

Toys and Amusements
of the Liberty Hall and Hollow
Inhabitants

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"The word 'toys' as we use it today, meaning exclusively plaything for children, was not in common use until the nineteenth century. Up to this time and even into the early 1800's the word 'toys' was used to describe anything from an adult bauble or gewgaw of little or no value, a trifle to a costly miniature such as a piece of silver furniture made by the finest silversmith of the day."¹ When one thinks about the word toy, one pictures a manufactured piece for a child or even an electronic game which has become popular in recent years. When toys, games, and other amusements are spoken of in connection with the hollow inhabitants none of this comes to mind, however they did possess some amusement items and played games.

When one thinks of the hollows he thinks of generally farmers, who were isolated by choice, geographics, and economics. However, as past research of the archeological courses have shown these people were not as isolated as conditions appeared to be. Also there is evidence that the young and old took time out from their rigorous routines to enjoy themselves. Therefore, my hypothesis is that the people of the hollows did own toys and played games, however not as much as those at the Liberty Hall site.

Their lives were not as full of druggery as it first appeared to be on the surface. The people took time out to enjoy themselves with many different amusements that were

inexpensive to the inhabitants, but yet an important part of their lifestyles which has been over looked in the past because it conflicts with our image of the poor, hard working, yoman farmer.

Further, I hypothesize that the people of the hollows did not buy a great deal of toys but took it upon themselves to amuse themselves. To confirm this point I looked at David Bowen's paper, "The Moore, Dunlap Accountbook Analysis." In this paper David traced individuals backgrounds who inhabited the hollows and were customers at the general store. He made mention of purchases which included barbed wire, work clothes, silk, and items of fine wear, but there is no mention of the purchase of any toys or the like. Because of the meticulous manner in which the books were kept, some account of the purchase of toys or gameing devices would surely have been kept. He not only kept the dates of the opening and closing of accounts, but also accurate accounts of bartirings, cash payments, and loans.

Also by looking at the types of payments which were made, the majority for two dollars or less one would have to assume that the people of the hollows were not financially capable of purchasing a large amount of toys. This is because a purchase of a 'fine jacket' at the price of sixteen dollars was considered a prized item. An imported toy would also be considered a prized item because it would cost about twenty-five dollars to import a toy from England. Although during

this time toys were being made in northern cities such as Philadelphia. The price to bring the toy to an area such as the hollows would still be very expensive and most likely would be mentioned in the account book of the store which sold it.²

Other evidence shows that the people of the hollows found ways to enjoy themselves. Their predecessors, "the indians had toys and played games. Little girls had dolls. Some were made from cornhusks; some from a bit of wood--a torso with no legs--tapered on the ends so that it could be held; . . . Indian boys had leather balls,' made from the intestines of captured game; stuffed with feathers."³ The balls could be used to play a number of different games which would keep the children amused. They also played games which did not require toys.

"In the 1650's when life in the colonies was still very difficult, John Cotton, the minister, admitted that little children (refers to the age group of about seven or eight years) [sic] spend much of their time in pastime and play, for their bodies are too weak to work."⁴ Even when John Winthrop led the Puritans into the Roanoke valley, he recorded that the children engaged in games and horseplay. He even mentions that one of the games played by the children was known as the "wags."⁵ So as we can see even when times were considered to be very difficult for survival, there are records of children spending a good deal of their time at play.

There are two basic reasons why the early Americans did not possess a great number of toys. One as we have discussed

is the expense of the toy itself, and secondly they only carried the necessities of survival. Therefore a toy would be an unimportant object which would take up valuable space on a crowded ship. This may have been a situation faced by the first inhabitants of the hollows.

First of all, it would be expensive for a family to move to the hollows and they would have to sell many of their possessions to make the trip. Secondly, they would most likely not take a luxury item such as a toy because it would take up space from a valuable necessity. Therefore the hollow inhabitants would have to make or acquire toys once they reached and settle the hollow area.

