



Ernest Thompson Seton

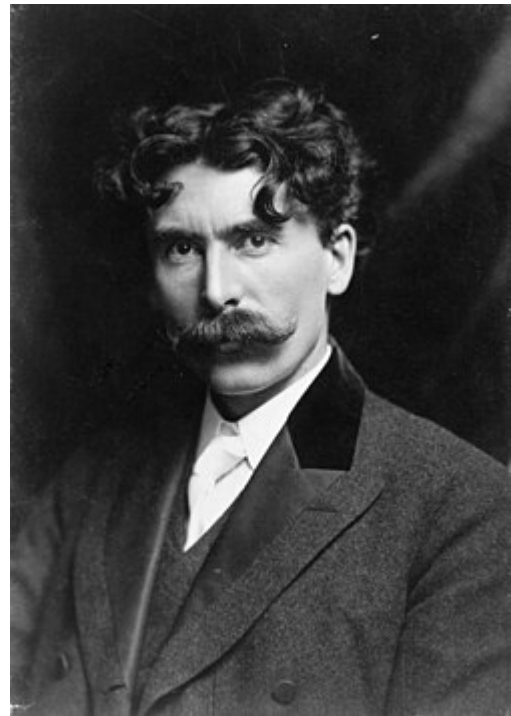
Ernest Thompson Seton (born **Ernest Evan Thompson**;^[1] August 14, 1860 – October 23, 1946) was a Canadian and American author, wildlife artist, founder of the Woodcraft Indians in 1902 (renamed Woodcraft League of America), and one of the founding pioneers of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) in 1910.

Seton also influenced Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouting movement. His writings were published in the United Kingdom, Canada, the US, and the USSR; his notable books related to Scouting include *The Birch Bark Roll* and the *Boy Scout Handbook*. He incorporated what he believed to be American Indian elements into the traditions of the BSA.

Early life

Seton was born in South Shields, County Durham, England to Scottish parents. His family emigrated to British North America in 1866. After settling in Lindsay, Canada West Seton spent most (after 1870) of his childhood in Toronto, and the family is known to have lived at 6 Aberdeen Avenue in Cabbagetown. As a youth, he retreated to the woods of the Don River to draw and study animals as a way of avoiding his abusive father.^[2] He attended the Ontario College of Art in 1879, studying with John Colin Forbes, then won a scholarship in art to the Royal Academy in London, England in 1880.^[3] He went out into the field, sometimes accompanied by William "Willie" Brodie jr., the son of the naturalist Dr. William Brodie. The death of Willie in a canoeing accident was a blow to Seton. In the 1890s, he studied at the Académie Julian in Paris^[4] In 1893-4, he was elected an associate member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.^[5]

Ernest Thompson Seton



Ernest Thompson Seton in 1901

Born	Ernest Evan Thompson August 14, 1860 <u>South Shields</u>, County Durham, England, United Kingdom
Died	October 23, 1946 (aged 86) <u>Seton Village</u>, New Mexico, United States
Other names	Ernest Seton-Thompson Black Wolf Chief
Occupation(s)	Author, wildlife artist
Known for	Founder of the <u>Woodcraft Indians</u> and founding pioneer of the <u>Boy Scouts of America</u>
Spouses	<u>Grace Gallatin</u> (m. 1896–1935) Julia Moss Buttree
Children	<u>Anya Seton</u> (daughter)

On Seton's 21st birthday his father presented him with an invoice for all of the expenses connected with his childhood and youth, including the fee charged by the doctor who delivered him. According to one writer, he paid the bill, but never spoke to his father again.^{[6][7]} In his autobiography, *Trail of An Artist-naturalist: The Autobiography of Ernest Thompson Seton*, he discusses the incident in detail, but, since he hadn't "a cent of money," he could not pay his father. He went immediately to work and used the money he made to leave the household.^[8]

In 1882, he joined his brother on a homestead outside Carberry, Manitoba, where he began to write. In 1891, he published *The Birds of Manitoba* and was appointed Provincial Naturalist by the government of Manitoba.^[9] He continued to publish books about Manitoba for decades to come, including *The Life Histories of Northern Animals: An Account of the Mammals of Manitoba* and lived in Manitoba, before moving to New York and Connecticut. In 1930, when he moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

He changed his name to Ernest Thompson Seton (after initially changing it to Ernest Seton-Thompson), believing that Seton had been an important family name. He became successful as a writer, artist, and naturalist, and moved to New York City to further his career. Seton later lived at Wyndygoul,^[10] an estate that he built in Cos Cob, a section of Greenwich, Connecticut. After experiencing vandalism by the local youth, Seton invited them to his estate for a weekend where he told them what he claimed were stories of the American Indians and of nature.^[11] Seton was an early and influential member of the Camp-Fire Club of America, hosting several of the club's earliest official events at his Wyndygoul estate.^[12]

He formed the Woodcraft Indians in 1902 and invited the local youth to join. Despite the name, the group was made up of non-native boys and girls. The stories became a series of articles written for the *Ladies Home Journal*, and were eventually collected in *The Birch Bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians* in 1906. Shortly after, the Woodcraft Indians evolved into the Woodcraft Rangers, which was established as a non-profit organization for youth programming in 1922.

Since 1922, Woodcraft Rangers has served Los Angeles youth with Seton's model of character building, which encompasses service, truth, fortitude, and beauty.^[13] Since then, Woodcraft Rangers youth have been received in a safe environment to encourage the discovery of their own talents. Today the Woodcraft Rangers organization serves over 15,000 youth in the Los Angeles county by helping them find pathways to purposeful lives. They offer expanded learning opportunities to youth from kindergarten to twelfth grade. Youth participants are encouraged to discover their natural talents and are embraced daily with the belief that all children are innately good.

