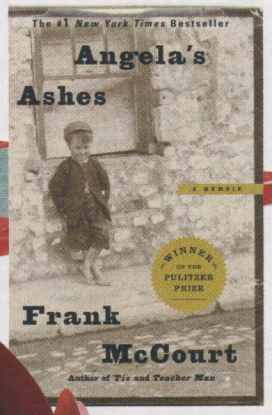
GUEST COLUMN

Gary Komarin



A Creative Enclave For decades, the bucolic farmlands of Litchfield County have attracted a long list of celebrities and creatives, including (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) Gary Komarin, Frank McCourt, Alexander Calder, Candace Bushnell, Marilyn Monroe, Arthur Miller and Lane Smith.

This idea of the artistic and literary connectedness of Roxbury has been on my mind almost since the day I moved up here in the late spring of 2008. I truly didn't look for Roxbury—rather, it found me. After living and teaching around the country at university art departments and exhibiting my paintings worldwide in places such as New York and London and locales as far-flung as Dubai and Tokyo, I came upon this bucolic section of the world. With its green rolling hills, old oak and maple trees, babbling brooks and reflecting ponds, it was a paradise on the geographic and topographic levels.

What I did not realize until the day that I first looked at my property, which sits parallel to Painter Hill Road (how appropriate to find a painter on Painter Hill Road), I very soon learned that just a half-mile up the road to my left, internationally recognized modern sculptor Alexander Calder had lived and worked. He bought a modest farmhouse here in the early 1930s and, over time, built a compound of studios and working spaces. The first few burned down—they were made of wood, and he was working with blowtorches. But he soon saw the light, and those that remain were built on cinder block, but with wide-open windows to catch the light and the landscape. Calder's colorful, large hand-painted sculptures still sit on his green hills, placed specifically according to his instructions.

In a matter of minutes, I learned that the very talented Candace Bushnell of *Sex and the City* fame, now turned novelist, lived several hundred yards to my right. And Pulitzer-prize winning author Frank McCourt, who wrote *Angela's Ashes*, was living across the road from me. About a mile away, playwright Arthur Miller had lived in a modest white farmhouse with Marilyn Monroe. Legend has it that Marilyn would skinny-dip in local ponds on hot summer nights, including, perhaps, the pond that sits on my own property. To tie the bow yet tighter, Barry Blitt, celebrated illustrator for the *New Yorker,* recently purchased the house where Arthur Miller penned *Death of a Salesman*. We were also delighted to learn that internationally celebrated children's book writer and illustrator Lane Smith and his wife, Molly, live a hop, skip and a jump away from my property, as well as talented landscape painter Tom Yost. And just a few hundred yards from the Miller house, acclaimed sculptor Tom Doyle lives and works with his wife, Jane Miller Doyle, an accomplished weaver in her own right.

When I arrived in this Litchfield County neighborhood, I found it comforting and gratifying to learn that so much literary and artistic history had unfolded on these country roads that twist and turn through green hills. Old meets new, new meets old in this magical pocket where creative energies never really die, they just continue to inhabit the space in which they were born. For me, it is a pleasure and an ongoing delight to be in this orbit of creativity set in a gorgeous and miraculous setting to boot.

—Gary Komarin, garykomarin.com

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HELEN NUSSER DURING (KOMARIN); SUSAN MONTGOMERY / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (CALDER)