

## **Rocks and Minerals as Toys**



### **Rocks Used As Markers for Games**

Children often played with stones. They looked at their shapes and imagined them to be food or tools. Some were collected and saved for polishing later. Soft stones were used like chalk to mark on other stones. Some were used as counters and markers in games.

Sandstones of different colors were sometimes crushed and the resulting “sand” was layered in glass jars to form interesting designs. Sand piles were and still are favorite places for children to play.



**Lamps Made from Clay**

Clay from newly plowed fields was molded into various shapes, dried, and placed into the dying fire of the wood stove at night. In the morning, children were able to take out their newly fired pottery.

Children walking home from school on gravel roads collected pretty stones and put them in their lunch boxes and pockets. Some were cracked to reveal inner beauty. Others were placed in water so they would be especially bright and colorful. Rock collections were created and enjoyed. Special stones were tumbled or polished on grinding wheels. Some were used in making jewelry. Local rock polishers provided polished specimens at craft shows.

Some of the large stones in the pasture were favorite places to play. One large, narrow stone was called the “camel” and ridden to imaginary places. A dark, flat, black stone was called the “stove stone” because it looked like an iron range. The “big man with a belt” was a huge gray granite boulder along the cow path. It protruded out of the ground at least three feet. Across it was a wide band of pink feldspar. Also near the cow path was a dark, flat stone probably made of basalt. It measured about two by three feet and was almost totally covered with a layer of white quartz. We called it the “frosting stone.” When land was cleared for a hayfield, holes were dug and some of these large rocks were buried.

Jumping from rock to rock in the pasture, walking on stone piles, standing on a rocky shore to fish, catching crayfish under rocks or turning over rocks to discover homes of insects were pleasant experiences.