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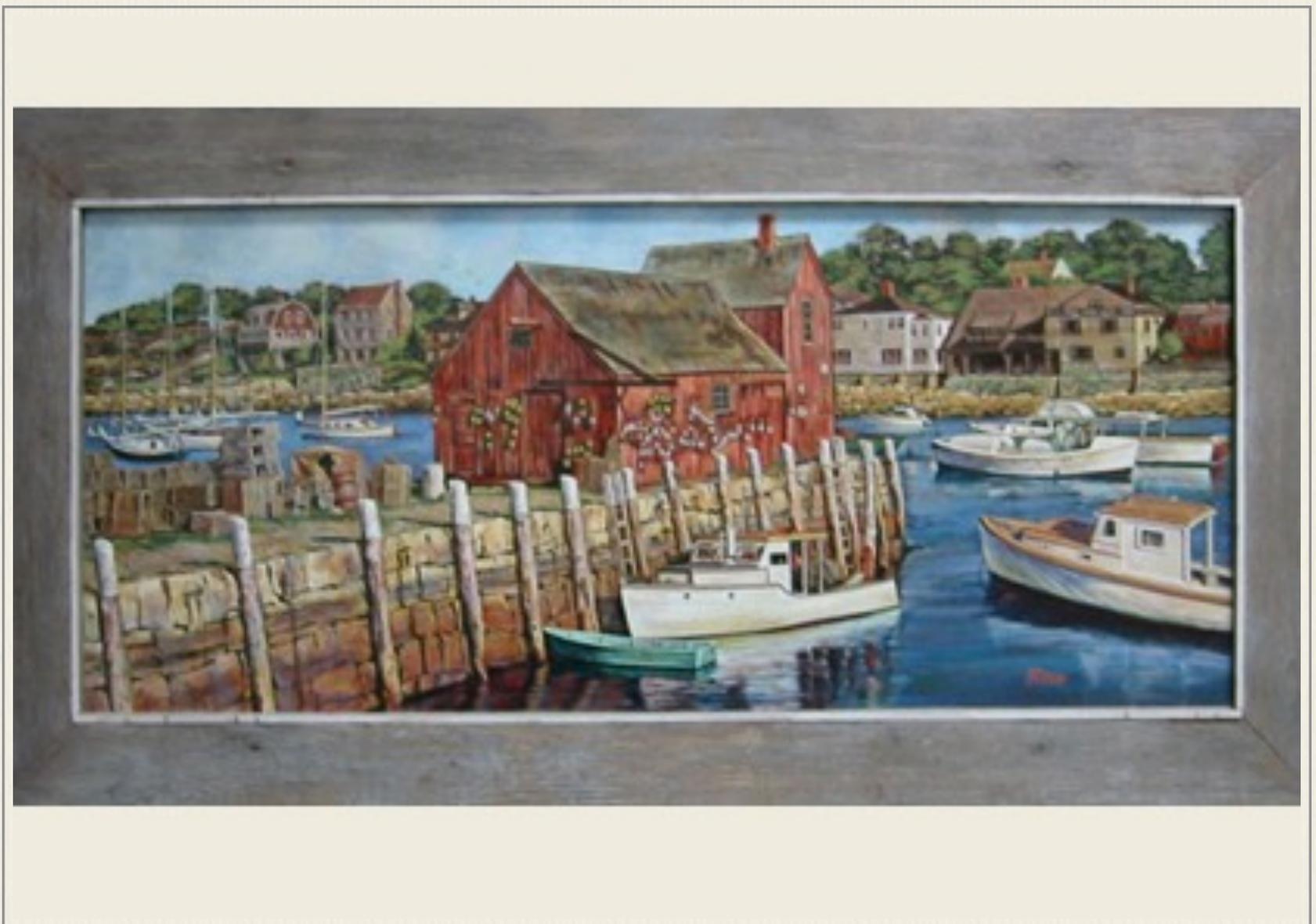
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Willow Glen Publishing



# Rossi



*The **Rossi family** joins our Falkenburg line with the marriage of Donald Falkenburg to Liane Marie Rossi. Liane's parents were Lenore and Eugene Rossi. The following story draws upon an account that Gene Rossi gave in his 94th year while living Independence Village, a retirement home in Brighton, Michigan.*

## Alfred and Amelia (Antonio) Rossi

Eugene Rossi's father, Alfredo Rossi was born Alfredo Da Vita in Giffoni Valle Piana<sup>13-1</sup> Italy on 21 MAR 1871. In his family history, son Eugene related that his father was a soldier in the war against the Turks. However, the Italo-Turkish war occurred after Alfredo settled in the United States. It is likely that Alfredo fought in the unsuccessful First Italo-Ethiopian War 1895 - 1896. After the war, Alfredo immigrated to Buenos Aires.<sup>13-2</sup> While in Argentina, Alfredo changed his surname from Da Vita to Rossi. We have no idea why, and we do not know the reason he left Argentina, but likely it was to seek greater opportunity in the United States. Alfredo's immigration record indicates that he left Buenos Aires, Argentina with a stop at Santos, Brazil aboard the steamship Tintoretto and arrived in New York on 13 OCT 1905. The record shows him age 24 at the time of arrival. Family records indicate that his birthdate was ten years earlier than the immigration record indicated. It is most likely that he shaved a few years off his age to put himself in a better position to find a job.