Scouting

Seton met Scouting's founder, Lord Baden-Powell, in 1906. Baden-Powell had read Seton's book *The Birch Bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians* and was greatly intrigued by it. The pair met and shared ideas. Baden-Powell went on to found the Scouting movement worldwide and Seton became the president of

Parents	Dee Barber Seton (daughter)
	Joseph Logan Thompson (father)
	Alice Snowdon Thompson (mother)
Awards	<u>John Burroughs Medal</u> (1927)
	<u>Daniel Giraud Elliot Medal</u> (1928)
	<u>Silver Buffalo Award</u>
Signature	
	

the committee that founded the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and was its first (and only) Chief Scout. Seton's Woodcraft Indians (a youth organization) combined with the early attempts at Scouting from the YMCA and other organizations and with Daniel Carter Beard's Sons of Daniel Boone, to form the BSA.^[14] The work of Seton and Beard is in large part the basis of the Traditional Scouting movement.^[15]

Seton served as Chief Scout of the BSA from 1910 to 1915 and incorporated what he believed to be American Indian elements into the traditions of the BSA. He had significant personality and philosophical clashes with Beard and James E. West.

In addition to disputes about the content of Seton's contributions to the Boy Scout Handbook, conflicts also arose about the suffragist activities of his wife, Grace Gallatin Seton Thompson, and his British citizenship. The citizenship issue arose partly because of his high position within the BSA and the federal charter West was attempting to obtain for the BSA requiring its board members to be United States citizens. Seton drafted his written resignation on January 29, 1915, but did not send it to the BSA until May.^[16] The position of Chief Scout was eliminated and the position "Chief Scout Executive" was taken on by James West. In 1931, Seton became a United States citizen.



Ernest Thompson Seton with Baden-Powell (seated) and Daniel Beard (right)

Personal life

British by birth, Seton was not naturalized as Canadian (as status did not legally exist until 1947; he thus remained a British subject) and became an American in 1931. He was married twice. His first marriage was to Grace Gallatin in 1896. Their only daughter, Ann (1904–1990), later known as Anya Seton, became a best-selling author of historical and biographical novels. According to Ann's introduction to the novel Green Darkness, Grace was a practicing Theosophist.

Ernest and Grace divorced in 1935, and Ernest soon married Julia Moss Buttree. Julia wrote works by herself and with Ernest. They did not have any biological children, but in the 1930s they sought to adopt Moss Buttree's niece, Leila Moss, who lived with them for years in New Mexico.^[17] In 1938, they adopted an infant daughter, Beulah (Dee) Seton (later Dee Seton Barber). Dee Seton Barber, a talented embroiderer of articles for synagogues such as Torah mantles, died in 2006.^[18]

Seton called his father, Joseph Logan Thompson, "the most selfish man I ever knew, or heard of, in history or in fiction." He cut off ties completely after being made to pay off an itemized list of all expenses he had cost his father, up to and including the doctor's fee for his delivery, a total of \$537.50.^[19]

Seton's parents lived out their lives in Toronto, as did brother John Enoch Thompson (abt. 1846–1932).

Two brothers, Joseph Logan Thompson (1849–1922) and Charles Seton Thompson (1851–1925), moved to British Columbia. Besides Seton, George Seton Thompson (1854–1944) moved to Illinois and died there.

Writing and later life

Seton was an early pioneer of the modern school of animal fiction writing, his most popular work being *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898), which contains the story of his killing of the wolf Lobo. Four stories from this collection would be republished as *Lobo, Rag, and Vixen* (1900). He later became involved in a literary debate known as the nature fakers controversy, after John Burroughs published an article in 1903 in the *Atlantic Monthly* attacking writers of sentimental animal stories. The controversy lasted for four years and included important American environmental and political figures of the day, including President Theodore Roosevelt.^[20]

For his work, *Lives of Game Animals Volume 4*, Seton was awarded the Daniel Giraud Elliot Medal from the National Academy of Sciences in 1928.^[21] In 1931, he became a United States citizen. Seton was associated with the Santa Fe arts and literary community during the mid-1930s and early 1940s, which was a group of artists and authors, including author and artist Alfred Morang, sculptor and potter Clem Hull, painter Georgia O'Keeffe, painter Randall Davey, painter Raymond Jonson, leader of the Transcendental Painters Group and artist Eliseo Rodriguez.^[22] He was made a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.^[23]



Seton early in his writing career

In 1933, Seton purchased 100 acres (40 ha) in Santa Fe County, New Mexico, United States. Seton ran training camps for youth leaders and had a small publisher named Seton Village Press that closed in 1943 due to World War II. The tract eventually grew to 2,500 acres (1,000 ha). Seton Village was established as an unincorporated community.

