



FIELD HOUSE MUSEUM

SCHOOL DAYS: TOYS

May 13, 2020

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this program is to educate children on how youth entertained themselves during the lifetime of Eugene Field and after. This is an online, go at your own pace program based on our Museum School Days event. Included in this informational packet is an introduction to the Field House Museum, transcript of the accompanying video about historic toys, histories of the games and toys mentioned, instructions on how to play the games, written instructions on how to make a kaleidoscope, and links to the relevant videos.

Age Range

7 – 13 years

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Introduction

The Field House Museum is a historic house and museum in St. Louis, Missouri that served as the home of Roswell Field, the key attorney who brought Dred Scott's freedom suit into the federal court system, leading to the infamous 1857 Supreme Court decision in Scott v. Sandford. Built in 1845, and initially saved as the birthplace and boyhood home of Roswell Field's son, Eugene Field, a noted 19th century journalist and children's poet, the site interpretation now includes the accolades and family life of both men. In addition, the museum maintains a large collection of 19th and 20th century toys, inspired by the poet's own collection.

This packet reflects educational information and activities from the institution's Museum School Days event. The focus of the May program is to educate children on the types of games and toys youths would have entertained themselves with during the lifetime of Eugene Field.

When Eugene was alive (1850 – 1895), there were no video games, television shows, or even radios. If someone wanted to listen to music, they would have to play it on instruments found around their homes. While toys such as dolls, stuffed animals, tea sets, and kaleidoscopes could be purchased, these were often only affordable to the middle and upper classes.

Many times, household materials would become objects of play. In Eugene Field's poem "The Naughty Doll," the child wishes for her doll to marry the Dresden plate; thus, dishware becomes a toy. Pieces of hay or long splinters of wood were painted to create games of pick-up sticks, small objects could be a substitute for a jack, and old rags were easily wound together to create a kickable ball.

When he had grown older, and money became more plentiful, Eugene Field curated a large collection of toys ranging from dolls to mechanical wind-ups. Unfortunately, a warehouse fire destroyed all but nine of his toys, seven of which are on display at the Field House Museum.

As a tribute to the "Children's Poet," the Field House Museum continues to collect toys. The Museum's current collection houses a vast array of playthings from the 1790s to present. On display currently at the Museum are four exhibits dedicated to toys and children that can be seen in person:

- Life in Miniature
- Steiff Everlasting
- Power of Words
- Tails of Friendship

Eugene's toys can be seen in person or by taking one of our live virtual tours online.

Video Transcript

Hello and welcome to the Field House Museum's first ever online Museum School Day. A few times a year the museum staff gets together as part of our educational mission and hosts a day for students and teachers. Each day has its own theme pertaining to who we are and our collections here at the Field House Museum. Today's theme is: Toys!

If you know a little bit about us, you will know that we were home to the Field family. Roswell Field, the father, was the attorney for the Dred and Harriet Scott Case that brought the suit all the way to the Supreme Court. His son, Eugene Field, was a poet and newspaper man who wrote many famous poems including "The Gingham Dog and Calico Cat."

Now you are probably wondering, what does this have to do with toys? Well, Eugene Field was an avid toy collector, and in his honor, we collect them as well. Currently our collection of dolls and other toys ranges from the 1790s all the way to the present day. We even have some of the surviving toys from Eugene's collection always on display here at the museum. But you will have to visit us in person or take one of our virtual tours to see them.

Today though we are going to be taking a look at a very...very....very...small portion of the Field House Museum's toy collection.

First up in we have a game of jacks, also known as knucklebones. This set is from the 1940s. The cloth pouch used to hold the game has been painted with an oil-based paint to simulate the look of leather. In this set there are 18 metal (and kind of rusty) jacks and a rubber ball.

There are a couple of ways to play Jacks, but the general idea is to bounce the ball and scoop up some jacks before the ball bounces again. Personally, I prefer to play plastic jacks, the metal ones can hurt if you scoop them up too hard and especially if you step on one! And you think stepping on a LEGO is bad.

Next, we have some sets of Jackstraws. As you can see from the array in front of me, these all have different names, but I assure you, they are all the same game.

First, we have this nicely packaged set in a blue cardboard box. This set was made by Parker Brothers in the 1930s and 40s between the Great Depression and World War II. You will see the "Jackstraws" are little different from our other sets, these pieces have shapes: shovels, hammers, hoes, and saws, made of balsa wood. Also included in this game are two hooks.

To play this style of game you hold the straws or sticks in an upright bundle on a table. When you let go, the pieces will fall into a pile. The goal is to collect pieces without disturbing the others. When playing you use the hooks to collect the pieces, making the game a little more difficult.