Therefore they may have done as their predecessors did and make toy. By using the definition of a toy 'as being anything which one uses to seek amusement' then we can begin to see that there were many toys for the hollow children to play with. Such as homemade dolls of wood or corncob. These dolls would have been very similar to the ones which the Indian children played with. The construction of the doll was simple and very easy to make with left over wood, straw, or many other left over items which could be easily sewn together in a cloth and given to a child. The doll also was very durable and could be easily handed down from child to child and very simple to repair, if needed.

Another toy which may have been played with by the children in the hollows, is a "battledore." Again the toy is

easily constructed by drying out a pig's bladder and attaching it to a board or piece of wood with string or twine. The toy is then held at one end and the ball is thrown up into the air and batted. This toy is also easily made and inexpensive because all one needs is left overs. Also the whittling of figures and toys may have been very popular. Usually these whittled toys were of animals. The toy would be whittled in the spare time of an adult and given to a child. The whittled toy would be done very well and with care.⁶

Another toy which did not last long, but there was a steady supply of, was chicken feet. Once a chicken was killed the feet would be removed with the tendons still attached, when the tendons were pulled the talons would make a great grabbing toy. Again the toy was easily made or aquired but provided a great deal of fun for the children. But a toy which may have been played with and would take some time to make is a jumping jack. The complete toy would be made of wood.⁷

However one of the simplest toys which may have been used by the hollow inhabitants may be made from either wood, metal, or bone attached to a piece of string or twine. A hole is drilled through the middle of the object and the string is tightly tied around it. The toy is then swung around in the air, and a whipping sound is made. The sound amused the child and the toy could be played with for hours. So as we can see the people in the hollows could have had simple, inexpensive and durable toys which were available to the children. (Diagrams shown on A1.)

More than likely, the same situation did not occur at the Liberty Hall site. Since the individuals who inhabited the site were of a higher social-economical class. They were more mobile and had a greater exposure to the outside world; and were influenced by it more than the people in the hollows. Therefore, it was expected that they would put a greater value on toys and amusements, as a sign of ^{their} social class, than the people who lived in the hollows. Also because of the type of site Liberty Hall was, a college, one would suspect that its inhabitants would have more free time and look for entertainment and amusements to full their free hours. As noted by Rich Oram the Director of the Rare Book Room ^{at} the Washington and Lee Univ. ^{Library}, "The private libraries of Liberty Hall (those maintained by students in various social organizations), were more extensive than the one operated by the school." This would not only denote the available time for relaxation but also enough of a financial freedom, not only to purchase books, but also gameing devices, and expensive ones which would not only denote free time but also social status.

Therefore, we would expect the toys to be different, such as ceramic toys, manufactured dolls, jumping jacks, paper toys, toy pistols, wooden toys, and porcelain toys. Many of these toys at first appearance sound simular to the ones which may have been played with by the hollow inhabitants, but the difference is that the toys in the hollows would be most likely homemade whereas the ones at Liberty Hall would be more of a

manufactured or craftsmanship nature. This is not to say that the toys at Liberty Hall were made in an assembly line process but that they may have been 'store bought.'⁹

To prove this aspect of our hypothesis true, we will look at the listing of artifacts uncovered at Liberty Hall, site number 0000; the Cunningham site, number 0029, the Knick site, number 0121, and the Hossteadler site, number 0101. To retrieve this information we get it from the computer program named ANTMAN. This varifies a great deal of our hypothesis, especially that the Liberty Hall site did have a greater number of toys and 'gameing devices' than the other three sites in the hollows. At Liberty Hall, a site occupide from about 1790-1805, 97,386 ^aartifacts were discovered, of which 297 were toys. At the Cunningham site, 1780-1820, of the 5182 ^aartifacts, none were toys. The same is true of the 1443 artifacts found at the Hossteadler site. However, at the Knicks site, occupied between 1850 -- and the late 1940's, 14 artifacts of toys were found. So we can see the people at Liberty Hall had a greater interrest or ability to amuse themselves with toys than the people in the hollows.