Seton designed and built his castle as a 32-room, 6,900-square-foot (640 m²) multi-level building with a flat-roof and rough hewn stone wall exterior. The interior had oak floors and plaster walls with the ceilings supported by log rafters. The castle was built on a hill at an elevation of 7,000 ft (2,100 m). It is designated a National Historic Landmark and a New Mexico State Cultural Property. The castle burned down while being restored in 2005. The Academy for the Love of Learning, which owns the property, has decided to preserve the castle ruins as a "contemplative garden".^[24]

Death

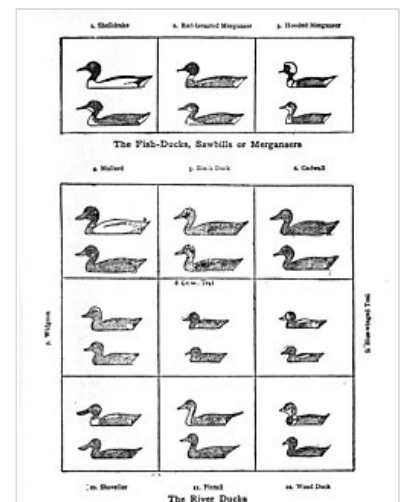
He died in Seton Village, New Mexico, at the age of 86. Seton was cremated in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In 1960, in honor of his 100th birthday and the 350th anniversary of Santa Fe, his daughter, Dee and his grandson, Seton Cottier (son of Anya), scattered the ashes over Seton Village from an airplane.^[25]

Legacy

The Philmont Scout Ranch houses the Seton Memorial Library and Museum. Seton Castle in Santa Fe, built by Seton as his last residence, housed many of his other items. Seton Castle burned down in 2005 during an attempt at restoration, but all the artwork, manuscripts, books, etc., had been removed to storage before renovation was to have begun.^[26]

The Academy for the Love of Learning, an educational organization in Santa Fe, acquired Seton Castle and its contents in 2003. The new Academy Center that opened in 2011 includes a gallery and archives featuring artwork and other materials as part of its Seton Legacy Project. The Seton Legacy Project organized a major exhibition on Seton opening at the New Mexico History Museum on May 23, 2010, the catalog published as *Ernest Thompson Seton: The Life and Legacy of an Artist and Conservationist* by David L. Witt.

Roger Tory Peterson drew inspiration for his field guide from the simple diagram of ducks that Seton included in *Two Little Savages*.^[27]



The diagrams of ducks inspired Roger Tory Peterson's idea for a field guide.

Seton is honored by the Ernest Thompson Seton Scout Reservation in Greenwich, Connecticut, and with the E.T. Seton Park in Toronto, Ontario. Obtained in the early 1960's as the site of the future Metro Toronto Zoo, the land was later used to establish parkland and home to the Ontario Science Centre. A plaque is found on the front wall of 6 Aberdeen Avenue in Toronto, where Seton had lived as a child.

In pop culture

In television

Monarch: The Big Bear of Tallac (Japanese: シートン動物記 くまの子ジャッキー, *Seton Dōbutsuki: Kuma no Ko Jacky*) was a 26-episode anime television series based on Seton's novel of the same name, and was first broadcast in 1977.

In 1979, a 26-episode anime series based on Seton's 1922 book *Bannertail: The Story of a Gray Squirrel* was produced in Japan by Nippon Animation, called *Bannertail: The Story of Gray Squirrel* (シートン動物記 りすのバナー, *Shiton Dōbutsuki Risu no Banā*).

In 1989–1990, Eiken released *Seton Dōbutsuki* (シートン動物記, 'Seton Animal Chronicles'), a 45-episode anime TV series adapted from the manga *Seton's Wild Animals* (シートン動物記), depicting the different literary works of Seton, including his 1898 *Wild Animals I Have Known*. "Lobo, the King of Currumpaw" (episodes 17 and 18) was a notable episode of the show which many viewers later learned of when the storyline was plotted into a popular 2009 TV documentary entitled *The Wolf That Changed America*. The cartoon was dubbed in German and Arabic and saw an emerging popularity among Arabs in the early 1990s as *Mokhles Sadik ul Hayawaan* (Arabic: مخلص صديق الحيوان, 'Mokhles, Animals' Friend').

"Chink, the Development of a Pup" was adapted into a cartoon in Russian in 1992.^[28]

In October 2015, the Comedy Central show *Drunk History* gave a short, drunk history lesson by Mike Still (season 3, episode 10, second act) in which Seton is portrayed by Colin Hanks. It mostly concentrates on the story of Lobo, but also mentions the roots of the Boy Scouts and helping out troubled teens.^[29]

In literature and manga

The five-volume manga *Seton's Wild Animals* (シートン動物記) by Sanpei Shirato, published between 1961 and 1965, portrayed the various literary works of Seton. Kenji Uchiyama translated Seton's work for the manga from English into Japanese.

In 1988, Yury Iosifovich Koval published a short novel called *Шамайка* (*Shamayka*), a retelling of *The Slum Cat*.

In a 1993 issue of the Japanese manga *Diamond is Unbreakable*, the character Jotaro Kujo references Seton's quote "there is no animal that cannot be tracked".^[30]

Several of Seton's works are written from the perspective of a predator and were an influence upon Robert T. Bakker's *Raptor Red* (1995).^[31]

From 2004–2006, manga artist Jiro Taniguchi and scenarist Yoshiharu Imaizumi published *Shīton* (Japanese: シートン), a four-volume manga romanticizing the life of Seton. These manga were not translated into English, but appeared in French, Italian and Spanish. The French titles are:

1. *Lobo, le Roi des Loups* ('Lobo, King of Wolves')
2. *Le jeune garçon et le lynx* ('The Young boy and the Lynx')
3. *Sandhill Stag* ('Sandhill Stag')
4. *Monarch, l'ours du mont Tallac* (Monarch, Mount Tallac Bear)

Seton's appearance inspired the design of the character Shiton Anehata, a scholar and zoophile who is one of the Abashiri convicts in the manga *Golden Kamui*.

