provide good library service within a tight budget, but I am excited at the possibilities this new position offers.

Having been the Director of the Clinton-Essex-Franklin Library System and worked with a Central Library Director, I now find myself at the alternate position of being the Central Library Director. I will work with Ewa Jankowska, CEF Director, to offer good Central Library services to the CEF member libraries.”

Welcome, Mr. Ransom! We look forward to working with you once again!
Member Library News

From Clinton County:
Chazy Public Library

Chazy has just finished having the library interior painted without closing the Library, thanks to a flexible painter willing to work weekends and lots of help from the Trustees. All our shelves are on the walls (no stacks), so we packed and moved books a section at a time (three sections) on Saturday mornings and re-shelved everything on Monday after the paint was dry. We were able to do business as usual during the rest of the week. It was lots of work, but the library sure looks cleaner and brighter now.

You are invited to stop in and check out our new look at our annual Christmas Open House which will be held on December 2 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Mulled cider and fancy breads will be featured.

-- Francie Fairchild, Director

Dannemora Free Library

Dannemora has a new library director. We are all sad to say goodbye to Niki. She is leaving us for a new adventure. My name is Laura Pritchard and I am excited to start my new adventure as Dannemora's library director. For the last nine years I have worked as a stay at home mom. My husband and I are home schooling our two children, who both love to read. I love books and hope to share this passion with all our patrons in Dannemora.

-- Laura Pritchard, Dannemora Library Director

Dodge Library, West Chazy

The library hosted a Teddy Bear and Pajama Party story time on October 25. Young readers and their favorite stuffed friends enjoyed hearing a story while sipping refreshments. Our weekly story hour for pre-school aged children is held every Saturday at 10:00 a.m. through the end of November.

-- Larry Hahn, Director

Have You Heard?

Sue Heersink, 281 High St., Newburyport, MA 01950, 978-465-8903 is collecting books for primary through 8th grade for BEADS, (Books For Education, Advancement, Development & Success). For more information about book donations to this group, contact Sue or check out the organization’s web site at www.beadsforeducation.org

-- contributed by Karen Rappaport, Wells Memorial Library, Upper Jay

Susan Orlando is the new librarian at Adirondack Correctional Facility. Susan is already participating actively in inter library loan, and plans to pick up Words Travel father-child reading activities at her facility. Welcome, Susan!

Maria Tirone has been appointed to represent Franklin County on the CEF Board of Trustees. Ms. Tirone is Deputy Superintendent of Programs at Upstate Correctional Facility in Malone. Thanks to her guidance, Upstate continues to be an active and valued participant in CEF’s Public Library Resources Program for State Correctional Facilities.

David Reuther of Willsboro has recently been appointed to the CEF Board of Trustees to represent Essex County. Mr. Reuther worked for many years in the publishing industry and is the editor of The Armchair Mountaineer and The Armchair Angler by Terry Brykcznski. He is also a loyal patron of the Paine Memorial Library. Cheryl Blanchard reports that she and Alice Wand were credited with “thanks for providing the many books” in Scary Stories by Barry Moser, which Mr. Reuther also edited. Baby boomers whose parents had the albums will be interested to note that he is also the son-in-law of the famous Mitch Miller.

An Advocacy in Action kit was recently compiled by CEF staff. The kit contains updated information about the services of CEF as well online links, tips and everything else needed to advocate successfully with local and state representatives. Most of these materials will be available online on the CEF web site www.cefls.org soon. If you would like a hard copy of the kit contents, please contact Karen Batchelder or Julie Weaver at CEF.
Ellenburg Sarah A. Munsil Free Library

The Ellenburg Sarah A. Munsil Free Library has held a Bag O’ Books sale every Saturday for the past seven months. What a success! The books sold at $2.00 a plastic grocery bag full. We took in over $350 to match the money needed for the Libri Foundation Grant. We also bought two bean bag chairs for the children’s corner. It was hard work, but well worth the effort. It might not sound like much money to some of you, but it was wonderful for us. My husband and three teen boys helped with the lifting. Many people came in to our library for the first time. Several people came from two local campgrounds, and bought their summer reading. Two families donated back to the library the books they bought and read back, so we could sell them again. We’ve tried a two day sale in past years, and sold books at $.25 for paperbacks and $.50 for hardcover but it didn’t go over well. This time our lowest sale day was $4.00, and our biggest sale day was $61.00. That’s a lot of bags of books, and it all adds up! We’ve packed it all upstairs until next spring.

