

BOOK NOOK

Innkeeper's Intuition

A former local innkeeper pens a debut novel set in Chatham.

With her touching debut novel, *Finding Scarlett*, Jill Meyer has made official her transition from professional innkeeper to published author.

In 2003 Meyer and her husband, James, bought Chatham's Carriage House Inn. Two-and-a-half years later they sold it and bought the Captain's House Inn down the street on Old Harbor Road. They were the innkeepers there for 13 years, which provided much fodder for Meyer's novel in which the fictional Anna Hadley is running the Beacon Inn, based on a combination of Meyer's two former inns. The Beacon Inn "is not just a setting, but almost a character in the novel," Meyer says.

When the novel opens, Anna's daughter, Scarlett, is 18. By chance, Scarlett runs into a woman, Lucy Ellis, who has been mailing to the inn photographs from her travels around the world. After that encounter, the lives of the three women shift in ways that cannot be predicted. In the end, their lives are different—and better.

FAMILY AFFAIR

Finding Scarlett compels the reader to contemplate what makes a family.

"A recurring trope in *Finding Scarlett* is found family," Meyer says. "I've always had a soft spot for this subject as my son, Kaleb, was adopted from Ethiopia. I wanted to write a story that touched on the idea that



often, families include people who aren't related by blood, but by love."

Like Meyer's two inns, the Beacon Inn is in Chatham. "I feel so lucky to live in one of the most beautiful parts of the world," Meyer says. "Tourists flock here in the summer to experience the small-town nostalgia that people crave in the fast-paced world we live in. What better setting for a novel than this?"

FIND YOUR FAVORITE CHATHAM SPOTS IN THE STORY

And Meyer's characters do take advantage of what Chatham has to offer, from drinks at the Red Nun, dinner at the Impudent Oyster and a trip to the Kream n' Kone before a Chatham Anglers' game. They enjoy Chatham Candy Manor chocolates as much as the rest of us do.

Her final two years of running the inn were challenging. "We had five kids at that point and juggling everything felt almost impossible," she says. After selling the inn, she began writing fiction. "A story began to take shape in my mind, incorporating bits and pieces of my innkeeping experiences." As she worked at her kitchen table, *Finding Scarlett* "spilled out" over the course of three years.

Meyer's children are now ages 11 to 18. Back in 2014 she began performing weddings because the inn offered an "elopement package." She still officiates at weddings while her husband is a stay-at-home dad. Since completing *Finding Scarlett* the prolific Meyer has written four additional novels. Her second novel is now with her literary agent. (*Wisteria Press*, 268 pages) ▲