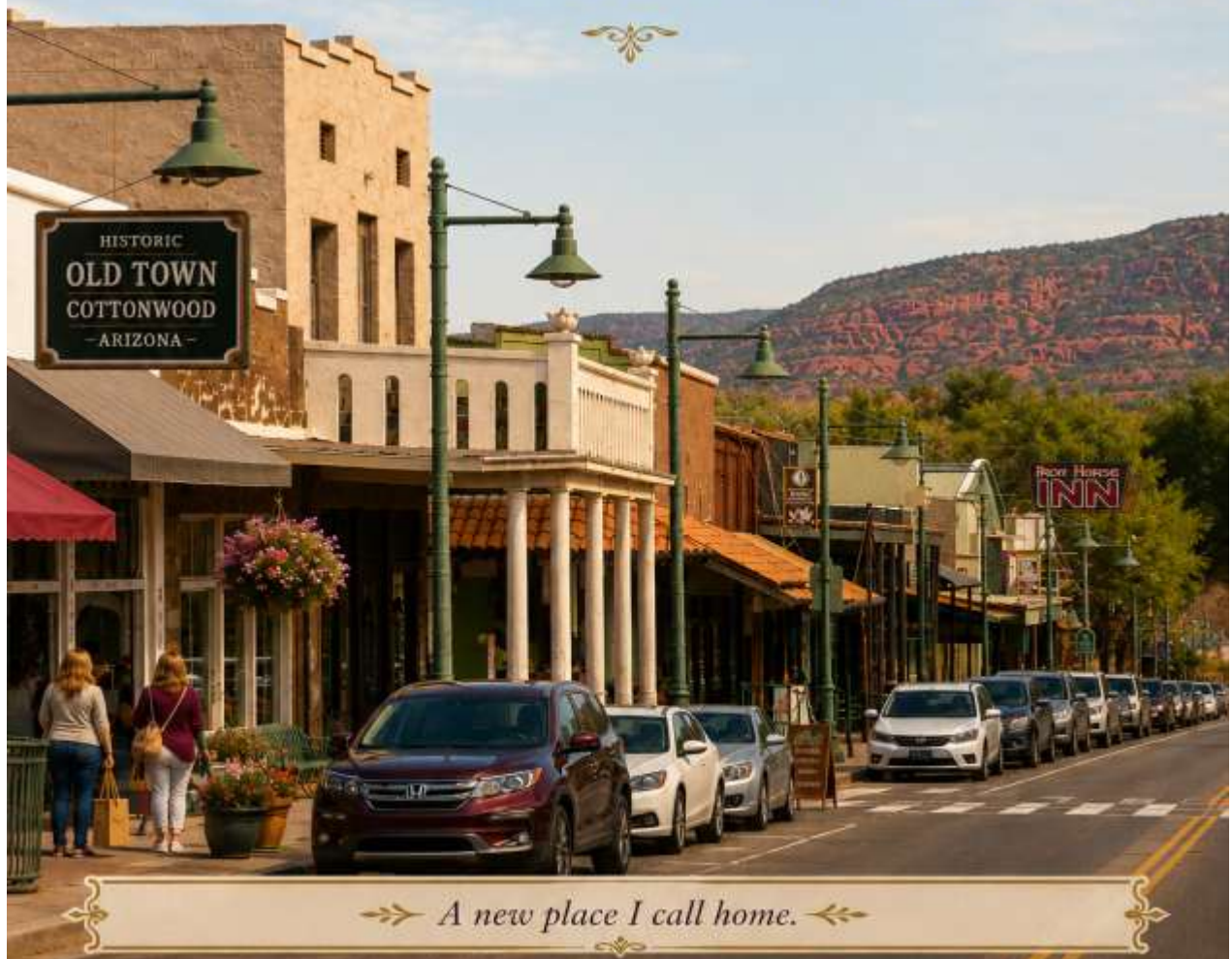


PLACES THAT TOUCH MY HEART™

A Collection Within the Sacred Wisdom Library

The Soul
of
COTTONWOOD



— A new place I call home. —

Welcome

Some places *quietly* find their way into our hearts.

This isn't a travel guide. It's an invitation to experience Cottonwood through the moments, places, and feelings that slowly transformed it into *a new place I call home*.

As you wander through these pages, I hope you'll slow down, notice the little things, and discover that the true spirit of a place is often found in its *quiet moments*.