U.S. Tintoretto sailing from Santos, 20 Sept. 1905 arriving at Port of New York, 13 Oct. 1905

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Place of Birth	Marital Status	Profession	Remarks
1	Alfredo Rossi	24	M		Italy			
2	Amelia Rossi	24	F		Italy			
3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
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6	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
8	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
9	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
10	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
11	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
12	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
13	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
14	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
15	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
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17	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
18	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
19	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
20	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
21	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
22	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
23	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
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25	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
26	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
27	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
28	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
29	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
30	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

**13-1** Giffoni Valle Piana is a town and comune in the province of Salerno in the Campania region of south-west Italy.

**13-2** From 1857 to 1940 a total of 44.9% of the entire immigrant population to Argentina came from Italy, exceeding migration from any other country (including Spain at 31.5%)



*A Photocopy of a tintype of Amelia and Alfred Rossi taken 1906 or 1907*

Alfred (his name in his adopted country) was a barber. One of his work associates told him about Amelia Antonio, a girl born to Italian immigrants living in Norwood, New Jersey, about 20 miles north of the George Washington Bridge. Alfred went to Norwood to meet Amelia, and three weeks later they were married. On January 13, 1909, Eugene Rossi, the couple's only child, was born.

Eugene's parents owned barber and beauty shops at different locations in Manhattan. Their original shops were on Broadway between 81st and 82nd streets, with an apartment in back. In

addition to average New Yorkers, Alfred Rossi had some select clients. When actor Douglas Fairbanks Sr. came to New York, he would seek out Alfred Rossi to come and do a 'cut and shave' at his hotel. Amelia was the hairdresser for several prima donnas of the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Among her clientele was Costanza Gigli, wife of the Metropolitan's famous tenor Beniamino Gigli, successor to the great Enrico Caruso.



*Baby Eugene with his mother Amelia*

At the time, Manhattan was a close-knit community. Everyone knew everyone else and neighbors would go to neighbors to get their shoes soled, to buy their produce, to groom their hair or their nails. When the depression hit, the Rossi's owned three beauty shops. One was located on 99th Street between Broadway and West End Avenue, another on

West 79th Street off of Broadway, and a third was on Broadway between 80th and 81st Streets. As so many people did, the Rossi family lost everything when the stock market crashed.



*Amelia's beauty shop was located at 2247 Broadway between 81st and 82nd streets. Amelia (front right) poses with the girls who worked in her shop.*

## Cross Country to Los Angeles, California

When Eugene was nine years old, he and his parents moved to Los Angeles, California. Eugene had never been farther than the Catskills. They boarded the train at Grand Central bound for Chicago. From Chicago, they changed onto the Santa Fe line and headed southwest. The train ride was largely non-stop from Chicago to California. Everything was a first,



from sleeping in a sleeping car to dining in the dining car. Eugene never knew what to expect. At one point on the trip, while stopped at a depot, Gene looked at the next track next and saw the Barnum and Bailey Circus Train. Gene recalled, *“I perched myself on the open deck of the last car and watched the landscape of America pass before my eyes”*.

When he arrived in Los Angeles, Gene was in the fifth grade. His teacher, Mrs. Vandergrift, gave him an award for penmanship and public speaking. In the sixth



*Amelia and young Eugene at their home in Hollywood.*

grade, Gene moved to a school in the country. He had to take a trolley to the new school, which took nearly three-quarters of an hour each way.

After Gene's parents arrived home from work, they would often go to West Lake Park, a refuge later renamed MacArthur Park, made memorable in the 1968 song by Jimmy Webb. Gene revisited the area years later on a trip to California with his daughter and son-in-law.

## Home to New York

After living in Los Angeles for about a year, Amelia received word her mother was ill so they decided to return to New York. They took the Southern Pacific Railroad to New Orleans. Once there, they boarded a steamer, which traveled through the end of the Mississippi River and into the Gulf of Mexico. From there they went around the Florida Peninsula, up the east coast and on to New York. Throughout the trip, Gene kept a diary, marveling at the muddy Mississippi and noting what an incredible change when they entered the Gulf and saw the blue-green water.

Back in New York, Eugene attended P.S. 87 (Sherman Square School)—an all boys' school for grades 5 through 8. In 1922, Eugene was elected Mayor of the school city. He received a velvet armband that held six gold stars and the inscription The Honorable Mayor of Sherman Square School. Gene fondly remembered memorizing the Cremation of Sam McGee,<sup>13-3</sup> which he recited for the entire school at an assembly. Well into



*Gene's Mayor of P.S. 87 armband*

his nineties, Gene could still recite the poem with great expression. The poem by Robert Service begins:

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun  
By the men who toil for gold....*

After graduating from P.S. 87, Eugene attended an all boys' high school, DeWitt Clinton High School. One of his teachers was duly impressed with Gene's meticulous printing including Roman Lettering, and had him do all of her sign work. It was at this time that Gene began experimenting with color mixing. He discovered that he could create new hues by blending colors he had in his crayon box.