-- Michele Phillips, Director

Northern New York Library Assistants’ Annual Fall Conference

Library Assistants from across the North Country will again gather for the Annual Fall Conference, to be held on Thursday, November 8th. This year’s program will begin with Elaine Dunn-Thayer, of Massena Public Library, and a brief talk about NYLA’s Leadership and Management Academy. Xan VanArsdale follows, with a presentation on “Graphic Novels”. The afternoon session will begin with a trip to St. Lawrence University. A demonstration of the ArcGIS System, which is used to analyze and display geographic data, will be presented by Carol Cady and Bill Olsen. A tour of Owen D. Young Library at St. Lawrence University will conclude the program. Join us for a day full of information and a chance to meet others from around the region.

— Tracey LaBarge, CEFLS

From a Man’s View

By Larry Hahn,
Dodge Library, West Chazy

The World Without Us by Alan Weisman takes an in depth look at what would happen to the world if there were no longer any humans. Ironically, one always assumed that cockroaches would survive, but without the warmth of human habitation, the lowly cockroach would perish. Things made of bronze would survive, although they would tarnish and turn green. Houses would begin to lose their wooden supports and collapse in on themselves. If the subway system in New York City were breached by the ocean, the entire system would be inundated because there would be no one to man the pumps. Already, we are polluting our waters with plastic bags which would last long after our passing, especially plastic buried in landfills that would not have sunlight to degrade them. Animals that have been hunted by man would be able to make a comeback.

The Chosen Soldier by Dick Couch, covers the making of a Green Beret and the extensive training candidates undergo. Unlike Navy Seals, a special forces team member needs to be able to teach others what he has learned. This includes not only other military units but foreign soldiers as well. The Green Beret must learn how to navigate terrain during the day and at night, carrying everything they need in a rucksack and living off the land if necessary. Anyone interested in an “up close and personal” look at how Green Berets are chosen and trained will find a wealth of information in this book.
Essex County News

Belden Noble Library, Essex

This summer we were fortunate to host six evening programs given by some of the many talented people who are our neighbors in Essex. Jan Eakins is a historic preservation consultant who served as a docent at Monticello and was employed by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation. In April and September, Jan gave two wonderful Power Point presentations about Thomas Jefferson and his many talents. Each program paid special attention to architecture. In June, community members Jim and Colleen VanHoven discussed their fascinating trip to South Africa. In July, we hosted a book signing for the Adirondack Council, a group that held their hugely successful annual meeting in Essex. In August, Broadway actor George Hearn presented "My Life on Broadway". What great experiences he's had! Neighbor Peter Schultz presented a program titled "The Invention of Fiberoptics and Its Impact on Our World". He is a co-inventor of fiber optics and was so informative about the future of communications.

Each of these programs was very well attended and appreciated by our patrons.

-- Karen East, Director

Paine Memorial Library, Willsboro

The Paine Memorial Free Library held the first meeting of a newly formed "Writers' Tea" group on Sunday, October 21. Marty Statton, author of Angel on the Great Medicine Trail and Her Father's Laugh will head up the group. Nikki Andrews, author of Chicken Bones and A Wind Swept Star opened the first meeting. Ms. Andrews is also a member of the National Novel in a Month Challenge. We invite all who are interested in writing to attend; beginners or published authors are welcome. This is the time to share your poems, memoirs, short stories or just listen.

Mark your calendar for these upcoming events:

November 8  Readers’ Circle 1:00 p.m. & Friends of the Library at 3:00 p.m.
December 3 to December 24  Holiday Craft Sale (20% benefits the library)
December 12  Tea & Talk at 1:00 p.m.
December 21  Writers Tea at 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

-- Cheryl Blanchard, Director

A Spot of Art

The Distribution to Underserved Communities Library Program (DUC) distributes books on contemporary art and culture free of charge to rural and inner-city libraries and schools nationwide.

The program aims to actively further more “egalitarian access” to contemporary art, and is committed to fostering partnerships among publishers, non-profit organizations, librarians and readers to enrich and diversify library collections. The program offers over 490 titles by more than 90 different publishers. It reaches readers in all 50 states and has placed over 200,000 free books in public libraries, schools and alternative reading centers.

The DUC is a program of Art Resources Transfer, Inc., a non profit organization founded in 1987 that is committed to documenting and supporting artists’ voices and work, and making these voices accessible to the broadest possible audience.

