

Toys and Games

Discovery Box and Guidebook Index

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Toys and Games

Description of Discovery Box Contents

1. **Wooden Spindle Top (2):** This is a modern example of an old-fashioned toy. In fact, tops have been popular toys since the days of ancient Greece. To use the toy, set the top on the table and pull the string. Pull up on the handle and watch the top spin! A group game in which tops could be used is "Peg in the Ring," in which a child would start one top in the ring and then other kids would send their tops spinning into the ring, trying to knock the first one down.



2. **Wooden Ball and Cup:** This is a modern rendition of an old-fashioned toy where children could prove their skill by tossing the ball up and trying to catch it in the cup.



3. **Wooden Limber Jack:** This is a modern example of an old-fashioned folk toy. The Limber Jack, or Dancing Man, became popular in the late 1700's. Jack's crazy tap dancing was very similar to the lively performances known as clogging seen and enjoyed by the folks of this era. To make him dance place the stick through the hole in his mid-section to keep Jack upright. Then sit with one end of the wooden plank under your leg and place the Limber Jack on the far end. Begin tapping the end holding the Limber Jack to make him dance on the wood.



4. **Flap Jack:** Another modern example of a folk toy, which was easy to make and use by pioneers. Just hold the sticks near the bottom with one hand and hold the toy upright. Squeeze and release the sticks with short, quick motions to see Jack's daring flips around the string.



5. **Buckeye Doll:** Pioneer children used whatever they found to make dolls. This doll is made from a buckeye and corncob, and dressed with cloth and yarn. For pioneers, buckeyes were a symbol of good luck. His eyes and mouth have been glued on, and his arms are made from modern day pipe cleaners. Buckeyes are nearly impossible to put holes in, so his head is glued on.



6. **Small Corn Cob Doll:** Dolls have been favorite toys for as long as there have been kids, and until very recently they were made of what was on hand – including rocks. Native Americans as well as pioneers made dolls of corn husks and corn cobs and dressed them with whatever scraps of material were on hand. This doll's face and body are made using corn cobs. Her arms are made from modern pipe cleaners and her face has been drawn on.



7. **Large Corn Cob Doll:** This doll is a very simple version of what a corn cob doll could look like. It has no special decorations to make it look more human. It is a good example of the simple toys that most pioneer children had to play with because there was often not enough time to make anything more realistic. The head is made from a gourd. The facial features could be added using string or pieces of material.



8. **Corn Cob Pig:** This toy is also made from corncobs and fashioned to resemble an animal that was seen on most Ozark farms, the pig. For pioneer families, toys were not made in stores. For special occasions like birthdays and Christmas, many toys were made by hand. This pig could have been a present to a brother or sister from a sibling because it was quick and easy to make.



9. **Button on a String (6):** This toy was also known as “Buzz Saw” because of the noise the string made when it was wound. To make the buzzing noise, place the button in the middle of the string. While holding an end of the string in each hand, begin to wind the string by spinning the button in a circle (this may take several minutes of spinning). When the string is really twisted, pull and relax the ends rhythmically. The button will spin and the string will make a buzz saw noise. This effect works best with bigger buttons.



10. **Stereoscope and Box of Stereocards:** This is similar to the modern day View Finder. The cards are placed in the scope allowing the viewer to move the photo closer or further away to focus the image. An illusion of a three dimensional photograph can be seen when viewing. These view cards were not just for children. They allowed all people to see places and events that they might never be able to see otherwise.



11. **Thaumatrope:** The thaumatrope, or “Wonder Turner,” was invented in 1826 by the English physician J.A. Paris. This toy is made from a piece of cardboard with a picture drawn on each side. The cardboard is then placed on a stick, which can be spun between the hands. When the thaumatrope is rapidly spun the pictures on either side of it merge into one. Patterns to make a thaumatrope are included in this notebook.



12. **Clay Marble:** Pioneer children, and others who could not easily visit a store to buy toys, could make their toys out of whatever materials they had around their homes. This marble is made from clay. Marbles could also be made from polishing rocks into a smooth, round shape.



13. **Bean Bags (2):** These bean bags are a very versatile toy. They could be used to play hopscotch or a game of tag. Children could make these easily by sewing together pieces of scrap fabric and filling them with beans.



14. Jacob's Ladder: The Jacob's ladder toy is named for a passage in the Bible (Genesis 28:12). This toy is mysterious- its wooden blocks are connected by ribbon or cloth hinges, and appear to tumble down one another. To operate the toy, simply hold the top block and let the others hang down. Tilt that top block to the left or right, and the blocks below will begin to cascade downward. A common trick is to fold a dollar bill into a small rectangle and tuck it under one of the cloth hinges, and then operate the ladder to see what happens!



15. Turkey Call: The original purpose of this toy was to call wild turkeys in the woods when hunting. However, it was used more as a toy than a hunting aid. To use, take hold of the handle and gently move it back and forth across the open box. The resulting sound is very similar to a turkey's gobble!



16. Jump Rope: Many children throughout time have used jump ropes both for play and for exercise. Included in the discovery box manual are jump rope rhymes- get a student volunteer who thinks they can jump well enough to complete a rhyme!



17. Jack in the Box: A jack in the box looks like a simple wooden box until you open it. Inside is a spring covered by a puppet (Jack), and it jumps out at whoever opens it.