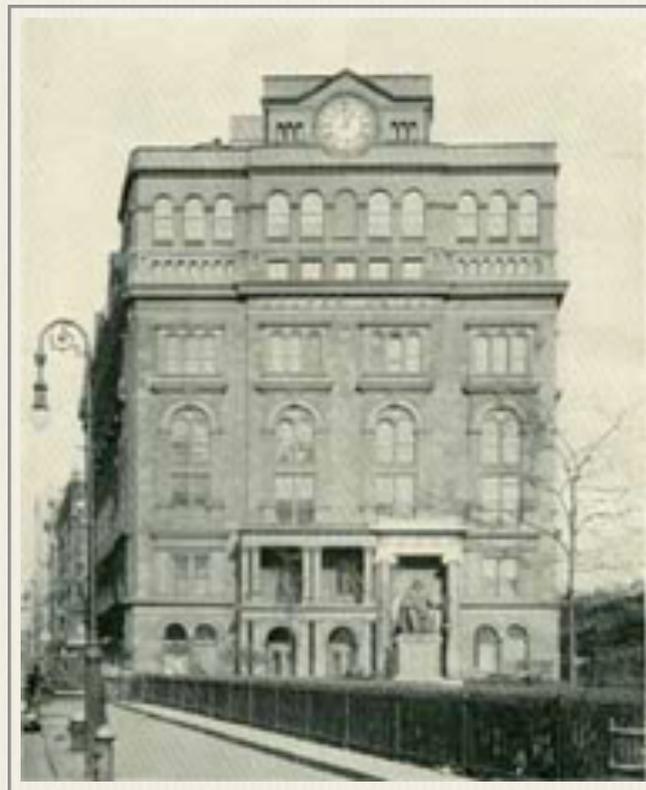
During these formative years, Gene became a proficient lettering artist. What today is done using computers, in Gene's day was done by hand. Business cards, letterheads, menu booklets, annual reports, and posters were all hand lettered. Gene learned from a Barron Collier book and the Typefounders Catalog, printed in 1923. He was able to copy 12 to 15 different typefaces after working diligently for a year. This hard work led to his first job, preparing alphabets to show to potential clients.

**13-3** *The Cremation of Sam McGee* < <http://wordinfo.info/unit/2640?letter=C&page=26> >

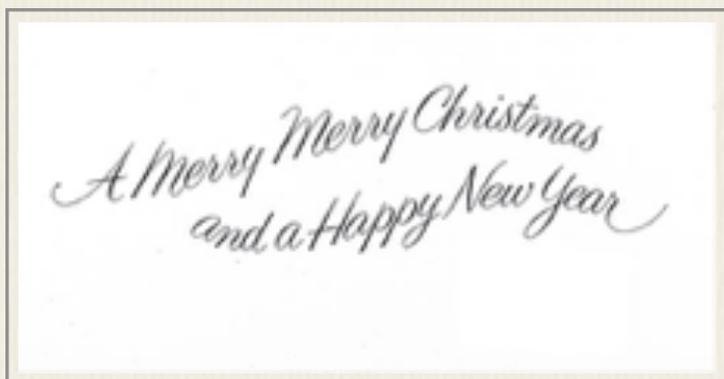
From 1926 to 1932 Gene took night courses at the Art School at Cooper Union Institute in New York City. He studied design, poster and charcoal drawing. He drew sketches from life-size casts of classical Greek and Roman statues, and crafted drawings of live models. He became president of the Night Art Council and two of his drawings won first prize at graduation.

## Early Employment

In 1926, at the age of 17, The Golden Printing Company, an Artcraft Lithograph Company, hired Gene to letter New York City musical and



*Cooper Union Foundation Hall*



*One of the greetings Gene designed for the American Greeting Card Company*



*Gene did the lettering for many of the Little Golden Books*

theater posters. Some of these included American Tragedy by Theodore Dreiser, Oklahoma, West Side Story and even the original poster for Dracula, for which Gene used a wriggling type of lettering to simulate dripping blood. Not only was Gene responsible for the lettering, but he oversaw the creation of the finished product. One memorable design that Gene recalled was a poster for Vladimir Horow-

itz, the renowned pianist. His name had to be huge on the poster, but how would he fit it on a 64 inch by 33-inch sheet? Gene's solution was to place it on a diagonal with staggered, big, bold, letters between two vibrant red bands, also on a diagonal. His design was seen on billboards all over New York City.

His work was on the cover of Modern Packaging in 1933. He also designed for Griffin, the most famous name in shoe polish. He worked for Brooks and Porter in 1933. From 1934 through 1940 Gene was employed by the Lily Tulip Corporation based in College Point, Long Island (a suburb of Flushing). He did lettering for food products such as cottage cheese, ice cream, and sodas.

## Marriage



*On April 14, 1940 Lee Signorile married Gene Rossi at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church. The family gathered to celebrate the occasion.*

In 1939 Gene met Lenore Signorile. She was one of four sisters and three brothers, and Gene noted, “She swept me off my feet”. According to Gene, Lenore was quiet, with exquisite hands and fingers. He courted her for a year and proposed marriage on the boardwalk at Coney Island, while enjoying a picnic of hot dogs at Nathan's. Gene was 31 and Lenore was 24 when they married April 14th, 1940.

Lenore was born in Brooklyn, New York to Vincent and Anna (Guidotti) Signorile. Lenore's father delivered coal and ice in the neighborhood. According to Lenore, *“in the basement of our home, Pops made his own wine for the family. Mom kept house, a full time job for this large family.”* Typical of Italian families, Mom made her own pasta and sauces. Sundays were a day-long eating event!



*Lenore Signorile family: (Left to Right) Back Row: Frank, Jane (Jenny), Danny, Kate Front Row: Marion, Anna (Mom), Mikey, Vincent (Pop), Lenore*

Gene's parents chipped in for a honeymoon cruise on the Clyde-Mallory Line Steamer, which took, then down to Miami for a week. The passenger ship was exciting. They had a nice cabin with a porthole and shower and were provided wonderful meals in the dining room. The tables had raised edges so when the sea got rough, the food wouldn't escape from the table surface.

