

## **PROJECT JUSTIFICATION**

### **Need**

The Edith B. Ford Memorial Library is a small rural library located in Seneca County, New York. The library serves the towns of Ovid and Romulus, with a combined population of 6,627 (US Federal Census, 2010). The residents of Southern Seneca County have important stories to tell about local agriculture, farming and one of the greatest success stories in agriculture in the country. The Cayuga and Seneca Lakes Craft Beverage Industry Community Memory Project will document and preserve the memories of the creation of a beverage-making industry which are unique in agriculture and unlike any other in the country.

This two-year oral history project will document the historical emergence of the wine and craft beverage industries between the west shore of Cayuga Lake and the east shore of Seneca Lake, in Seneca and Schuyler Counties of New York. The project will preserve, interpret, and provide access to histories from participants directly involved in growing crops and producing wine or craft beverages. These oral histories will document how wineries, breweries, cideries, and distilleries have economically and culturally re-defined this narrow stretch of land between the two lakes. The Cayuga Lake Wine Trail, established in 1983, is the oldest wine trail in the United States, followed in 1986 by the neighboring Seneca Lake Wine Trail. This area of the Finger Lakes currently has more than 60 wineries, 12 breweries, 5 cideries, and 5 distilleries.

No comprehensive oral history project or documentary of this unique beverage-producing region has ever been produced. The personal histories will document how and why this historic climb occurred in the short span of about forty years. Influences to be documented include the New York Farm Winery Act of 1976; the expanded New York Farm Brewery Act of 2012 which has since benefited a number of craft beverage producers; and the microclimate and soil of the region which helps to define the terroir of the final product.

The Ford Memorial Library is committed to the preservation and dissemination of local history. With the addition of a part-time archivist in 2014, the library has become a destination for people seeking local history and genealogy information. Archivist Monica Kelly has overseen 4 digitization projects, conducted oral history interviews, and the BLAST (Bringing Libraries And Schools Together) project that had library staff teaching third and sixth grade students in both the South Seneca and Romulus Central Schools how to research local history using primary documents in our collection. These projects were made possible with grant funding for staff time.

The Memory Project requires staff time to preserve individual stories of the transition from farming to producing craft beverages as well as stories from individuals drawn to the area for the opportunity to produce wine, cider, beer and distilled products. Volunteers, including college students, adults and seniors, will be recruited and trained to assist in this process. With the necessary equipment owned by the library, these volunteers will be able to carry out future oral history projects.

### **Background**

The area addressed in this project has a long history of fruit growing. The Iroquois were the first to recognize and utilize the microclimate of Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. In modern times, the New York Farm Winery Act of 1976 was the greatest impetus in jump-starting the wine industry around Cayuga

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and Seneca Lakes. The Act allowed grape growers and farmers to produce wine and sell it directly to the consumers. Slowly wineries and tasting rooms became wine trail tourist destinations. In 2012 the New York Farm Winery Act was expanded to create a “Farm Brewery License Act” to include craft beer, cider and distilleries.

Seneca County experienced the loss of two major employers when Willard Psychiatric Center closed in 1995 and the Seneca Army Depot closed in 2000, leaving behind hundreds of unemployed locals. Farming and farm related industries, particularly the craft beverage industry, began to expand, providing local economic growth.

In this rural community which has roots in generations of farmers and producers of agricultural products, there is a need to preserve the memories and accomplishments of the hard-working people of the previous and present centuries. This project will provide a sense of pride in a community which often reflects sadness and disappointment, both prevalent due to the long-term economic downturn caused by the loss of its largest employers.

### **Library Description**

The Ford Library serves two school districts where 56%-73% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunches. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, 13.6% of the population of the town of Ovid and 21.4% of the population of the town of Romulus were below the poverty line. Transportation is a significant barrier for families seeking educational opportunities outside of public school. Most cultural organizations and services are located 20 minutes away in the northern part of the county. Many families depend primarily on the Ford Library for activities, books, and programs. The library has become a cultural hub and social center for Southern Seneca County with over 27,000 visitors annually. The library hosted 555 programs for 6,712 individuals in 2018, even while the library was under construction. This demonstrates strong growth since 2008, when the library offered 26 programs and saw 6,100 annual visitors.

In 2019 the Ford Memorial Library completed a \$3.2 million dollar expansion; 60% of this project was funded through local donations and the remainder through grant funds. The library archivist of the past six years, Monica Wilkinson Kelly, oversaw the design and creation of an archival suite with a new archives storage facility and a Local History Reading Room. This suite hosts school groups, researchers and local history clubs. Donations of historical ephemera have increased since the expansion opened in May 2019, and Ms. Kelly uses her hours to accession, organize, store and highlight donated materials.

### **Best Practices**

In 2017 the library received a Humanities New York Vision Grant to generate a database of 50 prospective interviewees, former employees at Willard Psychiatric Center. Ms. Kelly researched and developed best practices guidelines for conducting and editing oral interviews. The Edith B. Ford Memorial Library will adhere to best practices set forward by the library and New York Heritage to collect and create metadata (see Supportingdoc3 “Best Practices” and Supportingdoc4 “NY Heritage Metadata Dictionary.”)

