



*Self Portrait*, 1925–1930  
Oil on canvas, 64.1 × 52.4 cm (25¼ × 20⅝ in.). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.1165. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Photograph by Robert E. Mates

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EDWARD HOPPER'S NEW ENGLAND *is an exploration of landscape and a legacy of light. Encompassing the Maine coast, Cape Ann, Vermont, and Cape Cod, Hopper's New England comprises a quiet Ogunquit cove, a bold headland on Monhegan Island, Gloucester's sail-filled harbor and sunlit streets, the graceful bends of the White River, and South Truro's hills and dunes.*

Hopper's New England is also a study in architecture: Victorian mansions and shady hotels, a sugar house and a box factory, churches and filling stations, Two Lights on Cape Elizabeth (fig. 1) and the custom house in Portland, summer cottages at Wellfleet and the tenements of Gloucester's Italian quarter.

Beginning in 1912, Hopper (1882–1967) spent nearly every summer of his long life in New England. These seasonal visits, which often stretched on well into autumn, proved highly productive times. Consider, for instance, the many superb watercolors he painted during his stays on Cape Ann in the 1920s or the inventory of masterful oils he produced on Cape Cod in the early 1930s. Even on relatively brief sojourns to Vermont, the artist turned out a body of memorable watercolors that remain as fresh in feeling as the day they were painted.

New England provided Hopper with motifs that he would turn into icons of American art. Perhaps the best known of these is the lighthouse. Artists had been drawn to this subject since the first one was built on the New England coast in the early 1700s, but it was Hopper who made of the lighthouse a representative and enduring American image. His paintings of these coastal sentinels, standing out against the glorious blue of a Maine or Massachusetts sky, remind us of the truth of Emerson's observation, in the opening line of his second essay on nature: "There are days which occur in this climate, at almost any season of the year, wherein the world reaches its perfection."



Fig. 1. *Light at Two Lights*, 1927  
Watercolor and graphite pencil on paper, 35.4 × 50.8 cm (13⅞ × 20 in.). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Josephine N. Hopper Bequest 70.1094. © Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper, licensed by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Photograph by Sandak, Inc.