For more information and a list of titles, please visit the DUC web site at www.ducprogram.org.

-- forwarded by Jane Bouchard, Schroon Lake

See a Kiwanian, Thank a Kiwanian!

We are pleased to announce that the Plattsburgh Noon Kiwanis Club made two monetary awards to CEF during their 2007 funding cycle. The Major Emphasis Committee, chaired by Dr. Nancy Church, donated $500 to purchased a collection of Playaway digital audio book titles. This new format is currently being featured and evaluated for further purchase on the bookmobile. CEF also received $500 from the Noon Kiwanis Community Services Committee to support our “Put Your Child in the Reading Picture” project. This activity will target families with children age 0-5 in the greater Plattsburgh area through existing close ties between the CEF Library System and “Journey Into Reading” as conceived by Mrs. Alice Sample.

If you see a Kiwanian, please thank him/her for this club’s continued support of libraries and reading!
The Low Down on Downloadable Audios

Since the July 1 inception of our experiment with downloadable audio books, a surprising number of brave users are trying out the service in member libraries and on the bookmobile. Several library directors and CEF staff members purchased compatible mp3 players and spent the summer learning how to download and transfer audio books. This is a learning experience for everyone!

Horizon statistics reveal that since July 1, 145 users at 19 libraries have downloaded a total of 374 books. We hope to see this number rise during the coming months as users go into hibernation mode! To date, 44 registered listeners at Plattsburgh Public Library lead the pack, followed by Saranac Lake with 17, 15 users at Keene Valley, 12 at Wead Library, Malone, and 10 at Schroon Lake. Nine bookmobile users are registered listeners, and bookmobile staff report very positive feedback from non-fiction aficionados who feel that this format really expands our spoken word offerings.

Do any member library “early adopters” have picks or pans? We would like to hear about them for our next Trailblazer issue. If anyone has patrons who are having technical problems, don’t hesitate to call Betsy Brooks at CEF. We are still waiting to get our hands on more promotional bookmarks, and plan to do another “promotional blitz” before the holidays.

The Click, Connect and Listen project is made possible with support from a Federal Library Services and Technology Act grant from the NY State Library, and donations from three partner libraries (Plattsburgh Public Library, Saranac Lake Free Library, and the Keene Valley Library Association).

Essex County continued...

Black Watch Memorial Library, Ticonderoga

The Black Watch Memorial Library’s Board of Directors has approved an expansion plan which is currently on display at the library. Work commenced this year on Phase One of our project. This work includes demolition and removal of debris. Through the hard work and generous contributions from our Library Board, community members, Teresa Sayward, New York State Construction grants and the new money available from New York State representatives, we will finally be able to see our plans come to fruition. After meeting with our architects, we have determined that we will break ground in Spring 2008.

Our expansion will be built onto the north side of the library, while the existing building will remain exactly as it is on the outside. The plans will double the square footage, bringing it from 1,403 to 2,848 feet. Renovations to the interior will result in a larger children’s room, public bathroom, handicapped accessible entrance, and OPAC computer stations for patrons. However, the best aspect of the addition will be the additional space to house the collection we already have.

In other news, the Friends of the Library will raffle a beautiful handmade quilt, which is on display at the library until the raffle date of September 2008. We would also like to welcome Beth Nadeau as our newest employee. Beth has come to us after many years of experience at a local preschool. We are excited to have her and look forward to her input for our children’s area.

-- Heather Johns, Director

Keeseville Free Library

Keeseville Free Library Director Mary Ann Goff (right), with help from CEF Automation Librarian Betsy Brooks, displays a flag that was recently presented to the library by the 962nd Ordnance Company. The accompanying certificate, which is also shown, states that the flag was “proudly flown by Sgt. Daniel Costin and the 962nd Company over its headquarters building at Q-West Base Complex, Iraq on 24 September 2007.” The flag was presented to the Keeseville Library in recognition of “their outstanding support to the American soldier and the 962nd Company during their tour of combat in Iraq.” --- Elizabeth Rogers, photo
More From Essex County...

Sherman Free Library, Port Henry

After a busy summer, the Port Henry Library is full of fall plans for activities for all ages.

Book sales will be held on the first Saturday of the month during regular library hours, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Upcoming sale dates are November 3, December 1, January 5, 2008, February 2, and March 1.

