



## Tom Thomson

Thomas John `Tom` Thomson (August 5, 1877 – July 8, 1917)

Tom` Thomson was an influential Canadian artist of the early 20th century. He directly influenced a group of Canadian painters that would come to be known as the Group of Seven, and though he died before they formally formed, he is sometimes incorrectly credited as being a member of the group itself. Thomson died under mysterious circumstances, which added to his mystique.

Tom Thomson was probably the most influential and enduringly popular Canadian artist of the early part of the twentieth century. His paintings *The West Wind* (1917) and *Jack Pine* (1916-1917) are familiar Canadian icons.

Thomson first visited Algonquin Park in 1912. Thereafter he often traveled around Ontario with his colleagues, especially to the wilderness of Ontario, which was to be a major source of inspiration for him. That same year he began working, along with other artists who would go on to form the Group of Seven after his death, at Rous and Mann Press, but left the following year to work as a full-time artist. He first exhibited with the Ontario Society of Artists in 1913, and became a member in 1914 when the National Gallery of Canada purchased one of his paintings.

Thomson was largely self-taught but it was only in 1912, when Thomson was well into his thirties, that he began to paint seriously. His first trips to Algonquin Park inspired him to follow the lead of fellow artists in producing oil sketches of natural scenes on small, rectangular panels for easy portability while travelling.

Although the Group of Seven was not founded until after Thomson`s death, his work is sympathetic to that of group members A. Y. Jackson, Frederick Varley, and Arthur Lismer. These artists shared an appreciation for rugged, unkempt natural scenery, and all used broad brush strokes and a liberal application of paint to capture the stark beauty and vibrant colour of the Ontario landscape.

Since his death, Thomson`s work has grown in value and popularity. In 2002, the National Gallery of Canada staged a major exhibition of his work, giving Thomson the same level of prominence afforded Picasso, Renoir, and the Group of Seven in previous years. In recent decades, the increased value of Thomson`s work has led to the discovery of numerous forgeries of his work on the market.