The number of artifacts is important but also what is of greater importance is the type of artifacts which were found. Of the 14 artifacts found at the Knick site 8 were modern glass marbles, probly left during the later part of the occupation of the site. There were also two porcelain figurines, toy parts, and a model toy, all problely from the later occupation of the

site. However at Liberty Hall there was a greater number of artifacts and a greater variation of artifacts. There are modern glass marbles to clay marbles, stone marbles, porcelain figurines, wagon wheels, ice skates, toys and toy parts, jacks, toy guns, plastic figures, and even model toys, (For a specific breakdown of what toys, and the number of toys, and also the percentage found look at graph #2).

So as we can see the Liberty Hall site had more toys which gives us a better vision of one aspect of their lives there. But one of the most popular toys which may have been played with were marbles of different types. The game could be played for hours by a large group of individuals, as Mr. Wilson explains, "There were so many games you could play with marbles that -- that I can't remember them all." The toy was relatively inexpensive and fun to play, "Everybody, all the boys, walked around with a lot of marbles, pockets just full of 'em."¹⁰ He also told me that marbles was a big thing for his father and his friends but that they played more games that did not require many toys at all.

The early marbles, the majority of which are found in this area from the Liberty Hall site and are of "plain-grey or brown clay though some are agnates made from the mixing of two clays of different colors, generally grey and reddish brown."¹¹ So as we can see even at Liberty Hall there was an emphasis placed on simple amusements. But there is evidence that there were dolls at the site as well. There was also another simple

stick game which may have been played at Liberty Hall and the hollow sites called 'biblo-catcher'.¹²

Toys were not the only things used for amusement in the hollow areas or Liberty Hall, such as games as hide-and-seek, hop scotch, and leap frog were popular.¹³ These games were popular because they not only could be played by a small or large number of children but was a simple form of exercising, and lasted for a long while.

Another amusement of the people of Liberty Hall and the hollows may have been music. Folk music was highly regarded as a means of recreation. It played a very significant role in the everyday lives of the people of the hollows and in other Southern Appalachian Mt. regions. Folk music thrived among the people of the Mts. whom we considered to be isolated.¹⁴ To prove this, again we go to the ANT-MAN program and the information found is very interesting. At the Cunningham site no musical instruments were found. At the Hossteadler site again, no musical instruments were found. But at Liberty Hall a few musically related artifacts were found and they were of the variety of Jews harps and harmonicas. At the Knick site, however, 137 artifacts related to musical instruments were found; not only Jews harps and harmonicas but also the remains of an organ. So again, we can see there is evidence of a definite musical interest of the inhabitants of Liberty Hall and in the hollows.

Another amusement which may have interested the people

in the hollows is hunting. Although the primary reason to hunt may have been to provide food for the family. A gun was a prized possession. We know the people in the hollows had them because of the number of various ammunition shells which have been found and recorded at each site. But hunting was a way of enjoying oneself because of the skill developed and the sporting nature which existed then and still does today.

