

Stepping Back in Time

Civil War Re-enactments, like the *1862 Battle at Lone Jack*, are a powerful way to see ourselves “linked to the good intentions of those who came before us”. They are also a gold mine for marble’s history. Hundreds of History-buffs come to Lone Jack each year, not only to re-enact a battle, wearing period clothes and authentic gear, but to share knowledge and artifacts they have collected.

I have secured several **Musket Balls**(C), sometimes called **Grapeshot**, found at battle sites where, “The roar of musketry and cannon fire, was intense.”³⁹ The metal balls look like steel ball bearing, but up-close the surface is rough and usually rusty. Artillery divisions, low on ammo, may have also resorted to round stones, but more likely the stone artifacts are **Chunkee Stones** (D)⁴⁰, used for games and target practice, with a spear, by Native American Indian.



Technically, some of the marbles artifacts date 100’s if not 1000’s of years before the Civil war (1861-1865). **Thunder Eggs**, and **Mud Balls**(D) found near volcanic craters, **Ceramic Mill Balls**(A), which are distinctively heavier than clay marble, are used in mining operations to grind carbide allows, such as Molybdenum, into powder. **Stone Mill Balls**(B) for grinding grains, support my claim that kids have played marble games for “centuries.”⁴¹



Living History Museums have also been a huge part of my Marbles For Good “crusade”. **The Shawnee Indian Mission**⁴² (1839-1862) challenges students on school field trips, and the Fall Festival, to learn more about those who came before us. The Mission offers 1,000’s of students on field trips, amazing “back in the day (1839-1862)” experiences - fence-building, blacksmithing, setting up a Teepee, cooking, sewing, and weaving.

Stone & Clay / Non-Glass Marbles



³⁹ Download article, “Shot all to pieces” at <http://www.historiclonejack.org>

⁴⁰ For Cherokee Marbles Game Video go to MarbleKeeper.com [downloads] [videos]

⁴¹ For full report on Texas Marbles Artifacts MarbleKeeper.com [downloads] [resources]

⁴² Go to <https://shawneeindianmission.org/> and “Mission Market” for marbles products.

My “job” is teaching traditional marbles games, using stone and clay marbles. I also created a Non-glass marbles display. Glass marbles were unheard of in 1839. Children in the 1800s played with clay or stone marbles. Round stones were more common, but some were made of clay. Archeologist referred to these artifacts as “Game Balls” or “Game Pieces”.⁴³

My favorite artifact is a hand-crafted clay marble (pictured). A volunteers, Joe Gristead, found it 28 years ago, among pebbles from the Kaw (Kansas) River in NE Kansas, in Northeast Kansas, where the Shawnee (south bank) and Delaware (north bank), settle in the 1830’s. Note the hand-chipped facets.



A Geology Lesson⁴⁴

Not all pre-historic stone marbles were played with by children. Small, brownish-black balls have been unearthed in Utah. They are called Moqui Marbles, the original name given to the Hopi Tribe. Legend has it, Hopi ancestors’ spirits would return to Earth in the evenings to play marble games with these iron-sandstone balls. The spirits would leave the marbles behind to reassure their relatives that they are happy and content.



At **Shawnee Town and Farmstead 1929**, students on field trips and at the Shawnee Old Town Festival, experience a typical day on the farm with live animals, a community garden, barns, and outbuildings. Or tour the 1929 Farm town, with an authentic 1929 car dealership, a service station, a fire truck, a barber shop, and a grocery store.

My role is playing Ringer (page28) with kids, up by the old farmhouse, next to the chickens. We play with **Slag Marbles** (pictured), which were the first machine-made glass marbles, produced by Martin Christensen.⁴⁵ Slags have distinct features; a translucent base color and a trace of swirling opaque, white glass.



By 1929, the “Golden Age of Marbles” was in high gear. Over 3 million kids nationwide, 7-14 years of age, were playing Ringer at local competitions, to earn an invitation to the Nationals Marbles Tournament in June. (page 39). Also, in 1929, for the first time, the finals of the national tournament were broadcast live on radio, with legendary Graham McNamee, the “father of play-by-play sports broadcasting.”

⁴³ Download Non-glass picture guide at MarbleKeeper.com [downloads] [visual aids]

⁴⁴ **Project Based Learning** ideas at MarbleKeeper.com [downloads] [resources]

⁴⁵ Download Slag Marble pictures at MarbleKeeper.com [download] [visual aid]