As we inch our way back to normalcy, we hope you have been able to enjoy the fall season in and around the Adirondacks. While the Kelly Adirondack Center (KAC) is not back to full pre-pandemic operations, we have opened our doors, first to Union faculty and students over the summer (following, of course, College and state COVID regulations) and now to all. We held several fall events in various formats – in-person at the KAC, in-person on the Union campus, and virtual. All of these events were recorded and are available at our website. The photographic exhibit currently on display is images from the new Putnam collection. For more details visit our website or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

This past summer the KAC and Adirondack Research Library (ARL), with help from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, supported four summer research students. Their research ranged from the history of skiing in the Adirondacks, to a study of initiatives to promote diversity in the Adirondacks, to a study of tick hosts, to a continuation of a project begun last summer to develop a GIS database of dams in the Adirondacks. A recording of the students’ October presentations has been posted at the KAC website, in case you miss it.

We are currently open to the public Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and by appointment. We are available to help with specific research questions. Many of our archival materials are already digitized and available online, and we try to make additional materials available virtually as requested.

Even during the pandemic, we have continued to build our collections at the ARL. We reported in the last newsletter the acquisition of the Putnam photographs, taken in and around Johnsburg in the late nineteenth century. Elsewhere in this issue, our archivist Matt Golebiewski reports on a new collection detailing efforts to address the acid rain problem of the late twentieth century.

Doug Klein
FACULTY DIRECTOR, KELLY ADIRONDACK CENTER
ADIRONDACK MINI-TERM 2021
EXPLORING THIS PEOPLED WILDERNESS
This year’s program included nine students and eight faculty/staff (not a bad ratio!). It began with three days at the KAC getting organized and learning how to use the resources of the ARL, followed by 15 days in the Adirondacks.

Students learned about the geology of the region from Holli Frey (Geology), who also grew up in the northern Adirondacks; history from Andy Morris (History), who teaches a full course at Union on the environmental history of the Adirondacks; and rural sociology from Dave Cotter (Sociology), who arranged meetings with a variety of local government officials and NGOs. They also learned observational drawing from Loraine Cox (Visual Arts), who guided students through a variety of approaches to seeing and recording observations visually; and Adirondack architecture from Jen Grayburn (Schaffer Library). She arranged tours of Saranac Lake and Great Camp Sagamore, and was a resource for students employing digital scholarship methods.

The students themselves formed three teams of three, with each team focusing on a different Adirondack issue. One group explored alternative solutions to the perennial problem of crowding and trail over-use. Another group wanted to see how residents (and visitors) dealt with the Adirondack Park Agency and the “forever wild” clause of the New York State Constitution, in this, the APA’s 50th year of existence. The last group was interested in the Adirondack housing crisis, exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. Outsiders and new-comers have bid up the cost of housing – both rents and purchase prices, making it un-affordable for long-time residents, and would-be job-seekers in the Adirondacks. These issues gave us all lots to talk about as we met with different people and groups.

Of course, a trip to the Adirondacks would not be complete without enjoying that which makes the Adirondacks famous – the outdoors. We camped at Heart Lake for four nights, and I am very proud that all of the students succeeded in climbing Algonquin, the second-highest peak in the Adirondacks. For some it was their first high peak. For one, it was the 44th. We canoed five miles; we participated in trail maintenance; we visited John Brown’s farm, the 6 Nations Iroquois Culture Center and the Adirondack Experience Museum. I think it is safe to say that as soon as it was over, everyone was ready to do it again.
The Adirondack Research Library is happy to announce that historical acid rain files, graciously donated by the Adirondack Council, are now available for use.

The Adirondacks suffered the worst damage from acid rain in the U.S. The pollutants that cause it are carried on the wind from industrial plants in the Midwest and deposited into the forever-wild lands and waters of the Adirondack Park. Not only does acid rain effect the natural world, but it is damaging to human health as well.

The files were created by the former deputy director and counsel to the Adirondack Council, Bernard Melewski, and document the Adirondack Council’s public outreach and legislative efforts to stop acid rain in the Adirondacks.

The Council’s actions on combating acid rain go back as far as 1978. In 1990, the Council co-directed and helped fund a national clean air advocacy meeting in Washington, D.C. This resulted in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Within two years, a pollution trading scheme initiated by the EPA misled the public that it would end acidity in Adirondack lakes and streams. It didn’t work and further action was still needed.

The files show the Council’s response in the late 1990s and early 2000s to revise previous legislation for better environmental protection. Specifically, to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and mercury from polluting industrial plants. Their efforts culminated in testimonies before the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Clean Air, Wetlands, Private Property and Nuclear Safety. The Adirondack Council urged the government to finish the job Congress started in 1990. Through public outreach, research, legislative wrangling and education, it achieved major successes in 2002 and 2003 with passage of the Clean Power Act and Clean Skies Initiative.

Files include background information on the effects of acid rain on the Adirondack Park, reports containing environmental data, senate hearings and transcripts, public events with celebrities of the day, and other records.

Acid rain files are one series within the larger collection of Adirondack Council Records (ARL-043). A finding aid to the collection is available here.

For updates on acid rain and other issues, please visit the Adirondack Council website.

Matthew Golebiewski
ADORONDACK RESEARCH LIBRARY PROJECT ARCHIVIST