Seton is also mentioned in Philip Roth's 2010 novel, *Nemesis*, where he is credited for having introduced Indian lore to the American camping movement.^[32]

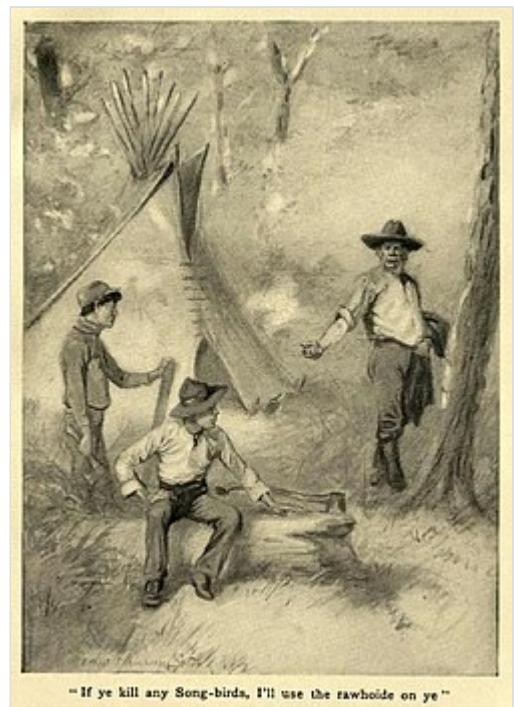
Works

- *Mammals of Manitoba* (1886)
- *Birds of Manitoba, Foster* (1891)
- *How to Catch Wolves* (1894)
- *Studies in the Art Anatomy of Animals* (1896)
- *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898)
 - "Lobo the King of Currumpaw"
- *The Trail of the Sandhill Stag* (1899)
- *Lobo, Rag, & Vixen* (1900)

- *The Wild Animal Play for Children* (musical) (1900)
- *The Biography of a Grizzly* (1900)
- *Tito: The Story of the Coyote That Learned How* (1900)^[33]
- *Bird Portraits* (1901)
- *Lives of the Hunted* (1901)
- *Twelve Pictures of Wild Animals* (1901)
- *Krag and Johnny Bear* (1902)
- *How to Play Indian* (1903)
- *Two Little Savages* (1903)
- *How to Make a Real Indian Teepee* (1903)
- *How Boys Can Form a Band of Indians* (1903)
- *The Red Book* (1904)
- *Monarch, the Big Bear of Tallac* (1904)
- *Woodmyth & Fable* (1905)
- *Animal Heroes* (1905)
- *The Birchbark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians* (1906)
- *The Natural History of the Ten Commandments* (1907)
- *Fauna of Manitoba, British Assoc. Handbook* (1909)
- *Biography of a Silver Fox* (1909)
- *Life-Histories of Northern Animals* (two volumes) (1909)
- *Boy Scouts of America: Official Handbook*, with General Sir Robert Baden-Powell (1910)
- *The Forester's Manual* (1910)
- *The Arctic Prairies* (1911)
- *Rolf in the Woods* (1911)
- *The Book of Woodcraft and Indian Lore* (1912)
- *The Red Lodge* (1912)
- *Wild Animals at Home* (1913)
- *The Slum Cat* (1915)
- *Legend of the White Reindeer* (1915)
- *The Manual of the Woodcraft Indians* (1915)
- *Wild Animal Ways* (1916)^[34]
- *Woodcraft Manual for Girls* (1916)
- *The Preacher of Cedar Mountain* (1917)
- *Woodcraft Manual for Boys; the Sixteenth Birch Bark Roll* (1917)
- *The Woodcraft Manual for Boys; the Seventeenth Birch Bark Roll* (1918)
- *The Woodcraft Manual for Girls; the Eighteenth Birch Bark Roll* (1918)
- *Sign Talk of the Indians* (1918)
- *The Laws and Honors of the Little Lodge of Woodcraft* (1919)
- *The Brownie Wigwam: The Rules of the Brownies* (1921)
- *The Buffalo Wind* (1921)



Drawing from *Wild Animals I Have Known*, Scribner's (1898)

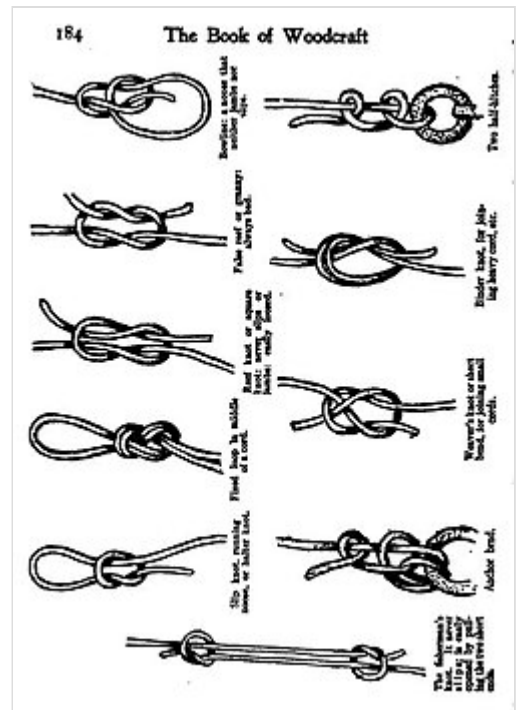


Drawing from *Two Little Savages*, Doubleday (1903)

