

## **Carroll Thayer Berry**

**Painter/Printmaker**

Born 1888 New Gloucester, Maine

Died 1978 Rockport, Maine

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Carroll Thayer Berry was born and raised in New Gloucester, Maine, the son of a dairy farmer. Not wanting to follow in his father's footsteps, he was determined to become a marine engineer and, in 1905, enrolled at the University of Michigan. Upon completion of his undergraduate work, he was employed as a mechanical draftsman for an engineering company in Massachusetts.

In 1910, Berry joined an architectural firm in Portland and was sent to Panama to contribute to the construction of the Panama Canal. After a year, he was sent back to the United States to recuperate from a serious case of malaria. While home, he enrolled in art classes, this time at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Berry was sent back to Panama once again as an inspector of construction, but the government became so impressed with his artistic talent that they commissioned him to paint a series of large murals of the Canal construction for the administration building.

After returning from Panama in 1915, Berry settled in New York where he began work as a commercial artist. While in New York, he married and fathered a son. When the United States entered World War I, Berry volunteered for service and was commissioned as first lieutenant. He was assigned to the First Army Camouflage Regiment and was sent to the front lines witnessing first hand the atrocities of war.

After the war, Berry moved to Chicago. There, he worked as a designer of installations and interiors for office buildings and met his second wife, Jane Scott, a successful illustrator who later designed the Bobsey Twins books and Raggedy Andy dolls. The depression brought Berry and his wife back to Maine where they bought a house in Wiscasset. Their home became a meeting place for craftsmen and artists of the region. With a second World War on the horizon, Bath Iron Works commissioned Berry to document their construction of fighting ships for the Navy. These oil paintings depict the shipyard in full production - a period during which the phrase "the delivery of a destroyer every other Friday" was coined.

After the war, Berry sold his house in Wiscasset and bought an old three-story brick building on Rockport's Main Street, just a short walk from his newly purchased home. This building served as his studio until the end of his life. There along with a 19th Century acorn press Berry came to perfect his skill as a printmaker. Berry experimented with many printmaking techniques including wood engraving and wood cutting.

Wood cutting is a relief printing process where the raised surfaces of the carved plank carry ink to produce the printed image. Berry would sometimes produce his prints in color versions adding a beige, blue, orange or other tint to the usually black and white print. He also produced large editions of his prints realizing the demand for his work. He would go back to the press again and again on his most popular prints; others, in less demand, were never printed after the first run.

In 1978, at the age of 90, he died in a Rockport Hospital having led a productive and creative life and leaving to the people of the State of Maine a body of work "created with consummate skill and fidelity to their subjects."

### Sources:

All quotes from "The Romantic World of Carroll Thayer Berry," Downeast Magazine, Lewis D. Hammond.