Their hotel, the Hotel Maxine, was close enough to the beach to walk. Two rocky breakwaters bound the beach and a lifeguard sat on a raised platform midway between the breakwaters. Gene learned the Australian crawl as a boy so he and Lenore swam in the water with some confidence. They were swimming at the north end, still able to touch bottom, when suddenly, the ground slid out from underneath them. They were panic stricken for a few seconds before the lifeguard pushed them back towards the beach. *“You need to stay where I can see you because you two can't swim. I was blowing my whistle and yelling at you -the surf sucks the sand away near that breakwater, sometimes four, six, eight feet deep is scooped out!”*



*Lenore and Gene on the steamer to Miami and their hotel Maxine*

The trip back to New York was choppy, especially near Cape Hatteras. Gene and Lenore saw few people in the dining room, but they never got seasick. A more ominous danger than the rough sea was the possibility of German submarines lurking down below. Throughout the trip, men with binoculars vigilantly searched the waves but, thankfully, there were no sightings.

## Family

Lee and Gene's first child was Liane Marie, born 16 May 1941. Gene took the lovely Portuguese name from a Jules Verne story "800 Leagues Along the Amazon". After the depression, Gene's mother, Amelia, had a residence on West 99th Street above a beauty shop she ran on the ground floor. Gene's mother lived on the floor above the beauty shop. It had a kitchen, large dining room, living room and a big bedroom with a bath. Now married, Gene and Lenore moved into the unoccupied top floor. This floor included a kitchen, bathroom and a bedroom large enough to hold the baby's crib.

In December of 1941, Gene's mother was babysitting Liane while Gene and Lenore enjoyed a night out at the movies. Suddenly the screen went blank and a man came out on the stage to tell the audience that Pearl Harbor had been bombed; the U.S. involvement in World War II was about to begin. Gene and Lenore's second daughter, Rina Louise, was born on December 7th, 1943. Gene had received a draft notice to appear before the draft board while Lenore was still in the hospital recuperating. Gene went before the draft board that evening and explained that his mother was caring for their first small daughter while his wife remained in the hospital with their newborn daughter. He asked for an extension and received it. Life was shadowed by uncertainty for the young Rossi family. Gene was able to freelance but continued to check the mailbox with trepidation as he had three dependents to care for at that turbulent time.

Resourceful as always, Gene decided to take a night course at City College in New York. This was an eight-week crash course in preparing mechanical drawings; the class met three or four nights a week. Traveling through the New York streets at this time was eerie as the street lamps were dimmed as low as possible, car headlights were painted half black so the high beams could not be used, and the subway lights were also dimmed—all as precautions against potential air attacks from Europe. Gene prepared the drawings in pencil and ink on translucent paper, which would then be turned into a blueprint. Professor Newcomb studied the specifications box at the bottom of Gene's drawing and saw that it was immaculately done. He noticed that there were no fingerprint or erasure marks on

the drawing. Gene received his diploma with commendations. Professor Newcomb told him he would personally recommend his entrance to any defense plant in the United States as a draftsman in the event that the draft board sent him another notice.

Gene's father had left and his mother and she was not able to keep the residence on West 99th Street. Fortunately, while at a meeting at the Lord & Thomas Advertising Agency, Gene was introduced to Wally Cole. Wally Cole asked Gene to freelance for him at a company called the M.M. Nickerson Agency. Freelancing provided enough work to support his extended family.

In 1945, Lenore, Eugene and Amelia were able to find an apartment in the Bronx, a borough of New York. The apartment was on Sedgewick Avenue in the University Heights section of the Bronx. They were to live there from 1946 until 1950. The apartment had a lovely entrance hall and an enormous living room with a window that provided an expansive view of the Harlem River. They were on the first floor of a six-story building overlooking the northeast point of the Palisades of New Jersey. They were within a two block walking distance from New York University. A large park nearby had a beautiful view overlooking Manhattan Island. The park contained a University Hall of Fame with bronze busts on stone pillars. The busts were images of famous statesmen and presidents. Gene and Lenore frequently took the girls for walks in the park, taking pictures and feeding the squirrels along the way.

## Move to Oceanside, Long Island

Aiming to achieve the American dream of home ownership, Gene worked days, nights, and weekends to save for a downpayment. In 1950 the Rossi family found a home in Oceanside, Long Island, NY; 54 Howard Place was to be their home for the next 21 years. It was a two-story house with three bedrooms on a 60 by 100 foot corner lot. It had a living room, dining room, kitchen with a dinette, bathroom, den and porch on the first floor. The master suite and a bedroom for the girls were upstairs.



*Lenore, Rina and Liane: Christmas in new home in Oceanside*



*54 Howard Place, the Rossi home 1950 to 1971*

Liane and Rina went to school at P.S. #5 on North Oceanside Road, just a block away from home. Gene commuted to work on the Long Island Railroad. They joined the Oceanside First Presbyterian Church. The church was a social as well as spiritual extension of their immediate family. Gene and Lenore were active in their new community. Gene was on the Board of Deacons and Lenore taught Sunday School. Gene was able to use his excellent drawing skills to put together a fundraising brochure for a manse (living quarters for the minister adjoining the church).

