

# Taking a Colorful Journey

New Hampshire artist Sue Anne Bottomley charts a creative course across New Hampshire for project

By MELANIE PLENDA  
Special to the Union Leader

**M**anchester to Lincoln, Lincoln to Lancaster, Lancaster to Colebrook—hundreds of miles may separate these places but they are all connected somehow. And to Sue Anne Bottomley, it makes New Hampshire a very small world.

"The state seems so much smaller to me now that I've been everywhere," said Bottomley. "Because I know how things connect now. And when we come into a town now, even if we come on a different road or (from) a different direction, I recognize it now. It's an important sort of familiarity, I guess."

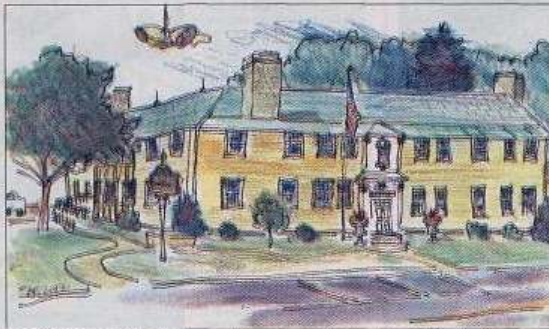
Bottomley officially may live in New London, but two years ago she set out to make the whole of New Hampshire her home. Back then, she started the DRAW-NH project with the idea of traveling to each of the state's 234 towns. Once there, she'd make drawings of something in each of the towns.

This past Nov. 17, she visited her last place: Salmon Falls Mills in Rollinsford.

"It was like a celebration to myself and it satisfied my curiosity, having been gone for such a long time," Bottomley said. "A lot of the places I had never been to before, ... so to go to every town, stop the car, get out, look around, read the signs, talk to people in the libraries and in the general stores—it was like a grand adventure."

## Getting a Start

Bottomley was born and raised in New Hampshire. She went on to graduate from the University of New Hampshire in Durham, majoring in fine arts and French.



**CHRONICLING HER JOURNEY:** In her travels throughout the Granite State artist Sue Anne Bottomley drew images and recorded the stories that inspired her in each town or city.

"I had always loved drawing but for years (her creations) were very personal and I kept them to myself," she said. "I would go on trips or travel and make these drawings but I never really shared them with anyone. But my living, my career, was making limited-edition prints."

She spent the better part of her life traveling, living in England, France, and Germany and nearly 40 years in Maryland. "And I very rarely came back," she said. "But a funny thing happened when I decided to move back to my home state."

About four years ago, she returned to New Hampshire. Though she and her husband were settling down, they weren't done traveling and she found herself exploring her new old home area. She drew as she went and eventually started a blog

where she shared her pictures. This slowly grew into DRAW-NH and a more extensive blog with a name—Colorful Journey—complete with commentary on the scenes that inspired the work. "It seemed to sort of combined everything I loved," Bottomley said. "And I started to think of a timeframe for it."

Since she had 19 drawings—mostly of New London—before she got the idea for her project, she figured she could do 19 places and drawings a month, no matter the weather, and it would take two years.

## Documenting NH

"We have to make time for things you really want to do," she said. "She wrote on the calendar each month, 'Draw 10,' and that usually meant two visits per month, sometimes more to a chosen

place. In her off time, she studied maps, attempting to find ways that the places connected with each other to make the go a little easier.

Once in a place, she kept the drawings small in scale, often drawing and finishing the works on site. When she couldn't, she'd finish them at home later while the images were still fresh.

really thought we were going to have to hike out of there and buy a new car."

And the drawings from that trip reflect her thoughts.

"My drawing of Monroe is kind of quiet and serene. That's where we started," Bottomley said. "And of Lyman, the other side, my drawing is like crazy. I was so happy to have arrived. And I put that emotion into it."

And that's typical of all of her drawings. She chooses the sub-



**A PROFILE OF NH:** Sue Anne Bottomley of New London sits surrounded by some of the drawings she made over a two-year period.

## Sharing Stories

She also kept tabs on the stories that inspired the drawings.

"We decided to take a short cut between Monroe and Lyman, even though I had read that these two towns used to be one and they split apart because it was so hard to (travel) from the Connecticut River half over to the mountains hall.

The shortcut proved it was a difficult journey.

"Well, I think it was a road that may have been cut through in about 1780 or so," she said. "I

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jects, whether it's a town hall or a library or a park, by the feeling she gets when she sees the actual place.

"It's that connection that I'm not even sure what it is sometimes," she said. "That's what I'm looking for: the connection of the visual and the emotional."

Eventually, Bottomley said that she would like to see her drawings and stories collected into a book. Meantime, they can be viewed or purchased at ColorfulJourney.us.