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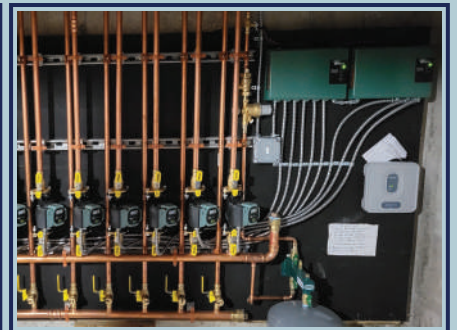
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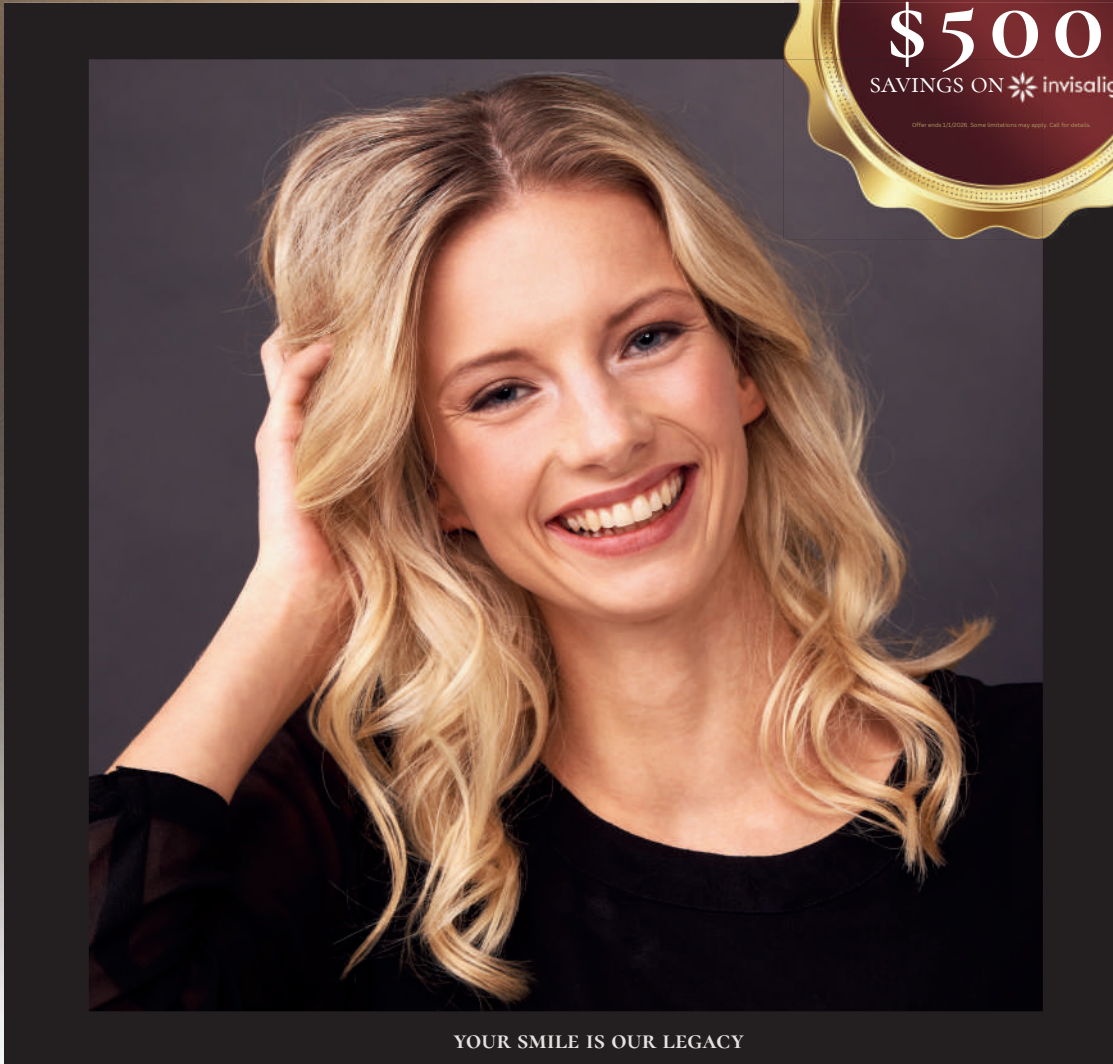
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Storytelling as a destination

Stories have the power to transport us, to inspire us, to teach us, to make us feel seen.

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As a lifelong fiction reader, I love nothing more than traveling to different places and times, all within the pages of a book, all without ever getting up off the couch. When I became a journalist, I realized that nonfiction carries this same power, albeit in a different manner.

Within these pages, you'll find a variety of destinations. It's almost like "choose your own adventure." Where do you want

to travel first?

Step into The Eleventh Letter Writing Gallery, where text art adorns the walls and creativity flows freely in writing workshops and other literary activities. Here, stories abound. You'll meet owner Jocelyn Winn, whose writing journey inspired her to shepherd others along their paths.

Melodies and lyrics tell stories, too. Discover the brand new record store attached to Pembroke City Limits in downtown Suncook Village, where a vinyl revival is taking shape. You'll find that the store complements the live music bar, with both establishments owned by locals Rob Azevedo and Eric Klesper.

Voyage to 20th-century France with author Laura Knoy, whose debut novel, "The Shopkeeper of Alsace," illuminates one woman's determination to keep her family safe from the dangers of World War II. Knoy shares more about her writing process and the real-life inspirations behind her historical fiction tale.

Or, explore our own internal storytelling with The Monitor Weekly, our new podcast. Hosted by news editor Rebeca Pereira and reporter Alexander Rapp, each episode brings to life our reporting projects, showcases journalist voices and takes listeners inside our process. You'll relish the multitude of stories spotlighted and find yourself hungry for more.

No passport or suitcases necessary. Just yourself and your curiosity. Enjoy our stories, wherever they take you.

Happy reading,

Rachel Wachman

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Fast faves



Ben Normandeau, owner of 603 Bar-B-Q, has lived in Concord all his life. The 26-year-old, who opened his eatery around two-and-a-half years ago, knows the city like the back of his hand. Still, he enjoys discovering new additions to the scene. "What I like most about Concord is the small-town feel with big city characteristics," Normandeau said. "It feels like everyone knows each other but has also become a spot more and more people are moving to, which has really grown the city." Discover some of Normandeau's favorite places.