In 1970, Gene was asked to join the Session, a twelve-person ruling body of the Oceanside Presbyterian Church. Gene remembers as a great honor being called by a fellow member, Bob Colwell, to do the sermon jointly on Layman Sunday. Bob had specifically asked Gene to participate because the theme was 'Musical Life in Church History' and he knew of Gene's love of music. On the train to and from work, Gene would jot down ideas for the sermon on his yellow legal pad, hoping he would not get "too emotional" to complete the sermon to his liking. The memory of giving that sermon with his dear friend provided Gene great joy.

Gene worked at Snyder and Black, a lithograph company that had moved from lower Manhattan on Williams Street to Elmsford north of New York City. Gene commuted to Westchester County with fellow artist Joe Tesar for 6 years. Joe Tesar was an illustrator while Gene did the lettering and mechanical art production. A few of the accounts they worked on were the General Foods and the Coca-Cola accounts. Joe Tesar was an accomplished painter. Gene called him “*the man for all seasons*”. He influenced Gene in many ways-philosophically and artistically.

Gene decided to take a watercolor class taught by Barbara McDougall, the wife of a good friend he'd met through church. Because of Gene's proficiency at drawing, Barbara asked if he would help teach the class. Gene brought tracing paper to use as an overlay on which the students planned the spacing of objects in their drawing. Gene was certified to teach the course and did so for a year. He had to turn students away as he wanted to control the class size so that he could give each student proper attention. Gene told his students never discard any drawing. He wanted them to look at everything for inspiration and achieve spatial unity by composing what they saw around them, paying particular attention to the spacing of the chosen elements.

## Saying Goodbye with Memories

A conservator had written to Gene that his father, now living in Chattanooga, Tennessee, needed to be put in a nursing home. He was in his eighties and was frail from a bad fall. Father and son had a moving last visit, ending in an embrace, before Alfred Rossi (Pasio) died in 1956.

Gene had never been on a airplane before he flew to the funeral. The lawyer who'd handled his father's affairs accompanied Gene to the cemetery and provided support throughout the ceremony. Alfred Rossi had taken care of the arrangements before he had passed away, and seeing the suit he'd picked out to be buried in reminded Gene of the time they'd gone together to be fitted for suits when he was a boy. He remembered the time he and his father had discovered a spring in Central Park and had brought gallon drums back to fill with water, pass-

ing sheep grazing in the meadows along the way. On a given night, the Goldman Band or legendary violinist Jascha Heifetz or violin virtuoso Mischa Elman, or renowned pianist Paderewski would play at the Central Park outdoor amphitheater. Gene would sit on his father's shoulders in order to see and hear the beautiful music being played. Gene has a blazing memory of the voice of Enrico Caruso, the great tenor of the Metropolitan Opera, reverberating from the amphitheater. Caruso's always began and closed his performance singing *The Star Spangled Banner*.

Though Gene's father was somewhat of an enigma, his past was not completely unknown to his wife and son. Gene's mother, who loved traveling, had gone to Europe in the mid 1920s. She visited the town in Italy where her husband had been born, and had met Alfred's mother. It was a momentous visit between the two women as Gene's father had not been in touch with his family for many years. In her diary of that trip Amelia wrote: *"Mother cried over me and blessed me and told me over and over I was bella come il solo. ... Mother knocks at my door every am and blesses me and adds sweet names and always says take me to my boy with you... she would even get in an airplane (some sport) she's 87 years old and still takes care of herself."*

## Retirement in Copake, New York

In 1964, Gene had accepted a job working for Seagrams located at 375 Park Avenue in New York City. For the next seven years he worked at a frantic pace. Among the accounts on which he worked were the redesign for Canada Dry and Allerest Antihistamine. As always, Gene's work was pristine. The head of the Calvert Division for Calvert Whiskey once told Gene *"I'm going to have to get you some rubber gloves because you handle everything like a surgeon"*. Gene's high standards would allow the work he was responsible for to be nothing less than perfect and as the workload kept increasing, he felt as if he were "shoveling sand against the tide"

In December of 1970 at the age of 61, Gene had an operation and was off work recuperating. When it was time for him to return to work in January, he talked it over with Lenore and decided to retire. He was asked to stay on in an executive position, responsible for sending out work off-site. Gene replied, "Thank

you for presenting that alternative, but that wouldn't be suitable. Please accept my resignation with regret. I love my work, but I can't keep up the physical pace."



*Lenore's garden in Copake*

At his retirement luncheon, he was presented a book of Andrew Wyeth's paintings, a book on retirement and a lovely gold plated pen and pencil set. Even at his retirement luncheon Gene could not sit still; he noticed some ladies waiting to be served so he threw a napkin over his arm took their order and carried it back to the kitchen.

Years later, Gene returned to New York City to see the Citicorp Building which was being worked on when he retired. He visited his old department and the new attendant said, "You're the Gene Rossi". While there, an executive needed

the original Seagram's 7 logo art. Gene was able to immediately go to the right bookcase and pull it out.

Gene and Lenore looked at real estate in Canaan near their friends, Marge and Steve Nacastro. That search led them to Copake where they bought a lovely house on an acre of land. Gene's mother had been living in Florida in a trailer Gene had bought for her. When Gene and Lenore moved to Copake, she decided to come back to live with them. His mother was very comfortable in their new home. In her room she had all of her things around her: her hand painted oval dresser with the mirror attached; her chair with the carved back; and she had two windows overlooking the beautiful country side.