Perhaps this little book will also remind you of a place that has touched *your own heart*.

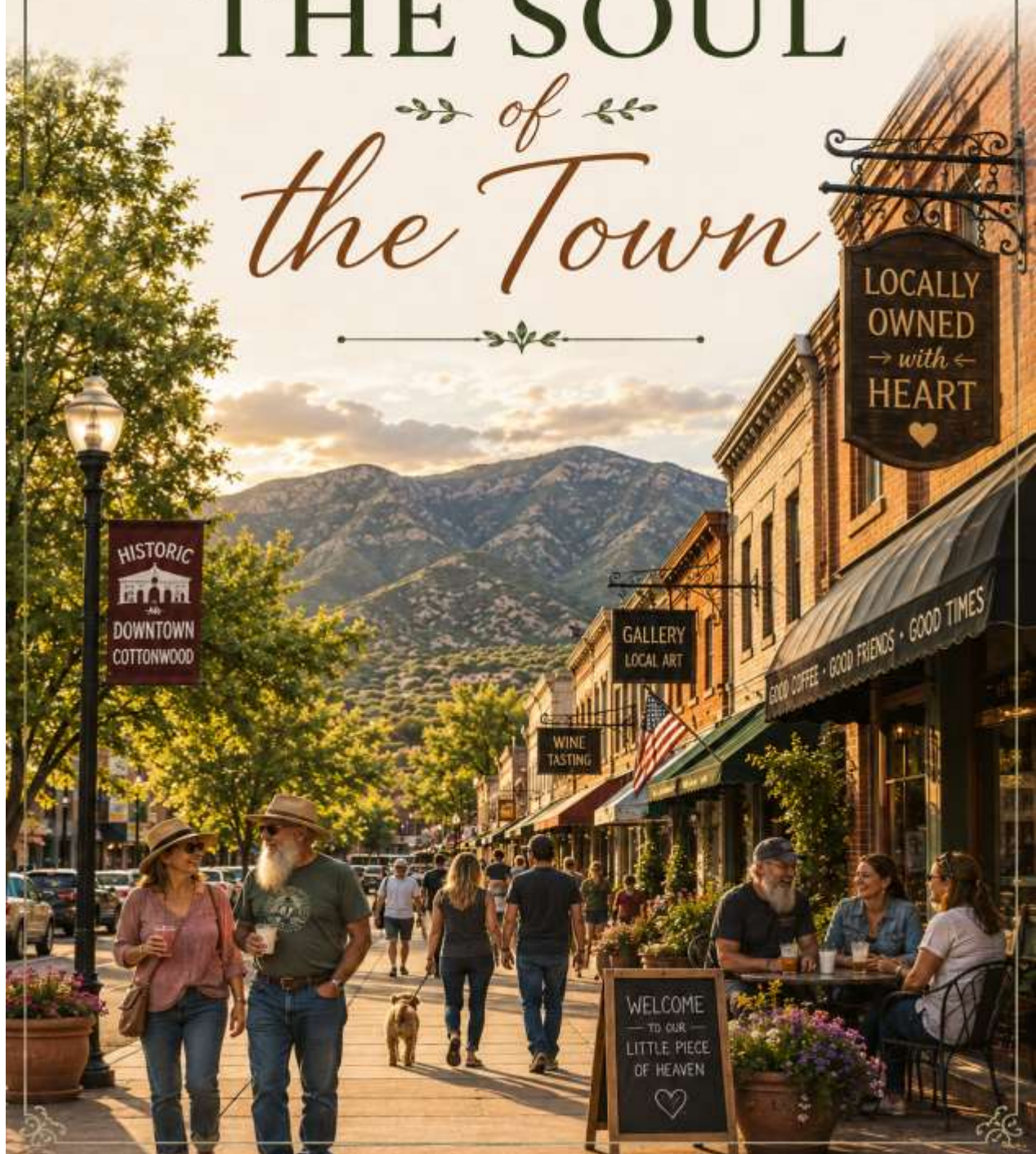
Welcome to *The Soul of Cottonwood*.



— • Part One • —

THE SOUL of the Town

— • —



Fifteen Miles an Hour



As you enter historic downtown Cottonwood, the speed limit drops to **15 miles an hour.**

The first time I drove down Main Street, I understood why.

It felt like the set of an old John Wayne movie, where you almost expect a cowboy to stroll out of one of the storefronts.

