



# Arizona Scouting Museum Newsletter

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## Ernest Thompson Seton The Founder of Scouting???

Ernest Thompson Seton: Founder of the Boy Scouts of America. True or not? If you read his books and autobiography and read between the lines you might wonder if everything that was the BSA in 1910 didn't come from Seton's ideas. I'll give you that William D. Boyce secured the papers of incorporation and that Daniel Carter Beard divided his "forts" into 8 boys each. James West was truly the organization genius of the BSA program. But the fundamental concepts of giving boys the ability to govern themselves and come together in fellowship to learn about the outdoors, nature, kindness, and honor was basic to the structure of Ernest Seton.

Born in South Shields, England on August 16, 1860 (151 years ago) to John Logan Seton and Alice Snowdon, his father was in the shipping business and fairly well-to-do owning and operating 12 merchant ships by 1865. However, in a short series of shipping disasters and bad business deals they lost everything and in the summer of 1866 moved to Lindsay, Ontario, Canada (near Toronto). Ernest was 6 years old and, yes, he had to walk 2 miles round-trip, in the snow, to a log cabin school. His home was in the forest outside Lindsay and with 10 older and 2 younger brothers to help with chores there was plenty of free time to study nature. The boys all learned to work leather, glass, and metal, to tie knots, and use an axe and knife. The family raised cows and sheep and Ernest helped with the birthing of young each spring.

At age 2 Ernest had tumbled off the family sofa and had slightly crossed eyes since, though the doctor said he'd eventually outgrow the problem. Now if you're the new kid in a tough school of 300 kids, on the poor side of town and you're cross-eyed, you can expect to have to fight a lot. Seton considered it a way to make friends as such frequently happened after a fight, win or lose. However, two whippings by teachers taught him an important lesson. One was for a caricature of a teacher that he drew on the blackboard in which he poked fun at the teacher, and he accepted the whipping; holding no grudge of the teacher. The second was for throwing snowballs with other kids, unaware that the teacher had forbid it. He got the whipping and the other boys did not so he held a grudge against that teacher the rest of his life as he felt it was unwarranted.