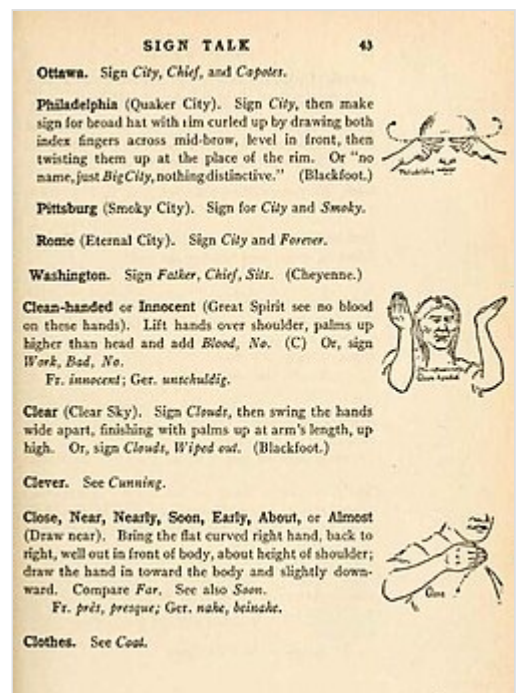
- *Woodland Tales* (1921)
- *The Book of Woodcraft* (1921)
- *The Book of Woodcraft and Indian Lore* (1922)
- *Bannertail: The Story of a Gray Squirrel* (1922)
- *Manual of the Brownies*, 6th edition (1922)
- *The Ten Commandments in the Animal World* (1923)
- *Animals* (1926)
- *Animals Worth Knowing* (1928)
- *Lives of Game Animals* (four volumes) (1925–1928)
- *Blazes on the Trail* (1928)
- *Krag, the Kootenay Ram and Other Stories* (1929)
- *Billy the Dog That Made Good* (1930)
- *Cute Coyote and Other Stories* (1930)
- *Lobo, Bingo, The Pacing Mustang* (1930)
- *Famous Animal Stories* (1932)
- *Animals Worth Knowing* (1934)
- *Johnny Bear, Lobo and Other Stories* (1935)
- *The Gospel of the Redman*, with Julia M. Seton^[35]
- *Biography of An Arctic Fox* (1937)
- *Great Historic Animals* (1937)
- *Mainly about Wolves* (1937)
- *Pictographs of the Old Southwest* (1937)
- *Buffalo Wind* (1938)
- *Trail and Camp-Fire Stories* (1940)
- *Trail of an Artist-Naturalist: The Autobiography of Ernest Thompson Seton* (1940)
- *Santanna, the Hero Dog of France* (1945)
- *The Best of Ernest Thompson Seton* (1949)
- *Ernest Thompson Seton's America* (1954)
- *Animal Tracks and Hunter Signs* (1958)
- *The Worlds of Ernest Thompson Seton* (1976)

Archives

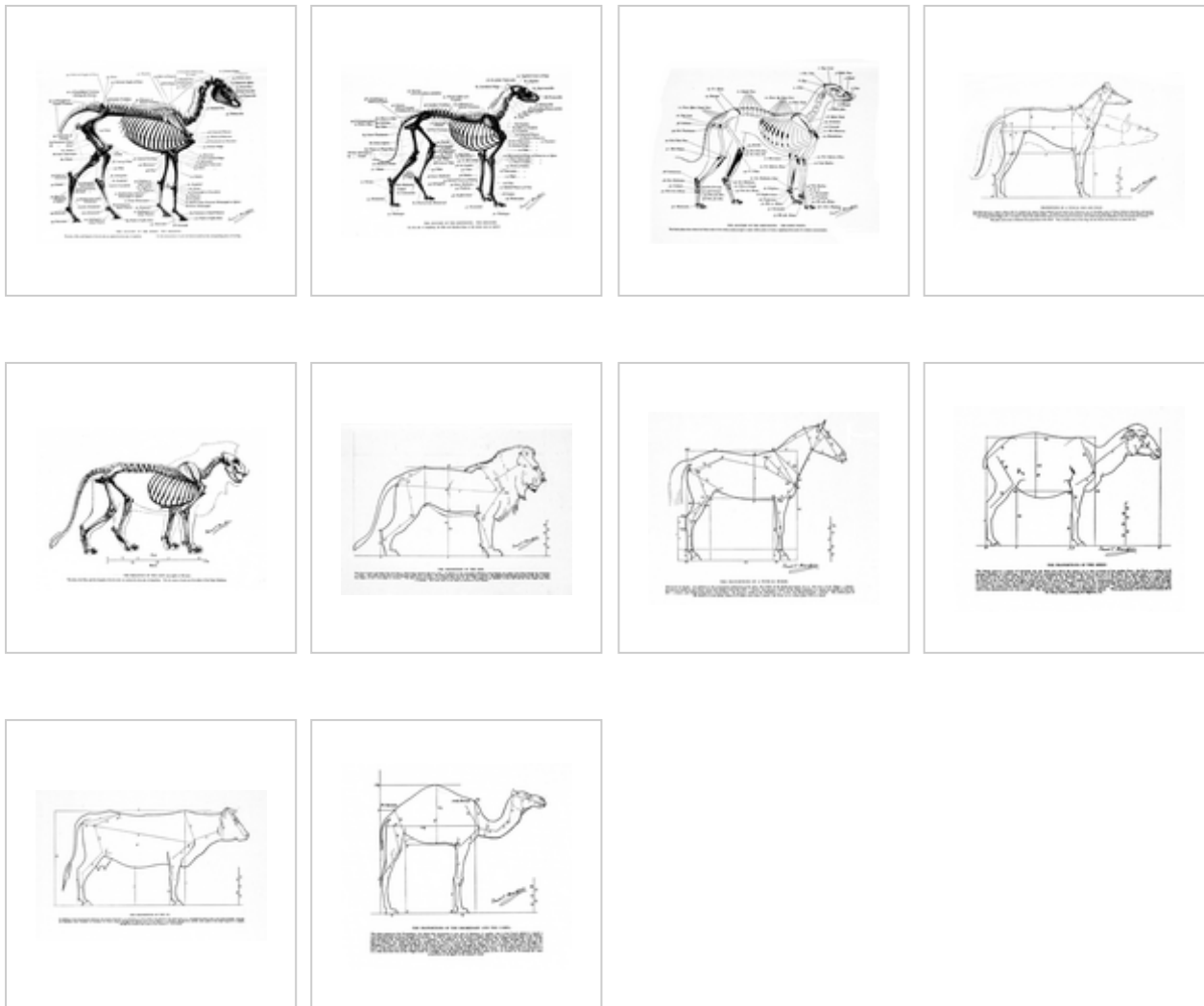
There is an Ernest Thompson Seton fonds at Library and Archives Canada. It is archival reference number R7616 and former archival reference number MG29-D108. The fonds consists of 6.2 metres of textual records, 1,220 photographs, 118 drawings, and other media.^[36]



