



# Children of Early Appalachia

## Toys and Games

Children in the pioneer days managed to have lots of fun with very few toys. Since toys were nearly always homemade, it took lots of skill and imagination to make them workable.

### Dolls

Dolls were as much loved by little children as they are today. The corn husk (or corn shuck) dolls were the most common dolls for little girls, as every household had corn shucks.



Little girls would be encouraged to make their own dolls. They were made from scraps from their mother's sewing basket. Little girls were expected to know how to sew by age 5 or 6.



A lucky girl might have a “china” doll. This china doll has a round and rosy face. The heads and hands are highly glazed and so are called “china”. The body is cloth and is stuffed with sawdust. It is called a “Germanic type” doll because it was first made in Germany.

Bisque baby dolls were cherished by many little girls as their only store-bought dolls. They were less expensive than glazed china dolls. This Bye-lo Baby Doll is made of sugar bisque. Bisque is much like china; the main difference is that china is fired and glazed while bisque is only fired. Sugar bisque is a low grade bisque with a dull white tone. On a sugar bisque doll, the cheeks, eyes, mouth and all details are all painted on so that the contrast with the dull white looks unnatural. Bisque dolls and heads date anywhere from 1844 to a little after World War 1.

This link will take you to an Appalachian Heritage Activity Guide for Girl Scouts:

<https://www.bdgsc.org/getattachment/for-adults/Volunteer-Resources/Activity-Ideas/Appalachian-Heritage-Activity-Guide-for-Girls.pdf.aspx>. In it, you can find many activities that can help you celebrate Appalachian heritage; you can even learn how to make a corn husk doll!

## Quilting

Girls also learned how to sew by making their own quilts for their dolls. This is a picture of a doll quilt made from tiny scraps of material. There is a tutorial about how to make a

doll quilt here: <http://www.dawnsquiltcorner.com/2009/09/doll-quilt-tutorial.html>.



### **Flipper Dinger**

Flipper dingers have been used for over 200 years and have been fun for kids and grownups.

A flipper dinger is made from a piece of river cane, a little wire, and a small chunk of corn stalk. The goal is to blow through the river cane and make the little corncob ball blow up and hook itself on the wire rim which is placed right above a small cane air chute.



Here is a link to a video demonstrating the flipper dinger:  
<http://fairetymetoys.com/uploads/Main/FlipperDingerVideo.mp4>.

### **Gee-Haw Whimmy Diddle**

The whizzer or *Gee-Haw Whimmy Diddle* is usually carved out of red cedar. The object is to rub the ridges very fast in the same direction to make the wooden propeller go around.



Here is a link to a description of how to make one:

<http://bobscrafts.com/bobstuff/geehaw.htm>.

## Horseshoes

Boys and men pitched horseshoes at a pin set in the ground. There were usually plenty of old horseshoes around.



Horseshoe pitching is still practiced today. You can watch a video about an excellent horseshoe pitcher, Alan Francis, at this link:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHD\\_nG8uY1Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHD_nG8uY1Y). The National Horseshoe Pitchers

Association has a link describing how to pitch horseshoes here:

<http://www.horseshoepitching.com/gameinfo/howtopitch.html>.

## Hoop Rolling

Hoop rolling was a favorite past-time for children in colonial days up through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hoops came in any size available. As the source of hoops (from barrels, kegs or wheel rims) died, hoop rolling has diminished in popularity. However, Wellesley College has had a tradition of hoop rolling on May Day since 1895. Here is a video of Wellesley hoop rolling from 2012: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZfv5Am4PMM>.



The hoop is started with a balancing push on the inside and then steady pushing from the outside rim to keep the hoop rolling.

## Puzzles

Children sometimes found a new handmade wooden puzzle in their stockings at Christmas.

