

The Historic Game of Graces (Grades K-12)

Background:

Originally known as *le jeu des graces*, when it was invented in early 1800s France, this game grew in popularity in the United States over several decades and is mentioned in some Civil War era activity books for kids.



The game was considered an acceptable game for girls, because it involved no rowdiness and was thought to develop graceful movements. It was most commonly played by 2 girls, occasionally a boy and a girl, but never two boys together. (Although I have found that boys enjoy the game as much as girls.)

We don't know if children or patients ever played *The Game of Graces* at Fort Stanton, but it would have been a good exercise for ambulatory tubercular patients since it is played outdoors in the fresh air, is low impact and would not have stressed their respiratory system.

Materials Needed per Team:

There are companies that sell reproductions of the game, but you can also make your own.

- 4 wood dowels (cut to a length of approximately 18")
- 1 embroidery hoop (at least 9")
- multicolor ribbons (wrapped around the hoop with tails approximately 12" left hanging off for decoration and to slow the flight of the hoop)

How to Play:

- Two players stand facing each other, approximately 12' apart.
- Holding a stick in each hand, the player with the hoop places the hoop over both sticks which are crossed.
- The hoop player then pulls both arms outward from the body which moves the hoop up the sticks and launches it off the end of the sticks through the air.
- The goal of the other player is to catch the hoop using his or her sticks.
- Then the hoop is returned to the other player using the same technique.
- Scoring is not required, but traditionally, the first player to catch the hoop 10 times was the winner.

Variations:

- Two players can toss two hoops simultaneously.
- Three or more players can form a triangle or larger circle.