

Crazy for Croquet

By Trail End State Historic Site Superintendent Cynde Georgen; from *Trail End Notes*, July 2008

A ninety-four year old photograph shows three children – two boys and a girl – outside on a sunny day, each holding a mallet in their hands. The boys are wearing trousers and button-down shirts, and the girl is wearing a sailor-type blouse, skirt and hat with white stockings and shoes.



The year is 1914, and the children are Harry Kay, Manville Kendrick, and Rosa-Maye Kendrick. The snapshot was taken at the Quarter Circle U Ranch near Birney, Montana.

What could these youngsters be doing, dressed so nicely? Playing croquet, of course!

The exact origin of croquet is unknown, but by the mid-1800s, the game had become all the rage in England, especially since it was an outdoor game that could be played by both sexes. In 1864, John Jaques published his book, *Croquet: The Laws and Regulations*, and the game soon spread overseas to other English-speaking countries, including the United States. It became so popular that it was even included in the 1900 Summer Olympics (France took the gold, silver and bronze medals).

It is no surprise, then, that the Kendricks enjoyed playing this trendy game with their family and friends. Whenever they visited the QCU Ranch, croquet was almost always on the schedule. Even the cowboys at the Kendrick's LX Bar Ranch enjoyed a good game of croquet now and then.

There are many variations on the game, but the basic equipment is the same. In the United States, you're most likely to find croquet sets for sale that include nine wire wickets (hoops), six wooden mallets, six different colored balls, and two wooden stakes. Although the game may not be quite as popular around here as it was in the Kendricks' time, it still has a following – the United States Croquet Association continues to promote the game through croquet clubs and tournaments in both the U. S. and Canada.



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