Favorite weekend destination in the area?

My favorite weekend destination in the area is anywhere in the Lakes Region! I love the lakes, mountains and nature the Lakes Region has to offer.



What's your favorite event in Concord?

My favorite Concord event is the classic Market Days. Growing up here and loving food, this has always been a staple for me. Now that I own a business, it's really nice to see how much the downtown businesses benefit from this event.



What's a local dish you haven't been able to get out of your mind?



A restaurant dish I can't get out of my mind is Sour Joe's Eagle Square pizza. I eat pizza weekly, and often Sour Joe's is the spot. The hot honey with crispy pepperonis and ricotta is to die for.



Favorite place to spend time in/around Concord?

I don't have a lot of spare time, being in the restaurant industry, but my go-to place to relax is Beaver Meadow Golf Course! It is a beautifully kept course right down the road from me. It's also supercool how old the course is.

Favorite place to hang out with friends?

My favorite place to hang out with friends is either the golf course or somewhere watching sports games.

What's your favorite new local discovery?

A new place I have recently discovered is Revival Kitchen in Concord. Anything on that menu is amazing!

Favorite store to shop at?

My go-to store is Viking House downtown! The imported candy makes for great presents as well as delicious snacks. The chocolate-covered bugles are my favorite!

DON'T MISS IT



Art & Bloom creates a floral arrangement based on a work of art.

Courtesy

Opportunities Blossom

As the darkest and coldest days of the year are upon us, it's easy to want to stay home and hibernate. But the Concord area has a lot of fun in store this winter. Here are four exciting upcoming events to add to your calendars.

Yule Celebration: Sunday, Dec. 21, 7 p.m. Looking for both a secular and historically-rooted way of ringing in the season? Visit Concord's Yule Celebration at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Concord. The solstice is a reminder that, with winter's shortest and darkest days behind us, warmth, life and light are yet to come. The evening features music, candles, singing and the Stag Dance.

Art & Bloom: Thursday, Jan. 22 – Saturday, Jan. 24. Hosted by the Concord Garden Club, the 23rd annual Art &

Bloom will return to Kimball Jenkins. The installation features floral arrangements created by community members and professional designers, intended to complement the artwork in Kimball Jenkins' winter exhibition.

Black Ice Pond Hockey Championship and Festival: Friday, Jan. 23 – Sunday, Jan. 25. A staple of winter in Concord, the 1883 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championship will take over White Park for the 15th year since its inception. Spanning eight rinks, three days and eight divisions, the tournament includes over 60 teams and 420 hockey players. The weekend will feature family-friendly fun with bonfires, a rock climbing wall, fireworks, live entertainment, food trucks, games and ice sculptures and more.

Winter Fest: Saturday, Jan. 24. The Concord Winter Fest, hosted by The Hotel Concord and Intown Concord, returns downtown for its eighth year with an ice-carving competition featuring renowned sculptors. Food trucks will line Main Street, providing a swath of tasty flavors to warm you up throughout the chilly day. Winter Fest is an outdoor event, so be prepared to dress for the weather. Arts Alley will host an Ice Bar with more details to come soon.

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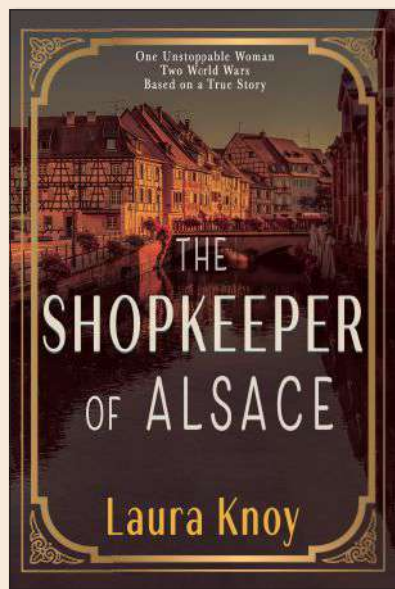
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Q&A

We sit down with author **Laura Knoy** to hear about her debut novel 'The Shopkeeper of Alsace'



A journey into history

Award-winning journalist Laura Knoy just released her first novel, “The Shopkeeper of Alsace,” which follows a woman named Sarah who escapes from Poland during World War I.

Sarah settles in the Alsace region of France, opens a clothing store and starts a family, but she never forgets the lessons she learned in the war. As Nazism rises in the 1930s with another war looming, Sarah prepares to do whatever she needs to in order to keep her loved ones safe.

As she unrolls her fiction debut, Knoy shared parts of her writing journey with Around Concord Magazine.

Around Concord: What inspired you to branch into historical fiction?

Laura Knoy: I’ve always loved history. So, for me, there was no question about what type of novel I’d write. It didn’t even occur to me to write a contemporary novel. Perhaps that’s because for

“This year, 2025, marked eighty years since the war ended. And yet, I think many of us are still stunned by the scope of it, by both the savagery and bravery of those who experienced the war. I think in a way, we’re still digesting it.”

decades as a journalist, I was reflecting and reporting on current events. Now, I want to explore the past through storytelling about the people who came before us. We can learn so much from them.

AC: What drew you to this particular time period? Your story spans from 1915 to 1945.

LK: I admit, it’s ambitious! But I’ve always been fascinated by it. While WWII is often explored in American historical fiction, WWI and the inter-war period get much less attention. And yet, those early years of the 20th century were so dramatic and difficult. The Great War, which we now call WWI; a global pandemic, known as “The Spanish Flu”; the Great Depression; the rise of communism and fascism. In just four decades, people experienced so much change and hardship.

And then, there’s WWII. This year, 2025, marked eighty years since the war ended. And yet, I think many of us are still stunned by the scope of it, by both the savagery and bravery of those who experienced the war. I think in a way, we’re still digesting it. I know I am. Also, many people are still personally connected to the WWII era. My parents were children during WWII. My father-in-law participated in the D-Day invasion. And my friend Annette Seibert, at age eight, had to flee with her family as the Nazis crossed the Rhine River into her home province of Alsace, France. Annette’s mother, Sarah, was a member of that unfortunate generation whose lives were affected by both global conflicts. She was a teenage girl in WWI and a forty-something businesswoman, mom, wife, and devoted daughter and sister during WWII. Sarah is the heroine of my book. She is “The Shopkeeper of Alsace.”

