

Childhood Amusements



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Childhood Amusements in America

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 $1\frac{3}{8}$ -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.

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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



Christmas
Child on hobby-horse.
Scott 1769 • 1978

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

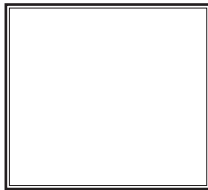


Toys

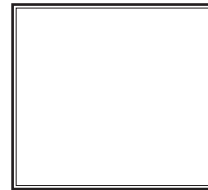
Antique Toys • Scott 3629–3629 • 2002; also issued as coil stamps, Scott 3638–3641



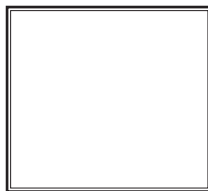
Toy mail wagon • Scott 3626, 3638



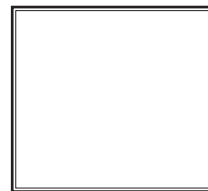
Toy locomotive • Scott 3627, 3639



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

CLASSIC *American Dolls*



32
x15
\$480

PLATE
POSITION
P 1 1 1 1

© 1996 USPS

"Alabama Baby" and Martha Chase
"Baby Coos"
Ludwig Greiner

"The Columbian Doll"
Plains Indian
"Betsy McCall"

Johnny Gruelle's "Raggedy Ann"
Izannah Walker
Percy Crosby's "Skippy"

Martha Chase
"Babyland Rag"
"Maggie Mix-up"

"American Child"
"Scottles"
Albert Schoenhut

The above names include doll makers, designers, trade names and common names.

- (a) "Alabama Baby" and doll by Martha Chase, (b) "Columbian Doll," (c) Johnny Gruelle's "Raggedy Ann," (d) Doll by Martha Chase, (e) "American Child," (f) "Baby Coos," (g) Plains Indian, (h) Doll by Izannah Walker, (i) "Babyland Rag," (j) "Scottles," (k) Doll by Ludwig Greiner, (l) "Betsy McCall," (m) Percy Crosby's "Skippy," (n) "Maggie Mix-up," (o) Dolls by Albert Schoenhut.



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 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



2000
Seminole doll USA37

Art of the American
Indian • Seminole Doll
Scott 3873e

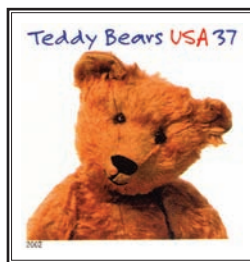


Celebrate the Century
1900s
Crayola Crayons
Scott 3182d

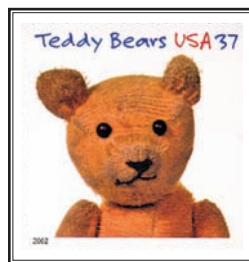


Celebrate the Century
1900s
Teddy Bear
Scott 3182k

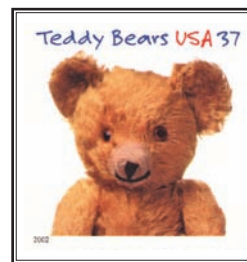
Teddy Bears Centennial, Scott 3653–3656 • 2002



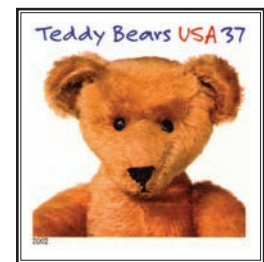
Bruin Bear, c. 1907
Scott 3653



"Stick" Bear, 1920s
Scott 3654



Gund Bear, c. 1948
Scott 3655



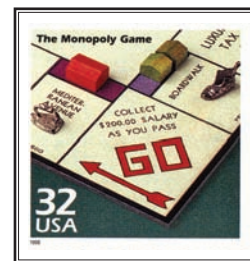
Ideal Bear, c. 1905
Scott 3656



Celebrate the Century
1910s
Construction Toys
Scott 3183n



Celebrate the Century
1920s
Electric Toy Trains
Scott 3184d



Celebrate the Century
1930s
Monopoly Game
Scott 3185o



Toys

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

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.

Celebrate the Century 1980s

Video Games •

Scott 3190l • 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.



Toys



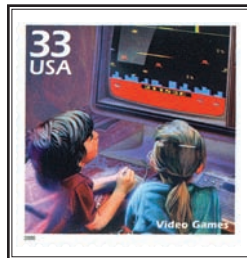
Celebrate the Century
1940s
Slinky • Scott 3186m



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....

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

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.”

Christmas • *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.

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

Football • 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

Softball • Scott 3402 • 2000

The game was invented by George Hancock in 1887 using a soft boxing glove tied into a ball shape and a broom stick. He called it “indoor baseball” and went on to create a body of rules and move it outdoors. The first women’s team was formed in 1895. Although it became an Olympic event in 1991, in 2010 softball was dropped from the scheduled events until at least 2020.

Let it snow....

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 Building a Snowman

Scott 2028 • 1982

Building figures out of packed snow has its roots in prehistory. The modern snowman, however, owes its “look” to “Frosty the Snowman,” the popular song recorded by Gene Autry in 1949 and subsequently turned into an animated (and annual) television special in 1969.

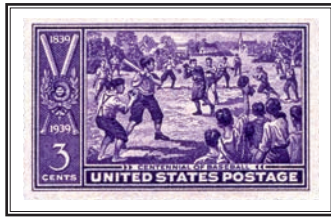
Season’s Greetings • Decorating an Outdoor Tree • Scott 2030 • 1982

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.



Games & Sports

In the good old summertime...



Baseball Centennial
Scott 855



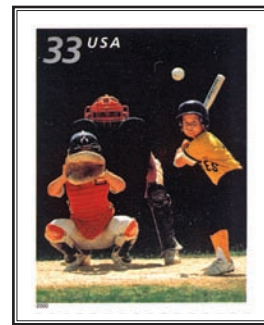
Youth Team Sports
Basketball • Scott 3399



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



Games & Sports

Let me be brave....

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.

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.

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."

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 bungee 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 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.

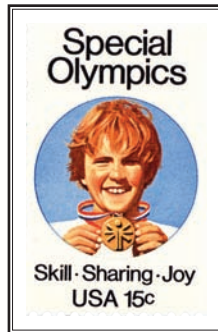
Extreme Sports • Inline Skating Scott 3324 • 1999

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.



Games & Sports

Let me be brave....



Special Olympics
Scott 1788



Winter Special Olympics
Scott 2142



Celebrate the Century 1990s
Special Olympics
Scott 3191i



Special Olympics
Scott 3771

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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