Childhood Amusements

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Americans are often accused of “spoiling” their children, which perhaps has something to do with the precarious nature of life on the frontier in the early days of settlement and exploration. In the eighteenth century between 10–30 percent of all children died in infancy; many colonial graveyards have markers that simply read “baby” or “infant.” Those children that survived quickly went to work for the good of the family; even the youngest had specific chores, many of which were laborious and even dangerous to modern eyes. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, improved health care and diet for all ages and a growing middle class meant a gradual easing of the pressure to work at an early age. Parents were able to indulge their children in playtime.

Children around the world, of course, have always played games, many of which are strikingly similar no matter what the culture or language spoken. A game of “tag” or “capture the flag” would be recognized by children throughout the ages. Modern stamp designs look at sport activities ranging from soccer, which has been around in one version or another for thousands of years, to newer thrills such as skateboarding. Summer sun or winter snow, outdoor activities have always had a special appeal to children.

Toys are another universal phenomenon. Dolls, model animals, pull toys, boats, balls, kites — almost every toy has its counterpart in cultures around the world. Some of the most ancient human graves have included what are clearly children’s toys — some are miniatures of adults tools such as a tiny 1 1/8-inch Eskimo oil lamp or arrow points suitable for a child’s bow, others are strictly for play such as a pull-along Egyptian crocodile with a moveable lower jaw.

Curiously, most U.S. stamp designs that feature toys have focused on Victorian-era items, primarily those intended for the amusement of little boys. Perhaps it has something to do with the universal appeal of a pull-toy, such as the horse shown in Scott 1416 or the fun of pushing any kind of wheeled vehicle along the floor, such as the mail truck shown in Scott 3626. Modern toys with specific inventors finally make their appearance on the Celebrate the Century stamps.

The stamps that follow present a selection of the games and toys that have amused children in the United States in the past and continue to be enjoyed by children today.
Toys

Victorian Toys • Scott 1415–1418 • 1970

- Tin and cast-iron locomotive
  Scott 1415

- Toy horse on wheels
  Scott 1416

- Mechanical tricycle
  Scott 1417

- Doll carriage
  Scott 1418

Victorian Toys • Scott 2711–2714 • 1992

- Pull-toy jockey on horse
  Scott 2711

- Pump fire engine
  Scott 2712

- Locomotive
  Scott 2713

- Riverboat
  Scott 2714

Greetings

Jack-in-the box
Scott 2791 • 1993
Toys

Antique Toys • Scott 3629–3629 • 2002; also issued as coil stamps, Scott 3638–3641

Toy mail wagon • Scott 3626, 3638

Toy locomotive • Scott 3627, 3639

Toy taxicab • Scott 3628, 3640

Toy fire pumper • Scott 3629, 3641

Greetings

Toy soldier blowing horn • Scott 2794 • 1993
Toys
Classic American Dolls, Scott 3151a-o • 1997

Toys

Art of the American Indian
Scott 3873e • 2004
A Miccosukee-Seminole (Florida) doll from the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC. This male doll, made circa 1935, wears a brightly colored patchwork man’s “foksikco.bi,” or big shirt.

Celebrate the Century 1900s
Crayola Crayons
Scott 3182d • 1998
Crayola Crayons were introduced in 1903. The first box of Crayola Crayons cost five cents and contained eight coloring sticks: black, brown blue, red, violet, orange, yellow and green. Today, there are 120 colors available. The top three favorites: blue (1903), cerulean (light blue) (1997), and purple (1997).

Celebrate the Century 1900s
Teddy Bear
Scott 3182k • 1998
“Teddy” Bear created. President Theodore Roosevelt was on an unsuccessful bear hunt in Mississippi in 1902 and his hosts presented him with captured bear for him to shoot. The president refused to shoot a tethered animal for sport but, because the bear was seriously wounded, did authorize a mercy killing. A cartoon in the Washington Post showed Roosevelt refusing to shoot what was now redrawn as a bear cub. The first official toy bear was marketed by Morris & Rose Michton, with the president’s permission, as “Teddy’s Bear.” Michton went on to form the Ideal Toy Company.

Celebrate the Century 1910s
Construction Toys
Scott 3183n • 1998
Toys that can be used to build and create remain popular. Erector® sets were introduced in 1913, Tinkertoys® in 1914, and Lincoln Logs® in 1916.

Celebrate the Century 1910s
Electric Toy Trains
Scott 3184d • 1998
In 1901 Joshua Lionel Cowen fitted a small motor under a model of a railroad flatcar, powered by a battery on 30 inches of track, and the Lionel electric train was born. The first Lionel train, the Electric Express, was designed as an animated window display in a local toy store.

