**Antique Toys- Art Docent Session**

Life for kids in the olden days was different in many ways from your lives today. All children in the United States today have to go to school, and 100 years ago, children were also supposed to go to school too, but poor children and children who lived on farms had to work to help their families. Some children in the cities tried to work during the day and then go to night school, but sometimes they fell asleep during their school classes! It wasn´t until the 1900s that laws were passed to protect children from working and that children under 14 must go to school.

Public schools were not nice and comfortable like Willard- many were overcrowded, dirty and poorly lit - sometimes classrooms had100 students. Desks and books were shared by 2,3 or even 4 children- and there were no playgrounds! Teachers didn´t make learning fun - Children just had to memorize spelling and facts. If woman teachers got married, they had to stop teaching- this happened to Christina´s great grandmother- she was very disappointed!

What did children do for fun? They played outdoors a lot, like you do today (but without playgrounds and sports coaches.) There weren´t a lot of public parks - Who has been to Central Park? It opened in the winter of 1859. Children ice skated on local ponds in winter and musical get togethers were popular where people met to sing around a piano or other instruments.

Most children only had a few, simple toys, often handmade- some similar to what you play today:

* **Jumprope** – both boys and girls, (card with rhymes that the chanted), Cats Cradle
* **Hopscotch**- one of the oldest documented games- you can still see a hopscotch board etched into the floor of the Roman Forum centuries ago! From there it spread via the great network of roads built by the Romans.
* Where did hopscotch get its name? Nothing to do with Scotland- Scotch meant scratch in old English. What were streets made of then? Dirt, so they scratched their hopscotch board in the dirt. Today, because streets are paved, we use chalk…
* **Handmade dolls** (No Barbies or American Girl dolls) - out of cornhusks, old scraps of material, animal skins etc. In 1880 the inventor Thomas Edison from NJ made the first talking doll
* **Pick up sticks**- do any of you have these?
* **Tic Tac Toe**- originally called Tit Tat Toe- what did children write on before paper was so readily available? Tic Tac Toe was also played on a slate with chalk- easy to erase and start again
* **Yoyo-** how many of you have a yoyo?
* **Popgun**- had a cork that would shoot- like nerf guns of today
* **Ball in Cup games**- how many have one or have made one?
* **Marbles**
* **Jacks -** Hugely popular- ask your Grandmothers if they played jacks
* **Tops** – 5 types have been around since the 1500s, often with string to make them go- kids would compete to see whose top would spin longest and/or knock the others over. What game today is similar? (Beyblade)
* **Nine Pin** – What does it remind you of? Like Bowling- only all wood pins and ball. Brought to America from Germany and Holland
* **Hide and Seek and Kites were also popular**

What are your favorite toys? How are they different from when your grandparents were little? How often do you feel bored with nothing to do?

Go home and talk with your Grandparents about what they played when they were little- see how many of the games we talked about they used to play and what their favorites were!

Group 1: Ball and cup, pick-up sticks, tictactoe

Group 2: Yoyo, popgun, pin game, puzzle

Group 3: Marbles or jacks, tops, pull toys