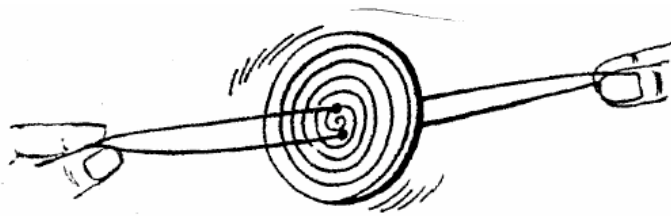


# Colonial Children's Games

In Colonial times, children didn't have electronic toys, or factories to make their toys. Many children or their parents made their toys out of scraps and things that were not needed. Little girls in Colonial times made their dolls out of corn husks, rags, scraps, and sometimes carved, dried apples as heads. The boys used sticks as imaginary horses. Children enjoyed spinning tops made of leftover wood and string. Children were often left without supervision and were left to play in the field or house.

Another toy the children enjoyed was a Whirligig.



**Whirligig**

To make a Whirligig, Cut out a 4 inch (10 cm) circle on a piece of stiff cardboard or use a large 2 or 4 hole button. Make two holes in the cardboard approximately 3/8 inch (9 mm) from the center as shown above. Thread a piece of string about 2-1/2 feet long through the holes and tie the ends together. Proceed by twirling the circle until the string is tangled and then pull. Continue the pulling and relaxing method and enjoy the Whirligig.

Many families had at least six or seven children, so they always had someone to play with. Also, if the neighbors lived near by, the children would have more company and then all children would join in the games. Many times children would make up games on the spur of the moment. When the children weren't making up games to play, they played many games that are still played today.

Colonial children jumped rope, played tennis, swinging, scotch-hopper (modern day hopscotch), and played on a see-saw. The children even played leap frog, tag, hide-and-peek, sack and relay races. Some other games played by the Colonial children were nine pins (similar to bowling, but more difficult due to uneven ground), bow-and-arrow, quoits (ring toss), and wooden stilts.

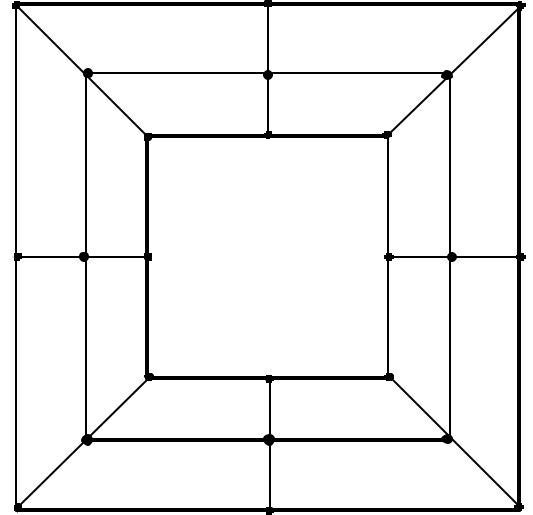
Battledores, which is similar to Badminton, was played often. A popular game during the Colonial times was "Rolling the Hoop". This was when children would get



a large wooden hoop and race each other to the finish point. Walking was also very much enjoyed by the children, especially if they had a friend to walk with. During the warmer weather, Colonial children went swimming and during the cooler weather, when snow had fallen, sledding was enjoyed.

Children also played some board games; one favorite board game is Nine Man's Morrice. Players take turns placing one of their nine markers at points where lines cross each other.

The markers may be placed vertically, horizontally, or diagonally on the board's corners. After all markers have been placed on the board, the players may begin to move their markers by sliding them along a line to a circle. They try to make a row of three of their markers or block the opponent's row. When you have three markers in a row, the player can remove any one of the opponent's markers. Once a player has two markers left on the board, that player loses the game.



Although children in Colonial times didn't have much free time to play, they made their own games out of their chores. Daily chores normally consisted of carrying wood, husking corn, retrieving berries, carding wool, and gathering eggs. Many boys would make contests on who could carry the most wood or who could carry the wood fastest. Examples of other contests would be who could *card* the most wool, or carry the eggs the fastest without breaking or dropping them.



After shearing sheep, the wool is washed then *carded*. This straightens the fibers so it can then be spun into yarn.

When they weren't making contests out of their chores, the children would sing, tell riddles, practice tongue twisters, and say rhymes to pass their chore time faster.

*"Lucy Locket lost her pocket, Sally Fisher found it, Not a penny was there in it, Just a ribbon' round it."*

and *"Jack be nimble..."* were some popular nursery rhymes. *"Ring around the Rosy"*, *"London Bridge"*, and *"Here we go 'round the Mulberry Bush"* were some favorite songs that the Colonial children sang. A popular tongue twister that seems quite difficult that the Colonial children practiced during chore time was, *"The skunk sat on a stump and thunk the stump stuck, but the stump thunk the skunk stunk."*

Here are some Colonial Riddles:

- 1) What can be seen falling down, but never crying?
- 2) What kind of room is not in a house?
- 3) What has three feet, but cannot walk?

*Answers on last page*



Original work by: Barbara R. Buckwald – May 22, 2002

Bibliography

- [www.americancolonialhistory.com](http://www.americancolonialhistory.com)
- [wneo.org/halefarm/family/cardingwool.htm](http://wneo.org/halefarm/family/cardingwool.htm)
- [www.victoriana.com/antiquetoys/rollinghoop.html](http://www.victoriana.com/antiquetoys/rollinghoop.html)
- [www.ctstateu.edu](http://www.ctstateu.edu)
- [www.williamsburgmarketplace.com](http://www.williamsburgmarketplace.com)
- [www.stratfordhall.org](http://www.stratfordhall.org)
- [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

Answers:

- 1) Rain
- 2) Mushroom
- 3) Yardstick