Celebrate the Century 1930s
Monopoly Game
Scott 3185o • 1998
Based on a patented 1904 game originally known as The Landlord’s Game, and by the 1920s known as Monopoly, inventor Charles Darrow created his own version of the Atlantic City real estate game and offered it for sale to Parker Brothers in 1934. The royalties made him the first game inventor to become a millionaire.
Toys

Art of the American Indian • Seminold Doll Scott 3873e

Teddy Bears Centennial, Scott 3653–3656 • 2002

Bruin Bear, c. 1907 Scott 3653
“Stick” Bear, 1920s Scott 3654
Gund Bear, c. 1948 Scott 3655
Ideal Bear, c. 1905 Scott 3656

Celebrate the Century 1900s
Crayola Crayons Scott 3182d

Celebrate the Century 1900s
Teddy Bear Scott 3182k

Celebrate the Century 1910s
Construction Toys Scott 3183n

Celebrate the Century 1920s
Electric Toy Trains Scott 3184d

Celebrate the Century 1930s
Monopoly Game Scott 3185o
Celebrate the Century 1940s
Slinky
Scott 3186m • 1999
Inspired by the continuing movement of a dropped tension spring, the toy was developed by Richard and Betty James. It debuted at Gimbel's Department Store in Philadelphia in 1945 — 400 Slinkys were sold during the initial 90-minute demonstration.

Celebrate the Century 1960s
Barbie Doll
Scott 3188i • 1999
Barbie Doll was invented in 1959 by Ruth Handler, co-founder of Mattel, and named for her young daughter. Designed to be a “teenage” doll with a wide array of fashions for her wardrobe, Barbie set a new sales record for Mattel, selling 351,000 dolls at $3 each in her first year.

Celebrate the Century 1980s
Video Games •
Scott 3190i • 2000
Beginning with a simple version of Tic-Tac-Toe back in 1952, video games have become complex and absorbing pastimes for all ages. Three early games — Pong (1972), Pac-Man (1980), Dragon's Lair (1983) — have been added to the collection at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Celebrate the Century 1980s
Cabbage Patch Kids
Scott 3190i • 2000
Cabbage Patch Kids were invented in 1979 by 21-year-old art student Xavier Roberts as “Little Person” dolls that could be adopted from Babyland General Hospital in Cleveland, Georgia. Each hand-sewn soft sculpture doll was unique in some small way, a practice that continues today even though the dolls are now mass produced with vinyl faces by toy giant Mattel.
Toys

Celebrate the Century
1940s
Slinky • Scott 3186m

Celebrate the Century
1960s
Barbie Doll
Scott 3188i

Celebrate the Century
1980s
Cabbage Patch Kids
Scott 3190i

Celebrate the Century
1980s
Video Games
Scott 3190l
**Games & Sports**

*In the good old summertime....*

**Youth Team Sports**

**Softball • Scott 3400 • 2000**

Although the modern game of American football has its roots in British rugby, the attraction of “kicking a ball about” was known in China as far back as 2500 BCE where it was used in military training. The first American collegiate game was held in 1869 between Rutgers and Princeton; it was won by Rutgers 6–4.

**Youth Team Sports**

**Baseball Centennial • Scott 855 • 1939**

The earliest reference to “baseball” as a distinct American game is a 1791 town ordinance from Pittsfield, MA prohibiting anyone from playing baseball within 80 yards of the new town meeting house with its glass windows. Alexander Cartwright drew up formal rules for the game in 1845, including “Three hands out, all out.”

**Youth Team Sports**

**Basketball • Scott 3399 • 2000**

Created by Dr. James Naismith in 1891 as a game that could be played indoors during the winter. His intent was to create a game that would develop a variety of physical skills and not rely solely on personal strength. The first game was played with two peach baskets and a soccer ball.

**Youth Team Sports**

**Soccer • Scott 3401 • 2000**

Like football/rugby, soccer is an ancient and rowdy sport. The earliest record reports it being played on a special field in Japan in 1004 BCE. Great Britain's Eton College formulated the earliest known rules in 1815 and from there it spread around the world. Soccer is said to be the most watched and played sport in the world, although Queen Elizabeth I once ordered that anyone caught playing soccer be “jailed for a week, and obliged to do penance in church.”

**Season's Greetings • Sledding**

**Scott 2027 • 1982**

Nothing beats the rush of your first plunge down a snowy hill on a barely controllable sled, whether traditional wood on metal runners, a plastic toboggan or a metal saucer.

