

Topic Page: [Moses, Grandma \(Anna Mary Robertson\) 1860 - 1961](#)

Definition: **Grandma Moses** from *Dictionary of Pseudonyms: 13,000 Assumed Names and Their Origins*
Anna Mary Moses, née Robertson (1860-1961), U.S. painter. Following her “discovery” by an art collector at the age of 78, the elderly widow retained the homely name by which she was known to family and friends.



Image from: [A paradigmatic figure of twentieth-century memory... in *The Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*](#)

Summary Article: **Moses, Grandma (1860 - 1961)**
from *The Penguin Biographical Dictionary of Women*

Grandma Moses has been described as an “authentic primitive” – that is, a painter whose talent developed in complete isolation from contemporary artistic trends. Despite her lack of technical training, she became renowned for her naive but highly individualistic paintings.

Born Anna Mary Robertson into a farming family in Greenwich, New York State, she was one of ten children. She became a “hired girl,” and in 1887 married Thomas Salmon Moses, a farmhand. They rented a farm near Staunton, Virginia, and then moved in 1905 to Eagle Bridge, New York, where Grandma Moses spent the rest of her long life. Her husband died in 1927; of their ten children, five died in infancy.

At the age of 67, when she was no longer able to do farm work because her hands were crippled with arthritis, Grandma Moses began painting in oils. At first she copied picture postcards but then turned to painting original farm scenes and landscapes “so that people will see how we used to live.” She worked from memory rather than from life; always a keen observer, she had an instinctive feeling for colour and composition.

Her paintings were discovered by a New York collector who was touring the area in 1938; he arranged for some to be shown in 1939 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in an exhibition entitled Contemporary Unknown American Painters. In 1940 she had her first one-woman show in a New York gallery. She painted more than 1,000 pictures and exhibited in the United States, Canada, and Europe. She also received numerous awards.

APA

Chicago

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Moses, Grandma (1860 - 1961). (1998). In Market House Books Ltd. (Ed.), *The penguin Biographical Dictionary of Women*. London, UK: Penguin. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/moses_grandma_anna_mary_robertson_1860_1961



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