

Robert Goddard Art Commentary

Creating art was one of Robert Goddard's favorite forms of relaxation. He particularly enjoyed painting landscapes. When he was sixteen years old, he received a set of oil painting supplies as a Christmas gift. Two days later, he went shopping for water colors and a sketch book. He wrote in his diary that he painted nearly every day the following week.

Goddard lived in Massachusetts most of his life, but he moved to New Mexico when he was 48 years old. Those environments gave him different kinds of landscapes to paint. He often wrote in his diary about painting cottonwood, pine, and apple trees as well as lilac and desert poppy blossoms. In New Mexico, he painted sagebrush-dotted deserts with snow-capped mountains in the background. When he traveled, he painted seascapes and harbor scenes.

Sometimes, his diary entries reflected his artistic eye. For example, on a steamship cruise from Massachusetts to Florida, he wrote "Sea a lead color, with the waves as small hills with long valleys between. Sky a smoky green. Water [is] two colors, blue and slate. Clouds two shades of buff, darker below." During a seaside visit, he painted a harbor with its lighthouse. That evening, he wrote some self-criticism of the day's painting: "Sky might be a little bluer or greener near the horizon. Ocean a little less blue—not so dark, and perhaps more gray or green."

In Massachusetts, he took private lessons from O. Victor Humann of the Worcester Art Museum, and in New Mexico, he developed a friendship with Peter Hurd, a regionally acclaimed landscape and portrait painter. They would often get together on a Sunday to spend a quiet day painting and enjoying each other's company.

Goddard's artistic abilities also helped him with his work. In his research journals, he would often sketch new designs for rocket components. When he applied for a patent, he would have to include detailed drawings of his inventions.

[Insert description of the art contest.]