**Season's Greetings • Decorating an Outdoor Tree**

**Scott 2030 • 1982**

Another tradition with roots in antiquity is decorating a living tree with food for wild animals and birds, in this case what with appear to be strands of popcorn and cranberries.

**Season's Greetings • Winter Pastime**

**Scott 1703 • 1976**

Winter Pastime, 1855, shows children ice-skating on a country pond and sledding on a nearby hill. Lithograph printed by the firm of N. Currier, later the famous team of Currier & Ives who published about 7,500 scenes for home decoration. Original lithograph by Frances Flora Palmer (1812–1876); one of the firm's principal artists, she created an estimated 200 scenes.

**Season's Greetings • Ice-Skating**

**Scott 2029 • 1982**

Ice-skating on a pond near a covered bridge brings back memories of earlier days. Today's young skaters are more likely to take to the ice in a groomed and covered arena.

**Christmas • Winter Pastime**

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Let it snow....
Games & Sports

In the good old summertime....

Baseball Centennial
Scott 855

Youth Team Sports
Basketball • Scott 3399

Youth Team Sports
Football • Scott 3400

Youth Team Sports
Soccer • Scott 3401

Youth Team Sports
Softball • Scott 3402

Let it snow....

Christmas • Winter Pastime
Scott 1703

Season's Greetings • Sledding
Scott 2027

Season's Greetings • Building a Snowman • Scott 2028

Season's Greetings • Ice-Skating
Scott 2029

Season's Greetings • Decorating an Outdoor Tree • Scott 2030
Special Olympics
Scott 1788 • 1979
Special Olympics for Special Children, Brockport, NY, August 8–13. Child holding a medal. The first summer games were held in 1968 with 1,000 athletes from 26 states and Canada competing in track and swimming. Founder Eunice Kennedy also wrote the athlete's pledge: “Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

Winter Special Olympics
Scott 2142 • 1985
The first winter games were held in Steamboat Springs, Colorado in 1977. More than 500 athletes competed in skiing and skating events. Special Olympics provides year-round training for athletes as well as the biennial competitions.

Special Olympics
Scott 3771 • 2003
Special Olympics celebrates with pride the sports accomplishments of intellectually disabled children and adults in the hope of one day seeing “a world in which everyone is respected and included.”

Celebrate the Century 1990s
Special Olympics
Scott 3191i • 2000
From its beginning in 1962 as a summer day camp for intellectually impaired children and adults, at founder Eunice Shriver's Maryland home, Special Olympics have become international competitions alternating winter and summer games every two years. More than 3 million athletes from 170+ countries now compete in thirty individual and team events including such sports as alpine skiing, snowboarding, bowling, badminton, horseback riding, sailing, soccer, and softball.

Games & Sports
Let me be brave....

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Take it to the limit....

Celebrate the Century 1990s
Extreme Sports
Scott 3191d 2000
Generally characterized as activities with a high level of inherent danger and characterized by some combination of high speed, high risk, and great physical exertion, Extreme Sports were first popularized by ESPN television sports network, in 1995. The first X Games featuring events such as bungy jumping, skateboarding and street luge. Today, there are both winter and summer X Game competitions broadcast live on ESPN.

Extreme Sports
Skateboarding
Scott 3321 • 1999
The third most popular sport among American teens. With roots in the “no rules” punk movement, this is a recreation for the individual. It can be used for transportation, as a leisure sports activity, as an art form (think of those spectacular tricks), and in professional competition.

Extreme Sports
BMX Racing
Scott 3322 • 1999
First popularized as cross-country racing on dirt bikes, bicycle motocross now performed on specialized bikes on a groomed dirt obstacle course.

Extreme Sports • Inline Skating
Scott 3324 • 1999
Rollers or wheels set in a straight line to simulate ice-skating in the summer months have been around since the early 1700s, but inline skating only began to reach its potential as both a cross-training tool and a sport in its own right in the 1990s.

Extreme Sports
Snowboarding • Scott 3323 1999
“Surfing” in snow appeared in the 1960s. Following its debut in the 1998 Winter Olympics it became one of the fastest growing sports in the United States.
Games & Sports

Let me be brave....

Special Olympics
Scott 1788

Winter Special Olympics
Scott 2142

Celebrate the Century 1990s
Special Olympics
Scott 3191i

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Take it to the limit....

Extreme Sports
Skateboarding • Scott 3321

Celebrate the Century 1990s
Extreme Sports • Scott 3191d

Extreme Sports
BMX Racing • Scott 3322

Extreme Sports
Snowboarding • Scott 3323

Extreme Sports • Inline Skating
Scott 3324
Toys
Games & Sports
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