The lush farm country could also be seen through the dining room windows and from the deck. Gene captured this view in a painting. The detail of the painting stands out, but it is the impression of serenity of the land that lingered in the mind. It is a particularly poignant scene because it doesn't exist anymore, having been developed as a subdivision with streets and houses.

In Copake, Lenore gained a reputation as a notable cook with her Italian specialties including roasted chicken and spaghetti. Not content only to serve, she gave cooking lessons as well. Lenore also worked at the local hospital as a 'pink lady' in the Hospital Auxiliary Group.

Gene built a studio at the end of the garage, He belonged to the Sheffield Art League where he showed many of his paintings: Barn-scapes in Copake, Lily Pond, Bash-Bish Falls, Portrait of a Rock, Motif No. 1 in Rockport, Massachusetts, and Peggy's Cove. He even produced an abstract painting to prove to a critic he could branch out with his creativity.



*Gene Rossi with some of his paintings exhibited at the Sheffield Art League*

Gene talks of their move to Copake as “a whole new lifestyle”. They worked the land, mowing and planting a row of 50 or 60 trees, Crimson King, Birch, Spruce and Crabapple, which formed a natural barrier to the road. Lenore planted a vegetable garden.

Gene and Lenore had always been members of a close community and it followed they would seek out just that in their new community. Their neighbors next door belonged to The Grange, a farming organization. Gene and Lenore decided to join in 1972. The Grange had a building in Copake for meetings and the members, being farm producers, were quite different from the city dwellers Gene and Lenore had previously know in New York City. However, the common thread was there: the Grange members welcomed Gene and Lenore with open arms.

Gene and Lenore became friends with a dentist and his wife, Dr. Leonard and Madelyn Faust. Dr. Faust had retired to the country from New Your City. Through them, Gene and Lenore joined the Community Activities League or CAL. CAL members were interested in anything cultural, educational, or artistic. Leonard Faust was President of the League, and Gene was Secretary. CAL started with 8 to 10 members but quickly expanded to include 150 members. As Boston was three hours away and New York City was over 2, there were many opportunities to satisfy the cultural yearnings of the group. Excursions included bus rides to NYC to art gallery openings, including the Van Gogh and Monet exhibitions. A woman once took off her earphones while listening to a tape about the masters to listen to Gene instead, as he was more interesting than the tape. Not to be forgotten was a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see The Treasures of Tutankhamen. Most impressive was the death mask, so well preserved, of the young king. Gene could remember hearing about the treasures being excavated back in the twenties. The members listened to the Philharmonic Orchestra while picnicking in the woods. In Boston, they toured the North Church Bell Tower, the Boston and Gardener Museums; CAL brought a Jazz orchestra to the local auditorium. They brought a theater group in to perform Butterflies are Free. Gene illustrated the program cover. They would assemble as 'armchair travelers'. Gene entertained a group of people at St. Bridget's Catholic Church with slides and commentary of their trip to Europe in 1967.

Although Copake was a rural farm community, its location near urban cultural centers provided an eclectic group of interesting friends which included: farmers, writers, producers, sculptors, painters and musicians. Gene sums up “Our life was a living work of art”.

Lenore Rossi was a woman of many talents. She sculpted this bust of an African Queen. She won first prize for her work in an exhibition at the Sheffield Art League. As a painter, Eugene was extremely proud of Lenore's accomplishment.



*African Queen: Sculpture by  
Lenore Rossi*

## Travel

Lee and Gene relished their travels throughout their lifetime. Especially memorable were a series of trips they took with his daughter Liane and son-in-law Don. Right after their marriage, Liane and Don took Lee and Gene on a trip to Montreal, Quebec. Gene recalls the evening at Place des Arts for a performance by the Montreal Symphony Orchestra of Vivaldi's Four Seasons. "We enjoyed so many



*Camping along the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick*

great restaurants in Montreal!. At La Crepe Bretonne we watched the creation of, and then we tasted, marvelous savory crepes avec jambon et fromage. Another exciting venue was La Cave d'Abbey, a wine bar where waiters wearing monks' habits served patrons. Dinner at Troika, a Russian restaurant on Rue Crescent, was a fantastic experience!" Tours took Lenore, Gene, Liane and Don to such notable sites as Place Ville-Marie, the old historic center—Vieux Montréal— St Joseph's Oratory, Montmorency Falls, and the Shrine of Sainte Anne de Beaupre. Gene recalls that in later years Liane, Don, David and Steven took us back for another Canadian vacation. This time, instead of staying in top hotels in the city, we went camping. "It was our first experience with family camping," recalls Gene. "I never realized how much work was involved in unpacking the gear, inflating the air mattresses, and setting up camp." Gene jokingly recalled the important papers necessary to assure comfort at rustic campgrounds. "One night we camped on a bluff high above the St. Lawrence River as it flows into the Bay of Fundy. The next morning, we all marveled at the incredible tides, acclaimed to be the highest tides on earth, as they rolled into this New Brunswick estuary." From there it was on to Nouvelle Ecosse (Nova Scotia). Peggy's Cove was a particularly inspirational seafaring community, and became the subject of several oil paintings that Gene later created.

In celebration of Lee and Gene's 50th, and Liane and Don's 25th anniversaries, another trip was designed to revisit some of the sites of Gene's earlier life. The trip began with a flight to Los Angeles and a stay at a favorite old hotel in Manhattan Beach called Barnaby's. The turn-of-the-century decor and fantastic cooked-at-table omelets began the adventure. Gene was fascinated as we attempted to retrace his roots in LA—the Los Angeles Plaza Historic District, which contains the site of the original Pueblo of Los Angeles, established in 1781. We attempted to find Westlake Park, which Gene remembered from his youth. After talking to a docent at the Fire House Museum in the historic district, we found that the park had been renamed for General Douglas MacArthur. When we visited the park and tried to find the home in which Gene had lived, we realized that time had taken its toll; nothing seemed familiar.