Drawing from *The Book of Woodcraft and Indian Lore*, Doubleday (1912)



Page from *Sign Talk of the Indians*, Doubleday (1918)



See also



[Scouting portal](#)



[Children's literature portal](#)

- [Kibbo Kift](#)
- [Lobo the King of Currumpaw](#)
- [Philmont Scout Ranch](#)
- [Roving Outdoor Conservation School \(ROCS\)](#)
- [Scouting memorials](#)
- [Seton's *Wild Animals*](#), a Japanese [manga](#) adaptation of some of Seton's works by [Sanpei Shirato](#)

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 35. "(1936)" (<http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/slideshows/view.aspx?SlideShowID=20&SlideDetailID=206>). Retrieved June 6, 2023.
 36. "Ernest Thompson Seton fonds description at Library and Archives Canada" (<https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&id=101709&lang=eng>). November 25, 2016. Retrieved March 17, 2022.
- *The Birch Bark Roll* (<http://www.inquiry.net/traditional/seton/birch/index.htm>)

Further reading

- Anderson, Hugh Allen (June 2, 2000). *The Chief: Ernest Thompson Seton and the Changing West*. TAMU Press. ISBN 0-89096-982-5.
- Morris, Brian (2008). *Ernest Thompson Seton, Founder of the Woodcraft Movement 1860-1946*. Edwin Mellen Press. ISBN 978-0-7734-5474-3.

- Witt, David (2010). *Ernest Thompson Seton, The Life and Legacy of an Artist and Conservationist*. Gibbs Smith. ISBN 978-1-4236-0391-7.

External links

Digital collections

- Works by Ernest Thompson Seton in eBook form (<https://standardebooks.org/ebooks/ernest-thompson-seton>) at [Standard Ebooks](#)
- Works by Ernest Thompson Seton (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/535>) at [Project Gutenberg](#)
- Works by Ernest Thompson Seton (<https://fadedpage.com/csearch.php?author=Seton%20C%20Ernest%20Thompson>) at [Faded Page](#) (Canada)
- Works by or about Ernest Thompson Seton ([https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28subject%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20Thompson%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20T%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Seton%2C%20E%2E%20T%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Ernest%20Thompson%20Seton%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Ernest%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22E%2E%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Ernest%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Ernest%20Thompson%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Ernest%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22E%2E%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22E%2E%20Thompson%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20Thompson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20T%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20E%2E%20T%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20E%2E%20Thompson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Ernest%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%22%29%20OR%20%28%221860-1946%22%20AND%20Seton%29%29%20AND%20%28-mediatype:software%29](https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28subject%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20Thompson%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20T%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Seton%2C%20E%2E%20T%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Ernest%20Thompson%20Seton%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Ernest%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22E%2E%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Ernest%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Ernest%20Thompson%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Ernest%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22E%2E%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22E%2E%20Thompson%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20Thompson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20T%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20E%2E%20T%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20E%2E%20Thompson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Ernest%20Seton%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Ernest%20Thompson%20Seton%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Ernest%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20title%3A%22E%2E%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Ernest%20Seton%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Ernest%20Thompson%20Seton%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Ernest%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20description%3A%22E%2E%20T%2E%20Seton%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20Thompson%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%20T%2E%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Ernest%20Seton%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Seton%2C%20Ernest%22%29%20OR%20%28%221860-1946%22%20AND%20Seton%29%29%20AND%20%28-mediatype:software%29)) at the [Internet Archive](#)
- Works by Ernest Thompson Seton (<https://librivox.org/author/634>) at [LibriVox](#) (public domain audiobooks) 
- The Birchbark Roll (<http://www.inquiry.net/traditional/seton/birch/index.htm>) (full text)

Other collections

- Ernest Thompson Seton's scientific collections at Philmont (<https://web.archive.org/web/20050915063011/http://etsetoninstitute.org/PHILMONT.HTM>)
- Ernest Thompson Seton fonds (R7616) (<http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&id=101709&lang=eng>) at [Library and Archives Canada](#)
- Ernest Thompson Seton: Life and Work at World Wisdom (<http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/authors/Ernest-Thompson-Seton.aspx>)
- On-line Seton art exhibition and collections (<http://www.aloveoflearning.org/>)

Other links

- Comprehensive biographical information on Ernest Thompson Seton (<http://www.ernestthompsonseton.com/>)
- Ernest Thompson Seton Institute (<https://etsetoninstitute.org/>)
- Seton Village site at the NPS (<http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=350&ResourceType=District>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20071221095915/http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=350&ResourceType=District>) December 21, 2007, at the Wayback Machine
- Ernest Thompson Seton in Upasika (<http://upasika.com/ernestthompsonseton.html>)
- Academy for the Love of Learning (<http://www.aloveoflearning.org/>)
- Woodcraft Rangers (<http://www.woodcrafrangers.org/>)
- The Seton Centre (<http://www.thesetoncentre.ca>)
- Seton Legacy Project at Academy for the Love of Learning (<https://www.setonlegacyproject.blogspot.com/>)

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Biography

Seton, born Ernest Evan Thompson, was an award-winning wildlife illustrator and naturalist who was also a spell-binding storyteller and lecturer, a best-selling author of animal stories, an expert in Native American Sign language, and an early supporter of the political, cultural, and spiritual rights of First Peoples. He was born August 14, 1860, in South Shields, Durham, England, of Scottish ancestry (both sides of the family fought for The Old and New "Pretenders"). He was the eighth of ten brothers to reach adulthood; a sister died at age 6.

