

Historic Rambles of the Ausable Watershed

"Newman"

The Town that was Never on the Map

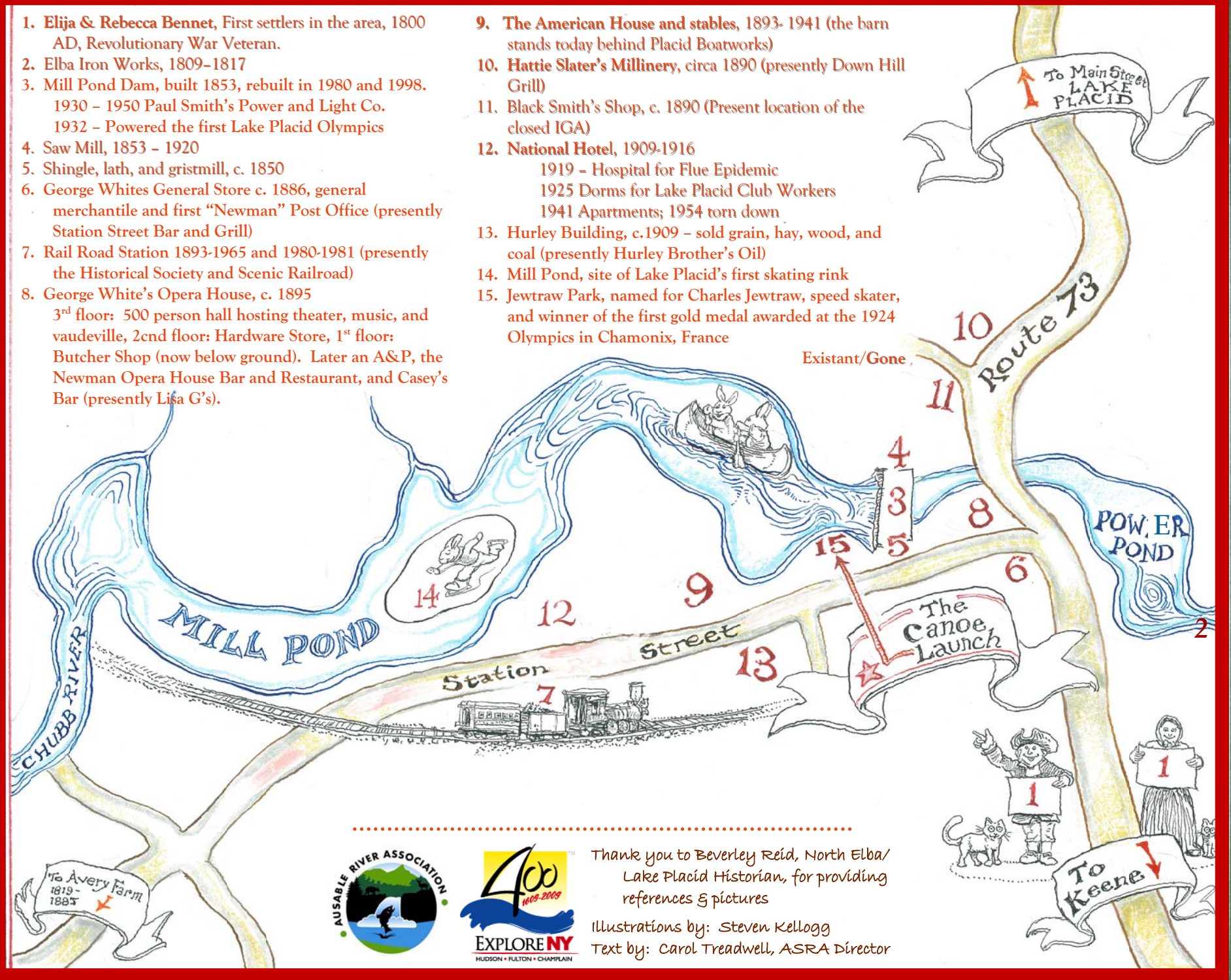


In July 1609, Samuel de Champlain, on an exploratory mission of the Lake Champlain region wrote "towards the south I saw very high mountains..." He would have noticed Mt. Marcy and Algonquin - the headwaters of the Ausable River. It was not for another 200 years, however, that Europeans would first settle in the upper Ausable Watershed. The Ausable River and its tributaries were to play an important role in the early development and industry of the region. Early settlers harnessed the power of the Chubb River by building a dam to form Mill Pond. Sawmills powered by water falling over the dam supplied the lumber used to build the early village of Lake Placid. The river also powered the short lived "Elba Iron Works." Eventually the dam was converted to generate electricity by Paul Smith and powered the 1932 Winter Olympics. The Mill Pond area was once referred to as Newman, after Anna Newman, a prominent resident. It served as a center for commerce hosting a general store, butcher shop, hardware store, hotels, opera house, and postal station. The name Newman faded into history after the postal station closed in 1937.