The tour continued up the coast to San Francisco. Gene marveled at the vistas along the Pacific Coastal Highway, CA1. It reminded him of Italy and the Amalfi Coast. Big Sur and the fantastic Nepenthe hanging on the cliffs. What a throw-back to a bye-gone era. On to San Francisco to enjoy seeing David and Steven and learning about his grandsons' work in Silicon Valley. A visit to Napa was another highlight!



*Lee and Gene visited Yosemite National Park with Liane and Don*

The tour was still to be capped by a trip to Yosemite Valley. Gene was swept away by the scale of the rock cliffs and waterfalls. "I remember the beauty of the view from our balcony at the Yosemite Lodge. The moon was shining on the sheer rock cliffs, and we could see (and hear) the cascade at Yosemite Falls right in front of us."

Gene and Lenore loved to travel, and nothing was more exciting than their trips to Europe, and La Belle Italia. They took two trips to Europe. The first was a "grand-circle route" taking them to London, Paris, Amsterdam, Germany, Liechtenstein, and Italy. In each place, Gene made friends and always tried to communicate in the local language. In the shadow of the Schloss Heidelberg, he met a German tourist who was also taking pictures of the castle. Neither spoke the other's language, but at the end Gene said in broken German, "*Ich habe einen neuen freund gebildet*"—I have made a new friend!

In Rome, Gene and his tour group went to dinner at the famous Alfredo di Roma. What would Gene have, but Fettuccni Alfredo. "It was the most delicious pasta I have ever had," said Gene. He asked the famous Alfredo to come to the table and Gene proceeded to kiss his hands, hold them in the air and proclaim "mani di oro" (hands of gold).

Later trips focused more on his Italy--Rome, Florence, Sicily, Amalfi, and many others. In Rome, Gene visited the Vatican. He describe the unbelievable beauty of the work of Michelangelo Buonarroti. He was awestruck by the Pietà. "I was reduced to tears," Gene explained. "How could anyone capture the essence of human form, as did Michelangelo?" Gene had visited a photographic exhibit in New York City of the Sistine Chapel. He was so excited to see this masterpiece for himself. He made arrangements with Vatican officials to enter the Chapel before the public was admitted—an honor accorded to him as an artist. Gene recalled his experience. "I lay on the floor in the center of the Chapel so that I could see the frescos without straining my head. I had a pair of binoculars so that I could see the detail. How incredible! How could anyone paint like this?" Gene's half hour was up, and the other tourists were entering. "What an experience!"

On a tour of Florence he visited the Franciscan church of Santa Croce . Gene realized that he was at the tomb of Michelangelo. This encounter was unexpected, but deeply moving to Gene. Michelangelo Buonarroti represented a level of perfection in art that Gene admired, and now to stand at the very resting place of this giant; it was unbelievable! Gene marveled that he began his life on Manhattan Island, where Revolutionary War battles had been fought not so many years before. Now, he was a world traveler!

## Final Years

In 1999 Lenore and Eugene Rossi moved to Brighton, MI so that they were close to Liane and Don. They gave up their beloved home in Copake and settled in a retirement community where they did not have the pressures of home maintenance. Eugene passed away on January 29, 2005 just days after his 96th birthday. That 96th birthday was marked by the birth of his third great-grandchild, Joseph

Michael Falkenburg. Lenore lived until her 93rd year passing away October 9, 2009. Her 91st birthday, May 20, 2007 was another occasion for celebration marked by the birth of her first grandson Benjamin Eugene Falkenburg. So both the birth dates of Eugene Rossi and Lenore Signorile Rossi are carried in our family as the days for the birth of two of three grandsons!