Two book discussion groups are currently meeting at the library. One group meets on the first Wednesday of each month from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. The second group meets on the third Thursday of each month. Books discussed are selected by the members. New members are always welcome to join either of the groups.

Story time for three and four year olds is held at the library on Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. During this half hour program, children and their parents enjoy hearing a story or two, and coloring a page related to the story or other activity.

On November 29 and December 27, representatives from the Essex County Office of the Aging will be at the library from 1:00 to 5:00 pm. to help people enroll in Medicare Part D.

Everyone is welcome to come to the library to make a small holiday centerpiece on Thursday, November 8 at 6:00 p.m. with Jo Denno from Decker’s Flats Nursery. The centerpiece will have carnations and a candle. Participants must sign up at the library by November 6 and pay a fee of $10 for supplies.

-- excerpted from the Sherman Free Library October 2007 newsletter; Jackie Viestenz, Director

Happy 100th birthday on November 7 to the Wells Memorial Library, Upper Jay! A celebration party will be held on Saturday, November 10 from 1:00 to 2:00. A special commemorative envelope and pictorial cancellation stamp will be available to purchase at the library.

Let Pandora Pick for You!

Pandora is a music recommendation site that knows what songs you like better than you do. Other sites, like Last.fm and iTunes, use collaborative filtering algorithms (“people who like your favorite songs like this, too”) that can often result in a “bland common denominator.” Pandora is powered by what the site says is the “most comprehensive analysis of music ever undertaken, the Music Genome Project: a crazy project started back in early 2000 to capture the complex musical DNA of songs using a large team of highly trained musicians.” Pandora’s musicologists break songs into hundreds of elements – tempo, instrumentation, tonality – and divine what your favorite tunes have in common.

Listeners can “tune their channel” precisely by giving a “thumbs up” to a song they especially like. A thumbs-up vote has several effects: the very next set of songs for your station will be directly generated using the song that received the vote, and future sets of songs are more likely to have similar musical traits.

Pandora streams music at 128kbps. You will need a broadband connection (DSL or cable) of at least 150 kbps to run it. It works entirely through your browser, so you do not need any separate software. You do, however, need Flash Player for your browser, which is often already installed. If not, you can get the latest Flash Player plug-in (currently Version 9) free through the Pandora site. Up to 100 stations can be maintained by a single listener at any one time. Since each listener’s station is account specific, a single computer can be shared by other Pandora listeners. And, a Pandora account can be used on any computer that meets the site’s technical requirements.

A free advertising-supported Pandora on the web service is offered, along with several other listening options which require a paid subscription. Pandora does not use any form of pop-up ads. After experimenting with several other online music streaming station, I’m enjoying the free version of Pandora at work, “fiddling with the knobs” to build a perfectly relaxing Oscar Peterson-based genome that hits all the right notes. — JW
Wells Memorial Library celebrates 100 years of library service in November. Built and named in memory of Charles Wells, the library opened on November 7, 1907. Madella Buck was hired at a salary of $10 per month and remained the librarian for the next sixty years. Festivities will take place at the library on Saturday, November 10th.

We are happy to welcome back retired Library Director Carole McDowell for What's the BIG Idea? Mother Goose Programs from Vermont Center for the Book. Carole's monthly math and science programs for ages 3-7 started in September.

In September and October the library is hosting an art exhibit of images of the old Jay Covered Bridge to coincide with the Town of Jay's grand opening of The Covered Bridge, the Essex County Emergency Services Volunteer Memorial Bridge and the Douglas Memorial Park. Keeseville artist Speedy Arnold will exhibit drawings and paintings in November and December.

The Children's Theater Workshop presents the play Jookalorum, based on O.Henry stories. Performances are scheduled for 3:00 pm on Saturday, November 10th at Uihlein Mercy Center in Lake Placid and Sunday, November 11 at the new Amos and Julia Ward Theater in Jay. The play is directed by Kathy Recchia along with CTW participants Catherine Goulet, Maria Goulet and Sam Balzac, and is made possible with grants from Stewart's and the Arts Council of the Northern Adirondacks.

In December a month-long Holiday Sale will feature new and gently-used holiday items including decorations, gifts, cards, and candles.

More from Essex County...

Green Web Sites

The recent Nobel Peace Prize Awards have resulted in increased focus on climate protection. Climate change and global warming now figure prominently in the news and in our personal and professional consciousness. Here are some recommended “green” sites to explore. Don’t forget to “power off” when you are done!