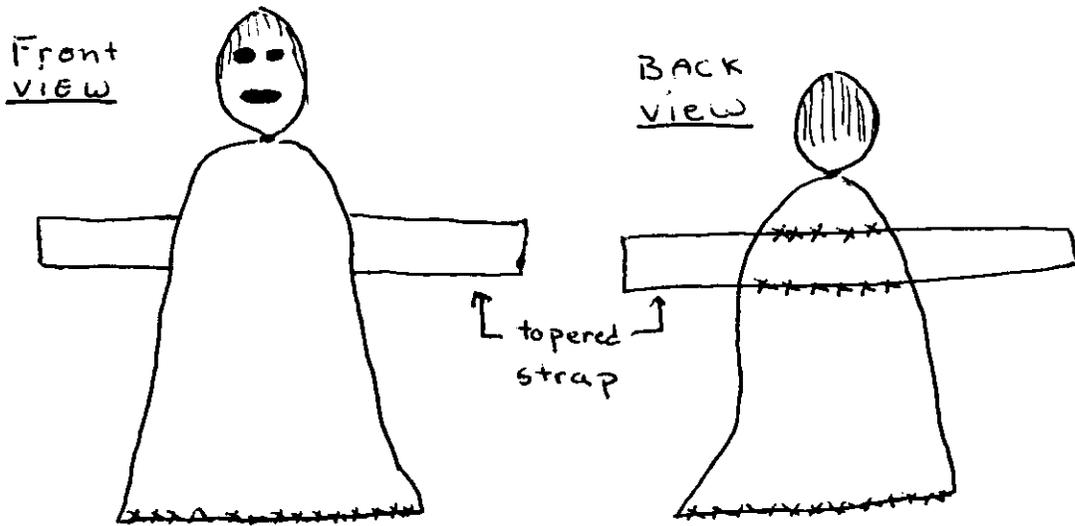
So as we can see that less than 500 or $\frac{1}{2}$ of one percent (0.05%) of the artifacts found in the archeological research listing of ANT-MAN are toy and amusement items. They tell us a great deal about the leisure time spent by the inhabitants and even to a certain extent how much leisure time they had. However there are problems which are difficult to face and could help explain why there are so few artifacts of toys. One is that every piece of artifact which is found is counted as a separate artifact. An example of this is when bottle glass is discovered and the bottle is shattered into twenty-five or thirty pieces. Each separate piece is an artifact in its own right. But here it is important to remember that the number of artifacts found is not always as important as what is found. Secondly, many toys which may have existed, were made out of ceramic and porcelain. When shattered it may have been impossible to distinguish if it was ever a toy or just ceramic and classified under ceramic. Many of the ceramic toys were made of the same material as cups and saucers and by the same craftsmen. So, it would be impossible to tell if it was ceramic of a cup or a curved toy.

However, the largest problem may have been the date that the toy was made and the material which it was made of. Such as the Cunningham site which was inhabited in the 1780's-1820's, many of the artifacts which may have been there are now decayed and cannot be excavated if they were not preserved. Such things as corncob, wood, cloth, and paper decays fairly quickly and these are the things which early toys were constructed out of. If any metal from a homemade toy was found and could be distinguished as a specific item then it would be classified as this, its primary classification, instead of its secondary classification as a toy. Most likely it would be classified as an unknown piece of metal.

In conclusion the information available to us shows that life in the hollows may have been difficult, and somewhat isolated, but the inhabitants did enjoy themselves. While they were young they played with homemade toys and enjoyed games which only required a little imagination and some will power. They also had an access to music which they provided for those of all ages. Some even enjoyed hunting not only for their survival but for its relaxing qualities as well. But the inhabitants of Liberty Hall had more free time which is proven by their access and outgoing interest in toys and gaming devices. Also a higher socio-economic group of people inhabited Liberty Hall, this also can be proven by the number of artifacts found and the type and quality of the artifacts found.

