

LIMBERJACKS



WHAT IS A LIMBERJACK? A limberjack is a loose-limbed dancing doll. This toy probably originated in 16th century Europe when a seated street performer attached a string from his knee to a jointed wooden toy and by jiggling made it dance on a board. A wooden stick replaced the string sometime in 19th century England. In Appalachia, these traditional toys are often hand-carved with a stick in the back. The manipulator, seated on a narrow flexible wooden board, taps the board with a fist in time to a lively fiddle tune. The vibrating board makes the doll appear to do a clackety mountain clog dance. A skillful handler can make this toy an effective rhythm instrument.

Other names for the toy: jig doll, dancing doll, jollyboy, paddle puppet, Dancin' Dan, les gigueux (in French-speaking Canada).

WHERE TO FIND:

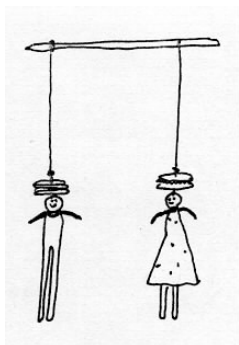
By searching, you may find "limber toys" at crafts fairs. However, they are more readily available from online suppliers. A Google search will turn up a wide variety. Here are some examples:

- Music Is Elementary www.musiciselementary.com (man, pony, dog, frog, dinosaur)
- Prairie Wind Toy Company <http://prairiewindtoyco.com/folktoys.html> (man, chicken, moose)
- Craggy Mountain Music <http://craggymtnmusic.com/limberjacks.php> (man)

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN LIMBERJACK:

For books with directions on how to construct your own limberjack, consult your local public library or amazon.com. We have included a couple of online resources, too:

- Dallas Cline. Cornstalk Fiddle and Other Homemade Instruments.
- Linda Garland Page. The Fox Fire Book of Appalachian Toys and Games.
- Elderly Instruments. Blueprint plans for Limberjack. <http://elderly.com/welcome.htm>
- Russ Childers' web site example of a pair of clothespin dolls with bottle cap "hats" that can be made to jingle as dolls dance on a table top. <http://home.fuse.net/russchilders/activity.html>



--illustration from Russ Childers' Traditional Appalachian Music & Stories web site

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