



The reign of England's Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901 was an era marked by international social and political evolutions. These wide-ranging changes reached rural life in places like the Farm House.

The name *Graces* came from how graceful the hoop looked as it flew across the yard. Another popular game was *Hoop and Stick*, in which the players maneuvered a large wooden hoop, using only a short rod to keep it rolling. Players raced to see who could keep their hoop moving the farthest.

Other such games included *Lookabout*, where one player hid an object and everyone else tried to find it; *Blindman's Bluff*, during which one blindfolded person tried to capture and identify the other players; and *Forfeits*, in which every player gave up some object of value and then had to do something amusing or embarrassing back.

Pastimes

Before the invention of computers, DVD players, and iPods, Victorians looking for fun had to be more creative than we do today. For children, this usually meant heading outside to play a game while adults turned to card games and books.

Children's Games

A popular pastime for Victorian children, especially girls, was a two-player game, *Graces*. The first player used a pair of sticks to fling a decorated hoop across to the second player, who then tried to catch the hoop on their own sticks.



Parlor Games

Games were not just for children in the Victorian era. Adults played parlor games with family and friends for entertainment in the evening. One common parlor game was *Charades*, an amusement which many still enjoy today.

Women

Working Class

Victorian women's roles depended on their socio-economic class. Urban working-class women often worked outside the home in a factory or as a domestic servant, receiving a significantly lower salary than their male counterparts. While the Farm House never had servants, it almost always had a housekeeper, usually one of the college's female students.

Middle Class

Women in middle-class farm families often enjoyed a high level of gender equality because their busy families could not afford to segregate roles based on gender. Women living in the Farm House managed the business side of the home, including providing for boarders, hosting the college's trustee meetings, and overseeing the three-acre farm garden.

Upper Class

Wealthy women (a status not seen in residents of the Farm House) spent their days busily managing servants, caring for family, and maintaining their household, all while adhering to the Victorian values of female reserve and propriety. When not scripting the night's dinner menu or overseeing the household chores, wealthy women studied French, practiced singing or playing the piano, and decorated their homes with embroidery and other crafts.



Victorian calling cards were a means of introduction and served as a record of who had or called on whom. Here are some rules of calling card etiquette:

First-time visitors simply dropped off a card and left. The house's mistress then decided whether to return the call and establish a relationship.

A turned-down corner indicated that the card had been delivered in person, rather than by a servant.

A newcomer to the neighborhood waited until she received cards from neighbors, then visited each house that had left a card.

Visitors' cards were kept in a small, decorative tray in the entryway, with the most impressive names displayed on top.

Etiquette

Victorian life for the middle and upper classes was highly regulated by social etiquette. Children grew up learning about the rules of proper behavior, and adults were to strictly adhere to them. The following is a small sampling of Victorian etiquette:

Ladies and gentlemen will always speak in a gentle tone.

When walking in the street, a gentleman may take two ladies upon his arms, but under no circumstances should the lady take the arms of two gentlemen.

No gentleman should stand on the street corners, steps of hotels, or other public places and make remarks about ladies passing by.

When giving a formal dinner, no more than two vegetables should be served with each entree and potatoes should not be offered with fish.



Farm House Museum

Victorian Life

Additional Information on the Farm House and other University Museums Information sheets are available at the University Museums office - 290 Scheman building (2nd floor) 515-294-3342 or visit us online at www.museums.iastate.edu