It felt as though Cottonwood itself was inviting me to slow down, look around, take a deep breath, and enjoy the moment.



Reflection



Where in your life could you benefit from slowing down enough to truly enjoy the moment?



Stepping *Back in Time*

The first time I walked down Main Street, it felt as though I had stepped into another era.

The historic buildings, old storefronts, vintage trucks, and the occasional cowboy hat create the feeling that time has slowed just enough to let you enjoy it.

Cottonwood doesn't ask you to hurry.

It quietly invites you to remember a gentler way of living.



Reflection

*When was the last time
a place made you feel
as though you'd stepped
back in time?*



The Cast of Characters



One of the things I love most about downtown Cottonwood is its cast of characters.

People from every walk of life seem to find their way here.

Locals and visitors, artists and musicians, cowboys and shopkeepers, families, retirees, and even those with no place to call home all share the same sidewalks.

Somehow, everyone belongs.

Together, they create the warm, welcoming spirit that makes Cottonwood feel so special.



Reflection

Where have you experienced a place where everyone seemed to belong?



The Beards

One of the first things that made me smile after I'd lived in Cottonwood for a while was all the beards.

I'd never seen so many in one place.

Long beards. Short beards.
Cowboy beards.
Mountain-man beards.
A few that could have belonged in ZZ Top.

As I noticed the beards, I also began to notice something else.

The people here seemed comfortable simply being themselves.

Over time, I've come to understand that this is part of the soul of Cottonwood.

Reflection

Where do you feel most free to simply be yourself?



Everyone Has a Story

One of the things I've come to love about Cottonwood is that conversations happen naturally.

You might chat with a shop owner, a visitor exploring Arizona, someone walking their dog, or a longtime resident enjoying a bench in the shade.

Everyone has a story.

And somehow, in Cottonwood, people still seem willing to share it.

These moments remind me that we are more alike than different—all of us just trying to live a good life and enjoying the journey as best we can.

It's one more reason this small town has such a big place in my heart.



Reflection

*Whose story has
unexpectedly touched
your life?*



A Surprise *in the Desert*

When I moved to Cottonwood,
I couldn't imagine that vineyards
could flourish in the Arizona desert.

Yet they do.

Every once in a while, I'll enjoy a
glass of wine made from grapes
grown right here in the Verde Valley.
I'm certainly not a wine connoisseur,
but what I've tasted has been
absolutely delicious.

There's something special about
supporting families who grow the
grapes, make the wine, and call this
community home.

*Just another unexpected
surprise that made me fall
in love with Cottonwood.*



Reflection



*What unexpected surprise
has changed the way you
see a place?*



Family-Owned

One of the things I love about Historic Downtown Cottonwood is that there are no chain stores.

Instead, you'll find locally owned restaurants, cafés, galleries, tasting rooms, and unique little shops.

Every place has its own personality because every owner has a story.

There's something special about supporting families and small business owners who have poured their hearts into creating places where people gather, laugh, and make memories.

It's one more reason Cottonwood feels like home. ♥



Reflection

What locally owned place has become one of your favorites, and why?