He was known by several names and nicknames throughout his life, including three given by leaders of separate North American Indigenous Nations: *Ah-pas-to* (Sign Talker), given by the Blackfoot Nation in 1916; *Mahto Ska*, given by Yanktonais Chief White Bear in 1927; and *shunka sapa* (Black Wolf), given by the Lakota Nation. Black Wolf was also his Woodcraft name. Nicknames included Chief, ETS, Wolf Thompson, and Wolf Seton.

The family emigrated to Lindsay, Ontario, Canada, in 1866, after his father, Joseph Logan Thompson, had lost his fortune as a ship-owner. Joseph did not make a good farmer, and by 1870 they had moved to Toronto, where he was employed as an accountant.

Seton attended Toronto schools. He was active in art from his early teens. A woman prominent in the Toronto art community became his mentor in this field, giving him advice (and money) to continue his studies at the Ontario School of Art. He won the Gold Medal in the spring of 1879. In August, he went to London to study art, where he won a seven-year scholarship to the Royal Academy of Art in December 1880; however, he stayed less than a year. By 1881 his health was so bad from poor living conditions and bad eating habits that a cousin wrote his mother saying that she better get him back to Canada before he died. His family sent him a steerage ticket, and he returned to Toronto. Once back home and recovered, he no longer felt welcome under his father's roof.

He found work illustrating a set of Christmas cards that brought enough money to join two of his older brothers who were homesteading in Manitoba, near what is now the small town of Carberry. He and his good friend William G. A. (Willie) Brodie, Jr. boarded a farm train with sixty chickens, four geese, and four turkeys bound for Winnipeg in March 1882. Willie's father, Dr. William Brodie, served as the boys' mentor in natural history, leading field trips to the marshland around Toronto. As they prepared for the trip west, he advised Seton to keep a daily journal and to record everything of interest on the same day.

Once in Manitoba, Seton embraced the life of a field naturalist rather than a homesteader. He was easily distracted by the natural surroundings, spending his time watching the wildlife instead of plowing fields. He collected specimens of flora and fauna, took careful measurements, and kept records in his journal. Willie helped him identify many of the birds and insects they saw until he was tragically killed in an accident. His death was a heavy blow to Seton.

His natural history research in Manitoba involved activities such as counting all the feathers on a grackle, learning the songs of the various birds, and watching prairie chickens dance. He would go off into the Carberry Sandhills for days on end. The locals frowned upon this behavior, and he earned

a reputation for being lazy and odd. He wrote his first natural history articles, started corresponding with the Smithsonian Institute, and submitted specimens to the US Biological Survey. He also began exchanging study skins with other naturalists in Canada and the United States, including Theodore Roosevelt.

His first visit to the United States was in December of 1883. He visited New York and met many naturalists, ornithologists, artists, and writers. He became lifelong friends with Frank Chapman, William Hornaday, Elliott Coues, and many others. From then until the late 1880s, he spent his time between Carberry, Toronto, and New York. He became an established wildlife artist and was contracted 1885 to do 1,000 mammal drawings for the *Century Dictionary*. He also spent time at the New York Art Student's League, where he met Daniel Carter Beard.

In the early 1890s, he re-visited his art education in Paris, studying at the Académie Julian, where he befriended the likes of Robert E. Henri, E. W. Redfield, Irving Coues, and others destined to become well-known American artists. This was where he researched his first published book, *The Art Anatomy of Animals*. His painting "The Sleeping Wolf" hung "on the line" in the Paris Salon in 1891. His next painting, "Awaited in Vain" or "The Triumph of the Wolves," was rejected by the Salon; but later was exhibited at the first World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. Seton was appointed Official Naturalist to the Government of Manitoba – a title he held until he died in 1946 – as compensation for designing and building the natural history exhibit for Manitoba at the Fair.

He had trouble with his eyes caused by too much close work while developing the *Anatomy* book. A doctor advised him not to use his eyes heavily for at least six months, or he would go blind. So he left France and took a job hunting wolves in New Mexico for Mr. Fitz-Randolph, an acquaintance he had made on an Atlantic crossing. The story of "Lobo" came from this hunt, was first published in Scribner's Magazine, and then with other stories in book form as *Wild Animals I Have Known*. The book has been in print since 1898. It launched him into the celebrity world, and he became a famous writer, artist, lecturer/storyteller, and environmentalist in North America and Europe. Seton wrote approximately ten thousand scientific and popular articles during his lifetime. He received an honorary Master's Degree in Humanities from Springfield College (formerly the International YMCA College) in Springfield College.

He married his first wife, Grace Gallatin, in 1896. Raised in California, Grace was a wealthy socialite, a pioneer traveler, the founder of a women's writers' club, a first-rank suffragette, and a leading fund raiser for War Bonds in WWI. Grace was instrumental in organizing Seton's first books. They divorced in 1935. Grace lived until 1959. Their only child, Ann, was born in 1904. She grew up as a well-known historical novelist under the name of Anya Seton. Two of her books were made into movies. Ann lived until 1990.

