A native of Lynn, Massachusetts, Charles Woodbury showed an aptitude for the arts at an early age, and joined the Lynn Beach Painters when he was only sixteen. Although a junior member of the group in terms of age, Woodbury was in many ways its leader, having exhibited the first Lynn Beach painting at the Boston Art Club in 1882. He had already become the youngest elected member of the Club, and Woodbury continued to have further success exhibiting and teaching throughout his career, becoming a full National Academician in 1907.

Woodbury graduated from MIT in 1886 with a degree in engineering, but he quickly began exhibiting and teaching fine art, working from his Boston studio on School Street and later at the Grundmann Studios. He worked as an illustrator for Harper's Monthly and Century magazines during these early years, and eventually obtained a teaching position at Wellesley College. In 1890 he married one of his students, Marcia Oakes, and together they traveled to Europe, where he continued his studies at the Académie Julian.

Ogunquit, Maine, became Woodbury's primary home in 1897, and the art school which he subsequently established there helped to shape the town as a major artist colony. Rather than focus on technique in his lessons, Woodbury emphasized expression and careful observation in his teaching. These attributes are clearly illustrated in his powerful seascapes; while retaining a traditional subject matter, they show a daring and experimental use of form and vivid color. His approach was also revolutionary, declaring to his students: "We [paint pictures] primarily because we want to put into visible form some thought or feeling we have in the presence of our subject..." Working with nearly 100 students each summer, Woodbury taught by example and individual criticism, eventually publishing his own book, The Art of Seeing, in 1925.

Exhibitions: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, "113th Annual Exhibition," 1918

Charles H. Woodbury (1864-1940)
The Motor Boat
Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 inches, Signed lower right: Charles H. Woodbury, Dated 1917