### **Who Will Benefit**

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This project will serve the community by engaging a range of people as project volunteers. Volunteer recruitment will be conducted within the two local history societies and the Friends of the Three Bears group. These volunteers will be trained in best practices and digital production to promote oral history collection within their organization using the library's equipment. Volunteer recruitment will also be conducted at the local senior center; through the homeschool community and service organizations; and widely promoted throughout the community. Volunteers will gain knowledge in digital recording and editing and experience in transcription and metadata collection. With our Fingerlakes1.com partnership, we will recruit six interns from Cayuga Community College and Hobart and William Smith colleges each year, to assist with the field interviews and podcast production.

The Friends of the Three Bears, who are responsible for the preservation of three unique Greek Revival buildings listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, located adjacent to the library, will open a tourist center in the spring of 2020. The Community Memory Project will create exhibitions for this space to further promote the oral history project. The exhibitions will travel to local wineries, cideries, distilleries, breweries, and six area libraries to increase public exposure to historic information.

The stories of craft beverage producers will have an inspirational impact on people locally and nationally by serving as a business model for anyone considering a career in micro-brewing, winemaking, distilling, or cidermaking. The round tables will bring together beverage producers and agricultural growers from across the industry; individuals who do not currently have the opportunity for meaningful dialogue. With distribution of podcasts and roundtable discussions on FingerLakes1.com, the Ford Library Memory Project has the potential to reach 21 million annual visitors, viewers, and listeners. Field interviews will be recorded, transcribed and posted to New York Heritage's digital collection of over 3,000 oral histories. New York Heritage is a portal for learning more about the people, places and events that contributed to the making of New York State:  
<https://nyheritage.org/>

### **Project Partners**

This project will include Josh Durso, News Director, FingerLakes1.com, who will host roundtable discussions and podcasts in the FingerLakes1 studio. Josh will also coordinate college interns to assist with the planning, production, and transcription of studio recordings. Walter Gable, Seneca County Historian, will provide historic information and help research interviews. Phyllis Motil, Vice President, Friends of the Three Bears, will provide the space for our exhibits. Jane Braunig, Ovid Town Historian, and Bill Sebring, Romulus Town Historian, will volunteer to assist in research, transcribe interviews, prepare metadata and recruit other volunteers within their organizations to assist with oral histories.

### **PROJECT WORK PLAN**

This project consists of six parts:

1. Field interviews: Monica Wilkinson Kelly, Archivist and Luke Hodde, Producer, will conduct one field interview every two weeks beginning December, 2020 at a different venue for a total of 40 completed interviews over two years. Each interview will be 30-45 minutes in length and feature a craft beverage maker, vineyard or orchard manager, or crop producer affiliated with the beverage industry.
2. Roundtable discussions: Ms. Kelly will recruit beverage industry workers from field interviews to record a 30 minute discussion in the Fingerlakes1.com studio. Four participants will discuss a

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topic, such as women winemakers or beverage trends, to provide a current context of the local beverage industry. A roundtable discussion will be held every two months for 11 total discussions.

3. Podcasts: Ms. Kelly, Mr. Hodde and college interns will select topics of discussion from field interviews and roundtable discussions. The podcasts will form a mini-series with storytelling as the main component, to walk through the history of the beverage industry from start to finish. Twelve podcasts, each approximately 15 minutes in length, will be produced.
4. Community Presentations: Ms. Kelly will build upon the agricultural and beverage industry presentations the Ford Library currently hosts by including Seneca County Historian Walter Gable to discuss the history of agriculture in the county and early winery owners. In addition, library director Shannon O'Connor will host current beverage industry talks on topics such as apple tree grafting, cider making, hop growing, wine tasting and home brewing. A total of 8 presentations will take place at the library and each will be recorded by FingerLakes1.com using their mobile Sling Studio.
5. Complementary Collections: Ms. Kelly will conduct a public outreach campaign to solicit donations of archival materials relevant to the local beverage industry. Each item will be accessioned and some items will become part of 5 separate exhibitions to be displayed at the Friends of the Three Bears Tourist Center during the tourist season. Each exhibit will be filmed as a 360 degree narrated video walk-through and uploaded to YouTube and the library website. Ephemera will be scanned and uploaded to New York Heritage.
6. Promotion: The project will be kicked off at the first community presentation by Seneca County Historian Walter Gable, in conjunction with a beverage tasting event. The program will consist of a brief history of craft beverage production. Ms. Kelly will provide an overview of the project, including what types of items and information are sought, in addition to a calendar of events and scheduled transcription and scanning days for potential volunteers. Promotion will be ongoing, with news articles and presentations to local senior groups, service organizations, farm groups, and community gatherings. Beverage industry recruitment will be held at the monthly wine trail meetings and visits to individual businesses. Each month a link to new videos will be sent to library supporters via email newsletter and social media.