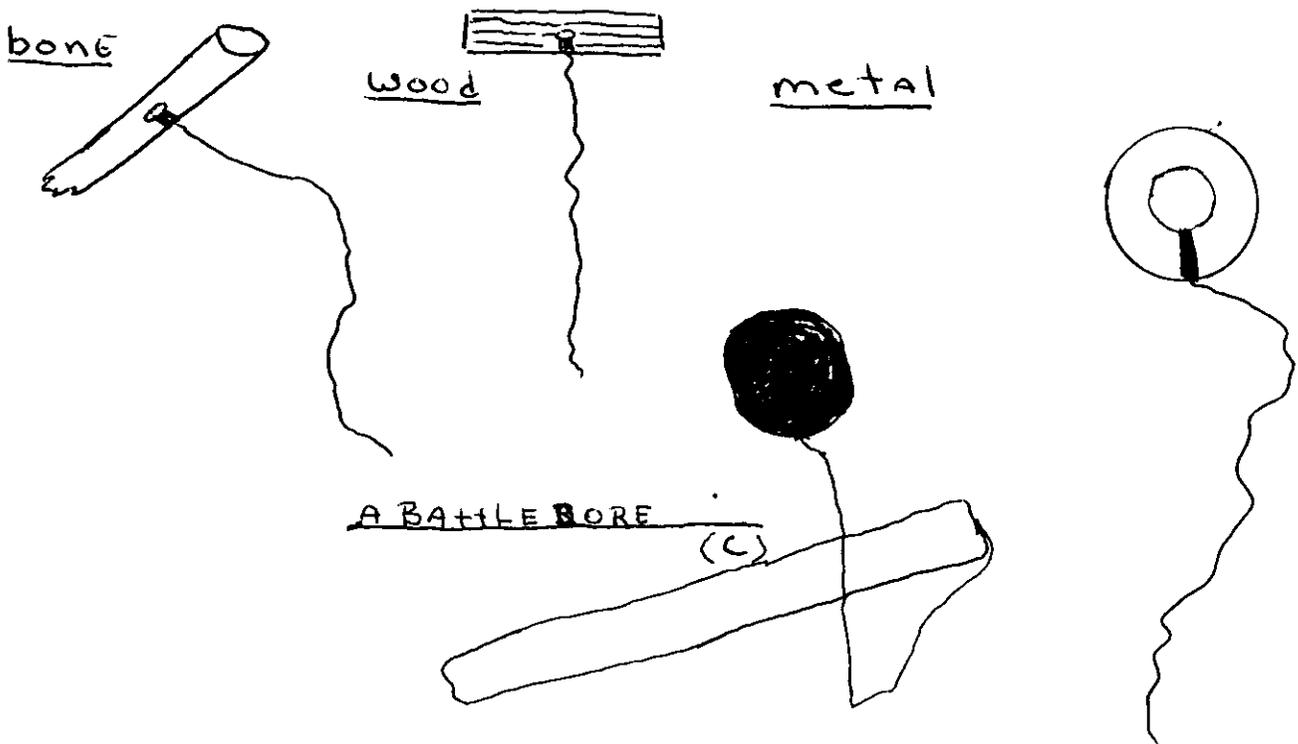
Homemade Doll (Figure 1)

