

For immediate release

What: Holyoke Remembered Oral History Program Showcase

Date: May 16, 2015, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Where: Holyoke Public Library Community Room, 250 Chestnut Street, Holyoke

Cost: Free and open to the public

Contact: Eileen Crosby 413-420-8017

Eileen Crosby, Archivist at the Holyoke History Room, has announced the completion of the first year of the Holyoke Remembered Oral History Program. This multi-year project is aimed at capturing audio conversations with a broad spectrum of people who have long experience living or working in Holyoke. The project began in 2014 with a grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, which provided for recording equipment, training, and full transcriptions of interviews.

A preview of the first set of interviews will be shown at the Holyoke Public Library Community Room on Saturday, May 16 from 10:30 AM – 1:00 PM. Anyone is welcome to drop in during that time to see the 20-minute preview and to talk with Archivist about the project. Some interviewees and project volunteers will also be on hand to share their experiences. Both Crosby and volunteer interviewers will also be able to talk with anyone who might want to be interviewed or who has a relative or friend who may be interested in that. "Those interviewed during the first year shared some incredibly rich and moving stories," Crosby reports. Portions of these will be shared at the May 16 event.

The project was inspired by the reminiscences that are shared in the History Room when a patron encounters a reminder of the past. While the outline of Holyoke's history is known, and strong collective memories exist of certain events and landmarks, vivid recollections of day-to-day life in Holyoke are in danger of being lost forever. As a social and cultural historian, Crosby is particularly eager to capture the experiences of a wide variety of people, including those who might not think their stories have particular importance: "The project embraces the idea that the history of a place is made up of many unique experiences. Our only criteria are that individuals be willing to talk about their personal and family experiences growing up, living, or working in the city. We're interested, as well, in how those experiences may have been shaped by a family's immigrant roots. Collectively, we think these stories will be an important source for the study of Holyoke's history." This phase of the project is focused on capturing life stories and family history. In future years, interviews may concentrate on particular themes. All interviews will be preserved at the History Room.

Anyone interested in the project who cannot drop in on May 16 is welcome to contact Crosby at the History Room: 413.420.8107.