1924

Stories of The Sand

Katherine Holden
Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker

Part of the Home Economics Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol4/iss2/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Homemaker by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Stories of The Sand

By Katherine Holden

"O H, MOTHER, MOTHER!" shouted Johnny and Jane in one breath, as they dashed into the house. "We almost saw the awfullest accident, just now. Oh, just think—if that man hadn't grabbed the baby, where would he be now? And it's the sweetest little baby, mother, just like the little Jones girl that got hurt by the hand car way back last summer."

Some questioning brought more details. The children had seen a woman and two small children just escape being hit by a freight train because they had tried to go thru a gate by the railroad tracks instead of going thru the subway. We discussed the value of having a subway and of using it.

"I wish we had a sand table here at home," said Jane. "We don't do things like that in our room, and Johnnie has more fun; I want to do it, too. I guess I could make a tunnel like the one at the railway station, just as well as he could."

Thus our sand table was called into existence. It was a wooden box, made with a width that would permit moving it from room to room, and as long as space in the room allowed. Two feet was as short as it could be and still be workable. For the lining, which is necessary to keep the box clean and wholesome, we wanted to use zinc, but felt that it was too expensive, so we used galvanized iron, which rusts very slowly. Oilcloth would have served fairly well also. We placed the table on wooden horses, so the substantial hinged legs would have been equally satisfactory, and made a wooden gutter around the edge to keep too much sand from spilling on the floor. A canvas cover fitting over the top helped to keep the sand clean and moist, and the room neat, when the table was not in use.

Sand was the first item on our list of supplies, of course. We wanted it clean and fine, for such sand models much better than that which is coarse and gritty. Not being fortunate enough to find it in town, we went to a firm on the seacoast that published books on sandcraft, and shipped sand at a quite reasonable cost. Had the sand been gritty, the children would have sifted it carefully to remove small stones and particles which interfere sadly with careful modelling.

To make sandcraft as interesting as other pastimes, fairly complete equipment is necessary. Fortunately, this is obtainable at little cost. Johnnie and his father whittled most of the modelling tools out of boards and discarded peach-baskets, which were made of wood well suited for the purpose. These were the most essential tools suggested by the teacher, and the ones the children found especially useful.

Packers are simple, but most useful. They are rectangular pieces of wood, not wider than the children can grasp easily, and are used for packing or pressing the sand and smoothing it into shape. These are used in pairs, but several extra ones are often needed.

Cutters are made from the thin wood of the fruit basket, cut in the general shape of a butcher knife. The edge is whittled and smoothed with sandpaper. This was invaluable for cutting and scraping the sand. Both large and small cutters were used by the children.

Packers are simple, but most useful. They are rectangular pieces of wood, not wider than the children can grasp easily, and are used for packing or pressing the sand and smoothing it into shape. These are used in pairs, but several extra ones are often needed.

Sandpoints, slender pointed sticks made into a very small flat cutter at one end, were useful in drawing outlines, in decorating models and in cutting finer points such as windows and chimney flues.

A spade, a small rectangular piece of wood, with a handle on one end, proved useful in digging out the sand many times.

Tamps were used in some of the more difficult modelling. They are small solid blocks with a handle sticking up from the middle, rather on the principle of the old solid wooden potato masher. These were efficient in packing down the sand solidity in molds.

A few other things were necessary to make our sand table the very best it could be. Of course a watering can was a necessity for the sand cannot be modelled if it is not quite moist; and a penknife and a piece of sandpaper kept the tools always in condition. These warped when left in the damp sand, so the children had a basket in which they kept all their sand-play accessories.

Washing the sand was one of Johnnie's favorite pastimes. After several weeks of constant use, the sand became quite dirty. Then we carried the box out to the yard and poured water into it—so much as it would hold, and literally washed the sand with soap and water. The addition of washing soda made the cleansing more thorough. When it was well washed, we allowed the sand to settle, and drained off the water containing the dirt. After repeating this two or three times, the sand was clean once more.

When the children finally had their sand table ready for play, they discovered that they couldn't immediately set out to make all the wonderful things they could think of, but must begin with more simple ideas. So geography, with its hills, valleys and rivers, occupied their attention, and Mt. Vesuvius and the little lake where we camp each summer, received equal attention. They had the most fun, however, over a map of our own state, Iowa, showing the hilly country, the mining districts (indicated by bits of coal), and the rivers, in truly realistic fashion.

Already John and Jane had decided that it was more fun to model something "out of their heads" than to copy something else, but as their skill increased, the supply of inspirations slackened, and they found soon that if they copied other things for a while, they might increase their own ideas, and they would have a far wider field in which to work. This urge for new ideas led them to observe their surroundings far more closely than was their wont. When they saw a typical Spanish villa, which is quite unusual in Iowa towns, they both came home eager to make one just like it in the sand. Sometimes reproduction led to creation, as in the case of the railway station. After carefully copying our little station and the subway, Johnny thought of adding a viaduct at the street crossing.

