

The History of Toys and Games During the Height of Rose Hill

Rose Hill was built 1852, but children didn't live in it for several years, not until the Welton family moved in.

Some games and toys that the children who lived in this house may have played with include:

Paper Dolls



Paper dolls were popular all over the world for centuries but became more accessible in America during mid-19th century to mid-20th century because of the development of technology that made printing cheaper. They usually depicted ladies of leisure along with celebrities and movie stars.

Dolls



In the 1840s the first American dollmaker received a patent, which set off the mass production of dolls in the USA.

Wooden Blocks/Alphabet Blocks



Playing with wooden building blocks was considered a beneficial activity for young children, because they helped develop motor skills, promoted social interaction through building with others, and allowed a child to explore their creativity. Alphabet blocks were introduced in 1879 and added to the educational qualities of plain building blocks because children could also work on forming words with alphabet blocks.

Game of Graces



The Game of Graces was a popular game for young girls in the 1800s. It was considered proper exercise for girls and made them look graceful. The game is played with two people, who each hold two dowel rods. One person takes a wooden hoop and then uses the rods to propel the hoop toward the other player. The winner is the one who catches the hoop with their rods ten times.

Ninepins/Tenpins



Ninepins was brought to the colonies by Dutch settlers. The game is very similar to modern bowling and could be played on a tabletop with small pins or on a lawn with larger ones. The only materials needed to play were nine wooden pins set up in a diamond shape and a ball. Each player rolled the ball ten times to see how many pins he could knock down and the player who knocked down the most pins won the game. Tenpins replaced ninepins when it became well established in the late 19th century. Tenpins is even more like modern day bowling.

Jacob's Ladder



A Jacob's Ladder is a toy that consists of blocks of wood held together by string or ribbons. When the ladder is held at one end, a visual illusion causes the blocks to appear to cascade down the strings. The name Jacob's ladder comes from the biblical ladder to Heaven, mentioned in Genesis 28:12.

Game of Jacks



The game of jacks was played in the ancient world over 2000 years ago with small animal bones or pebbles. In early America the game was commonly known as five-stones or jack-stones. As time went on, one of the stones (the Jack) was replaced by a wooden ball, then a rubber ball; the other stones were replaced by small pointed metal pieces reminiscent of the original animal knucklebones.

Rolling Hoop



Children have been rolling hoops from the time of the ancient Greeks. The early North American colonists brought this pastime with them from Europe; in the 19th century, both wood and metal hoops were used as playthings. The hoops could be rolled along in solitary play or raced by any number of players.

Cup and Ball/Bilbo Catcher



Cup and ball toys have been around since the 14th century and have been used by adults as well as children for entertainment or contests. The object of the game for children in the 19th century was simply to catch the ball in the wood cup it is attached to. The bilbo catcher is also a toy of the cup & ball family. In this more difficult version, the ball is caught on the tip of a spindle by a hole drilled in the ball opposite the string.

Marbles



Marble games have been played in all parts of the world with all manner of playing pieces for more than 2000 years. Children in colonial America played with marbles made of stone or clay, while glass marbles were highly prized among children's playthings in the 19th century. Enclosure games, hole games, and conquering games are all traditional marble games that are still familiar today.

Tops



Adults and children alike have been fascinated with spinning toys since antiquity, and top games are seen in all parts of the world throughout history. At least five types of tops were known in England by the 16th century, including peg tops (above), whip tops, and hand spun tops, which were brought over to America with the colonists.

Whirligigs and Buzzers



Whirligigs have been played with in North America dating back to the Native Americans. The versions that children played with in the 19th century were made out of coins or wood and string, and the object would “whirl” when the strings were pulled on. Buzzers are whirligigs that make sound when they spin determined by the grooves cut into the edge of the buzzer. The sound can be modulated based on how fast the buzzer is spinning.

Timeline of Popular Toys/Games

19th Century:
1840s-Dolls are mass produced in America
1879-Alphabet blocks
1886-BB guns
20th Century:
1901- Battery powered train
1902- “Teddy” bears-named affectionately after President Theodore Roosevelt
1903-Crayola Crayons
1914-Tinker Toys
1916-Lincoln Logs
1943-Slinky
1947-Tonka Trucks
1949-Legos
1950-Silly Putty
1952-Mr. Potato Head
1954-Matchbox Car
1956-Play-Doh

1957-Frisbee
1958-Skateboards, Hula Hoops
1959-Barbie dolls
1960-Etch A Sketch
1963-Easy Bake Oven
1965-G.I. Joe
1966-Hot Wheels
1969-Nerf balls
1970s-Space hoppers and clackers
1983-Nintendo video game system
1985-Cabbage Patch Kids
1989-Gameboy
1993-Beanie Babies
1996-Tomagatchi
1998-Furby
1999-Pokemon trading cards

What books did children read? -adventure, realism, coming-of-age, picture books, morality/manners

Here is a sample of some books the children who grew up at Rose Hill may have been exposed to (mainly up to the 1950s):

19th Century: Last Half of the Golden Age of Children’s Literature
1864-A Journey to the Center of the Earth, Jules Verne
1865-Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll
1868-Little Women, Louisa May Alcott
1876-The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain
1883-The Adventures of Pinnocchio
1883-Treasure Island, Robert Louis Stevenson
1894-The Jungle Book, Rudyard Kipling
20th Century:
1900-The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Frank L. Baum
1902-The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter
1908, Anne of Green Gables, L.M. Montgomery
1911-The Secret Garden, Frances Hodgson Burnett

1911-Peter Pan, J.M. Barrie
1926-Winnie-the-Pooh, A.A. Milne
1930s-1970s-Fun with Dick and Jane Series
1932-Little House in the Big Woods, Laura Ingalls Wilder
1937-And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street, Dr. Suess
1942-The Poky Little Puppy, first of Little Golden Books series
1950s-Children's book publishing became big business
1952-Charlotte's Web, E.B. White
1962-The Snowy Day, Ezra Jack Keats (first picture book with African American child as protagonist)
1963-Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak
1964-Harriet The Spy, Louise Fitzhughs
1985-If You Give a Mouse a Cookie, Laura Numeroff
1989-Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, Bill Martin and John Archambault

Discussion Questions:

Toys/Games

- Were these activities separated by gender? Why do you think so?

-Toys were used to prepare children for their adult lives: women as mothers and proper ladies and men as workers/soldiers/businessmen

Boys: marbles, toy soldiers, toy trains (outdoor games)

Girls: wood and porcelain dolls, doll houses, skipping ropes

Books

- Can you categorize the books into the genres listed?
- Have you read any of the books on this list? Which ones do you think were targeted to girls and which to boys? Why?

Sources:

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