

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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Croquet, anyone?
By Jay Graybeal

The photograph collection of the Historical Society of Carroll County contains three 19th century images of local groups posed with croquet equipment. A sheet music cover from the music collection portrays a romantic view of the sport, as do the lyrics:

"Out on the lawn in the ev'ning gray,
Went Willie and Kate – I said, "which way,"
And they both replied "Croquet, croquet."

"Of Mallet and Balls the usual display,
The Hoops all stood in arch array,
And I said to myself, "Soon we'll see Croquet; we'll see Croquet,"

"But the Mallet and Balls unheeded lay,
And the maid and the youth side by side, sat they,
And I thought to myself Is that Croquet?

"I saw the scamp, it was bright as day,
Put his arm round her waist in a loving way,
And he squeezed her hand, Was that Cro-quet?
Now was that Croquet?

"While the red rover roll'd all forgotten away,
He Whisper'd all that a lover should say,
And kiss'd her lips – What a queer Croquet!

"Silent they sat 'neath the moon of May,
But I knew by her blushes she said not nay,
And I thought in my heart, Now that's Croquet!
Now that's Croquet."

Croquet picnics and parties became popular in America in the 1860s. The first American text to appear was Capt. Mayne Reid's "Croquet: A Treatise and Commentary" published in New York in 1869. Reid, a hero of the Mexican War, envisioned croquet as a safe substitute for war, but

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warned his readers of the dangers of encountering women on the croquet court. Despite Reid’s warning women were frequent croquet players.

The sport of croquet occupies an interesting niche in sports history. It was the first outdoor sport where men and women competed on an equal status. A writer for the “Living Age” wrote in c.1898:

“As each player goes through the first hoop, as he undergoes a metamorphosis...The male antagonist becomes a creature too vile for language, the decency of womanhood has disappeared by the third hoop.”

Photo credit: Historical Society of Carroll County

Photo caption: Sheet music cover for “Croquet” by C.H. Webb and J.R. Thomas. Published by William A. Pond and Co., New York, N.Y. 1867.

Photo caption: Croquet Party, c. 1895 Millie Staup Donsife and friends standing in the near yard of a residence in Woodsboro. The donor of this photograph also gave the boxed croquet set seen in the image. Gift of Mary Ainsworth, 1983.

Photo caption: William G. Rinehart and family c.1900. Photographed in the side yard of their home at 179 W. Main St., Westminster by P.J. Weaver of Hanover, Pa. Gift of Mrs. Harvey K. Myers.

Photo caption: Croquet party c.1865. Front row: Jane Jones, Annie Jones, M. Shriver. Back row: Jessie Gorsuch, Richard B. Hollingsworth, Anna B. Jones. Photographed in studio of Grammer and Perkins, Westminster. Gift of the Rev. Paul Reese, 1941.