### Schedule

- September 2020: Public outreach campaign begins to advertise the project and solicit participant interviews. **Output:** Ms. Kelly and Mr. Hodde interviewed at FingerLakes1.com to introduce the project to a wide audience. Field interviews scheduled. *Evaluation: Ms. Kelly will connect with potential participants and volunteers as well as interviewees.*
- October-November 2020: Archivist trains college interns and volunteers in best practices for conducting interviews, scanning techniques and transcription. Field interview schedule completed. **Output:** 8 volunteers will be trained. *Evaluation: Interns and volunteers will demonstrate skill in digital practices. Field interviewees confirmed.*
- December 2020: Ms. Kelly and Mr. Hodde will begin field interviews with volunteers. First roundtable held, "Harvest Wrap-Up" with a representative from the wine, cider, brew, and distilling industry. Map podcast trajectory. **Output:** Interviews recorded, edited, transcribed and posted to library YouTube on a monthly basis. *Evaluation: Video viewership will be counted. Podcast guest will be determined.*

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- March 2021: Ms. Kelly, Mr. Hodde and Josh Durso will film the first podcast. **Output:** Using the podcast plan, the first of twelve will be recorded in the FingerLakes1 studio. *Evaluation: Video viewership will be counted.*
- May-June; July-August; September-October 2020. May-June; July-August, 2021: Complementary collection will be on display at The Three Bears Tourist Center. The exhibitions will be curated by Ms. Kelly and volunteers. Each exhibit will travel to a beverage producer or area library after the close of its display period at the Three Bears Tourist Center. **Output:** Exhibit will increase interest in the history of the local beverage industry. *Evaluation: Guest book in both the Three Bears Tourist Center and the Ford Library Archives will determine if the visit was driven by Community Memory Project and how individuals heard about the exhibit.*
- September-October 2020: A second round of volunteer training will be offered to replace any volunteers no longer available, and to accommodate new interest.
- Ongoing: project evaluation and reporting. New York Library Association (NYLA) Annual Conference and Trade Show program proposal, November 2021: "Community Memory Project."

### Schedule Evaluation:

- The Memory Project Team will meet monthly at the library and include the Library Director, Archivist/Project Director, Producer and Josh Durso, News Director FingerLakes1.
- Ongoing program evaluation will be conducted by the Memory Project Team who will define clear roles and responsibilities, monitor project activities, oversee the schedule and budget.
- The Archivist/Project Director and the Producer will meet weekly to discuss team activities, review and confirm field interview plans, performances of interns, editing, and participant assessment forms. The weekly meetings will allow for self-correction of any problems before they escalate and interfere with the project plan for completion.

### PROJECT OUTCOMES

1. Education of community volunteers on gathering oral histories and utilizing the library's recording equipment and transcription software.
2. Dissemination of information related to the yet undocumented history of the craft beverage industry between Cayuga and Seneca Lakes.
3. Creation of programs to inspire individuals interested in pursuing a career in beverage production and/or agriculture.

### Indicators of Success

Project outcome 1:

- 80% of participants interviewing others will report that they are now confident in using recording equipment and/or recording oral histories, as a result of this project.
- 50% of trained volunteers will express interest in conducting a community oral history project utilizing skills learned.

Project outcome 2:

- 80% of beverage industry interviewees will report a greater understanding of viewpoints from other roundtable participants, as recorded by exit surveys.
- 80% of exhibition visitors will report an increase in historical understanding, as recorded by guest book comments.

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- Viewership numbers will be recorded from FingerLakes1, YouTube viewership and New York Heritage oral history visits.

Project outcome 3:

- 80% of attendees will report increased understanding of the local beverage industry, as recorded by survey results at the end of each community program.

### **Data Collection and Reporting**

Custom participant surveys will be used for each type of activity; survey responses will be gathered in Google Drive during the project period (see Supportingdoc5 “Participant Survey”). The library will also gather data for inclusion in the grant report and for use in evaluation: program attendance, items accessioned, items digitized, advertising reach and hits on all related web-based media including videos.

### **Risk Mitigation**

Support and commitment levels are strong between the Edith B. Ford Memorial Library and the project partners; however, we acknowledge the potential difficulties of completion given the diverse daily responsibilities of our small library staff and the dependence on volunteer community member participants and students. For this reason, we will create a Memory Project Team to establish and define clear roles of project involvement. The team will meet monthly to evaluate and monitor the progress of interviews and editing, budget, and review any concerns which could delay reaching our target project completion.

### **Sustained Program Benefits**

The purchase of audio and visual equipment, transcription software and storage capability will provide assets needed to establish and maintain an oral history project at the library. With the addition of volunteers and increased project exposure from FingerLakes1 and partnerships with local historical societies, the Community Memory Project will serve as a model for other organizations to collect oral histories.

The project will become the foundation to build on, when a future comprehensive history of the beverage industries of the Finger Lakes is completed. This will include building upon the Ford Library’s connection to schools through the BLAST local history project to recruit students in helping build a larger repository of agricultural stories. The Ford Library is committed to providing technical training, the physical space for interviews, equipment and transcription software on an as-needed basis. By connecting community members through interviews, talks, and forums, The Community Memory Project addresses the library’s mission: *The Edith B. Ford Memorial Library provides access to information and programs to inspire lifelong learning for the cultural, educational, and professional enrichment of our community.*