Campaign Earth  www.campaignearth.org
The mission of this site is to bring everyday people to “a new level of personal involvement in critical environment issues.” Information is packaged in an upbeat style and the recommended actions are easily accomplished and accessible for all ages.

Carbon Footprint  carbonfootprint.com
Measure the size of your carbon footprint on this UK based web site that receives over a million hits a month from visitors all over the world. It’s also fun to check out the section on environmentally friendly holiday gift ideas.

David Suzuki Foundation  www.davidsuzuki.org
This Canadian foundation works to find way for society to live in balance with the natural world that sustains us. The Foundation focuses on four program areas: oceans and sustainable fishing, climate change and clean energy, sustainability, and the Nature Challenge (“10 easy life tweaks” that let you invent the future with the choices you make).

Climate Institute  www.climate.org
This site provides material for teachers and students of all ages on climate change. It includes background information, games, cartoons, maps, images, links to cool sites, portals, and other resources that can help enhance understanding of all aspects of climate change.

Earth 911  earth911.org
Another good site that aims to “empower the Earth’s citizenry” with community specific and “actionable” environmental information that can be used in everyday life to contribute to sustainability. Current features on this news-laden site include sections on “Green-Lantern”, “Trick or Green” “Hallo-green” and advice on how and why to recycle your Halloween pumpkin.

Global Warming: Early Warning Signs  climatehotmap.org
This site features an interactive map that illustrates the global nature and local consequences of climate change.

Writer's Workshops, sponsored in part by the Arts Council of the Northern Adirondacks, continued in September and October with sessions on essays and creative prose and songwriting. On Tuesday, November 20 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., Fred Balzac will lead a playwriting breakout group, which is the fifth in a series. A December 15 free performance of plays written by participants will take place at the Recovery Lounge at Upper Jay Upholstery (across from the post office). Please call 946-2644 or 946-7851 to reserve seats.

The Ausable River Association invites community members concerned about local river and water quality to an Ausable River Watershed Planning Meeting at the library on Thursday, November 15 at 6:30 p.m. There will be a discussion period to address questions and concerns, games and information for all. For further information, please call 873-3752 or e-mail info@ausableriver.org.

In December a month-long Holiday Sale will feature new and gently-used holiday items including decorations, gifts, cards, and candles.

--- Karen Rappaport, Director
$14 Million Construction Grant Money in Action

Over the years, CEF member libraries have put construction money to good use to accomplish work that ranged from repair and “de-mossing” of leaky roofs and meeting ADA requirements, to construction of snug additions in character with an existing library space. The injection of $14 million into the Construction pot has really helped local libraries by adding $318,676 (in 2006) to our “state aid pie”. We asked two recipients of 2006-2007 Construction money what they’ve accomplished to date, and are pleased to report their successes below.

Saranac Lake Free Library

The Saranac Lake Free Library applied for and was awarded $7,650. This grant allowed for chimney improvement, door modification for the Adirondack Room, a new roof over the Main Reading Room, energy efficient lighting in the basement and storage areas to complete our re-lighting project begun last year, a new screen door for the old front entrance and improved lighting for Children’s Room, which was inadequately designed during initial construction. The project has just been completed this fall and we hope to begin a major Cantwell Room renovation in 2008 to take further advantage of this grant opportunity. – Betsy Whitefield

Chateaugay Memorial Library

After a three month delay due to the discovery of asbestos, we began “rehabbing” the former Chateaugay Village Garage into the new library space in mid-October. The new library will be all on one level, with handicapped accessibility throughout. It will allow us to be more of a community center by providing a dedicated meeting space with a full kitchenette. The kitchenette will allow groups such as the Scouts to use the facility to acquire merit badges for cooking. Since this meeting room is accessible separately from the main part of the library it will be available to groups even on days that the library will not be open to the public. There will be an archival room for local historical collections and a newly formed Chateaugay Historical Society will manage those collections.

We are excited about other areas our new space will offer. There will be a large children’s area. We will also have a garden area in front of the library in which we will be able to take the children for exploration and observation of nature. There will be wall space and exhibit space for local artists and artisans to showcase their works, which will add a cultural element that we’ve never been able to provide before. We are also wireless so that everyone can take advantage of our fast internet connection.