# A Sample of Artwork of Eugene A. Rossi



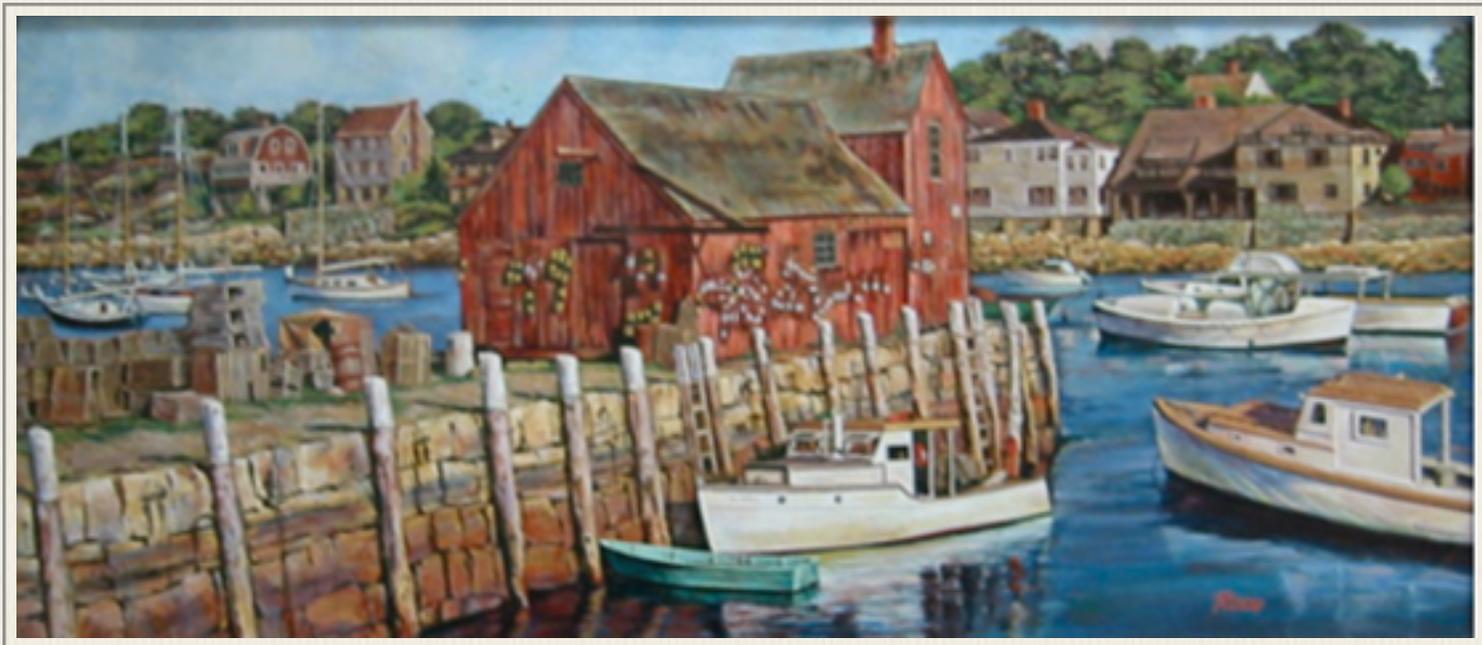
*A canal in Venice*



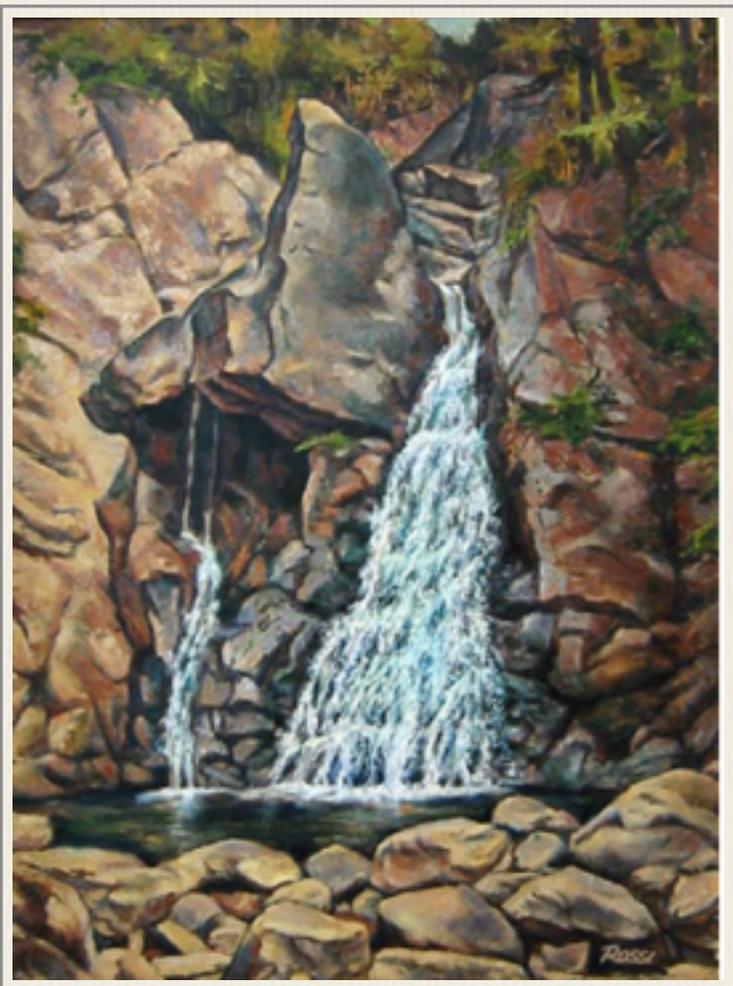
*Planning for poem lettered in calligraphy*



*Pemaquid Point along the Maine coast*



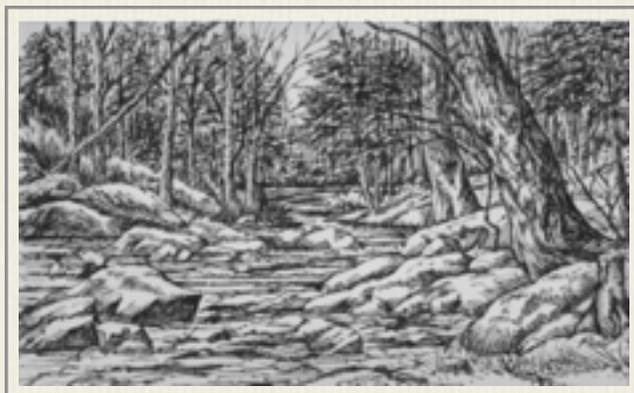
*Motif #1 Rockport, MA*



*Bash Bish Falls, near Copake NY*



*(top) Barns along Sky Farm Road  
(bottom) Portrait of a Rock*



*Along Bash Bish Brook (from a series of pen and ink drawings)*