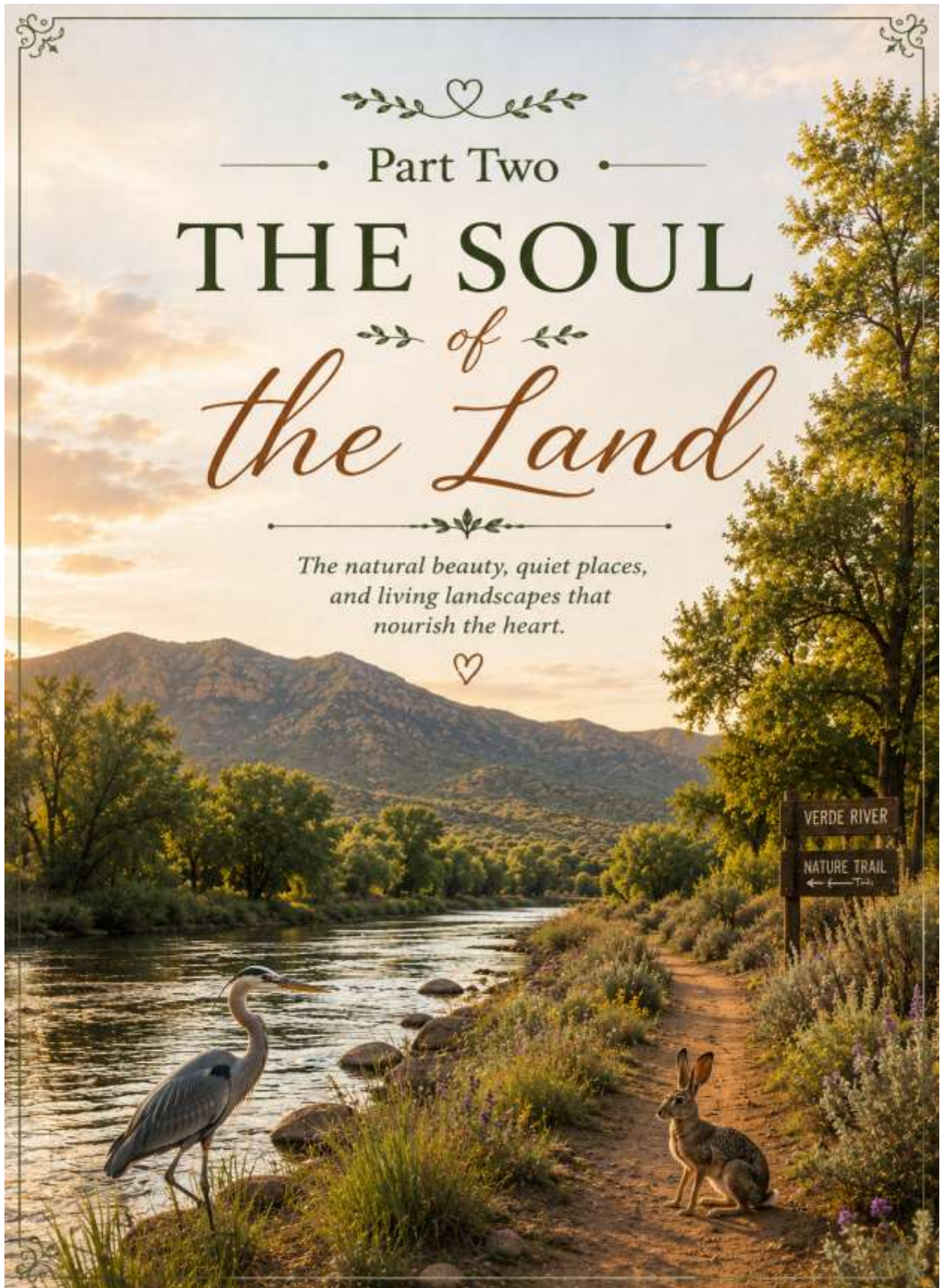


— • Part Two • —

THE SOUL of the Land



*The natural beauty, quiet places,
and living landscapes that
nourish the heart.*



Listening to the Land

Some places invite us to
slow down.

The trails, peaceful ponds,
majestic Mingus Mountain,
and graceful cottonwood trees
gently remind us that nature
has its own rhythm.

As we pause, breathe, and
simply notice, the landscape
offers a quiet sense of peace
that asks nothing of us
except our presence.

Sometimes, the land itself
becomes one of our
greatest teachers.

Reflection



*How do you feel when
you spend quiet time on
the land in and around
Cottonwood?*



The Verde River

The Verde River is the
lifeblood of this valley.

