

Childhood Games

Electronic mail message from Dr. Homer Rudolf, Richmond College, Richmond, Virginia

Dr. Rudolf is a native of Wishek, North Dakota. His ancestral German villages are Bergdorf, Glueckstal, Kassel, Klein Bergdorf and Neudorf (Glueckstal Enclave). Dr. Rudolf visited his ancestral German villages near Odessa, Ukraine in Moldova in May, 1998.

Recently I was visiting with a friend who grew up in Los Angeles, and we talked about the games we played as children, and it turned out that many of them were the same:

Red Rover, Red Rover -- won't you come over

[I think we called it "Pom, Pom Pullaway" -- or else I've completely forgotten what that game was]

Anti-I-Over

mumbledypeg

marbles

fox and the goose

crack the whip

hide & seek [olly, olly, in free]

wooden guns with a clothes-pin trigger [he shot rubber bands, we cut up old tire tubes for ammunition]

However, there are some that he had not heard of, and I'm wondering whether some of those, or others were distinctly German-Russian children's games:

Run my good sheep run

riding home-made scooters

rolling a wheel or a barrel hoop with a wooden stick that had a cross-bar attached to the bottom -- you started the "wheel" rolling by letting it

roll down the stick, & then kept it rolling

When one reads about the celebrations in the Ukraine, they commonly talk about May Pole celebrations. I don't remember any of that while I grew up, but we did celebrate "May Basket Day." We made small baskets, using construction paper and glue, filled them with candy, and gave them to others. The tradition in Wishek was that whoever you gave a May basket to [including the teachers] was challenged to catch you and give you a kiss [obviously before the "PC" days!].

We also played board games like Parcheesie [sp?] and Chinese checkers. My parents families also played board games, but they were home-made. I had them draw them for me, but by that time [1980] they had forgotten how they were played. The game of my mother's family was called "Rutschmiel" [?sp] -- played on a "board" about the size of a sheet of paper. Two players with 6 buttons each [one with white, the other with black] My father's family played on a "board" that was one foot square, with 4 players [one at each corner]. Again, each player had 6 buttons. He didn't remember the name of the game.

Can anyone add to this list, or identify specific German-Russian games?