

HILLFOLK: The Adventure Begins.....

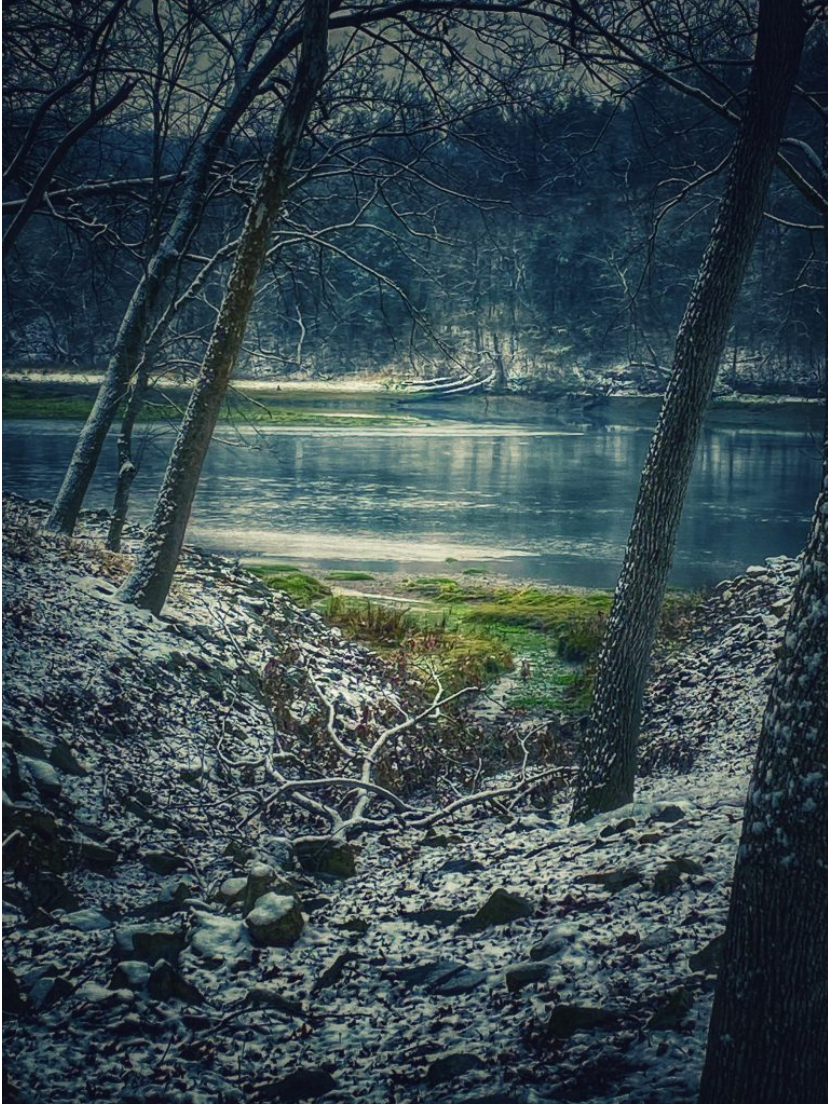


written by Kayla Cawvey

I've spent the better part of December trying to find the place to start my journey.

Perhaps I should have begun where my roots were planted, the parcel I was born on, or even the town that grew me—in that schoolyard or those nearby forests—or even the location from whence I last lived. Those would have all been appropriate beginnings...places to launch my exploration of this landscape. And I have. From each of those, I explored, searched, and had grown and learned.

Yet they just didn't seem right.





Overlooking the White River today, I finally found my spot.

The place to begin this later-half-of-life journey to all the places my roots have sought. The ground my ancestors plowed and trekked and fought so hard to tame. And, maybe that's why this location. This river...that flowed so free and fearlessly...that laid before me tamed to the degree a river can be tamed. It's a testament to the Ozark people. To their unwavering determination to make this rugged landscape a livable land.

Perhaps it's because my roots run so deep amongst its banks..? Intertwined with the arrowheads that litter the bluffs and buried beneath the shores of the lakes that swallowed the land. Woven with the fricassées, chicken bouillon, and *cuisses de grenouilles* (otherwise known as frog legs) that filled our bowls and graced our tables as

leftover remnants of the French trappers who canvassed the Ozarks a full century before any man put to pencil the stories of this place...were tales knitted together by remnants of Appalachian folklore from those first hardy pioneers who settled amongst these river banks and mountains. Roots deep in this Ozark soil are fed by the rivers that carve through the mountainsides.

Gazing over the White River from high above the Bull Shoals* dam, watching the sunset, seems the perfect place for new beginnings. A wide world spanning out in front of me. History before me in the untouched lands, waters, and trees. History behind me in the dam built during my grandparents' lifetime—changing the Ozarks from a secluded wilderness into a tourist destination. A river wild and free held back time and again by a series of dams and locks stretching its course till finally it's once again free to charge into the Mississippi and empty into the sea.





Waters that hold in its depths towns and paddleboats and secrets and springs and caves and life. A river that formed in the Ozark hills and the lakes that devoured them...constantly changing, constantly starting anew from its source in the Boston Mountains and gathering strength with each tributary and spring.

Today is a good day for new beginnings. As with every day, but, especially today—the first day of the year. And, as I watch the scene unfold, the colors envelop the White River basin before me and I see both the journey ahead (and all the new things that will bring) and my roots (and all the memories held within them that I hope to rediscover).

May our journey to find our roots inspire your journey to fall in love with these beautiful Ozarks. The adventure of discovery begins here...



Ms. Cawvey is embarking on a journey, beginning in 2024, to travel around the United States with her children where they will explore the world they live in, discover the rich histories of the places and people they encounter, and share their journey with those who, like them, believe that life should be an adventure.

* Bull Shoals State Park is a beautiful location with hundreds of acres of forest and shoreline to explore. There are campgrounds, parks and playgrounds, picnic areas, and a state-of-the-art visitor center with a small store. The grounds are both above and below the dam giving stunning views from every angle and plenty of opportunity to explore. Nearby are the small towns of Bull Shoals and Lakeview and, just a little further, the town of Flippin. The towns boast quaint cottages and old roadside motels, tiny cafes, and

cute boutiques—all in between stretches of picturesque roadside attractions and abundant natural scenery.