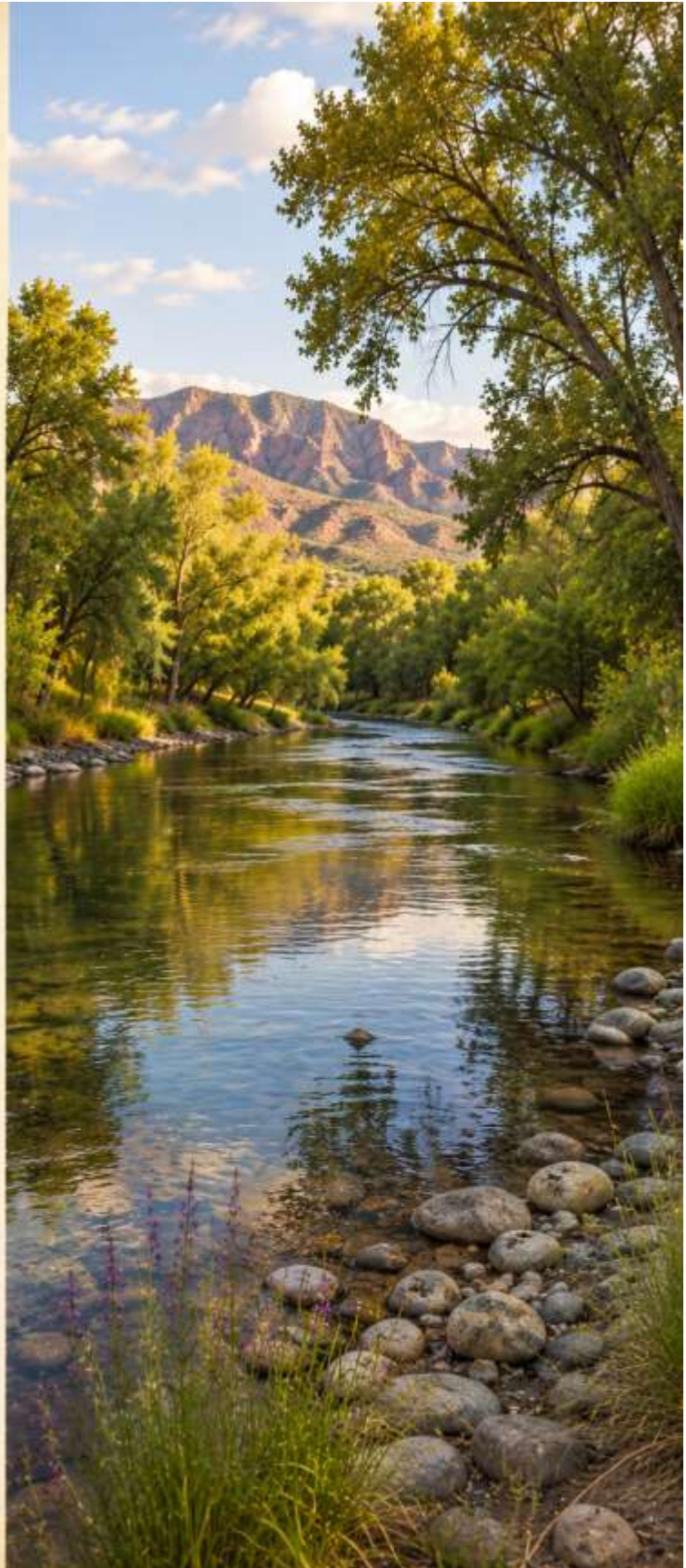
Its gentle flow nourishes the
trees, the wildlife, and the
people who are drawn to its
quiet beauty.

Whether you're walking
beside its banks or simply
pausing to watch the water
move, the river has a way of
reminding us that life is meant
to flow, one moment at a time.



Reflection

*What thoughts or feelings
arise as you quietly watch
a river flow?*



Listening to the Animals

One of the unexpected joys of living in Cottonwood is sharing the land with its wild neighbors.

Great blue herons, soaring hawks, majestic eagles, playful dragonflies, quiet rabbits, turtles basking in the sun, and even families of javelinas remind us that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.

Almost every day, the animals simply invite us to notice.



Reflection

What has an unexpected encounter with an animal taught you?



Dead Horse Ranch

Some places quietly become part of our daily lives.

Each time I pass through the entrance to Dead Horse Ranch, it feels as though the rangers and staff are welcoming me into their home.

Their care for this beautiful place is reflected in every trail, every pond, and every peaceful corner, inviting visitors to slow down and simply enjoy being there.

Sometimes, the places we return to again and again become part of who we are.



Reflection

Is there a place that welcomes you like an old friend?



The Cottonwood Trees

The graceful cottonwood trees have watched over this valley for generations.

Their broad branches offer welcome shade, their leaves dance in the breeze, and their quiet presence reminds us that strength and gentleness can exist together.

Sometimes the oldest things have the most to teach us.



Reflection

What in your life has quietly stood beside you through the years?



Mingus Mountain

Mingus Mountain quietly watches over the Verde Valley, changing with the light yet always remaining steady.

Living in its presence, I have come to appreciate the deep sense of grounding it offers. Surrounded by its beauty, I often feel more connected to the earth, more centered, and more at peace.

