Where can you find more exhibits?

Beltrami County Historical Society
130 Minnesota Avenue SW
Bemidji, MN 56601

Clearwater County Historical Society
264 1st St W
Bagley, MN 56621

East Polk Heritage Center
910 Hilligoss Blvd SE
Fosston, MN 56542

Goodridge Area Historical Society
12261 300th Ave NE
Goodridge, MN 56725

Kittson County Historical Society
332 Main St
Lake Bronson, MN 56734

LOW County Historical Society
119 8th Ave SE
Baudette, MN 56623

Mahnomen County Historical Society
106 N. Main St
Mahnomen, MN 56557

Marshall County Historical Society
808 East Johnson
Warren, MN 56762

Norman County Historical Society
Praire Vlg, 701 W. Thorpe Ave
Ada, MN 56510

North Beltrami Heritage Center
126 Clark Ave N
Kelliher, MN 56650

Pennington County Historical Society
825 Oakland Park Rd
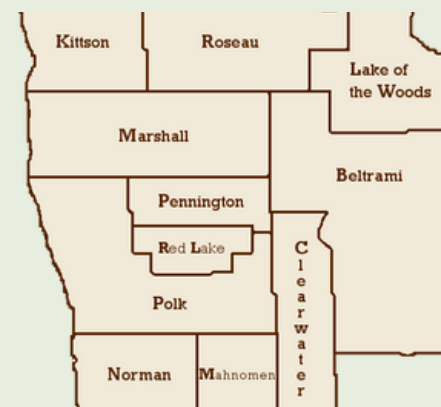Thief River Falls, MN 56701

Polk County Historical Society
719 E Robert St
Crookston, MN 56716

Roseau County Historical Society
121 Center St, STE 101
Roseau, MN 56751

Warroad Heritage Center
202 Main Ave NE
Warroad, MN 56763

Other MNHNW Organizations:
Becker County Historical Society
Oklee Historical Society
Old Home Town Museum
Red Lake County Historical Society
Sand Hill Settlement

Contact MNHNW at:

Phone : (218) 463-1918
Website : www.mnhistoricnw.org
Individual museum contact information located on the website.

CELEBRATE PLAY!

A Minnesota Historic Northwest Exhibit Series

Let's Play!

Throughout Summer 2022, participating museums of the MN Historic Northwest will display their personal toy collections and teach about the history of toys and playtime across America. Each location will feature unique childhood items, displays, posters, and imagery.

Children have played with toys as early as the 5th century. Balls, kites, dolls, and yo-yos are assumed to be the oldest items specifically designed as toys.

Playing with toys is a vital part of growing up and learning. Coordination and other manual skills are developed by manipulating toys that require the use of hands and body. In addition, adults can use toys to form and strengthen social bonds, teach, help in therapy, and remember and reinforce lessons from their youth.

What can you expect to see?

DOLLS

Dolls were used as a way to teach girls traditions in many cultures. They also taught girls how to care for possessions and to mimic the behaviors of their mothers. Our exhibit series features dolls of all kinds, from corn husk dolls to Barbie.

Vintage dolls at the Warroad Heritage Center

WHEELS

The earliest wheeled toys were pull toys, dating back to 2000 B.C. These featured an attached string designed to pull the toy along. From old wooden trains to the latest Hot Wheels, our exhibits show that fast wheels made for fast fun!
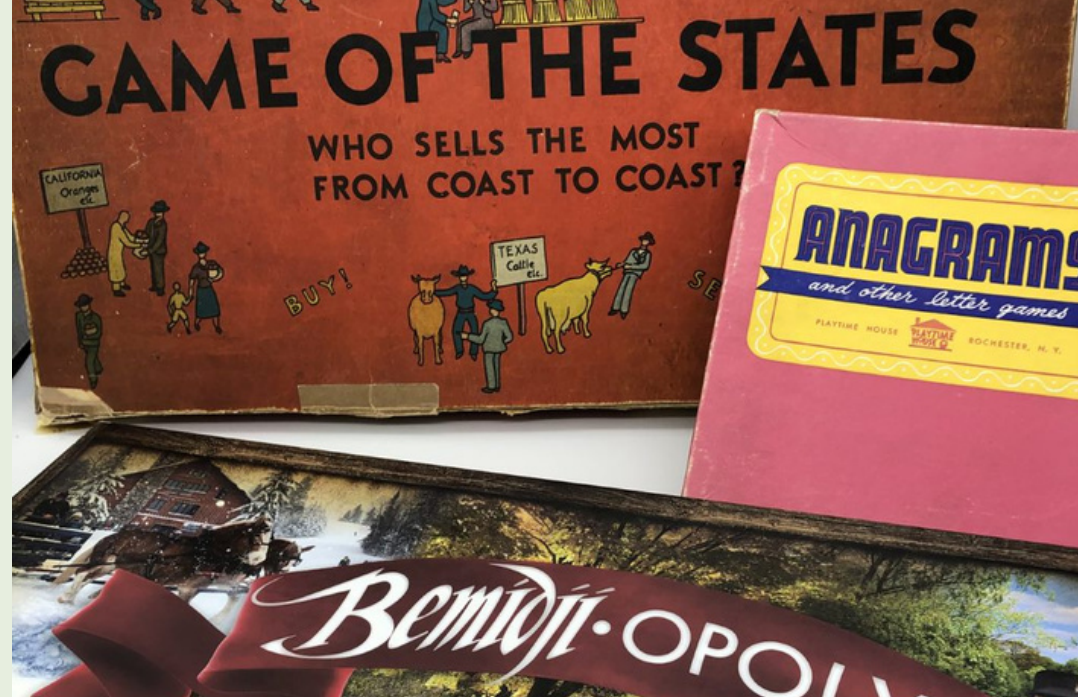
Train Set at Marshall County Historical Society

Spirograph art tools at Mahnomen County Historical Society

ART

Art is a common medium for play. The first coloring book appeared in 1879, and the first crayon was invented in 1903 using paraffin wax and non-toxic color pigments. Today, children continue to play with Etch-A-Sketches and Play-Doh.

GAME OF THE STATES
WHO SELLS THE MOST FROM COAST TO COAST?

ANAGRAMS
and other letter games

Board Games at Beltrami County Historical Society

BOARD GAMES

Before there were electronics, there were board games! Board games emerged from common dice and card games in the 19th century, but grew in popularity in the 20th century due to mass production capabilities. Although electronic toys have replaced much of the popularity of board games, new board games appear each year.

ELECTRONICS

Electronics quickly impacted the toy market. During the 1960s and 70s, electronic toys made their way into dolls and stuffed animals. The first video game was released in the 1970s. Today, kids enjoy an interactive experience with Smart toys, and video games have become a common way for young people to play today.

ACTION FIGURES

Toy soldiers made of stone, wood, and clay have been discovered in ancient Greece and Rome, while metal toy soldiers of the 1700s were used to to teach boys about war strategizing. These metal soldiers eventually evolved into the little green army men of the 1940s.

Action figures at the East Polk Heritage Center

ViewMaster at LOW County Historical Society

OPTICAL

Some toys are designed to stimulate the brain more than for entertainment purposes. Optical toys such as stereoscopes, viewfinders, and modern virtual reality devices present the world in new and interesting ways.

Stuffed animals at the Roseau County Historical Society

ANIMALS

The first teddy bear appeared in 1902, though animal toys made of wood and straw have existed for centuries. Our exhibits feature animals of all kinds, from rocking horses to My Little Pony!