Mill Pond Canoe Route: Park on Station Street at Jewtraw Park in the Village of Lake Placid. Canoes and Kayaks can be launched into Mill Pond from the shores of the park.

1. Elijia & Rebecca Bennet, First settlers in the area, 1800 AD, Revolutionary War Veteran.
2. Elba Iron Works, 1809-1817
3. Mill Pond Dam, built 1853, rebuilt in 1980 and 1998. 1930 - 1950 Paul Smith's Power and Light Co. 1932 - Powered the first Lake Placid Olympics
4. Saw Mill, 1853 - 1920
5. Shingle, lath, and gristmill, c. 1850
6. George Whites General Store c. 1886, general merchantile and first "Newman" Post Office (presently Station Street Bar and Grill)
7. Rail Road Station 1893-1965 and 1980-1981 (presently the Historical Society and Scenic Railroad)
8. George White's Opera House, c. 1895
3rd floor: 500 person hall hosting theater, music, and vaudeville, 2nd floor: Hardware Store, 1st floor: Butcher Shop (now below ground). Later an A&P, the Newman Opera House Bar and Restaurant, and Casey's Bar (presently Lisa G's).

9. The American House and stables, 1893- 1941 (the barn stands today behind Placid Boatworks)
10. Hattie Slater's Millinery, circa 1890 (presently Down Hill Grill)
11. Black Smith's Shop, c. 1890 (Present location of the closed IGA)
12. National Hotel, 1909-1916
1919 - Hospital for Flue Epidemic
1925 Dorms for Lake Placid Club Workers
1941 Apartments; 1954 torn down
13. Hurley Building, c.1909 - sold grain, hay, wood, and coal (presently Hurley Brother's Oil)
14. Mill Pond, site of Lake Placid's first skating rink
15. Jewtraw Park, named for Charles Jewtraw, speed skater, and winner of the first gold medal awarded at the 1924 Olympics in Chamonix, France



Thank you to Beverley Reid, North Elba/Lake Placid Historian, for providing references & pictures

Illustrations by: Steven Kellogg
Text by: Carol Treadwell, ASRA Director

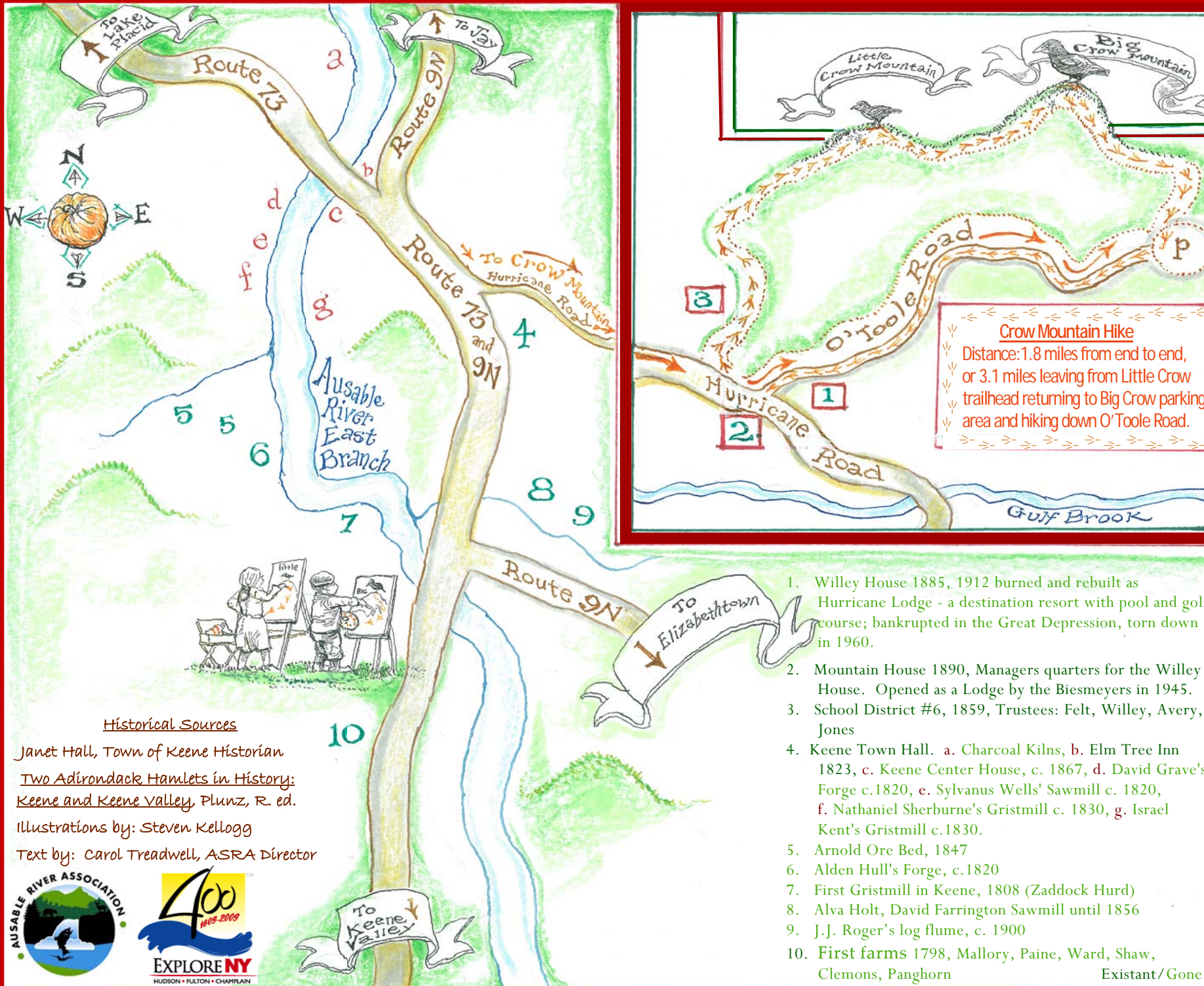
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A "Crows Eye" View of Historic Keene



