

LOYALIST CHILDREN'S GAMES

by Myrna Fox UE

GAMES

Since toys were scarce, Loyalist children had to amuse themselves with simple objects that were available around their houses or yards. Large families guaranteed an abundance of playmates, but time free from work was limited. Sometimes, work and play had to be combined, and toys were made from materials left over from everyday tasks.

TOYS

DOLLS were made from corn husks and carved pieces of wood. Their clothes were made from scraps of material left over from dressmaking, or from worn-out clothing.

TOY ANIMALS AND WAGONS were whittled from scraps of wood.

TOY BOATS were made from leaves, birch bark to imitate Native canoes and twigs bound together with thongs or willow withes to form rafts.

WHISTLES were made from poplar wood. The bark was carefully removed from a small, four- to six-inch-long piece of wood, and a groove was cut from a V nick at the top to the opposite end. When the bark was replaced, it was possible to make a whistling sound by blowing into the groove.

HOOPS were made from willow branches fastened to make a circle. Children would run beside the hoop, propelling it with a stick to see how far they could run before it fell over.

OUTDOOR GAMES

Loyalist children played many of the same games modern children play. They jumped rope, skipped stones across water (using the same techniques as if tossing a Frisbee), played hopscotch and tug-of-war. They also played tag, hide-and-seek and leap-frog.

A snowfall was always a good time to make snow angels or play fox-and-geese. Children also imitated their fathers or older brothers who served in the militia by marching back and forth carrying sticks instead of guns.

Singing games, such as *Ring-Around-the-Rosy* (whose words referred to the Great Plague of London in 1664-65), *London Bridge* (whose words date back to the 11th century, when troops of Norway's King Olaf destroyed one of London's bridges while Britons were standing on it) and *Drop the Handkerchief*,