We automated this year, in anticipation of the move and are now online and hopefully shortening the learning curve so that when we are in our new space, we will be technologically updated. We will also have new public access computers thanks to the Gates Grant Foundation and the NYS Library Construction Grant. – Eileen Clar

Sandy Randell, Vice President/Secretary and, Chateaugay Town Supervisor Donald Bilow, look on as contractor Don Gillette signs the contract by which work on the library will commence!
News From Franklin County

Goff-Nelson Memorial Library,
Tupper Lake

The busy days of summer are past, and we are settling in, waiting for you-know-what to cover “fields and highways with a silence deep and white.” (thank you James Russell Lowell.) Our library is bright and pretty with pumpkins and witches and cornstalks, and we will soon host our third annual Halloween party for young people, with scary stories, crafts, apple dunking and a pumpkin decorating contest. The children also have a weekly story hour, which is all part of our project to make our library a fun and interesting place to come to for our present and future readers.

The library is sponsoring an oral history project, which is off and running. Several members of the community have already been interviewed and many more are preparing to be recorded. These bits of history will be invaluable to researchers in future years. We are fortunate to have oral historian and author, Caper Tissot of Saranac Lake, coming to give a presentation titled “Oral History as a Community Builder.” The program reflects her own experiences with this topic. Caper Tissot is the author of the book History Between the Lines: Women’s Lives and Saranac Lake Customs. In her book, Ms. Tissot states that to prepare for the future of our towns, we should learn and preserve their history. Anyone who is interested in oral or local history is invited to come to the library on Friday, October 26 at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Tissot will have copies of her book for sale, and refreshments will be available.

In our next Trailblazer article we will be writing about our Christmas projects – the holidays will be here before we know it! Meanwhile, enjoy the lovely fall weather.

-- Sue LaBarge, Tupper Lake

“November!”

“No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds, -
November!”

Despite the fact that Thomas Hood’s often quoted little ditty is usually sadly apt, there is plenty to celebrate in November besides Election Day, Veterans' Day and Thanksgiving. Don’t forget the birthday of Daniel Boone (November 2) as well as American Education Week (November 11-17), Children’s Book Week (November 12-18), the birthday of Mickey Mouse (November 18), National Game and Puzzle Week (November 18-24) and Mark Twain’s birthday (November 30). Save some cake for us – we’re declaring “No Diet” month!

The CEF barcoding team was busy throughout October barcoding the collection at E.M. Cooper Memorial Library, Wilmington. Laptop computers and the library’s wireless network make the process go smoothly. Pictured left to right is Tracey LaBarge, Betsy Brooks and Kim Fletcher. Elizabeth Rogers must be ordering lunch!
Focus on…

The Saranac Lake Free Library  
Celebrating its Centennial throughout 2007

On Thursday, January 18, 2007, twelve ghosts visited the noon Brown Bag Lunch Program at the Saranac Lake Free Library, presenting the historic dramatization, “The Return of the Library Ghosts.” The event kicked off a gala year of Centennial Celebrations. The Board of Trustees, staff and library volunteers, in costume, presented the historical characterization of people who had played an important role in the formation of the library.

Susan Stiles, Board President, dressed as an auxiliary lady in a lovely white lace 1900s gown and hat, graciously welcomed the crowd of more than ninety, while local historian Howard Riley, playing Capt. Pliny Miller, Saranac Lake’s first settler, wearing snappy suspenders, provided historical context. The newly-framed 1907 charter was on display, and appropriate historic photographs were projected on a large screen.

Hillel Baker, played by a female board member, sporting a flashy dark mustache, told about starting the first library in Saranac Lake on the second floor of his brother’s store on Pine and Main Streets in 1856. At the time, Hillel said, there were only 15 families living in Saranac Lake and two schools with 31 children. An educated man, Hillel was a cobbler. He encouraged neighbors, especially children, to borrow books and magazines.

Next, the famous Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau stepped to the podium as his spirit self, wearing a white lab coat, of course! Trudeau explained that like so many others he came to Saranac Lake to cure for tuberculosis and when he got better helped many others to cure. He and friends organized a reading group for entertainment and then came up with the idea of starting a permanent library, raising $700 to fund their dream. In 1880 they purchased land at 52 Main Street for $25 (where Post Office Pharmacy is today) and built a one-story, one-room building that housed about 400 donated books. This was called the Franklin County Library.