AC: How did you come up with the idea for “The Shopkeeper of Alsace?”

LK: The idea of a novel came to me slowly, over the course of my 35-year





Brigitte Aumont / Courtesy

Sarah Seibert and her husband Max Seibert pose for a photo.

friendship with Annette. After she died in 2015, I regretted not probing more, asking more about her own wartime girlhood and her family's experience. But then in 2018, Annette's daughter, Brigitte, told me there were cassette tapes on which Annette and her siblings had recorded their memories. Also, she connected me with Annette's brother, her Uncle Jacques, who, at age 95, still remembered everything. Between my interview with Jacques and the cassettes, a novel was born.

AC: Tell us about your writing journey.

LK: "Journey" is the correct word! It took me seven years, from when I interviewed Jacques in November 2018, to where I am today, a traditionally published author in November 2025.

Part of the reason it took so long is that I was learning as I was writing. I took whatever free or low-cost seminars I could find. I went to conferences, read blogs and articles about fiction writing, talked with established authors, and absorbed everything I could. I submitted my work for conference critique sessions. I showed it to a wide array of people I respect. I don't have an MFA. I come from a journalism background, which was helpful, but I still had a lot to learn.

Another reason it took so long: I had a whole life, outside of this project! Over those seven years, I

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A canal in Colmar in the province of Alsace, France.

Brigitte Aumont / Courtesy

wasn't sitting at my desk, writing 8 hours a day. For the first 3 years, I was still the host of The Exchange on NHPR, including during the pandemic and the 2020 presidential primary and general elections. It was quite demanding. This book is definitely not my "pandemic project." I was working like crazy during that time. After I left NHPR mid-2021, I launched a consulting business to help pay the bills. I am still working as a podcaster/moderator/narrator, and I'm the director of com-

munity engagement for the Rudman Center at UNH-Franklin Pierce School of Law.

And then there's the personal stuff: over those seven years, we launched one son off to college, we had an exchange student living with us, my mother died, we launched another son from the nest, we moved my father into a nursing home, one son came back to live with us, and my husband had major surgery. Sometimes when I tell people it took me seven years, I can

see them thinking, “Wow! That’s an awfully long time...” But I didn’t have the luxury of writing full-time, or even reliably part-time. Far from it.

AC: What were some of your biggest joys and challenges throughout the writing process?

LK: I’m glad you asked about joys first, because there have been so many. One has been the discovery of an incredibly supportive and dynamic writing community here in New Hampshire. Everyone’s been so kind and helpful, and there’s so much talent here.

Another joy was simply exploring the story itself. I had a decent understanding of the early 20th century before I began writing. I knew about the massive political, economic, and social forces that swept Europe at that time. But for the novel, I did deep research, in English and in French. I absorbed giant non-fiction history books. I conducted interviews with leading scholars. I visited museums. I read countless articles, watched videos, especially interviews with people who’d lived in the times I was writing about. I made several trips to the regions featured in the novel and learned more each time. I loved researching this story.

I won’t sugar-coat the challenges. I had no idea, going into this, how ridiculously hard it is to be published. But at some level, perhaps being published should be hard. A good novel should have multiple sets of critical eyes on it. Everyone needs an edit, I always said in my journalism career.

I don’t even know how many people have examined my manuscript over the years. I lost count. Everyone’s feedback has been extremely valuable. That doesn’t mean that every time my manuscript was criticized or rejected, I celebrated and said, “Great! More negative feedback!” The rejections were quite depressing. Over the years, I sent out about 50 submissions to literary agents and acquisitions editors at publishing houses. I probably met with another five or ten agents and editors at conferences I attended.

Altogether, I guess I’ve had around 60 rejections. But the first 45 rejections I deserved! The novel was not ready, and it took all those rejections to make me realize that, and that I had to keep working on it. So, at some level, I am grateful to those who rejected me. Even though it was awful at the time.

As my manuscript improved, and I continued to reach out to agents and editors, I began to receive more positive comments, and more replies of “maybe” instead of flat-out “no.” I also noticed that small, independent publishers were the most likely to be seeking WWI-WWII stories.

So, about a year ago, I started submitting exclusively to them. It paid off. I received lots of interest from these companies, and came close with several, including two that were still considering my manuscript when I signed on with my current publisher, Bedazzled Ink of Northern California.

AC: How do you best overcome writer’s block?



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LK: I don't struggle with writer's block because I allow myself to write badly, and then I delete it or revise it later. One of the best pieces of advice I ever heard came from a seminar I attended long ago, while I was still at NPR in D.C. The instructor said, "Feel free to write garbage and fix it later."

Just keep your fingers moving across the keyboard. Even if it's "The Quick Brown Fox Jumped Over the Lazy Dog."

AC: What do you hope readers will take away from your novel?

LK: First, I hope they cherish and admire Sarah as much as I do. She's not the type of heroine you often encounter in WWII novels. She's not a spy, a code-breaker, a resistance fighter, or a lady-pilot. Don't get me wrong, I love these heroines. But Sarah appeals to me because she's none of those. She's a middle-aged mom, businesswoman, wife, devoted sister, and daughter. She's flawed, to


be sure — impatient, bossy, sometimes unkind. But she has a huge heart, a gift of sharp intuition, and she never lets the powers-that-be frighten her into submission. Best of all, I've drawn her character based very much on the real person she was. It's so inspiring.

Second, I hope readers will fall in love with Alsace. It's such a fascinating region. Alsace changed political hands many times in the not-too-distant past. Between 1870 to 1945, the province was French, German, French, German, and French again. Plus, it's just beautiful there — the rolling hills covered with vineyards, the forests of the Vosges Mountains, the tiny medieval villages, the wine and food. Strasbourg, where I was an exchange student, is a magnificent city.

Third, this project reaffirmed something I already knew: words matter. They matter a lot.

