

# Basic Detail Report



**Title: Mrs. Abby Rossiter**

# Basic Detail Report

Date: 1823

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3f0fd

Medium: Oil on wood panel

Description: Little is known about Mrs. Abbey Rossiter, who had her portrait painted by Waldo and Jewett when she was thirty-three. She is thought to have been a Connecticut resident. It is likely her home was the little river village seen in the far distance at the left edge of the painting. Perhaps she sat for her portrait when Waldo made one of his occasional journeys to Windham County to visit his parents. The inscription on the reverse of the painting credits the work to the firm of Waldo and Jewett. However, the careful attention given to several passages in the work, especially the disposition of color, suggests the hand of Waldo dominated. He seated Mrs. Rossiter off-center but on a diagonal at the right, leading the eye back to the light pale green and rose landscape in the distance at the left. Tiny strokes of white indicate a village and river. Small points of white in a deep stretch of landscape is a compositional device used by Thomas Lawrence, an English artist whose work Waldo had admired during his study in London a decade earlier. A tall column between the figure and the heavy foliage serves as a door jamb dividing interior and exterior space. Waldo's treatment of Mrs. Rossiter's double collar and fichu of dotted and sprigged white muslin is masterful. The soft fabric of the collar is constructed to rise stiffly above the fichu. It casts faint shadows and curves naturally around her long neck. A flattering v-neck opening in front reveals a three-strand necklace of gold, a color Waldo often used to relieve white. Another touch of naturalism is seen in the way the soft curl with its wayward strands brushes her cheek. Enlivening the shadows here and at the back of the neck is a garnet earring, perhaps a studio prop, as it is worn by a number of Waldo's sitters. Mrs. Rossiter's long bony fingers are poised on a book with a marbelized cover, bringing color and interest to play against the expanse of her black gown. These little touches helped fashion what could have been a plain painting of a rather plain-faced woman into a portrait of grace and charm. The large inscription in a cursive script on the reverse of the panel is in the artist's handwriting. Both the position of the figure and the handwritten inscription are similar to those on another Waldo painting of the same year, "Miss Booth" (private collection). MG Bibliography: "Artist Biography, Samuel L. Waldo," "Crayon" 8 (May 1861): 98. William Dunlap, "A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States", ed. Alexander Wyckoff, 3 vols. (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), vol. 2, p. 355, and vol. 3, p. 22; Dimensions: 30 x 24 5/8 in.