The famous author Robert Louis Stevenson, who cured in Saranac Lake, used the library and donated an autographed copy of Gentlemen Friends which is still in the library’s collection. The library, which was later moved to St. Luke’s Parish Hal and called The Adirondack Library, served the community for 15 years until members of St. Luke’s decided they could no longer maintain a library of that size.

Our next ghost, George V. W. Duryee, decked out in a bowler hat and hunting jacket, told about forming a committee that included W. J. Callanan, M. M. Feustman, E. H. Baldwin and W.H. Haase to again have a library in Saranac Lake. The Regents of the University of the State of New York granted the charter for a Free Library Association on December 21, 1907, and on December 30 a building fund was started with $50. A lot on Main Street was purchased, and in August, 1909, Branch & Callanan was awarded the $7,500 contract to build the new library designed by Scopes and Feustman. The building was completed in 1910 and is still part of the present library.

The Ghosts continued to present their stories telling about four additions that have been made to the original building. In 1925, Mr. C. H. Ludington paid for a much-needed addition in memory of his wife, including the front room of the Adirondack Research Room on the lower level. In the late 1960s the library was expanded to include the large Reading Room on the main floor, the Thomas B. Cantwell Community Room and a Director’s Office, along with the privately funded wing for the Dickert Wildlife Collection.
Focus On: The Saranac Free Library continued

The adult nonfiction section and Adirondack Research Room were expanded in 1984, and in 2004 a Children’s Room, office space and elevator were added, and the Dickert Collection was completely remodeled.

A few of the more humorous parts of the Ghosts’ historical re-creation included the fact that one former librarian had a cot downstairs where she often sneaked off to take a nap. A “cake” that had sold for quite a bit of money in the 1954 All-Male Bake Sale fund-raising event, when uncovered, turned out to be a cake mix, and strawberry blond former Library Director Joyce Meagher arrived as her ghostly self in a flaming red wig.

Research for “The Return of the Library Ghosts” was completed in the William Chapman White Memorial Room, the Adirondack Research Room, the library’s jewel, which was described by Northern New York Library Network Executive Director John Hammond in 2005 as “the best regional history collection in any public library in Northern New York.” This is a noncirculating collection of materials with a focus on the Adirondacks, the history of Saranac Lake, and in particular Saranac Lake as a tuberculosis cure center.

The Ghost founders were astonished to hear from current Library Director Betsy Whitefield that the library now has an online catalog and public access computers: audio books and DVDs; art shows that rotate each month; a Brown Bag Lunch series; children’s story hour, summer reading program and math/science programs. Services are provided by the Director, a Library Assistant, and seven part-time employees.

Last year 73,162 items were circulated, with an interlibrary loan circulation of 6,135. Renovation of the Cantwell Community Room is planned for February 2008. The Ghosts were pleased to hear that volunteers, both serving on the Board and in numerous other capacities, still play a major role in the library’s operations. The community has continued to be extremely generous in supporting the library.

The Centennial Committee, which began meeting a year before the start of the Centennial, decided to celebrate in a big way, with a special event each month throughout 2007. Highlights have been a “Read Mountains of Books” program for children; Library Ladies perform in the Winter Carnival Parade; “Centennial Sweets,” a week of serving coffee and cookies to all patrons; a Candlelit Supper honoring volunteers; two “Saranac Lake Reads” events; a Walking Tour of Historic Sites, followed by a picnic on the library’s front lawn; and a silent art auction.

All are invited to our next Centennial event, Meet the Authors Night on Friday, November 9, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., at the library. At the conclusion of the dramatization, the apparitions exited the Community Room, each waving to the crowd, and then vanished. We expect, however, that they will return for the 2107 extravaganza. We certainly hope so!

-- Pat Wiley, Library Assistant

This photograph shows the Ladies Auxilary Board of the Saranac Lake Free Library enjoying a tea party shortly after the library was built. The photograph was first published in the Adirondack Daily Enterprise on July 10, 1910.

Board of Trustees members, staff and volunteers presented “The Return of the Library Ghosts” to celebrate the Centennial.
Long time bookmobile patron Sue Ellen Mayville presented bookmobile librarian Deb Crossley with a beautiful handmade afghan to commemorate Debbie’s “almost 25” years of service on the bookmobile. The design was crocheted and cross stitched in an Adirondack theme. Sue Ellen and her mother Geraldine are bookmobile patrons at the Brushton stop and are avid mystery readers. Debbie says she was “surprised and flattered” by this lovely gift, and she looks forward to curling up in it with a good book this winter!