Gradually the models became more and more complex and difficult. From a railway station they had progressed to little villages, with town squares, stores, churches and residence districts. Model (Continued on page 21)
stance with the few which we casually encounter. Nor does this mean that local opportunities are to be overlooked. The tendency usually is to seek the apparent-ly greener grass across the fence only to be disillusioned.

Much might be written about means of discovering these significant abilities. The writer proposes, however, to leave those indirect methods of finding them out, now that they have been enumerated. It should be added, however, that self-discovery is a life-long process, that is a part of the adventure of life. Further, it should be stated that there is little of fatalism in the philosophy expounded, but rather a belief that the factors of a successful life are in the hands of the ordinary individual, that many more of the qualities which make for achievement are alterable than are fixed by nature. In any case, the proper measure of success is the ratio of what one does to what he might have done and in this sense success is possible for all.

A final word to adults seems to be in order. Too often attempts are made to hinder, rather than help self-discovery. There is dissatisfaction with the high school boy or girl because they are not stable and settled, forgetting that such stability can only result in the dwarfing of personality. Nature has provided that adolescence shall be a period of exploration. Permanent interests are not to be expected at this stage. In shifting from one interest to another, from one viewpoint to another, from one ideal or here to another, the individual acquaints himself with his social environment, acquires a genuine sympathy with the lives and ways of thinking of others and incidentally finds himself. There is a tendency toward stabilization toward the end of the high school period, but the years 12 to 16 are and should be exploratory.

Stories of the Sand

(Continued from page 7)

playgrounds were designed and executed; favorite pastimes, such as camping, were illustrated with lake, mountains, tents and campfire.

Illustrating stories was the most fun of all. "The Last of the Mohicans" was twice as thrilling when the background was worked out graphically before their eyes. Stories of the Bible and of history were much more real—in fact, they proved to be really interesting.

To make these complicated models realistic, the children used many ingenious reinforcements. Match sticks served excellently as fence posts and as tent-poles. A bent hairpin proved also to be a Jack-of-all-trades. Sticks and strings made most effective telephone systems, and a little cornstarch, wheedled from the cook, made a snow-capped mountain truly beautiful.

The finishing touch to these models, in the children's eyes, was the fact that if they were especially good, we took their picture and added it to the steadily growing Sandcraft Memory Book.

Again, increased power of observation must follow. The children note their surroundings more carefully, see their differences and points of interest, and partially, as result of this, develop a better sense of proportion and line. They learn to make a street the right width as compared to the size of their houses, and to
keep a swimming pool and tennis court in some sort of logical ratio.

We find in the study of psychology, that the process of learning is made easier if accompanied by appropriate work with the hands. Thus this kind of sand play can be a real aid in the child’s education, in history, geography—almost any course. If too much emphasis is laid on the technique of such work, its usefulness for fixing the main idea is negligible. The central aim should never be smothered in bothersome detail.

Appropriate Pictures for the Home
(Continued from page 8)

or a narrow frame. The color of the mat must be harmonious with the color of the print. It must be light in value, but not white. Hokusai and Hiroshige, Japanese artists, are ranked among the great landscape painters of the world.

Fine old engravings are very valuable. They should be mounted on a mat and a narrow frame should be used. Etchings by men like Rembrandt, Whistler, Goya and Zorn are almost priceless. There are many fine modern etchers. Mr. Pennell’s work is perhaps best known. The colored etchings are decorative and very beautiful. These are classed among the most popular pictures for the home at present. They are, of course, more expensive than the colored print.

The oil paintings are not so popular at present as they were formerly. Possibly people realize that a poor oil painting is an abomination. The oil paintings done by an artist of ability will, however, always be desirable in a home. They are possibly better for the pretentious home than the modest cottage.

Above all, pictures become dear to us by constant association, and they also become a powerful influence in our lives. When we hear martial music we are stirred. I believe that pictures of a war-like theme stir one in the same way. We join the ranks, fall in line, and are swayed by the rhythm of line and mass, even as we are by the rhythm of martial music. It is important, therefore, to choose one’s pictures with care even as one wishes to choose one’s friends. Whether one follows tradition, precedent, or religious considerations, pictures will always be one of the big things in one’s life and home which will need due consideration.

The Individual Scarf
(Continued from page 9)

"Do you always start with white materials?"
"No, it isn’t necessary to use white, but it is easiest. You can use any light color, but you will have to consider how the color already in the material will affect your dyes; for instance, if you dipped light blue material in yellow dye, you would have a light green color as a result. A light grey background would simply grey all your colors a little."

Mary Ellen worked a little longer, then she took some paper and a piece of charcoal and began to combine a flower form of circles, a palm design to suggest leaves, and enough line design (made by overcasting) to hold it together nicely. Finally, both girls were satisfied with the design.