

Replaying the Nineteenth Century

TIB CUPERY

Museum of Florida History

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Living history museums present an arena for bringing sport, game and play history to life. Game artifacts have been included in exhibits, but it is also possible to present opportunities to participate in activities from the past.

Several concerns focus efforts to incorporate sports and games into general and educational programs at a museum. First, it must be determined what the people of the era played, who played, the distinctions by age or socioeconomic level, season and geography. Since surviving game equipment is usually highly valued, it is necessary to find or produce replicas. The number of different activities as well as the amount of actual game equipment must be determined. A museum can be visited by thousands of people in a single day; hence, the nature and amount of equipment is a critical consideration. Training of staff and modes of presentation are further concerns. Finally, materials describing the history of sports and games must be gathered and made available to individuals who will interpret them. Older distribution to visitors, teachers and other museum personnel is also possible.

To present an accurate record of sports and games it is necessary to investigate a variety of primary sources. Interest in historical accuracy goes beyond the obvious activities of special days such as the Fourth of July. The pastimes of everyday life must also be determined and the equipment and rules identified. The data are not plentiful. Clearly, there is a need for serious attention to everyday life in the work of sport historians.

The authors' experiences suggest that museum visitors are willing to participate in the games and to ask questions about the history of the activities. These "hands on" activities provide opportunities to learn history by engaging in it. The visitors enthusiastically "replay" history.



Judy Jensen talked about artifacts, exhibits, and art museums.