As a lifelong journalist, I've always paid particular attention to how people use words and their impact. Reading the French press during the interwar era, you can see the intolerance rising against Jews and foreigners in France. You can see the blame game, for all the political and economic upheaval that the country is going through. You can see the increasing acceptance of words that dehumanize people, calling them bugs, dogs, or leeches. Then, once certain people are no longer defined as fully human, societies feel they have permission to do whatever they want with them.

About the author: *Laura Knoy, who grew up in Massachusetts before moving to Keene as a teenager, spent 25 years hosting "The Exchange," a public radio program she founded. Now a resident of Concord, Knoy works as a narrator, podcaster and public speaker. She previously made her career in newscasting, hosting and reporting for NPR. In her free time, Knoy enjoys reading and getting outside as much as she can.*



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Intro to 'The Shopkeeper'

The following is the prologue of Laura Knoy's debut novel, "The Shopkeeper of Alsace."

Alsace, France. May 1940

In the gray stillness of early morning, I padded into my sons' bedroom. I brushed each boy's cheek with a kiss, their faces still smooth but already hinting at the men they would soon become. At my touch, both mumbled something like "goodbye," before rolling back into the profound slumber of adolescence. I then slid down the hallway to my eight-year-old daughter's room, and gazed at her from the doorway, memorizing how her tangle of auburn curls fell over her face. I didn't risk entering; she might startle and wake, beg me not to leave, ask me questions I couldn't answer. Guilt jabbed a finger into my ribcage. What kind of a mother are you, Sarah? it asked. Perhaps the worst kind, I answered. I closed my daughter's door, put on my shoes, picked up my suitcase, and left.

Then I plunged into a war. Again.

I was a teenager when the Great War erupted, a conflict that would later be named "World War One." Poland, where I was born, was a battleground, a long-disputed territory coveted by all the combatants. Polish Jews like us were pawns, sometimes courted for political and material support, other times scapegoated and targeted as traitors. At age fourteen, I learned that war isn't just what happens at the battlefield. Behind the lines, it's poverty and hunger. It's frantically gathering your belongings and fleeing when the night is its blackest. It's soldiers who take what they want. Your food. Your business. Your home. Your body.

But as traumatic as my girlhood was, it also prepared me for right

now. And this time, I was no untested teenager. I was a mother, a wife, and a successful businesswoman with everything I loved and

had built at stake. I was ready. Poland taught me how to survive: to plan, to move, to hide, to lie. I could do it again.

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ON THE RECORD

STORY, Page 26



Pembroke City Limits Records co-owner Eric Klesper walks through the storefront, fitting in with The Beatles below him.

Alexander Rapp

Taking a spin around a Suncook Village addition



By **ALEXANDER RAPP**

Suncook Village has been getting louder lately — first with strumming guitars and crooning voices at Pembroke City Limits, and now with the crackle of needle-on-vinyl next door.

What began as a forgotten floor-to-ceiling maze of old records transformed into a shop determined to give the village its long-missing soundtrack.

Two summers ago when Rob Azevedo and Eric Klesper opened the live music bar Pembroke City Limits in a former furniture store in downtown Suncook, they hoped their new spot would be met with excitement.

As the bar took off, with different local acts taking the stage on a regular basis, the co-owners be-

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Alexander Rapp

The shelves are filled with records and CDs, as the store's grand opening approaches.

gan brainstorming how they could continue to grow the sense of community and love of music fostered within their walls.

Their answer? Pembroke City Limits Records and Books.

The storefront holds a lot of history. Neighboring the bar, the space had once been a pizza shop before transitioning to Bobby Dee's Record and Audio Repair. It remained Bobby Dee's for nearly two decades until it became Village Music, which lasted through the pandemic.

Village Music, filled to the brim with tens of thousands of records, CDs, DVDs, cassettes and books, was rarely open, Azevedo said. He and Klesper knew the owner was struggling to keep up with the business. The Pembroke City Limits owners saw potential. They connected with the owner and began planting the seeds of their idea.

When the pair bought the space in July of this year, the insides were so stuffed with music-related items that they didn't know there was a base-

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ment because the door was blocked. They couldn't even see the thermostat.

"Everything was to the ceiling," Azevedo said.

What the pair inherited when they bought Village Records wasn't exactly a record shop. It was more like a

storage unit with a sign. But they believed they could turn it into the perfect downtown addition, one that would serve as a great complement to their bar.

An homage to the store's history, an old "Pizza: Free Delivery" sign still hangs in the back, although Klesper and

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Azevedo still haven't agreed on whether to keep it up or not.

"Eventually, he told us he was ready to go," Azevedo said of the Village Music owner. "He wasn't going to leave with the inventory. There was no place for him to go. So we just bought it all."

That inventory turned out to mean around 40,000 albums, thousands of DVDs and a deep archive of books. Over the past few months, the two have hauled thousands of items to the basement, sorted through decades of music, repainted walls and started shaping the store into a cozy, browsable space where customers don't pop in for five minutes — they stay.

The partners have poured thought into every decision they've made in the new store, from dollar bins, \$5 bins and curated selections of new arrivals to copies of new releases from local musicians. A jazz corner. Rock and soul on the front wall. Punk, new wave, hip-hop, metal, and modern country coming soon. Books of all kinds in the back.

When they opened the bar, the focus was on the music. Azevedo had hosted a radio show on WKXL, "Granite State of Mind," for over a decade; after moving to Pembroke, he wanted to tap into the live music scene.

Azevedo began by hosting local musicians in his barn. The crowds at these casual concerts slowly grew in number, indicating a desire for more. As his friend, Klesper witnessed the success. Together, they came up with the idea of making live, local music the focal point of a new bar in town.

Expanding the business a year later made sense. It was a no-brainer to buy the record store next door and make it their own. What better than something that can feature music in a different way, with the same spirit and vibe? Vinyl plays a huge role in that.

"It never really truly went away, like people that collected and have a home stereo with turntable," Klesper said. "As every other medium started

to kind of peter out, vinyl started increasing in sales, and it's really not that recent of a thing."

When it comes to music taste, Azevedo leans Americana, whereas Klesper leans punk and new wave. The overlap works.

When they opened Pembroke City Limits, Klesper joined as a business partner because of his restaurant experience, but Azevedo made the

place his own. Now, in a way, they're swapping. Klesper will bring his own vision to the record store and curate the decor and the shelves.