Sitting on top of Big Crow Mountain and peering down into the valley of the East Branch of the Ausable River it is easy to imagine how the river and its flood plane served as the center of the community of Keene from its earliest settlement. The first settlers were farmers who tilled the flood-plain soils and build the first sawmills, and gristmills. During the age of iron (1820's - 1880) the river supplied water to forges in the hamlet of Keene. After the center of iron mining moved to the Mid-west the river and its tributaries were used to chute and float logs to sawmills (1890's - 1900's). The river is also the center of another valuable industry - tourism. Artists from the Hudson River school came to paint the valley's craggy cliffs and stunning mountain scenery (1850's). The Golden Age of tourism (1870 - 1920's) brought city weary travelers here to relax, hike, and fish in the refreshing mountain air. It is hard to imagine that the valley slopes were once denuded of trees. Today the forests hide the remnants of these past visitors and industries.

To Crow Mountain Trailhead: In the hamlet of Keene take Hurricane Road uphill for 1.9 miles; the trailhead for Little Crow is on the left. Or proceed to O'Toole Road and drive to the top for parking at the Big Crow trailhead.



Crow Mountain Hike
 Distance: 1.8 miles from end to end, or 3.1 miles leaving from Little Crow trailhead returning to Big Crow parking area and hiking down O'Toole Road.

1. Willey House 1885, 1912 burned and rebuilt as Hurricane Lodge - a destination resort with pool and golf course; bankrupted in the Great Depression, torn down in 1960.
2. Mountain House 1890, Managers quarters for the Willey House. Opened as a Lodge by the Biesmeyers in 1945.
3. School District #6, 1859, Trustees: Felt, Willey, Avery, Jones
4. Keene Town Hall. a. Charcoal Kilns, b. Elm Tree Inn 1823, c. Keene Center House, c. 1867, d. David Grave's Forge c.1820, e. Sylvanus Wells' Sawmill c. 1820, f. Nathaniel Sherburne's Gristmill c. 1830, g. Israel Kent's Gristmill c.1830.
5. Arnold Ore Bed, 1847
6. Alden Hull's Forge, c.1820
7. First Gristmill in Keene, 1808 (Zaddock Hurd)
8. Alva Holt, David Farrington Sawmill until 1856
9. J.J. Roger's log flume, c. 1900
10. First farms 1798, Mallory, Paine, Ward, Shaw, Clemons, Panghorn

Existant/Gone

Historical Sources

Janet Hall, Town of Keene Historian

Two Adirondack Hamlets in History: Keene and Keene Valley, Plunz, R. ed.

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