

Movement, Style, School or Type of Art

Folk Art

Date and Place of Birth

September 7, 1860, Greenwich, New York

Life

Anna Mary Robertson was born a farm girl, went to work for hire on another farm when she was 12, married farmer Thomas Salmon Moses at age 27 and labored by his side on their farm until his death in 1927. She also raised a family of five children (out of 10 pregnancies), cooked a gajillion meals, gardened, canned, cleaned, sewed, butchered and performed the thousands of other tasks one must do to farm. In retrospect, she was blessed to have lived long enough to get in a little painting time.

After Thomas' death, and after arthritic hands forced her to abandon embroidery, she took up oil painting in the 1930s. For a while, she sold paintings (and pickles) at the county fair, while also having a group of works on display in the local drugstore's window. Fate led collector Louis Caldor to pass through Hoosick Falls on a summer trip, and he promptly bought the lot. On his recommendation Moses' work was included in a 1939 MoMA exhibition and the rest, as they say, was cultural history.

It was after her 1940 solo exhibition, *What a Farm Wife Painted*, that the "Grandma" tag was added (presumably she didn't mind, as she qualified in real life). Living to the ripe old age of 101, she became a "household name," saw her work reproduced countless times in a variety of media and continued to paint to the end, producing over 1000 works in total. Ever the thrifty farmer, she never did quite reconcile herself with the sums of money people were willing to pay for her originals.

There is probably no other figure in Art History who needs *less* analysis than Grandma Moses. She was exactly who she seemed to be.

Important Works

- *Sugaring Off*, 1943
- *Wash Day*, 1945
- *A Beautiful World*, 1948
- *The Thunderstorm*, 1948
- *The Old Checkered House in Winter*, 1950

Date and Place of Death

December 13, 1961, Hoosick Falls, New York

Grandma Moses 'Anna Mary Robertson'

Artist Biography

- Born September 7, 1860, 3rd of 10 children
- Encouraged by her father to draw
- Worked on a family farm from age of 12 until her marriage at the age of 27
- She was the mother to five children. They farmed in Virginia and settled in New York in 1905
- She was creative in her house and her earliest works used embroidery rather than paint
- Using a needle became painful and her sister suggested that it might be easier to paint. This began her career as an artist in her late 70's

The Artist

- First public attention at the age of 80 at her first one-woman show titled “What a Farmwife Painted”. This is when she was first referred to as ‘Grandma Moses’ and soon became a celebrity
- She is described as a “folk artist” (she was a self-taught artist)
- She was inspired by the scenes published by Currier & Ives and items such as greeting cards and magazines.
- She created her paintings based on scenes from her own life experiences or words from old songs
- She painted in oils and these scenes were then copied on to greeting cards, fabrics, wallpaper etc...
- Grandma Moses died in 1961 at the age of 101 and had completed more than 1,600 works of art