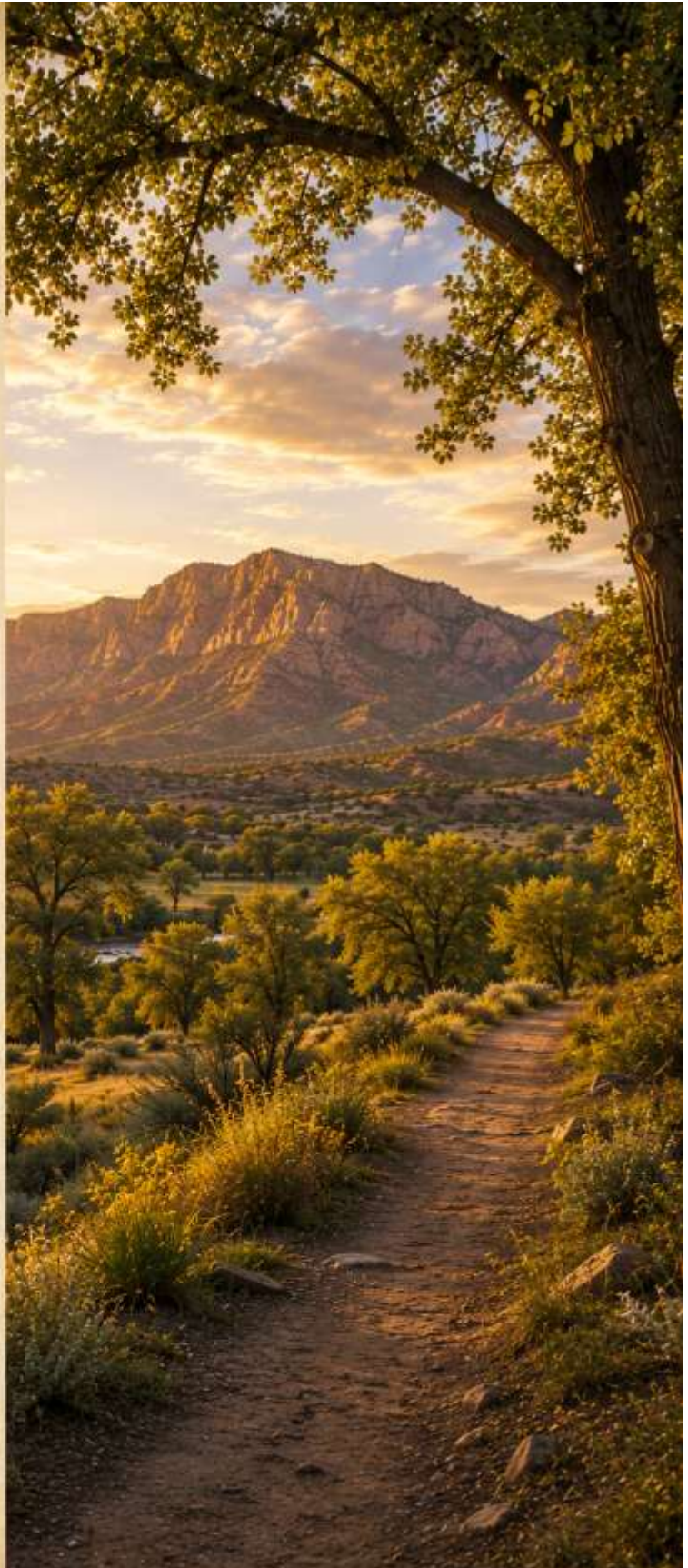
The mountain ranges that embrace us all around feel like guardians of the valley—majestic, timeless, and magnificent in their quiet strength.