"We're a dream team," Azevedo said. "He lets me run the bar. I let him run this. We support each other's vision."

They want the walls covered with curated art — concert posters, local show flyers, classic album art — but

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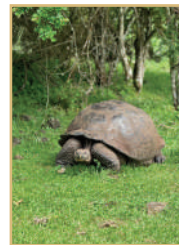
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not just as filler.

“We want it to reflect the store’s personality, our personalities and the personality of the village,” Azevedo said.

And they want music playing continuously — from the stacks, not Spotify. Klesper has a small boombox he’s been using exactly for this purpose.

“Not streaming. We’re not going to be streaming any music,” he said.

He had a point. Why stream when there are hundreds of thousands of songs on the shelves?

Beyond the LPs, the store holds a surprisingly rich cache of items: classic literature, jazz biographies, New Journalism, gonzo writers, rock history and more.

The vinyl and physical media revival is real. In record stores across the country, Gen Z and millennials browse the racks as eagerly as Gen X collectors. Klesper sees this play out with his son, despite them sharing a Spotify family plan.

“He’ll get CDs, or go through my



Rob Azevedo walks amongst the records at the new site.

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CDs, and he bought an old MP3 player, and he'll rip them to the MP3 player," Klesper said.

Pembroke City Limits Records and Books opened in a soft-launch phase in November, with a full opening anticipated by the end of the year, if all goes according to plan. The owners look forward to hosting events, such as local musicians doing record and book signings.

Their endeavor fits into a bigger vision of a revitalized Suncook Village, which is in the process of becoming its own thriving downtown in the greater Concord area.

"We signed a long-term contract," Azevedo said. "We're here not only for the growth of the record store and our own bar, but also for the whole village."

Soon, customers will be able to walk in, flip through stacks that smell like the 1970s, hear a record spinning on the player behind the counter and feel the revival taking shape.



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Jocelyn Winn opened
**The Eleventh Letter
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to highlight text art
and bring a love
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Kismet & Creativity

STORY, Page 34



KISMET:
Defining Patterns

Jocelynn Winn examines her 'Kismet' exhibition at The Eleventh Letter Writing Gallery in downtown Concord.



Rachel Wachman

The Artist-in-Residence room at The Eleventh Letter Writing Gallery features erasure art by Laci Mosier.

A community for words

By **RACHEL WACHMAN**

Jocelyn Winn believes in kismet — fate, destiny, inevitability.

She was meant to be a writer, that much is certain. Her words adorn the walls of The Writing Gallery, newly

opened in downtown Concord.

Winn's November exhibit, aptly titled "Kismet" after the same force of the universe Winn embraces, combined photography with short-form essays hanging side-by-side.

"There's a phrase that I love, which is what you are seeking is also seeking you," she said.

A freelance editor and nonfiction writer, Winn has built a life out of her love of words.

After moving to Concord from Dover in 2013, she founded The Eleventh Letter, a freelance business providing writing and editorial services. She works with people on their manuscripts and also serves as a writing coach.

The office she initially rented on Park Street overlooked Main Street, where she watched businesses move in and out over several years. It had been her long-held dream to open a brick-and-mortar space. Earlier this year, Winn, an avid practitioner of manifestation, sent a request to the universe: a Main Street storefront that would become hers.

One day over the summer, mere months after her "shot in the dark" manifestation, a vacancy popped up next to Buba Kitchen.

"I always knew it would be called The Writing Gallery," said Winn, who signed a lease in August and officially opened her doors in mid-October.

The gallery, which hosts visual exhibitions, writing workshops and other events such as bookmaking classes and songwriting sessions,

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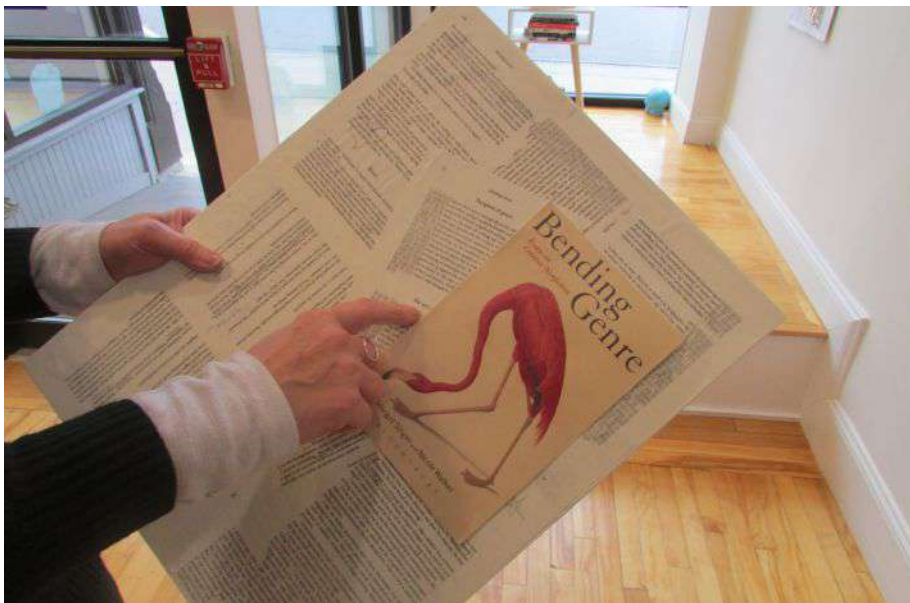
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Rachel Wachman

Jocelynn Winn points out a text art component of her 'Kismet' exhibition at The Eleventh Letter Writing Gallery in downtown Concord.

bridges the gap between writing and art, especially for people like Winn, who doesn't subscribe to any distinction between the two.

"I feel like we're all artists," she said. "And so this is sort of a play on

that also. So everything here is art, but it has to have a written word component, or in the future, it could be spoken word."

She wanted to foster a communal place to build on the creative momen-

tum she's been seeing around her, from the author series at the Capitol Center for the Arts to literary events at Gibson's Bookstore and the New Hampshire Book Festival, where Winn has moderated panels.

"I was finding pockets of writers, but we sort of hide in the shadows," she said.

After joining a local group called Shut Up And Write, Winn realized that bringing writers together felt more vital than ever, not just for her own creativity but for solidarity when creativity feels hard.