This version of Jackstraws is called FiddleStix and was produced by the Plaza Manufacturing Company also in the 1930s. Originally the game, according to the rule book, included 16 orange, 15 blue, 5 red, 5 green wooden sticks, and 1 purple wooden stick. Each of the colors are worth different amounts of points.

The purple stick, also known as “The Major” is worth the most and can be used by the player who obtains it to be used “whenever necessary to dislodge a stick which would be impossible to move directly with your finger.”

Here we have a game of 4-5-6- Pick-Up-Sticks made by O. Schoenhut Incorporated around 1936. This set comes with one black “Major,” 19 red, 17 yellow, 5 blue, and 5 green wooden sticks. The cardboard and metal canister are in really great condition as are the sticks and instructions.

This game is called Pix! Pix! Pick Up Sticks! and was made by the Whitman Publishing Group in 1937. This set is complete with 1 black stick, 6 blue, 6 green, 14 yellow, and 14 red wooden sticks.

In contrast, years later the Whitman- Western Publishing Company produced this colorfully cardboard clad set in 1986. The major difference, as you may notice, is that the sticks are made of plastic. We have 1 black stick, 11 yellow, 11 red, 4 blue, and 4 green sticks.

There is no universal number of sticks that are needed to play a game of Jackstraws, Fiddlesticks, or Pick Up Sticks. All you need is a “Major” and a varying number of 4 other colors.

Lastly, from the Field House Museum Collection, we have Kaleidoscopes! I wish we had a way for you to see how pretty all of the images are. If you go to our other video, you can see how to make your own kaleidoscope.

Our first kaleidoscope is undated but is made of cardboard with a pasted picture of a Victorian woman, likely a nurse as indicated by the apron and headpiece. We can tell that this is an older piece because the end pieces are made of glass, and not plastic. The chain you see would have allowed for the owner to easily carry it.

While it is fun to change up the image inside, the kaleidoscope's original purpose was to inspire artists to create beautiful works.

Here we have two kaleidoscopes that were made in St. Louis by the Steven Manufacturing Company. This one is called "Millions of Designs Kaleidoscope" and was produced between 1943 and 1945. Our other Steven's kaleidoscope was made around 1948. Both toys have colorful plastic shapes.

Our next kaleidoscope was likely made in Japan by Ikecho, a popular maker of kaleidoscopes. It is different from our others because it comes with three interchangeable tops that fit on the end. As you see each top is filled with colorful bits of glass and plastic.

If you are interested in making your own kaleidoscope with adult help, please view our other video. For a transcript of this video please download our informational packet. This packet also includes brief histories of jacks, jackstraws, and kaleidoscopes; information on how to play jacks and jackstraws; a short quiz, written instructions on how to make your own kaleidoscope; and links to today's videos.

Thank you everyone for joining us today. If you are interested in learning more about the toys Eugene Field owned, or about other items in our collection and on display, please come see us when we re-open. Or visit our online shop to book a virtual guided tour and a docent will take you through the historic Field house.

So, thank you to our sponsors who make programs like these possible and thank you again to those who joined us today, we hope to have our in-person Field House Museum School Days back in the fall. Stay tuned and have a great summer.

-End Video Transcript-

Histories of the Featured Toys

Jacks:

It is unclear when jacks, also known as knucklebones, was invented. The game is one of the oldest and most widespread games around the world. Mentions of knucklebones appear in Sophocles' account of the Trojan War from around 1190 B.C. The original game was played with five ankle bones, usually from a sheep. To play, people would throw the bones in the air and catch them in a various number of ways. One way to catch them was on the back of the player's hand.

Jacks are played with ten pieces and a rubber ball. Often made of metal or plastic, the shape of a jack pays homage to the shape of the original "knucklebones," with four short sides and two long sides. The game of jacks is so popular that it was inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame in 2000.

Jackstraws and Pick-Up Sticks:

Pick-up sticks is a game of coordination skills. It is unclear when the game originated, but it does trace back to Native Americans who played the game with straws of wheat. Pick-up sticks became popular among Colonial settlers after learning of the game from Native Peoples. Sets of pick-up sticks have been made with thin straw shaped wood, ivory, and plastic.

Jackstraws is a version of pick-up sticks that are made with the sticks in the form of farming implements. The game is played most often with hooks used to collect the pieces, some being harder to gather than others.

Kaleidoscopes:

Kaleidoscopes were invented in 1816 by Sir David Brewster and today are sold as toys. Kaleidoscopes are made up of mirrors or other reflective materials touching along a common edge at a 45-degree angle. The mirrors are enclosed in glass with a peephole at one end and a box enclosing colorful small objects at the other.

The box on the end of a kaleidoscope varies depending on the composition of the toy. On some, the box is stationary within the tube and the images are changed by rotating the entire kaleidoscope. Another variation is a rotating box that is partially affixed to the tubing, allowing for only the box to move to change the design.