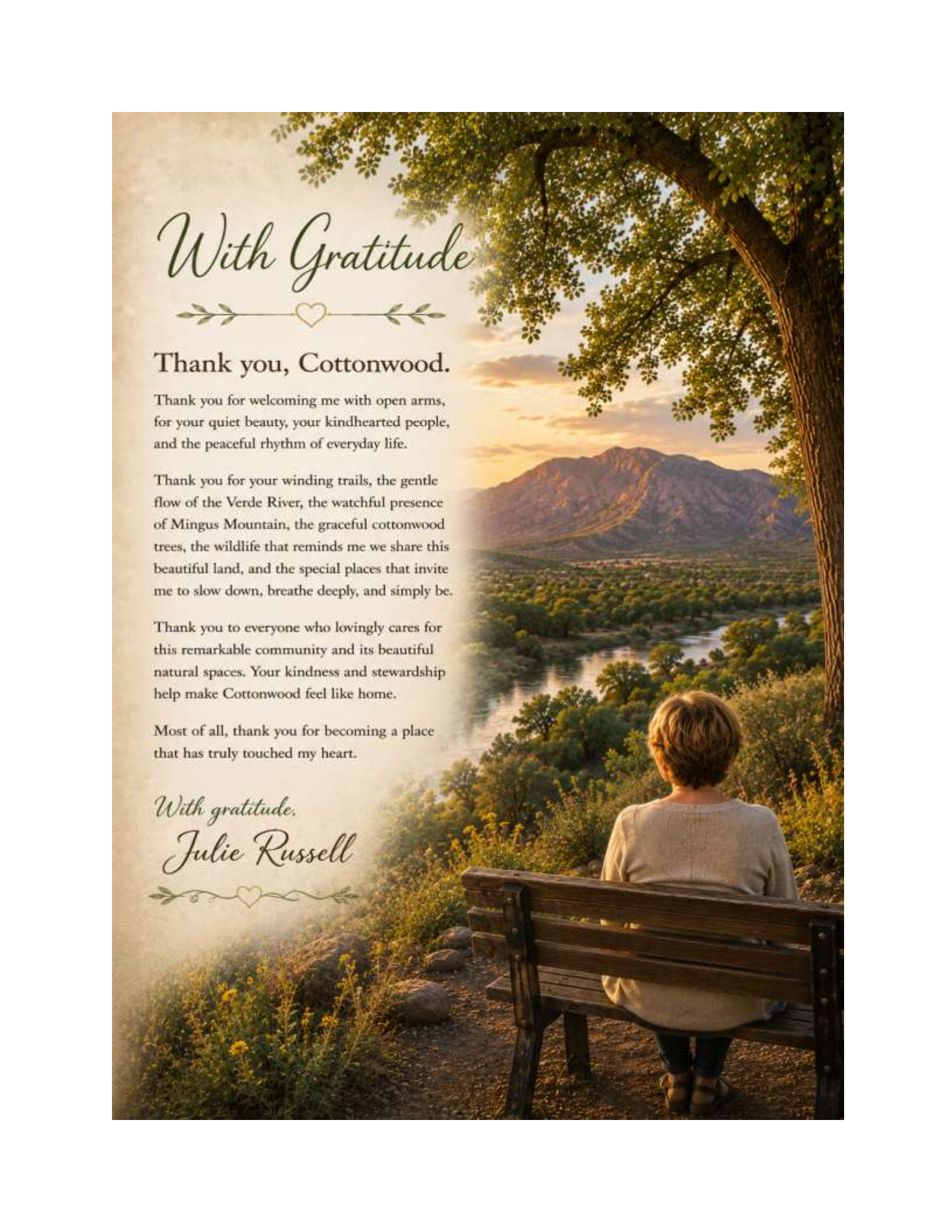
Sometimes, simply looking up is enough to remind us where we belong.



Reflection

Where do you feel most grounded and at peace?



A person with short blonde hair, seen from behind, sits on a wooden bench. They are looking out over a scenic landscape featuring a winding river, lush greenery, and a large mountain in the distance under a soft, golden sky. A large tree with green leaves is on the right side of the frame.

With Gratitude



Thank you, Cottonwood.

Thank you for welcoming me with open arms,
for your quiet beauty, your kindhearted people,
and the peaceful rhythm of everyday life.

Thank you for your winding trails, the gentle
flow of the Verde River, the watchful presence
of Mingus Mountain, the graceful cottonwood
trees, the wildlife that reminds me we share this
beautiful land, and the special places that invite
me to slow down, breathe deeply, and simply be.

Thank you to everyone who lovingly cares for
this remarkable community and its beautiful
natural spaces. Your kindness and stewardship
help make Cottonwood feel like home.

Most of all, thank you for becoming a place
that has truly touched my heart.

With gratitude,

Julie Russell



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The Soul of Cottonwood

A PLACES THAT TOUCH MY HEART™ BOOKLET



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With Gratitude

Thank you for walking this journey with me.

My hope is that these pages inspire you to slow down,
notice the beauty around you, and discover what makes
Cottonwood such a special place.



Julie Russell

Founder, Reiki Verde Valley
Cottonwood, Arizona



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