"Community is really important for me and for this gallery," she said. "Not everyone will self-define as an artist or writer, but I want them to know that they are creative and that the arts, specifically writing, is a great way to express yourself and sift through things."

Winn, a Massachusetts native, recalls writing Garfield stories in third grade, keeping her notebook and pen close throughout her childhood. It was never a question that words were her calling. But writing hadn't felt like a career option when she started out.

Following graduation from Emerson College, where Winn studied speech/communications, she began forging a career in the publishing and editing spheres, working for a textbook publisher, an art magazine, the American Meteorological Society and an educational publishing firm.

The connections she made in her various workplaces fed into her freelancing as she moved from the Boston area to Dover and then, ultimately, to Concord.

At age 42, she returned to school to pursue a Master's in Fine Arts in Writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts.

"I really started earnestly calling myself a writer, unabashedly, like not secret anymore," said Winn, whose work has appeared in literary magazines such as "Eratio" and "The Waterwheel Review." She also serves as the nonfiction editor at "The Maine Review" and has been nominated for

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Jocelyn Winn stands next to a collage of photography featuring her lucky number, 11.
 Rachel Wachman

a Pushcart Prize.

Winn feels her path has taken her exactly where it's meant to. And she, in turn, has embraced that journey and all its twists along the way.

When she was 22, the number 11 began following her, appearing on clocks, license plates and street

signs wherever she looked.

"I find it a nod from the universe to say that, 'Either pay attention to what's going on, it's important, or you're at the right time, or you're at the wrong time,'" she said.

"K" for "kismet" is the eleventh letter of the alpha-



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Rachel Wachman

The Eleventh Letter Writing Gallery has a library room.

bet, so when it came time to name her business, she combined multiple elements of her world. These threads appear in her writing as well, with different components of her first exhibition, “Kismet,” named “Coincidence,” “Serendipity,” “Synchronicity,”

“Magic,” “Wonder,” “Manifest,” “Chance,” “Energy,” “Intuition,” “Uncanny” and, of course, “Kismet.”

A self-described “observationist,” Winn derives inspiration from the world around her.

“Just in my daily life, I really like

taking the ordinary and elevating it to universal meaning through metaphor, or just that idea that we all are connected, we all have the same type of ideas or experiences,” Winn said. “I am super motivated by science and numbers, I think, because I don’t understand it.”

Genre, to Winn, does not have to be limiting. She gravitates towards nonfiction but dabbles in fiction and, on occasion, poetry. She writes essays and short stories that draw from her musings about the world around her — a house she once walked past, her favorite number (it’s 11!) or the scientific evidence on the impact of prayer. Recently, she’d been channeling her energy into a manuscript whose essay components oscillate between fiction and nonfiction.

As her exhibit demonstrates, she finds that one form of creative expression fuels another. Writing will always be her primary art, but photography and painting provide an outlet that makes crafting stories through words feel more organic.

She intends to rotate exhibits on a monthly basis and spotlight a broad array of local creatives. The “Artist in Residence” room, designed for longer-term exhibitions, currently displays the work of Laci Mosier, an artist, poet and creative director based in Brooklyn. Mossier’s exhibit, entitled “A Slice of the Nice Life,” brings to life erasure poetry through colorful modern collages.

As the gallery takes off, Winn hopes it will become “a hub of writers,” with author readings and a whole host of literary events geared toward all levels.

“My dream is that this would be a staple of the Concord community for a long time, and then from there, I would love to run writing retreats,” she said. “I would love to have a small press. I would love to have a literary magazine — those types of things, all in the service of what people want.”

Learn more about Winn, her work and The Writing Gallery at theeleventhletter.com.



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Don't forget to check out all the local institutions that also took home second- and third-place honors this year. You can find them at aroundconcord.com.

THE SCENE



Artist Nick Paradis in front of the mural he finished along Theatre Street in downtown Concord.

Community spirit



ABOVE: Elyse McKay holds her dog, Paya, during the 11th Annual Walk a Mile in Their Shoes event to draw awareness to domestic violence. TOP LEFT: Buba Kitchen owner Trumin Nguyen donated meals to those who weren't receiving benefits during the government shutdown. BOTTOM LEFT: Concord Public Properties Supervisor Jaime Bardwell attaches the front curtain to the voting booth ahead of the November election.



Rebeca Pereira and Alexander Rapp are the hosts of Monitor Weekly.

Rachel Wachman

Listen in each week

By **ALEXANDER RAPP**
and **REBECA PEREIRA**

The Monitor Weekly is, as you may have guessed, exactly what it sounds like — no pun intended!

Each week, we, the podcast's hosts, recruit reporters from our newsroom to discuss one of their recent stories and the reporting process behind that headline. We offer behind-the-scenes, on-the-ground insights into what we consider to be some of the biggest stories in the capital region, from cold cases to local elections.

The project originated from a seedling of shared interest: Alex was The New Hampshire's digital editor and audiovisual director at UNH and is a frequent listener of podcasts during his commute, and Rebeca was the news editor at her college radio station and a podcast editor in graduate school.

We believe in the power of audio to tell compelling human stories, the bedrock of the Monitor's journalism. Our approach to local news is people-centered and narrative-based. We lead with community members' voices and stories, and we take an interest in the minutiae and



**MONITOR
WEEKLY**

personal histories that make them three-dimensional. Embarking on an audio reporting project felt like a natural extension of the work we were already doing.

It also presented an opportunity to reach a broader audience and for our existing audience to gain more access our newsroom. We are both early-career journalists in our 20s — we wouldn't exactly go out of our way to read town meeting coverage if we weren't responsible for reporting it. We hope the podcast will provide younger news consumers like us with a meaningful doorway into their own communities, spurring an interest in civic engagement and staying informed.

Our established readers know that, apart from our personalized newsletters and the individual flair of each reporter's writing, there aren't many opportunities to glean who we are as people or to understand our reporting procedures.

We are not a disembodied, voice-of-God authority, unknowable and unquestionable in our ways. We hit roadblocks in our reporting and have to troubleshoot dead ends. We tell stories with every investigative tool

available to us, and even then, a story is a moving target that may abruptly change after publication. We hope the podcast will be a peek behind the veil for those readers — new and old — who crave knowing us better.

