



## Two Adirondack Hamlets in History: Keene and Keene Valley

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Comprising over six million acres in northern New York State, the Adirondack Park is the largest natural preserve in the United States outside of Alaska. Taken alone as a region, its area equals half the original thirteen English colonies. Yet at the time of colonization it was virtually unknown to Europeans, having been "discovered" only toward the end of the 18th century. In the early nineteenth century its wilderness was rivaled only by the distant Far West. But its proximity to the growing large urban centers fostered rapid exploitation such that today one finds an extraordinary combination of vast natural landscape with settlement pattern. Rarely, however, has this rich material culture been considered as the legitimate province of the many environmentalist initiatives which date to before the incorporation of the Adirondack Park in 1892. This book is devoted to the cultural legacy within the corridor of the East Branch of the Ausable River as it passes through the Keene Valley in the High Peaks region. Considered by many to be the most spectacular of Adirondack natural landscapes, the corridor is also the location of two historic hamlets, Keene and Keene Valley, which are the particular emphasis of this study. Both date from the turn of the nineteenth century and have rich social histories which may be seen as an integral part of the natural landscape. The Keene and Keene Valley Local History Project was begun in 1886 to foster the ideal of local empowerment through cultural self knowledge. Apart from the general interest inherent to this historical material, these case-studies can be seen as a working tool of relevance to other communities in the Adirondacks and elsewhere

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