Originally, kaleidoscopes were created to inspire artists in the creation of paintings, stained glass, and more.

How to Play

Jacks:

Variation 1 - Begin by scattering the jacks onto a flat surface. Player one will bounce the rubber ball with their dominant hand. The player will then pick up jacks one by one with the same dominant hand before the ball bounces again. If not successful, it becomes the next player's turn.

Variation 2 - Begin by scattering the jacks onto a flat surface. Player one will bounce the rubber ball with their dominant hand. The player will pick up as many jacks as possible with the same dominant hand before the ball bounces again. If not successful, it becomes the next player's turn.

Variation 3 - Begin by scattering the jacks onto a flat surface. Player one will bounce the rubber ball with their dominant hand. The player will pick up one jack in the first round, two in second, three in the third, etc. If not successful, it becomes the next player's turn.

Pick-Up Stick:

Player one begins by gathering all sticks in their hands and dropping/scattering them onto a flat surface. Player one then attempts to pick up the sticks one by one without moving any other sticks other than the one they are attempting to pick up. If any stick moves the player forfeits their turn to the next player.

The next player may continue and choose any stick they wish to attempt to retrieve or pick up all sticks and re-scatter them. The player will continue until a disruption is made.

If a player successfully picks up the black stick, also called the "Major", the player can use this stick to move sticks around in the scatter to allow them better access to the wanted stick.

Each stick has a certain amount of points based on color. The game is over once a predetermined number of points is reached. Black = 25 points, Red = 10 points, Blue = 5 points, Green = 2 points, Yellow = 1 point

If a player picks up a red, blue, and green stick in this order, their score is double for those three sticks.

Optional Quiz Questions

- 1. What is the theme of today's Museum School Day?**
 - a. Toys
 - b. Clothes
 - c. Teddy Bears
- 2. What are the three toys featured today?**
 - a. Balls, Dolls & Bears
 - b. Jacks, Jackstraws/ Pick-up sticks, & Kaleidoscopes
 - c. Yo-yos, Video games, & Tea sets
- 3. How many jacks were in the jack set?**
 - a. 18
 - b. 17
 - c. 4
- 4. What was the picture of on the bag of jacks?**
 - a. A flower
 - b. A picnic
 - c. A pond
- 5. When is the oldest set of pick-up sticks from?**
 - a. The 1930s
 - b. The 1980s
 - c. The 1950s
- 6. What makes the Jackstraws different from the other pick-up-sticks?**
 - a. The sticks are farm tools and you use a hook to play
 - b. The sticks are made of ivory
 - c. The sticks are short, and you use your toes to pick them up
- 7. Who invented the kaleidoscope?**
 - a. Leonardo Da Vinci
 - b. Benjamin Franklin
 - c. Sir David Brewster
- 8. What company made kaleidoscopes in St. Louis?**
 - a. Parker Brothers
 - b. Stevens Manufacturing
 - c. Mattel
- 9. What is used to create images inside of a kaleidoscope?**
 - a. Mirrors or other reflective surfaces and colorful objects
 - b. Magic
 - c. Glitter
- 10. How can you see Eugene Field's toy collection?**
 - a. By visiting the Field House Museum in person
 - b. By taking an online virtual tour
 - c. All of the above

Kaleidoscope Craft Instructions

Need:

- 1 Empty toilet paper roll
- 1 sheet of flat plastic (a food container works great)
- Mirror paper or aluminum foil pasted to printer paper
- Large colorful beads
- Tape
- Hot glue gun
- Marker
- Colorful duct tape or craft paper

Instructions:

1. Using the toilet paper tube and marker, trace 3 circles onto the plastic sheeting. Carefully cut out the circles.
2. Using the hot glue gun, glue one of the plastic circles onto one end of the toilet paper tube.
3. Cut out 3 rectangles that are 1 ¼ inch by 3 ½ inches from the mirror paper or aluminum foil pasted paper.
4. Tape the rectangles together along the long sides. Fold the papers together to create a triangle with the shiny sides facing inwards.
5. Slide the triangular tube into the toilet paper tube until it touches the plastic circle.
6. Trim the second plastic circle just enough so that it fits into the toilet paper tube to sit atop the triangular tube.
7. Top with large colorful beads.
8. Glue the last plastic circle on top of the remaining open end of the toilet paper tube.
9. Decorate with colorful duct tape or craft paper.

Video Links

1. *Field House Museum School Days: From the Collection*

Youtube: https://youtu.be/L4eo_S_1O34

2. *Field House Museum: How to Make a Kaleidoscope*

Youtube: <https://youtu.be/fgi4AqB7X1c>