So far, we've been successful in accomplishing just that.

First, we invited community editor Rachel Wachman to join us behind the microphones and discuss her coverage of two devastating housefires in Franklin and Epsom that shared some uncanny similarities. Rachel walked us through her reporting process, from finding one family's online fundraising campaign to following both families as they began to rebuild their lives from scratch. Then, we discussed practical tips for fire prevention based on Canterbury Fire and Rescue Lieutenant Herb Batchelder's decades of experience.

For our second episode, State House reporter Charlotte Matherly joined us to talk about New Hampshire's therapeutic cannabis program, which provides an alternative to pharmaceuticals for patients suffering from chronic pain, although it can come at an onerous cost. To better understand what one of Charlotte's sources called state leaders' "in-grained resistance to cannabis," we explored a timeline of cannabis legislation in New Hampshire, starting with the inception of the therapeutic cannabis program and ending with former Gov. Chris Sununu's concession that recreational cannabis is "inevitable."

Charlotte returned to the podcast, this time accompanied by city reporter Catherine McLaughlin, for episode three. Election season was in full swing, and we had just launched our Concord Votes landing page, an encyclopedia of every candidate running for office in Concord and the major issues on voters' minds. Catherine and Charlotte walked us through the ballot questions and contested races, which we later revisited in a post-election episode.

Our fourth episode featured a new

guest: investigative reporter Sruthi Gopalakrishnan. Together, we recapped two of her stories related to cemeteries: One was a heartwarming picture of volunteers undertaking a cemetery clean-up ahead of Veterans Day, while the other was a heartwrenching account of families who've had their mourning hastened by law enforcement at a Bow cemetery. With a handful of episodes under our belts, we also took the opportunity to give a high-level overview of how our newsroom functions, explaining our beat structure and respective roles.

We brought back our inaugural guest, Rachel, for our fifth episode, entitled "When the trail of evidence goes cold." This is exactly what happened in the case of Betty Place, a mother in Warner who disappeared without a trace one morning in June of 1978. For decades, her children have searched for answers. The addition of two new investigators to the New

Hampshire Department of Justice's Cold Case Unit has inspired renewed hope for people who have lost family members or friends, never received answers in their deaths or disappearances.

Following the election, we reconvened our conversation with Charlotte and Catherine to recap our local election, where incumbents ruled the day despite impressive performances by some first-time challengers. Concord voters indicated a receptiveness to social districts and reaffirmed their established opinion on Keno, continuing to keep the game of chance out of the capital city.

If these discussions intrigue you, if they prompt you to think more deeply about these stories or to wonder about how we approached them, we encourage you to listen to our podcast.

We — Alex, Rebeca and the entire Monitor staff — thank you for your support.

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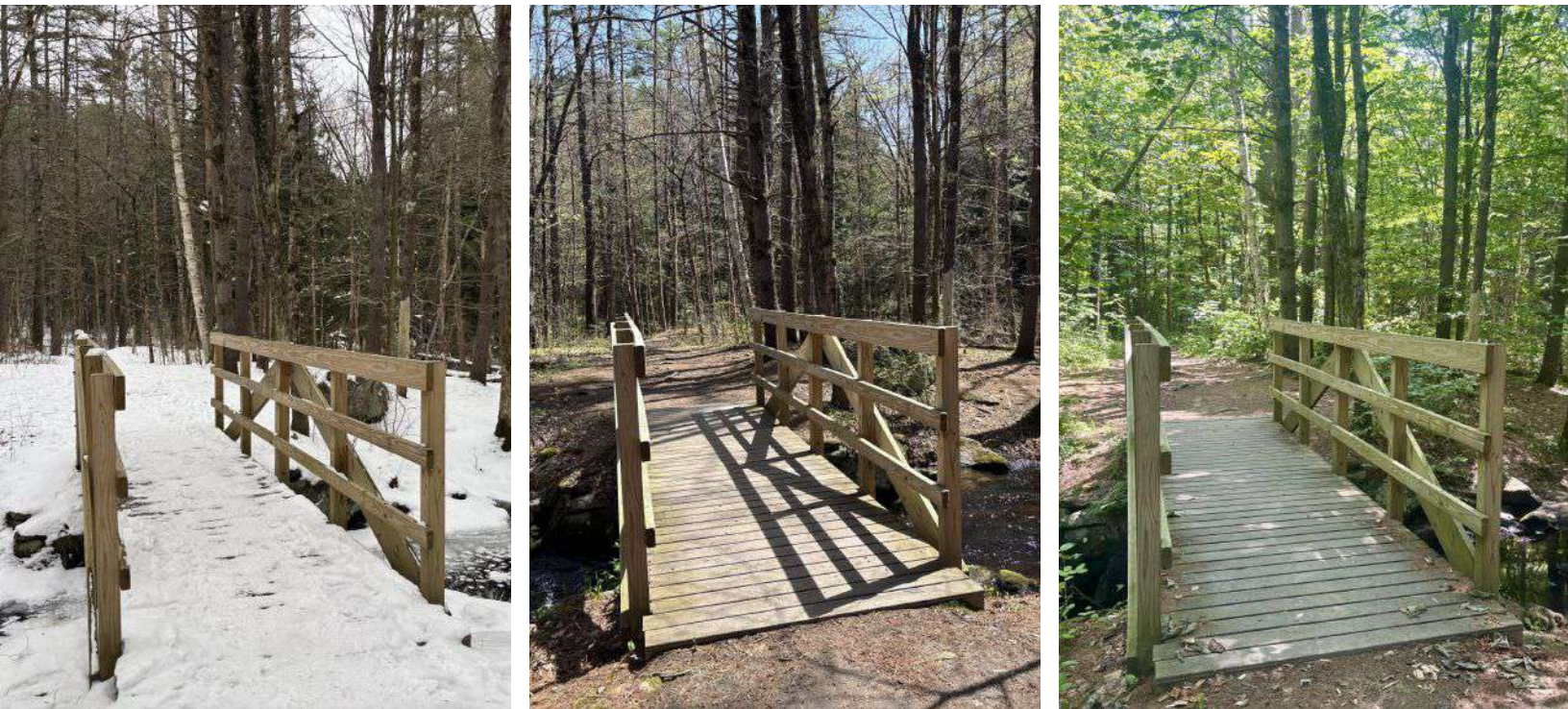
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Rachel Wachman

I visited the same spot over the course of the year to capture the change in seasons. Above are winter, spring and summer, and on the facing page is autumn..