In 1902, the first of a series of articles that began the Woodcraft movement was published in the Ladies Home Journal. In 1906 while in England, he met with Baden-Powell, who was introduced to him by the Duke of Bedford. They exchanged correspondence until after BP founded the Boy Scouts, borrowing many materials and concepts from Seton without giving him credit.

1907 Seton made a 2000-mile canoe trip in northern Canada, with Edward Preble of the US Biological Survey as his traveling companion. Seton funded the trip. Although he was not a surveyor and did his mapping with only a good compass, the maps he made on this trip were used until the 1950s and

are still considered extremely accurate.

In 1910 Seton was chairman of the founding committee of Boy Scouts of America. He wrote the first handbook (including BP's *Scouting for Boys* material) and served as Chief Scout from 1910 until 1915. Seton did not like the military aspects of Scouting, and some key Scouting leaders did not like the Native American emphasis of Seton.

With WW I, the militarists won, and Seton resigned from Scouting. He revived Woodcraft in 1915, not as a children's organization, but as a coeducational organization serving all ages, THE WOODCRAFT LEAGUE OF AMERICA.

It prospered. In 1922 the children's organization "Little Lodge" was merged with the Western Rangers and became the Woodcraft Rangers. They were not interested in girls or adults, so this became a young boys' organization. The Woodcraft Rangers became a co-educational organization by the early 1950s.

Seton continued to run Woodcraft Leadership Camps in Greenwich until 1930, when he moved to Santa Fe. In 1931 he became a United States citizen.

In Santa Fe, he bought a 2,500-acre plot and built a school, The Seton Institute College of Indian Wisdom, and continued to train leaders in Woodcraft.

In 1935 Seton and Grace were divorced. In 1935 (Jan.22), Seton married his second wife, Julia Moses Buttrees (also known as Julia Moss Buttrees), in El Paso, Texas. In 1938 they adopted a daughter, later Dee Seton Barber, who appeared with them on stage during Seton's lifetime.

Julia was an author in her own right. Her first book, 'Rhythm of the Redman' was published before she married Seton. He did the illustrations for this book. She worked as Seton's assistant and secretary, and they performed joint lectures in schools, clubs, churches, and lecture halls of towns and universities throughout the United States, Canada, England, France, Mexico, and the Czech Republic.

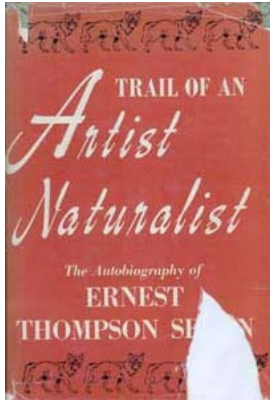
The Leadership camps continued in Santa Fe until 1941 (WW II) but were not continued after the war, as Seton died in 1946 at the age of 86.

After Seton's death, Julia continued to write and maintain the Santa Fe estate and lectured on her own, her last tour sponsored by the Audubon Society in 1967. She suffered a stroke in 1968 and died in 1975 in Santa Fe.

Dee Seton Barber died in 2006.

Trail of an Artist Naturalist

by Ernest Thompson Seton



I happened across this volume in a used bookstore while on a recent trip, and snatched it up at once. I recognized the author's name from a book I read many times over as a child at the public library: *Wild Animals I Have Known*. Here, in *Trail of an Artist Naturalist*, is Ernest Thompson Seton's autobiography. Seton was the son of Scots immigrants who settled on a farm in the backwoods of Canada. The first half of the book describes his rough upbringing there, learning the craft of a woodsman and hankering after knowledge of wildlife, an interest none of his family shared. Determined to squelch his desires to become a naturalist, Seton's father pushed him into an artistic career. Seton turned this to his own bent, becoming one of the most renowned wildlife artists of his day. He studied art in London and Paris, worked as a freelance artist and writer in New York City, and when he felt the need to escape to natural haunts, spent time tramping around northern Canada and the American West. He worked on

cattle ranches and remote prairie homesteads, taking any opportunity to roam through the wilderness and study with great scrutiny any wild animals he could find. His greatest interest was birds.

While Seton admired and was enthralled by the beauty of nature, he was also avid about collecting birds' eggs from nests, shooting specimens for their skins and dissecting them for study. While a student in London he would acquire dead dogs from the pound, dissect them to study and draw in his rented rooms, then puzzle over how to safely dispose of the remains when he was done- in one instance he almost got accused of a murder! He was very good at hunting animals, due to having studied their habits in depth, and in one famous incident rid an area of New Mexico of a wolf called Lobo, famed for its depredations on cattle. He had no qualms about pitting his wits against the wolf to exterminate it, but at the same time felt sympathy for the animals and hated to see poison used on them.

Seton knew and met many notable persons. Robert Henri was his fellow art student in Paris, and later in life he met Frederic Remington- two artists I have always admired. He was acquainted with James Barrie and Mark Twain, and his animal stories- sympathetic, novelistic writings based on true accounts and behavioral studies- inspired Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* stories. A man of surpassing energy and enthusiasm for his chosen work, Seton also faced his share of hardships. He suffered from debilitating childhood illnesses until in his twenties finally found a cure via surgery. He survived harsh weather and blizzards in the northern lands, once having to help dig out his own train on a journey from snowed-in tracks, another time nearly dying of malaria on a remote farm. His book - based on extensive journals he kept and full of sketches, drawings and plates of paintings - depicts a way of life in the late 1800's rougher and closer to the earth, and outlines one man's path to become a skillful artist and natural scientist. If I say any more about it, I'll be writing all night! I suppose his books are rather obscure now, but when first published they were very popular. You can read more about Seton [here](#) and [here](#).

Rating: 3/5

412 pages, 1940