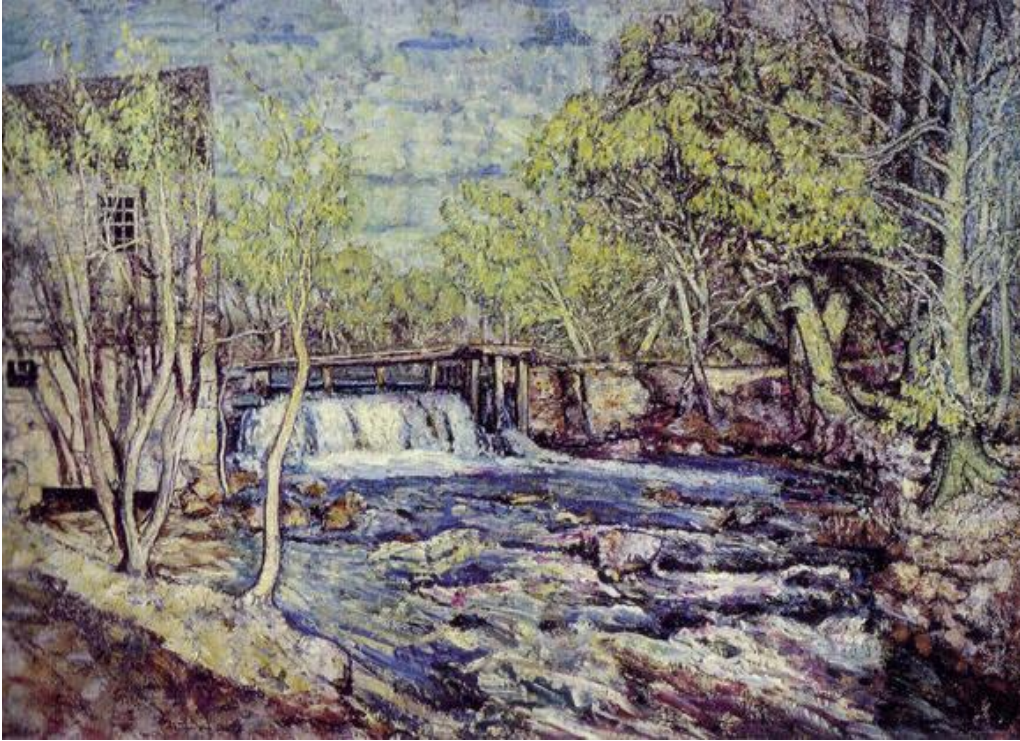


# Basic Detail Report



## **Title: Bradbury Mill Dam in Spring**

Date: c. 1910-15

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3ee46

Medium: oil on canvas

Description: "Bradbury's Mill Dam in Spring" The electricity evident in Rook's Mexican work carried into his paintings of Bradbury's Mill Dam, of which he executed at least eight examples between 1905 and 1917. Although Rook was not the first local artist to paint the stream and mill, he certainly carried his preoccupation further. Henry Ward Ranger had painted "Bradbury's Mill Pond" (National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.) in 1903 in a purely tonalist style. Rook was drawn to the stream, pond, and rustic mill, where he was able to create a powerful visual record of changing seasons and times of day much as Monet had done with "Haystacks". Rook's Bradbury's Mill Dam images vary according to his moods; as the seasons changed so, too, did his reaction to what he saw. Rook's paintings have been identified with those of John Twachtman, an artist whose interest in depicting waterfalls and streams is well documented. The New Britain Museum's "Niagara in Winter" (ca. 1893) is a prime example of the loose brushwork and atmospheric techniques typical of Twachtman. Charles Caffin, the noted early-twentieth-century critic and art historian, admired Rook's skill as a

# Basic Detail Report

colorist. Of all the Bradbury's Mill Dam paintings, the one that Caffin singled out for particular distinction was "Bradbury's Mill Dam in Spring".<sup>1</sup> The picture is daring in the use not only of purple but of rich light greens and bold shades of blue as well. Trees are coming alive after months of dormancy and there is a rush of water with the melting snow. Urgency and energy are everywhere, taken to an extreme not seen in any of the other depictions of the scene. The arbitrary application of pinks and purples applied to the surface of the water is more pervasive than it is in any previous view. William Gerdts has observed that Rook "applied local color in an almost expressionistic manner."<sup>2</sup> Certainly, the artist's arbitrary introduction of color is meant to enhance and complement nature's unleashed power. When he painted Bradbury's Mill Dam in Spring, Rook may have been familiar with the German Expressionists and with the other avant-garde movements represented at the Armory Show of 1913. A conservative, academically trained artist, Rook did not succumb to these radical influences, but he may have subconsciously incorporated some of their aims. Although tied to a form of visual reality, his objective was to capture an intuitive, visceral reaction to what he saw. By the time he painted "Swirling Water" (ca. 1917), the Old Lyme Colony had begun its slow decline. He continued to paint for another ten years or so and then gave up art entirely. DH Bibliography "Connecticut and American Impressionism", exhib. cat. (Storrs: William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, 1980); Diane Pietrucha Fisher, "Edward F. Rook, 1870 - 1960: American Impressionist", exhib. cat. (Old Lyme: Lyme Historical Society, 1987); and William H. Gerdts, "Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Painting", 1720 - 1920, vol. 1, (New York, Abbeville Press, 1990). Notes: 1 Fisher, "Edward F. Rook", p. 15 2 Gerdts, "Art", p. 128 Dimensions: 25 3/4 x 36 1/4 in.