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Novelist inspired by immigrant letters

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By MELISSA KATZ

LONGMEADOW - Imagine a woman with extensive knowledge of the Bread and Roses labor strike of 1912, who holds a master's of business administration from Harvard and who has published numerous books related to marketing, management and corporate policy.

Now consider, for a moment, what the topic of her next book, slated to hit the region's bookstores next month, might be.

You probably wouldn't guess it was an immigrant love story spanning two continents, starting out in Italy and walking readers through its characters' struggles and victories in America.

And you probably wouldn't guess it was a Harlequin romance novel.

But if you did, you'd be right.

Linda Cardillo Platzer, who has lived in Longmeadow for the past 10 years, is looking forward to the release of her first novel, "Dancing on Sunday Afternoons."

The novel was inspired by love letters that Platzer's grandparents had written to one another.

As an adult, she translated those letters from Italian for her father and aunts as a gift, but found herself struck by the depth of the lovers' devotion and couldn't get them out of her mind.

She says this is a book she knew she'd always write one day, in spite of how different it is from the other books she has published.

"I discovered my grandparents as young people when I read those letters," Platzer said. "I was struck by the passion that had been communicated between them. I used the letters as a seed for the story and imagined a life around the letters."

Platzer's research included a trip to her grandmother's native village in the mountains of southern Italy.

She also did research in Mount Vernon, N.Y., where her grandmother first settled in America. She said she was able to find a wealth of information about what life was like there at the time her grandmother was there.

Platzer says her family is "excited and thrilled" about the novel's upcoming release. For her, too, it is a time to celebrate, since it wasn't easy to get to this place.

"It took years to reach this point," she said. "There was a lot of rejection, which is a familiar story for writers. You have to have very thick skin to keep going."

Her novel is part of the Harlequin Everlasting line of books.

"This is not your mother's Harlequin anymore," Platzer said. "It's a new line and a departure in storytelling. These are still love stories, but it's a complex genre. These are stories about relationships over time and relationships that are impacted by the cultural and historical environment."