

## Enjoying Kids Games at the Battle of Plattsburgh Celebration

What was it like to be a young person in 1814? No TV, cars, radio, electricity or Internet? You had to make your own toys and games. You walked everywhere, sometimes for many miles. You got together after school to play sack races, foot races, marbles, jacks, rock tag, and other games. In winter you could tramp out a “Fox and Geese” circle. Children in rural schools played “Rock Tag,” running on command in a pasture from touching one large rock to another nearby one without being caught. You walked along the top of fence rails to get the cows on a wet day. You made a doll from corn husks. You used a hand loom to make pot holders to protect your hands. You whittled out animals or spoons with your jackknife. In maple syrup making time, some children prepared maple sap gathering spiles from short, pith centered bush branches, burning out the center with a red hot wire. Parents showed you how.

Tasks such as impaling wild or rotten apples on a long stick and flicking them over a fence in the Fall became a game, as well as preventing cows in a pasture from eating them and spoiling their milk.

You made a pair of stilts out of old lumber and learned to balance and walk on them. You took hoops off a barrel and “trundled” them along the ground with the help of a short stick. In winter, you made short skiis out of two wooden barrel staves, nailing on a harness strip for your toes and hooking a red canning jar rubber over your heels to keep them on.

Your mother made you a spinning button from a button and a piece of string. How fast it could go! What else can we do? Let’s get a rope and have a Tug-of-War!

There were many chores to be done, and all the family helped. Filling the wood box, feeding the chickens and animals and helping in the kitchen and in the barn took a lot of time. Girls learned to cook and sew, and boys learned to milk cows and helped with another farm work.

Boys and girls weeded the gardens and helped raise food for the family to eat. Everyone helped at haying time, when grass was cut, dried and put into the barn.

Many times chores could be turned into games. “Who could dig the most potatoes?” “Who could pick the most berries?” “How fast can you husk sweet corn?” “I’ll race you to the barn.”

Games and activities such as some of those mentioned above will be ready for you to play at the Kid’s Games tent, thanks to the Beekmantown Lions Club, our sponsor.

Thanks to local orchards and our string-tying volunteers, we will have fresh apples dangling on strings from the tent walls for children to try “bobbing for apples” without using your hands!

You can do it!

We will teach you to play the old-time games and have some fun, just as they did long ago. Tug-of-War ropes are ready, along with stilts, hoops, marbles, and other games. Walking along a balance beam is like walking along a fence-rail in the old days. It’s harder than you think! Even on a beam only three inches above the ground! Parents and grandparents are invited to help the children in games they used to play.

At 12 o’clock noon on Saturday and Sunday all available children will gather behind the Kid’s Games tent for the Kid’s Muster. Our Captain will train the troops to be good soldiers. He will help them learn to fight the enemy by charging with their wooden muskets.

Then comes their very own “Kid’s Parade!” Following a bagpiper will be Stan Ransom carrying the Star-Spangled Banner flag, then our marching children with their wooden muskets

and flags. We march once around Trinity Park and back to the Kid's Tent, with a brief stop for friends and family to take photos of this very important part of the celebration, the Kid's Parade! Don't miss it!

The Kid's Games are not just for children! We have found parents and grandparents enjoy demonstrating and talking about the games they played as children.

Learning and playing historic games is supported and fits into the New York State Education Department's curriculum. Games can be related to selected Education Standards. The fourth grade includes a unit on the Local Community; the seventh grade studies New York History. The games would fit in both areas nicely, and we encourage the teachers in our local schools to learn these historic games and pass them on to the students as part of their classroom activities.

Games played in 1800 can be used to help children understand his or her role in society today. Posing the question, "What is my role in society today?" can lead to comparisons with children of long ago and also can lead to discussions of "How am I connected to the children who lived 200 years ago?" Many children today are apt to think only of TV, telephones, videos, movies and other technological advantages they take for granted. They should be looking beyond the technology to the elements of their society and their community.

Games help children explore the different traditions in America and help them to understand historic events. Games also show how people lived, worked, and used natural resources. Games such as "Tug of War" and throwing objects through rolling hoops were important training exercises for Native American children. Children learn to be creative in inventing new ways of playing games, using new patterns and alternative forms of games. Games help with physical well-being of children, so that they would be able to do the work expected of them. Games teach

children to recognize simple patterns, sequences and relationships, and give them practice of interacting with other children to accomplish a task.

Games help children with intergenerational understanding. Many games were taught to children by their parents, grandparents or other relatives. We delight to see grandparents help children to understand the fine points of marbles and other games.

We invite volunteers of all ages to come help us teach, coach and play these historic games, for as little or as long as you wish. We appreciate all the help volunteers give us, which makes the games work and the children very happy. It's fun for everyone!

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