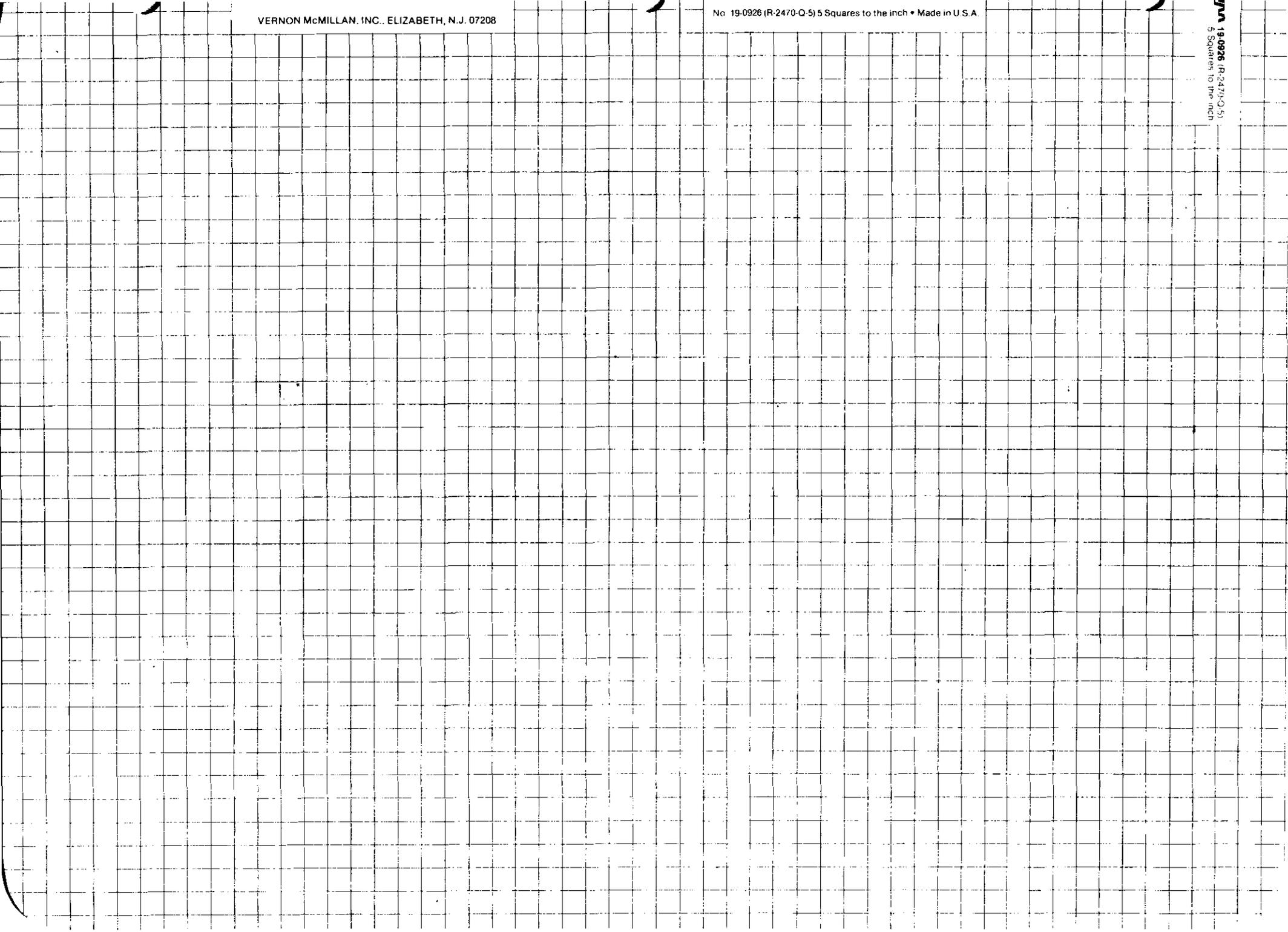
(A)



Swing Toys

(B)





FOOTNOTES

¹Bernard Barenholtz, Inez McClintock, American Antique Toys 1830-1900, (Harry N. Abrans, Inc. Publisher NY 1980) P 23.

²Ibid. P 27-29.

³Ibid. P.24.

⁴Ibid. P 26.

⁵Ibid. P 26.

⁶Ibid. P 30.

⁷Ibid. P 30.

⁸Quote, Rich Oram, Director of the Rare Book and Photograph room at Washington and Lee University.

⁹Louis Hertz's, Handbook of Old American Toys, (Dell Publishing Co. Inc. NY NY 10017) P IV.

¹⁰Quote, Mr. Wilson, custodian Washington and Lee Univ.

¹¹Ivor Noel Hume, A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America, (Publisher Undetermined, 1926) P 320.

¹²Kevin Ryan Bell "Colonial Generals at Play" (Paper for Anthropology 377, 1978) P 2.

¹³Ibid. P.3.

¹⁴Cecil J. Charp, English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians, (Oxford University Press Amen Hous Loundon 1932) P 14.

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- 8) Mr. Richard Oram, Director of the Rare Book and Photograph room at Washington and Lee Univ.
- 9) Mr. Wilson, custodian Washington and Lee Univ.