Bridging time

By RACHEL WACHMAN

I frequently think about time. How long it can stretch and, in the same measure, how quickly it seems to disappear. I draw constant inspiration from Claude Monet's "Haystacks," a series of paintings of the same haystacks across various seasons and times of day. Monet captured the shifting light and landscape through his focus on one steady subject. So I thought, why not try the same?

A year ago, I ventured to Concord's Coeyman Park for the first time, weaving my way down the narrow path to the bridge off of Batchelder Mill Road.

My footsteps crunched over snow, a trail of prints tattooing the ground behind me. I arrived at the bridge to find icicles clinging to branches and a frozen stream humming as fresh water rushed underneath, unstopped by the frigid air.

A few months later, I sidestepped mud and searched for shoots of green protruding from the thawed earth, flowers poking their faces out to

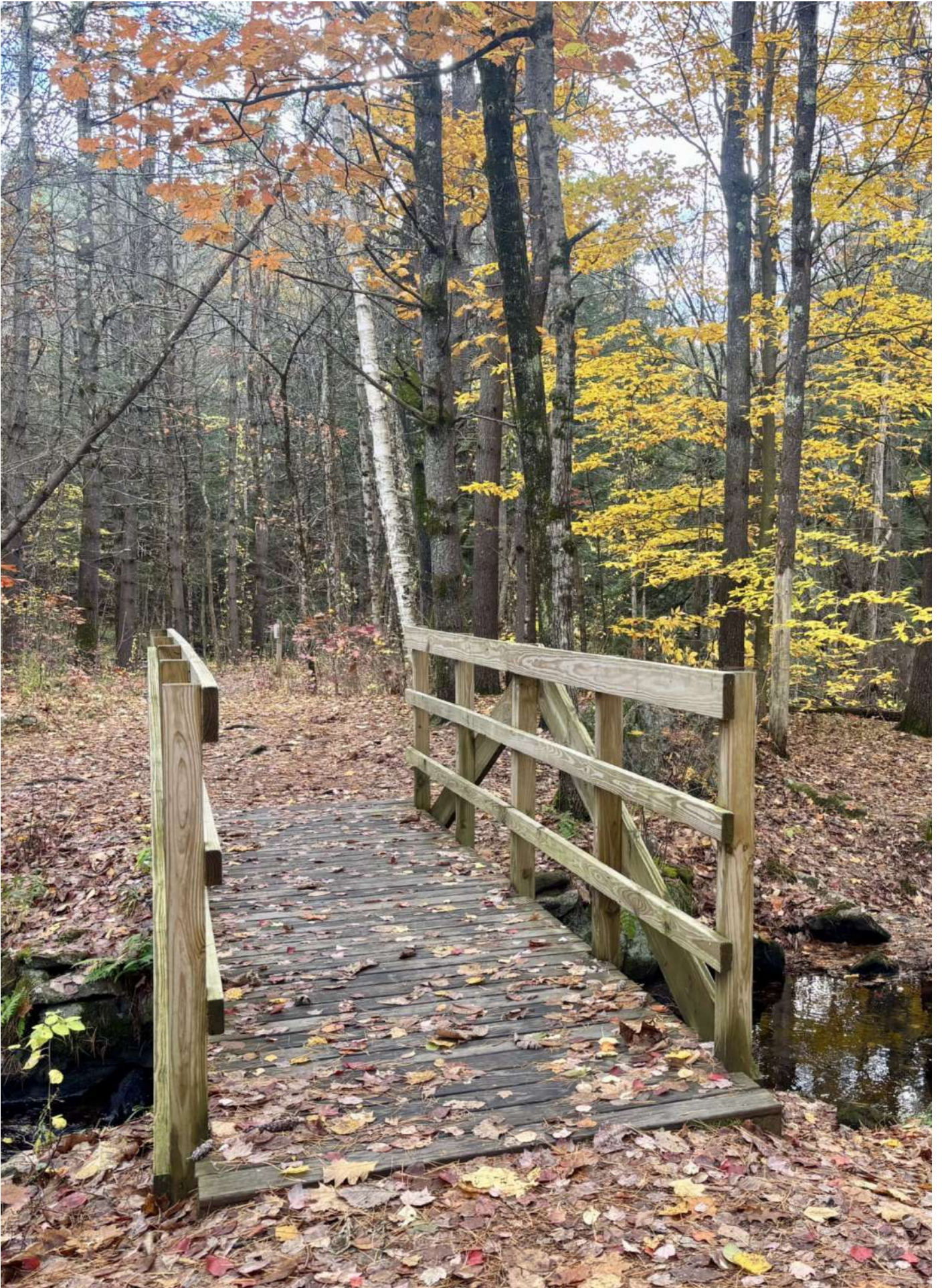
find sunshine and join the chirping birds in their joyful return.

In the persistent summer heat, I returned once again, this time to see the light glowing on the greenery, dappling the forest floor in a dancing pattern that seemed to buzz with energy.

The air grew crisp with promises of frost on the way, and so I made my way to the bridge one final time, with fiery leaves guiding my path, carpeting the soil, the roots, the rocks. Some trees had already shed their color, while others remained alight, alive with the full force of autumn.

Now I have four photos, compiled as time continues to ebb and flow around us like the seasons themselves.

So the next time nature sighs and ice melts to mud, sunlight shines on verdant branches with an extra sheen of brightness, leaves start to carry a russet tinge, or the first snowflakes fall from ashy clouds, savor the moment. Like everything living, breathing, navigating this tumultuous world we call home, it too shall change.



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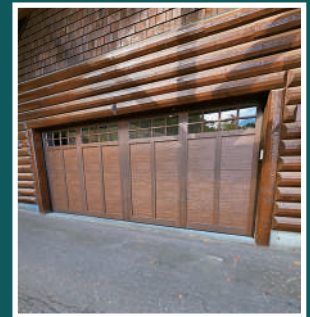
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